



CHAPTER 1

Annie Boldfoot didn't like excitement. She didn't like surprises, she didn't like danger, and she avoided adventure wherever she could. This was quite unusual in a family like the Boldfoots. Annie's mum, a famous insectologist, was often going to the jungle to discover new species of insects. Annie's grandma had been a trapeze artist in the circus (she was now retired). And her older brother, Hamish, was always getting into trouble for playing practical jokes on people.

The Boldfoots loved excitement – all except Annie. Her favourite thing to do was to curl up in her doona and read stories to her teddy bear, Ollie. She'd had Ollie ever since she was born. He was her best friend, and she took him everywhere. Sometimes she told him about her day, or asked

him for advice. But only when no-one else was listening. Hamish said only babies had teddy bears, not eight-year-old girls.

One morning, at the start of the school holidays, Annie's mum called Annie and Hamish downstairs. She had her suitcase out and was packing her jungle gear.



'I've been called on an expedition,' Annie's mum explained as she filled the suitcase (butterfly net, specimen jars, alligator repellent). 'A very important specimen has been spotted along the Amazon River.'

She put her hands on her hips and frowned. 'I'm afraid it's a bit unexpected. You can't come to the Amazon, it's too dangerous. Perhaps I'll ask Uncle Albert if you can stay with him for the holidays.'

Oh no! Annie thought. Uncle Albert was an adventurer. He owned his own museum, where he displayed all the treasures he collected on his adventures. It was called 'Albert Proudfoot's Amazing Adventureum', but it wasn't very amazing at all. It was quite small, and on the outside the paint was peeling off the walls, and on the inside it was dim and there was moss growing in the cracks between the bricks.



Annie liked Uncle Albert well enough, but he made her very nervous with his loud voice and stories of danger.

‘Couldn’t we stay here?’ Hamish asked. ‘I’m old enough to look after myself.’

‘So am I,’ said Annie.

Annie’s mum gave her a long look. ‘You’re far too young to stay home alone. You still have a teddy bear. There’s nothing for it,’ she decided. ‘You and Hamish will both have to stay with Uncle Albert these holidays.’ And she turned back to her packing.

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‘I’m bored,’ said Hamish.

It was the fourth day of the holidays, and they were sitting in Uncle Albert’s tiny flat. So far their stay had been pleasantly unadventurous, although Annie wished there were more books to read. The only books Uncle Albert had were called things like ‘Bear-Wrestling for Beginners’ and ‘How to Survive 100 Days in the Desert’.



Uncle Albert looked up from his newspaper. ‘Bored!’ he said. ‘I’ll tell you what bored is! I once spent fifty days stranded on a desert island with nothing to eat but beans. The island was as big as this room, and the only company I had was a shark, and *he* wanted to *eat* me!’

‘Well, we’re not adventurers,’ said Hamish. ‘We can’t spend the whole holidays in this room!’

‘Maybe we could go to the library,’ Annie ventured. ‘To get some more books.’

