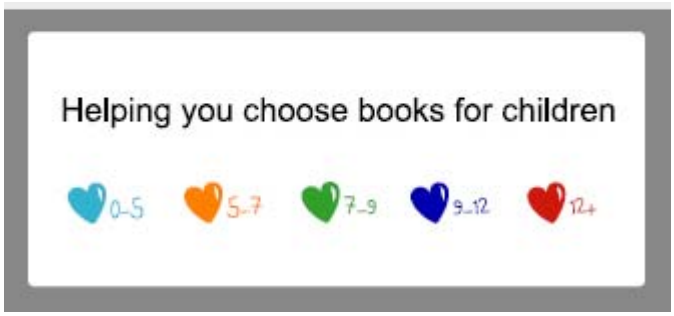
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opening extract from

Magic Helps Out

written by

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When a great storm rolls into the South Australian Riverland, gusty winds whip up the Murray River. Twigs and leaves fly off tall gum trees, swirling in a jumble on the ground, and animals shelter cosily inside their homes. Sometimes big branches come crashing down, making new homes for ground animals. Old trees sometimes topple over to make way for young saplings.

One night, Jessie woke up to the sound of wind whistling around the house. Her bedroom window rattled and rain pounded onto the iron roof above her. Suddenly she felt a movement at the end of her bed and she sat up. Max the dog jumped into her arms and licked her face.

'Yuck, Max!' Jessie said. 'You can sleep on my bed but don't lick my face!'



Jessie slipped out of bed and drew back the curtain. Raindrops ran down the window and the dark branches of a gum tree waved in the distance.

Jessie climbed back into bed again and Max snuggled beside her. The storm raged outside but Jessie felt safe under her quilt. Mum and Dad always said that rain was like liquid gold. The more it rained the happier they were.

Jessie loved the rain too. It was just the wind she didn't like so much. She pulled the quilt over her ears so the rattling window wasn't so loud.

When Jessie woke up the next morning, the wind had stopped and all the rain had made the earth smell fresh. The trees and bushes were sparkling

clean with the dust washed off their leaves. Even the air smelled brand new.

Jessie stretched, then dressed in her riding gear: long trousers, a long-sleeved shirt, hat and boots. This would be a great day for a ride on her pony, Magic.

'Hi, Jessie,' smiled Mum as Jessie hopped up on the kitchen stool to eat breakfast. A glass of orange juice and a big bowl of cereal were waiting for her. Mum was already working on the computer, sorting out business matters. Because she was looking forward to riding Magic, Jessie ate her breakfast very quickly. Then she hopped down and gave her Mum a big hug.

'Thanks for brekkie, Mum — I'm going to use up lots of energy riding my pony today!'

‘Did you hear the storm in the night, Jessie?’ asked Mum. ‘There will be lots of branches down — maybe even whole trees, so be careful where you ride.’

Jessie finished the last of her juice and nodded.

‘I’ll be extra careful, Mum, promise.’

‘Off you go then, and have fun.’ Mum smiled at Jessie.

Jessie’s eyes twinkled. ‘We will!’

