# MIND and ME




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# MIND and ME

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# CHAPTER ONE

AAAAHHHHHHH!!!

Imagine waking up to *that!*

Well, believe it or not, that is exactly what I woke up to today.

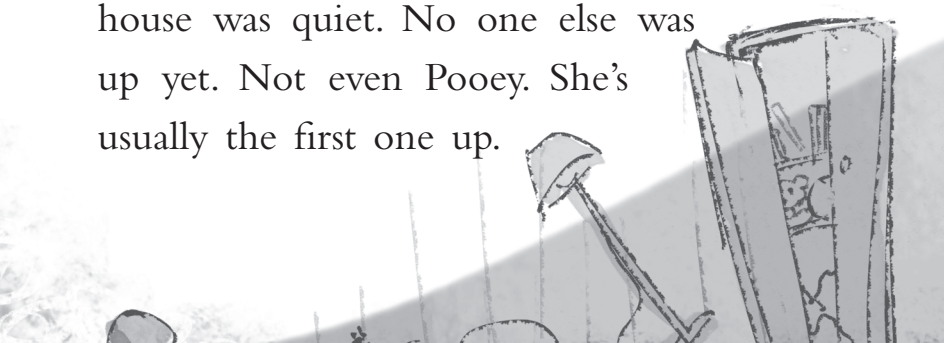
It was very early (way too early to be up) and I was still very, *very* sleepy . . .

But *Mind* had other ideas. Mind was VERY keen to start the day.

And once Mind was up, there was no chance of getting back to sleep. Mind was already bustling about like a whirlwind of excitement, spinning all around. Mind swirled my way, tossing me up into the air like a pancake and out of bed.

I pressed my toes into the bobbly rug under my feet and wondered what on earth Mind was up to.

It was still dark outside. The rest of the house was quiet. No one else was up yet. Not even Pooey. She's usually the first one up.

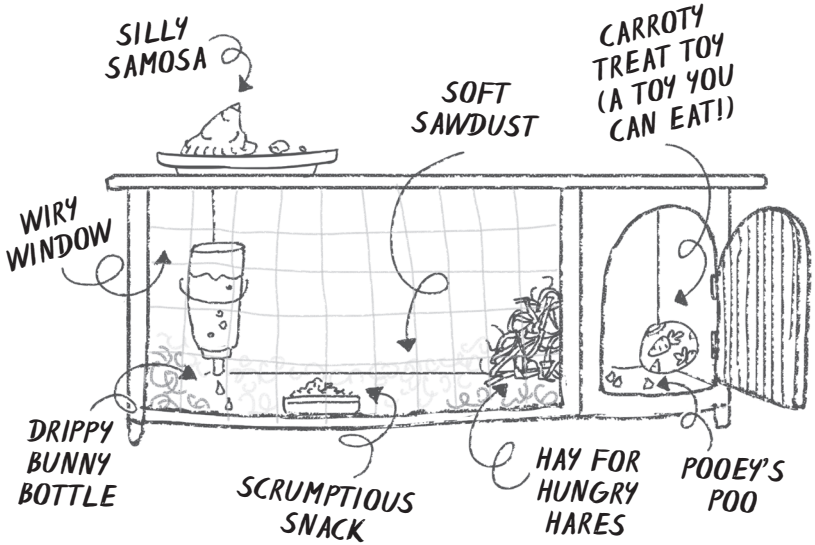


Pooey always starts her day (and mine) by rustling around. She has to sleep in my room, so once she's up all I can hear is **RUSTLE, RUSTLE, RUSTLE.**

Strangely, this morning there wasn't a peep out of Pooey. In case you were



wondering, Pooey is my pet rabbit. Pooey sleeps in her little rabbit house, right next to my bed. Every day, I take her out to play and every night before I go to bed, I make sure she's all snug and tucked up in her bed of hay and sawdust.




So, if no one else was up yet (not even the sun!) what was up with Mind?! I flicked the light switch on and was shocked to find . . . Pooey was **GONE!**

Well, that explained the louder-than-you-can-imagine: *'WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!!'*

Mind knew something was off, long before I'd realised anything was wrong.

The door on Pooey's hutch was wide open. I couldn't believe my eyes. How did Pooey open it all by herself?!

If that wasn't odd enough, Mind spotted something else…

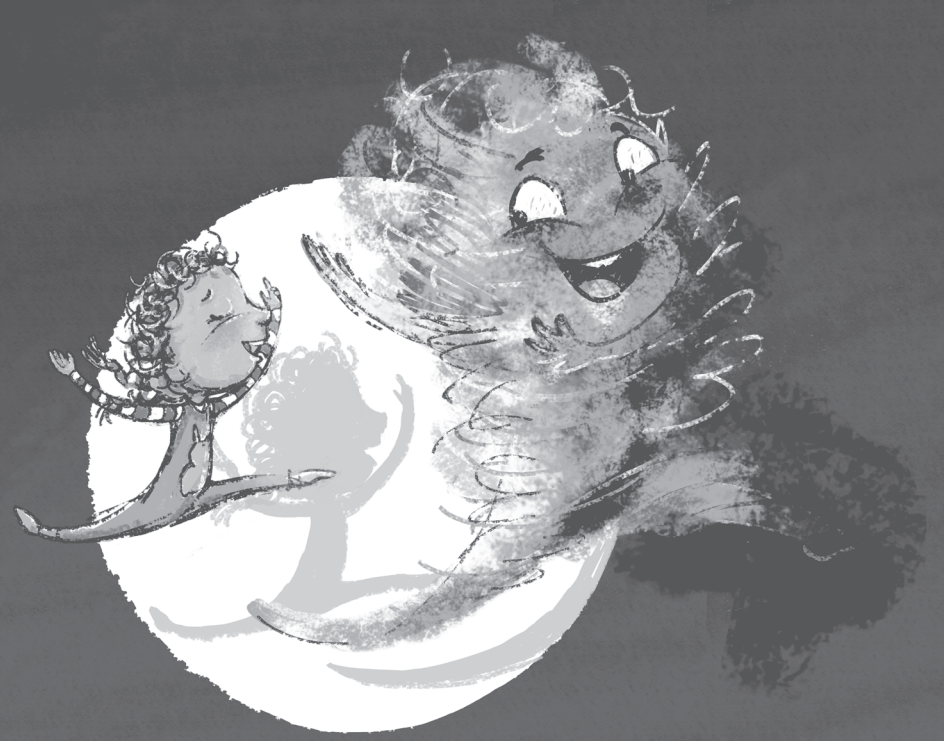
*A trail of rabbit poo!*

It led all the way out of my room. But Pooey had never left my room on her own before. We *had* to investigate. We did the only thing we could.

We followed Pooey's poo!

We followed the teeny, tiny poos all the way out of my room.

Mind and I leapt through the air, over the trail of poo and across the landing. It was like



a strange dance on a dark and silent stage. The only light, peeking out at us through the gap in my bedroom door, shone bright like a spotlight. We crawled past my parent's room, quieter than a pair of spiders trying to get by without getting caught. Mind had to remind me about the creaky floorboards. We hopped over them to get to the moonlit staircase.

Pooey's poo had led us to the top of the stairs.

But Pooey had NEVER gone downstairs by herself before.

*Something funny's going on. Something BAD.* Mind was sure of it.

Mind was also certain that the last thing we needed was for everyone to find out Pooey was missing.

This was OUR mystery and we had to solve it all on OUR own.

So we crept down the stairs, trying not to make a sound.



We followed the trail into the kitchen, counting each and every little poo along the way . . . 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 . . . but before I knew it I'd lost count . . .

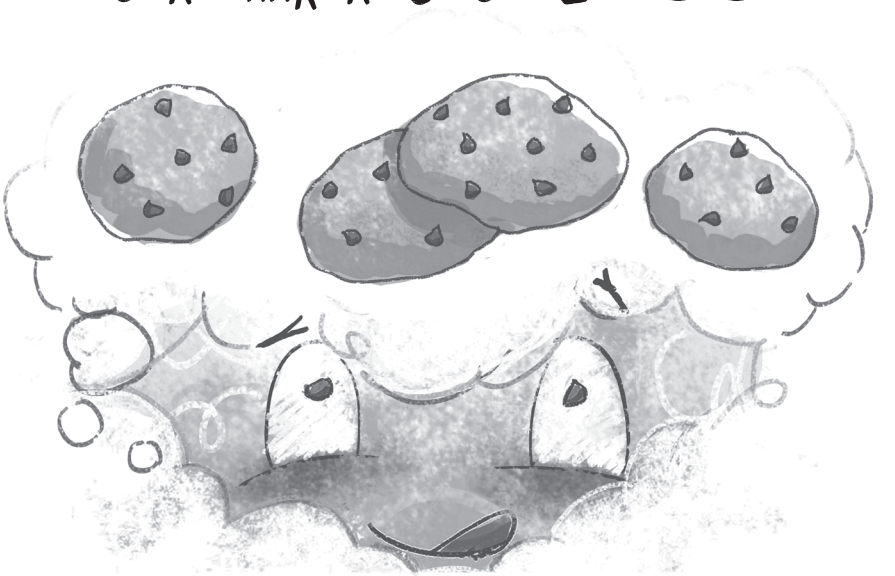
and Mind had wandered off too!

Mind loves to explore. That means, *everything* can distract Mind. And when Mind's distracted, no matter how hard I try, we get *nothing* done. It wasn't long before we got distracted thinking about rabbit poo. The thing about rabbit poo is that each poo looks a bit like a chocolate chip . . .

*Mmmmm . . . chocolate chip COOKIES!!!* Mind's thoughts turned to food.

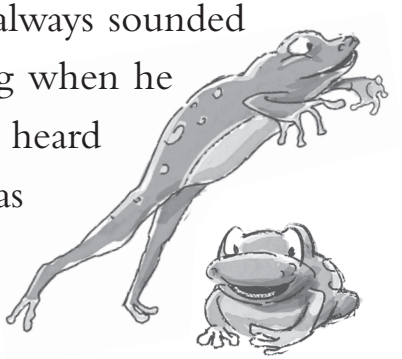
Uh oh. My tummy started to rumble.

GRRRRRRRRGGGGLLLLLLEEE



*Shhhhh* . . . whispered Mind.

But it was too late. Papa was awake. We heard his heavy footsteps creaking through the kitchen ceiling right above us. I knew it was Papa because it always sounded like giant frogs croaking when he came down the stairs. I heard Papa call out my name as he marched in, leaving the sound of frogs behind–



'Maya!'

Mind froze! I didn't know what to do.

Next thing I knew, Papa had switched on all the lights and he found me standing there – in the middle of the kitchen with rabbit poo everywhere.

'Maya, why are you up at this time of day?' he asked, blinking at the clock on the wall.

What was I supposed to say? I didn't want

to get told off for losing Pooey.

'And *why* is there rabbit poo everywhere?' he looked down at the floor.

Just then, Mind had a brilliant idea!

*Why don't we make something up?*

It made sense. Why tell Papa something he wouldn't want to hear, when we could tell him something he *would* want to hear?

So I told Papa a BIG, HORRID, OOPSY-DAISY (could this get more CRAZY?!) . . .

**L I E ! ! !**

'Errr . . . I was cleaning out Pooey's hutch!' I started with something he always wanted to hear.

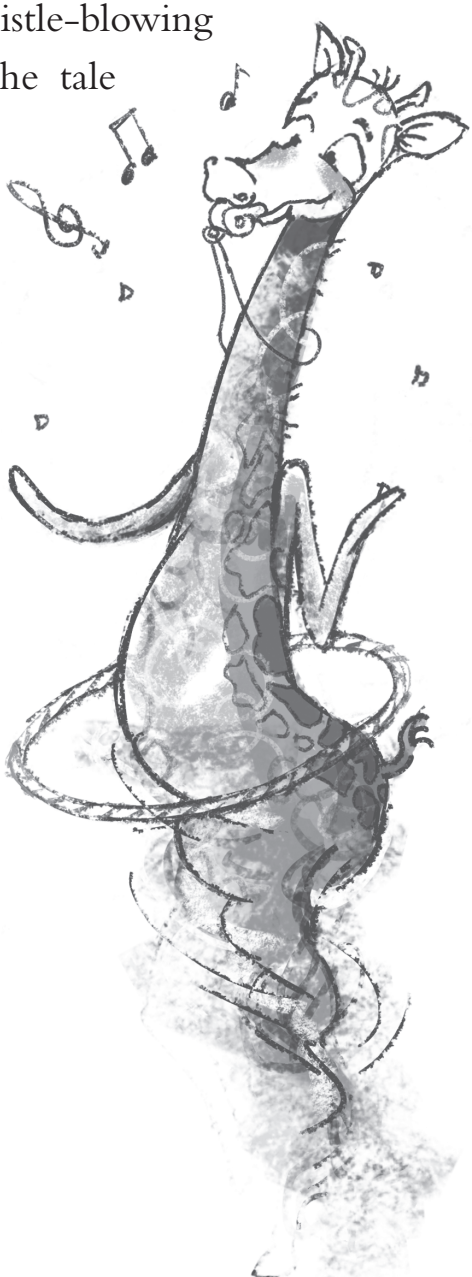
Mind was speechless . . . so started trying to *show* me what to say next by acting out the words. But Mind just ended up

looking like a poo-juggling, hula-hooping, whistle-blowing giraffe, as tall as the tale I was about to tell.

'I–I was taking the poo outside to throw it away . . . but then I fell down . . . and it slipped out of my hands.'

Papa sighed. For a moment, I thought he didn't believe me.





'Why didn't you ask for some help?'

I shrugged my shoulders and then I did something I never thought I would do . . . I lied AGAIN!

'I wanted to give you a surprise!'

'You silly billy,' he said with a smile that made the dimples in his cheeks dip in and out.

'You didn't need to do that!'

The *really* silly thing was that I had lied . . . not once, but TWICE.

*That's asking for DOUBLE the TROUBLE!* Mind warned me (a few hula-hoops too late).

We'd agreed to tell a lie. But not two of them!

Another creaky chorus over our heads made Mind and me look up. Except . . .



we knew there were no frogs upstairs, only floorboards. Oh no! That could only mean one thing . . .

We'd woken up Mama!

We could always tell when it was Mama because her footsteps were light and quick.

'Did you find Maya?' her sleepy words trickled down the stairs, through the hallway and into the kitchen, before she appeared through the doorway.

'Oh, yes, I sure did.' Papa reported back to her over his shoulder.

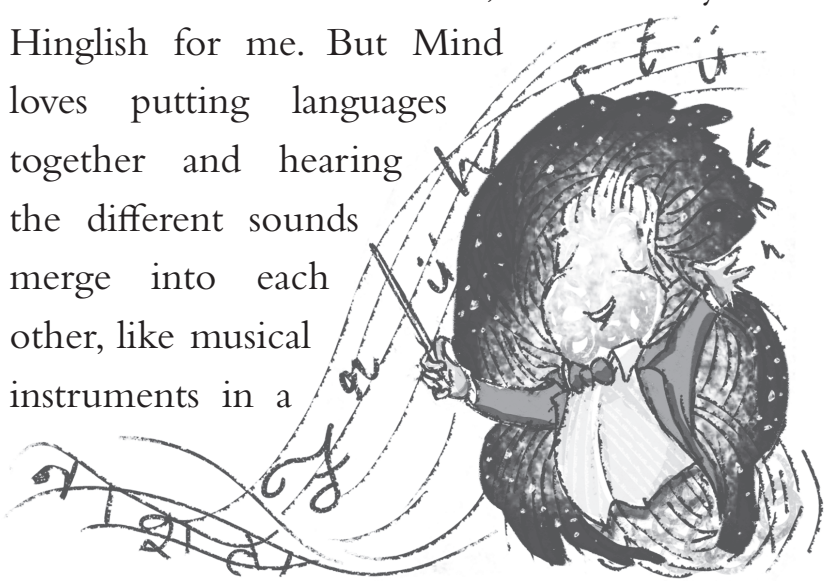
'Where was she?' Mama yawned, her eyes still not fully open as she shuffled forwards into the light.

'Kitchen *mey milli,*' Papa replied in *Hinglish*. That's what Mama and Papa call it when they speak to each other in a mix of Hindi and English. Hindi is another language we speak sometimes. Mama is

from India, which makes me half Indian. Not that you can draw a line halfway down me through my belly button and say which half is Indian. Anyway, I like learning new words and it feels special when we speak in our very own made-up language Hinglish. It's like a secret code.

*'Frühstücken?'* Papa asked us if we wanted breakfast. Not in Hinglish this time, but German.

Papa used to work in Germany, so he likes to throw in a few words of German too! I don't know much German, so it's mostly Hinglish for me. But Mind loves putting languages together and hearing the different sounds merge into each other, like musical instruments in a



group playing together making a new blended sound.

It made me think that when we spoke a mix of all three languages at home (Hindi and German and English) we should really call it: 'Hin-Ger-ish'.



*Sounds like Ginger-ish!* Mind chuckled. Funny because gingerish is exactly the way I would describe the colour of Pooey's fur coat. Which reminded me – we were looking for Pooey!

GRRRRRRGGGLLE . . . My tummy started to rumble again.

'You must be hungry!' Papa patted my belly gently and squeezed me like a tube of toothpaste. I could hear the smile in Papa's voice. I turned around and saw it in his eyes. It would only disappoint him if

I told him about Pooey.

'Go brush your teeth and I'll make us something yummy for breakfast!' He grinned and swiped side to side, pretending to brush his teeth.

But the truth was, my appetite had disappeared.

I looked around with no idea where Mind had got to.

I started to feel like I was losing EVERYTHING – first Pooey, then my appetite, and now Mind!

I had been so busy worrying about Pooey that I forgot to check on Mind! I wondered if Mind was hungry too. There are times when Mind can seem like a mystery. But there are some things about Mind that are *very* predictable. If Mind is hungry or tired, (or worse, both hungry *and* tired at the same time) Mind is bound to be cranky. And

*that* is when we get into a real *flap*. That's what Mind calls it when we're panicking.

I charged upstairs, wishing more than anything that Pooey would be in my room, waiting for me. Then everything would be normal again and no one would ever know I had lost Pooey, or that I had lied about it.

Wishing and hoping and imagining that Pooey was there, I pushed open the door to my room and found . . . pacing around and looking *very* worried . . . was . . . no, not Pooey (if only!) . . . a very unhappy Mind.

The BEST thing about Mind is that together we can *think* and *feel* and *do* ANYTHING.

But sometimes, that's also the WORST thing about Mind . . .

Mind could change like the weather. One minute, cold and grey. The next, warm and bright.



Right now, Mind was swelling up into a ginormous, angry, dark cloud overhead. Mind's arms were tightly crossed and face scrunched up into a miserable frown that gave off the *flappiest* vibes.

Yup. Mind was in a FLAP. That was the last thing we needed now, I thought, rolling my eyes. Then I took a deep breath and reminded myself – Mind was always there

for me, no matter how *flappy* I got. So, I had to help Mind calm down.

'Cheer up, Mind!'

Sizzling, hot, little lightning bolts fired out of Mind. I was *not* about to get in the way of those. Bringing Mind back from the brink of a thunderstorm of worry was going to be tougher than usual.



'Chill out!' I yelled firmly. 'There's no need to be so upset.' I hoped Mind might hear me through the noisy howls of stormy winds building up.

But telling Mind not to feel something only made the feelings *worse*. After all, you can't control your feelings.

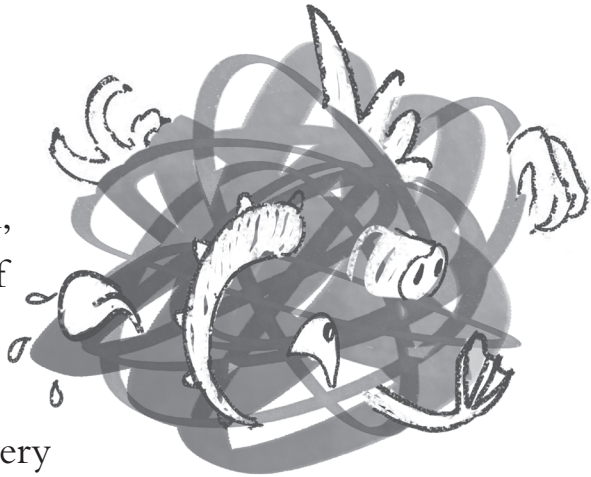
I usually knew how to take care of Mind. You could say it's a bit like having another pet. You might think that sounds like fun, but it isn't always that simple.

Mind can be fluffy and snuggly, or FIERCE and *ouchy!*

Mind can be LOUD and *scary*, or quiet and scaredy.

And, Mind can be all those things at once, which sounds impossible, doesn't it?!

If looking after Mind was just like taking care of a pet, that would be easy peasy. But Mind isn't like any one creature. When Mind is stressed, Mind is like ALL the animals you could ever imagine in one. And right now, *everything* about Mind reeked of STRESS!



Imagine training a wild dragon, totally out of control and ready to set fires with every other breath. Add to that: the deafening roars of a ferocious lion baring its pointy teeth and shaking its mane at you every time you try to get close. At the same time, it's boxing like a kangaroo, so that making eye contact is a risk!

Dipping under Mind's fiery breath shooting my way and avoiding a punch to my chest, I lunged forwards to grab my socks off the floor, but Mind swooped in. It was like a pushy seagull, claiming its share of leftover greasy chips on the roadside and ready to fight off anyone who got in its way.




I was sure Mind didn't mean any harm, but it's hard to remember that when you're busy dodging fireballs. Mind *had* to cool off eventually and would probably end up feeling more like a SHEEPish dragon-lion-kangaroo-bird thing.

I needed to find out what was behind all the AGGRO. The only way to do that was to get Mind to open up.

'It's okay to feel upset,' I tried more

gently, in between flaps and roars.

Mind looked at me and paused, mid-fire-raging roar.

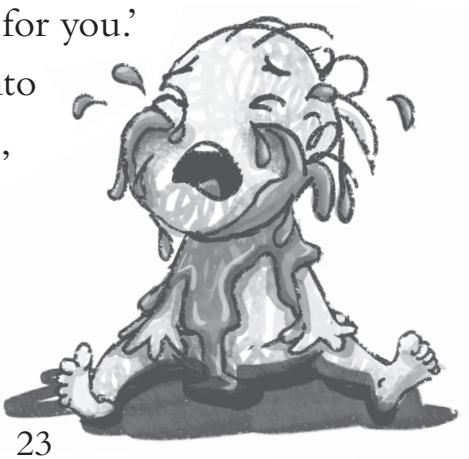
'Let's think this through,' I whispered. 'There's *always* a way out of the muddle.'

Mind's teeth-baring boxing came to halt. And, finally, Mind's furious feather flapping stopped.

Mind's scaly dragon's tail disappeared, and its frazzled feathers vanished one by one. I ran my fingers softly through Mind's mane as it fell out and faded away.

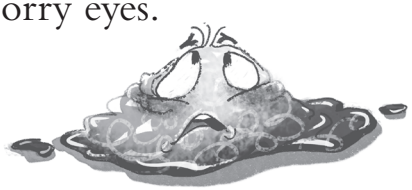
'Whenever I'm upset, you always help me feel better. I'm here for you.'

Mind erupted into a fountain of tears, rolling down like molten lava out of a volcano.



'We're a team!' I smiled.

Mind shrunk right down and slumped into a wobbly blob of jelly, looking up at me with sorry eyes.



Mind couldn't help but wonder: *How could we have let this happen?! Pooey has never escaped like this before. We've never kept a secret like this before.*

It felt like all the nevers were happening, all at the same time.

Mind was full of questions, but I had no answers.

*Why did we lie to Papa? How are we going to get out of this mess?? What do we do now???*

We would be in so much trouble if we couldn't find Pooey. It wasn't worth thinking about.

'No one else knows there is a problem . . . yet . . .' I reassured us both.

*So let's fix it and quick, before anyone finds out!* Mind spluttered.

We had no choice but to solve the mystery.

We had to go back downstairs and follow that trail of rabbit poo – that was the ONLY way to find Pooey.

First, I thought I'd better do as Papa had said. But Mind wouldn't let me brush my teeth in peace. Mind was hanging over me like a smelly fart that just wouldn't go away.



Then Mind started stomping and banging, like a fart parade following me around.

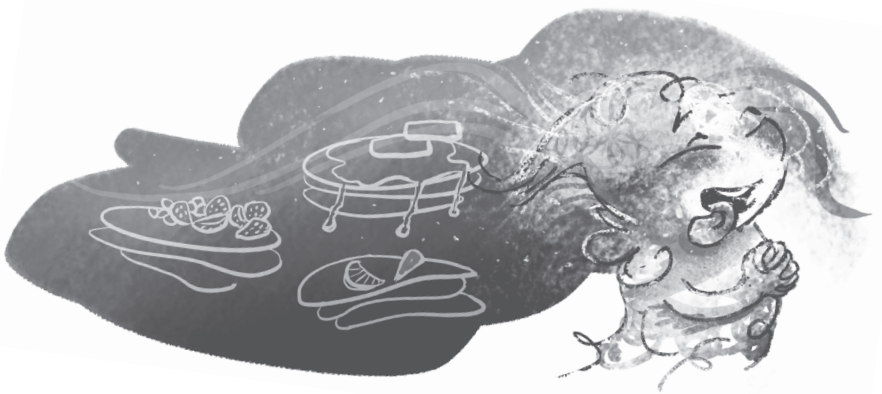
Part of me felt worried and impatient, like Mind . . .

After all, I had an empty belly, a guilty conscience *and* a MYSTERY to solve . . . The mystery of the missing Pooey!

But we had to be patient. It takes TIME to solve a mystery. The bigger the mystery, the longer it takes to solve . . . and this was by far our biggest mystery yet.

Suddenly I could smell something else . . .

*Mmmmmmmmmm . . . PANCAKES . . . my faaavourite!* The sides of Mind's mouth curled up with delight at the thought. Mind didn't need more than a whiff to recognise



exactly what was cooking for breakfast all the way downstairs in the kitchen.

Mind can be brilliant at thinking. Sometimes s l o w a n d s t e a d y like a tortoise, deep in thought. At other times, Mind is full of *racing thoughts* that move faster than I can keep up with.

Come to think of it . . . Mind can be really *sharp,* especially first thing in the morning after a good night's rest and something to eat. And I don't mean sharp like pokey or prickly. I mean *sharp as a tack* – that's what Papa says about himself when he figures something out quicker than anyone else.

We needed our best thinking heads on if we were going to solve this mystery. I had to get Mind fed first. Top priority.

We tiptoed out of my room and made our way back downstairs. Mind wanted to slide down the bannister, so we wouldn't

step on the precious poo trail. That's when I noticed, there was no rabbit poo on the stairs . . . In fact, there was no rabbit poo ANYWHERE!

I rushed downstairs and stumbled into the kitchen, where Papa was standing. To my horror, he was holding the dustpan and brush. He had swept away all the poo. There was no trail left to follow, and no trace of Pooey.

*We'll never find Pooey now.*

Pooey was lost . . . **FOREVER.**