

Another beginning

Ella lay on her bed and looked at the map of Western Australia. She looked at Margaret River in the south and at Broome in the north. She counted the kilometres between them – she was 2,496 kilometres from the place she wanted to be. She was in Broome.

Broome felt like another country. It was on the coast, but it was hot and flat and dry. It was full of impossible colours – the dusty red desert became fine white sand that disappeared into the blue-green waters of the Indian Ocean. To see it for the first time was amazing, but Ella felt as if she had come to the end of the Earth.

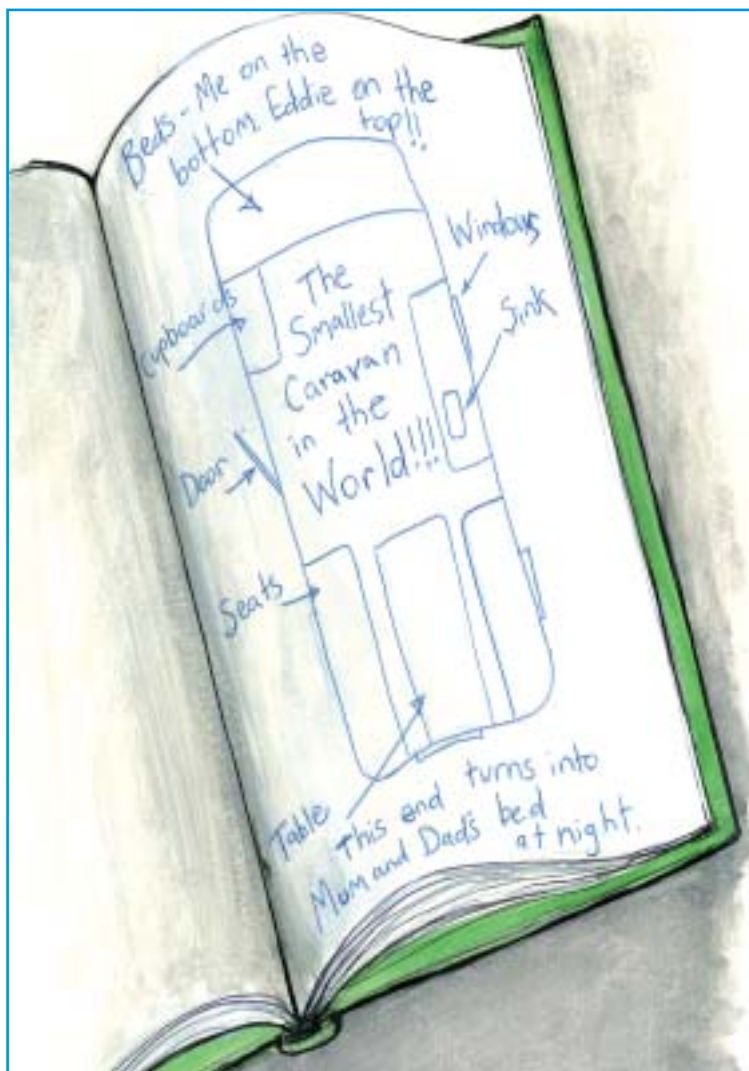
She lay on her back on the bed. Why did her father have to change jobs again? She had been happy in Margaret River. All the things she wanted – her plans and her dreams – were there. She liked her school there. She had great friends. And she had her own room – her family wasn't in this stupid caravan. Okay, the caravan was not her father's fault. They were supposed to move into a house. But somebody had made a mistake – the people were still living in it and weren't going to leave for two weeks.

So for two weeks, Ella and her family had to stay in this stupid caravan, a long way out of the town. They had only been here two days and already Ella hated it. Couldn't her father and mother have found somewhere else to stay? There was no space and nothing was private. It was very possible that she would kill her brother, Eddie, before the two weeks were over.

She reached under the pillow and pulled out a small green book. Across the middle was written the word 'Private'. She



opened it. Yesterday she had drawn a picture of the inside of the caravan. She looked at it.



She took out the little gold pencil she kept in her diary and began to write.

Sunday 12th

Dear Diary

Can you believe it? To make up for leaving his friends in Margaret River, Mum and Dad have taken Eddie into town to buy him a new bike. And what do I get? Nothing. I told them, 'All I want is to start that metalsmithing course in Margaret River. That's all I want in the whole world.' So then Dad says, 'That's enough, Ella. We talked about this until we were blue in the face. Let it go.'

But I can't let it go. I want to be a metalsmith. I want to make amazing jewellery. I want to do it for the rest of my life. If we were in Margaret River, I would be doing that metalsmithing course now. Instead, I'm sitting in this caravan on the edge of the desert thousands of kilometres away. And tomorrow I have to

Suddenly the caravan door was thrown open and Eddie's head appeared. Ella quickly shut her diary.

'Hey, Ella. Come and have a look at my new bike.' Eddie was smiling from ear to ear. He stepped up into the caravan.

'Close the door, Eddie,' called their mother from outside. 'Keep the cool air in.'

Eddie shut the door, went over to his sister and waved something in front of her face. 'Dad let me get these too.'

'What are they?' said Ella.

'Flashing lights. I'm going to put them on the front of the bike. You connect them to the wheels and then when you start riding, they flash on and off.'

'Amazing,' breathed Ella slowly, meaning quite the opposite.

Eddie's smile fell away. Then he grabbed Ella's diary. He ran to the other end of the caravan and opened the book.

'That's all I want in the whole world,' he started to read in a silly voice.

Ella jumped up and tried to grab it off him. 'Give it back to me, Eddie. It's private!'

Eddie pushed his sister away. *'I want to be a metalsmith. I want to make –'*

'Shut up!' cried Ella, trying to grab the book again. 'Mum!'

Eddie jumped up onto a seat and held the book over his head. Ella grabbed him around the legs. He kept on reading.

'– ama-a-a-zing jewellery. I want to do it for the rest of –'

The caravan door opened and he froze. Their mother came in, carrying two shopping bags. 'For heaven's sake, what is going on in here?' she said.

'He's reading my diary again, Mum,' said Ella.

'She's being horrible to me, Mum,' said Eddie. 'She's being rude about my new bike.'

Their mother put the shopping bags down and let out a long breath. 'Eddie, get down from the seat. Give the diary to your sister and go and play with your bike.'

Eddie dropped the diary onto the table and stuck out his tongue at Ella. He jumped off the seat and went outside.

Ella's mother started to unpack the shopping bags. 'Try not to quarrel with him, Ella. Things are difficult for all of us at the moment.'

'Why is it always *my* fault?' asked Ella, picking up her diary. She took it to the other end of the caravan and put it under her pillow.

'You're six years older than him. You're nearly an adult,' replied her mother.

'Oh, yes. Except when you're deciding where we're going to live,' said Ella angrily. 'Then I'm a child. Right?'

'Ella, you know your father had to take this job. We've only been here two days. Things will get better, you'll see.'

‘Yeah, right.’ Ella grabbed her towel off the end of her bed. ‘I’m going for a swim.’

The heat hit her in the face as soon as she stepped out of the caravan. It felt like nearly forty degrees. Her father was kneeling on the ground with some tools, putting the bike together. Standing next to him, Eddie jumped from foot to foot in excitement.

Ella hung her towel around her neck. Without a word, she walked in the direction of the beach. They had all been for a quick swim yesterday, so she knew the way.

When she got there she stood on the path above the beach and looked at it. She had to admit it was amazing. Kilometres of white sand as far as the eye could see, and there were only two other people there. She couldn’t wait to get into the clear blue water and wash her troubles away. She walked down onto the beach and dropped her towel on the sand.

Sunday night

Dear Diary

Something happened this afternoon. I went for a swim. And then a long walk on the beach. I was gone about half an hour, I guess. I left my towel on the sand, metres and metres away from the water. But when I came back it was gone. I thought someone had stolen it. Then I realised the water had come up and dragged it away. How could the tide have come in so far and so fast? Even the sea is against me in this place!