

Teasel Howett

Dusty, Lara and I

My suitcase clatters to the floor but mum yanks my hand to pull me onto the escalator before I have time to grab it. As soon as she lets go, I race back up, ignoring the annoyed glances of the people moving out of my way, until I reach the top and seize my precious suitcase.

It used to be right red, but after 10 years of summer traveling, it is now nearer brown. Faded stickers encase it, telling stories of the places I've visited.

'Iona, how many times have you told you to watch where you're going?' In my imagination, my mum's eyes flash red, she becomes an evil clone-my animal companions, Dusty the Squirrel and Lara the Badger squeak behind me. 'If you'd spend less time in your imaginary world then maybe we'd have a chance at catching our flight!' Oh, she's back to normal mum now. No evil clone in sight. Lara and Dusty slowly disappear. However, mum's right. The flashing orange signage board reads: Departures: Halifax, Leaving 9:15 pm, right now it's 9:03. On the board next to it is a photo of a man with lumpy purple scratches down his cheeks and neck. That looks horrid! I think reading the caption below: *Doctors urge affected patients of this rare, noncontagious disease to stay at home until appropriate medicines are supplied to all hospitals.*

'But we can't give up yet!' I say, tearing my eyes away from the picture.

'Fine, but we'll need one of those!' Mum says, pointing at an airport luggage trolley. The look we share tells me exactly what she's planning.

Seconds later, we are speeding down the long corridors of Heathrow. Mum is riding the trolley and having the time of her life until some staff on a tea break rush towards. Dusty and Lara, who had been running alongside us with a gnome, disappear again as I snap back to the real world. The biscuit-eating staff have told mum she can't ride the trolley anymore. And even though my animal friends have gone, we are now at gate fifty-three. Once we've been led onto the plane (just in time), I slip my eye mask on and whisper good night to everyone in my magical world. Even if mum says my 'little made-up world' is silly, I really don't believe her: Lara has taught me lots of things about nature and Dusty is incredibly good at telling jokes. Playing with them is what makes me happy and shouldn't that be the most important thing?

After a long flight, and a 3-hour taxi drive, we finally reach the place I've been dreaming of since last year: Blueberry Lane, Prince Edward Island. I loved the cows ice creams, blueberry picking with Grandad, swimming with Tete (Syrian for Grandma) and having fun with Uncle Mickey and his dog Reggie.

Once we reach the estate, I stop to stare at the log cabin for a few seconds: it's just how I remember it! Orangey-brown paneling with pink flowers hung under the eaves. Behind it, there's their stretching garden filled with abundant produce. When I open the door; I am engulfed in my grandparents' arms. Hugging them fiercely back, I look around and realise that I can't see Uncle Mickey.

'Tete? Where's Uncle M?' The room falls silent and a frown ceases Tete's forehead.

'Iona, Your Uncle is... quite ill.'

'What do you mean?' My voice wobbles.

'See for yourself.' says Grandad, gravely leading us upstairs where Uncle Mickey is lying on the double bed. I rush over and his lethargic eyes turn to mine. Across his face are leaking purple gashes, just like the man in the picture! I gasp.

Tears tickle my cheeks and I grasp his hand.

'You've seen enough now, please go outside!' Tete orders sternly. I walk outside and stare out over the Blueberry Field. What fun would this be without Uncle Mickey? Quietly, Lara appears beside me. Seeing her sparks a memory. Me, Dusty and Lara, had found a fox in my garden back in England. Lying on its side, it too had the bulbus gashes. We cured it by concocting a mixture of crushed bark and wild blueberries. If this was the same disease, then maybe the same treatment would work? I dash outside and collect a piece of delicate bark as well as picking some blueberries from the field. Once Dusty and Lara have applied their magical blessing over the blended ingredients, I step upstairs.

'Um, hi?' I say opening the door, 'I've bought Uncle Mickey a... snack.' Stepping past the worried faces, I reach his bed and layer the mixture over his wounds. Like the fox, as soon as it touches them, he seems to wake up. Though he isn't completely fixed, I know it will be alright.