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Illustrated by Mark Beech

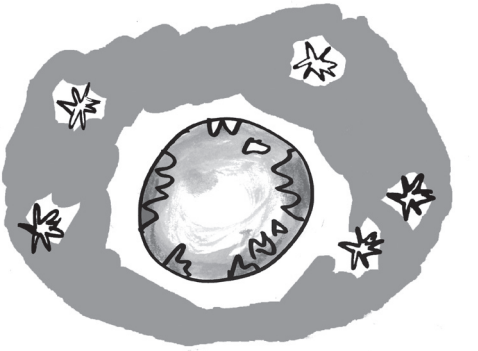
GAZZIMODO



For my Tribe:

Mam, Dad, Naseem, Halima,
Michelene and Jamila,
David, Malik, Murray, Heidi,
Sophia and Arabella.





We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the Earth as its other creatures do.

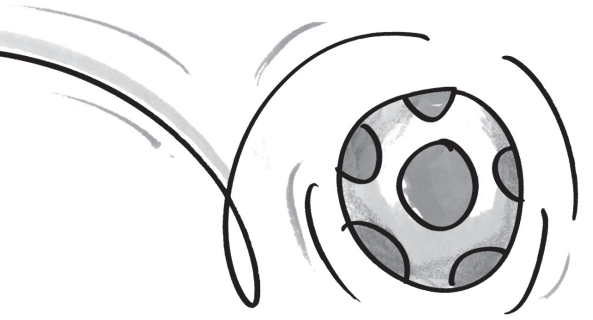
BARBARA WARD

The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.

RACHEL CARSON

You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

JANE GOODALL



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Heatwave Blistering Bertha

'But, Daaaad, are you sure she's going to be there?' said Hero. It was a sweltering day in July, and they were once again at Leaford International Airport.

'I told you she's arriving this afternoon,' Dad said firmly. He stood at the entrance dressed for the heatwave in his black vest, khaki shorts and Union flag flip-flops – his matchstick legs proudly on display.

'Okay.' Hero nodded, unconvinced that hanging around a stuffy airport listening to Dad witter on about some random fact was the best start to the summer holidays.

He followed Dad into the terminal building. Inside, several old fans creaked away, working hard to make up for the broken air conditioning but failing miserably to keep the place cool.

Hero cringed at the sight of people shading their eyes and slipping on sunglasses as Dad strode ahead, his skinny body a beacon of whiteness in the mass of crimson-faced travellers.

'But did you find out why she's coming back now?' he asked, trying to keep pace.

Dad sighed. 'I still don't know. Her one-line text messages are more cryptic than *The Times* crossword.'

They passed a row of shops before Hero stopped outside the Flying Bean Café. He took off his blue Leaford City baseball cap and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

The soft murmur of Globe News could be heard above the chatter of iced coffee drinkers. Hero glanced at the TV on the wall as



flashed across the screen.

Hero stared at the headline with his mouth gaping open. It was one thing giving a name to a heatwave and treating it like a celebrity, but to cancel the most famous football championship – that was going too far.

One of Dad's more interesting encyclopaedic facts was that the World Cup didn't take place in 1942 and 1946 due to the Second World War. Surely the heatwave wasn't as serious as a war? Even if it was bad enough to be called Bertha.

'Come on, let's keep moving,' Dad said, marching off.

In the arrival hall, a scrum of people stood behind a grey metal barrier. Hero leaned forward to see what the commotion was all about.

The crowd parted to show a man and woman from St John Ambulance assisting a plump, red-faced lady who had collapsed into a heap on the floor.

'Heatstroke!' said Dad. 'It plays havoc with the homeostatic state of the human body.'

Hero frowned. 'What are they doing?'

'Don't tell me you've forgotten what to do in an emergency?' said Dad, raising an eyebrow.

Dad had lectured Hero for months on how to save a life, until he gave in and agreed to learn basic first

aid. Hero had endured Dad's endless testing on what to do with a broken bone, a bleeding cut or a maggot-infested wound.

'No, of course not,' said Hero, with a sheepish smile.

It wasn't long before travellers from the seven continents flowed through the sliding doors.

Dad stood gazing into the distance with a two-line frown carved on his brow.

After a while, he scratched his greying hair and said, 'Don't you think this place is a verifiable melting pot of colour, culture and couture?'

Hero rolled his eyes. 'Oh no, please not again,' he muttered.

'Did you know there are forty-three thousand airports in the world?' said Dad.

Hero braced himself.

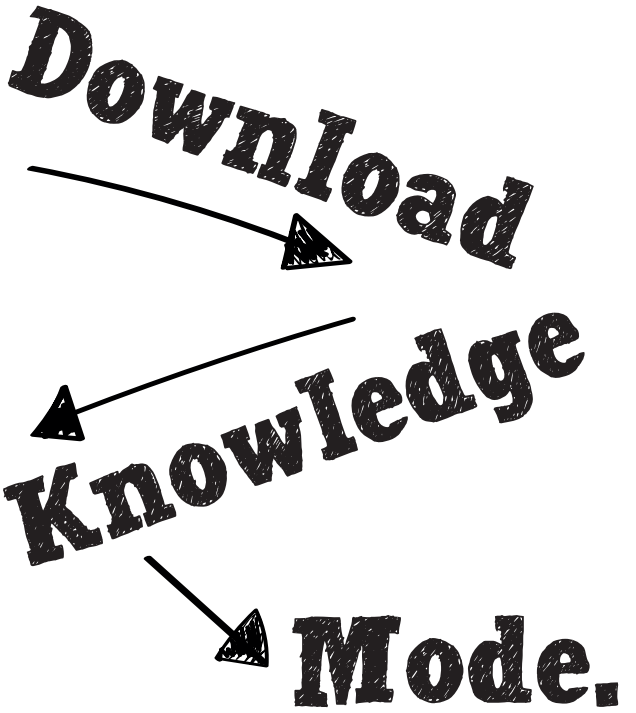
'The United States has the largest number, with over fourteen thousand,' Dad continued, 'although that's no surprise given the size of the country.'

All the signs were there: the reflective frown, the stare into space and the scratch of the head.

'If we have any chance of stopping global warming and heatwaves like this one, we definitely need to reduce flying,' said Dad.

There was no doubt about it:

Dad had entered



Hero would have given anything at that moment to close his ears and block out Dad's endless babble. But, according to Dad, the only members of the animal kingdom blessed with an ear-closing ability were hippos, polar bears and beavers. And the last time he looked in the mirror, he certainly wasn't one of them.

Faced with this undeniable truth, Hero focused his attention on the new batch of jet-setters, which included a young Chinese couple, a group of Italian schoolkids, a sullen businessman and two women in saris.

The stream of passengers eventually came to an end.

Hero and Dad were now the only people left in the hall except for a few glum-looking travellers who had lost their luggage. Hero stared at the sliding doors, which were unwilling to release new arrivals anytime soon.

'She's not coming,' he said, dropping his shoulders in disappointment.

Hero longed for her to return. He couldn't bear to be alone with his factual father a minute longer. But the million-dollar question was when?

'She may be delayed at customs again,' said Dad, rubbing his stubbled chin in thought. 'I hope she hasn't brought anything illegal into the country. You remember that Aztec dagger? She didn't let them take that without a fight.'

'But it's the third time this week she hasn't turned up,' said Hero. 'Can we go now?'

Suddenly, the doors slid open to show a grey-haired,

slim, sun-kissed lady. She wore a yellow, maroon and white patterned kaftan and a chunky red-beaded necklace. A couple of men in uniform accompanied her. The younger of the two pushed a trolley piled up with a battered suitcase and an unusual wrapped object covered in brown crumpled paper and dirty string.

The older man stood at her elbow.

'GRAN!' yelled Hero.

Gran narrowed her eyes, smiled and tried to lift one arm in the air to wave. It was then Hero saw that Gran was **HANDCUFFED**.