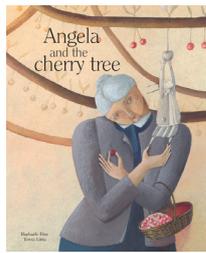


BOOK REVIEWS

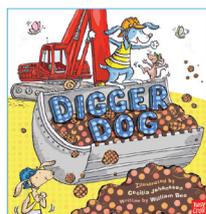
by Veronicah Larkin and David Witt



Angela and the cherry tree written by **Raphaële Frier**, illustrated by **Teresa Lima, Berbay Publishing, h/b,**

RRP \$22.95

Angela is an old woman who, every day, bakes the treat she has been mad about since she was a girl: shortbread cookies. Then, as the smell of the biscuits wafts through the house, Angela is joined by a young girl who leads her out into the garden where they both enjoy the fruit of the cherry tree. However, the reader can guess that the little girl, depicted in monochromatic, ghost-like illustrations, is not really there. Angela has dementia and the little girl is probably herself as a child. But this is not a sad book. Angela's life is full of hope and delight in the simple pleasures of life: food, companionship, the garden and even TV. She is also loved, because she is visited each day by her son who goes through a family album with her, helping patch up her fractured memory. This is a touching, poetic book with a sensitive but unsentimental text (Angela has "sick, old bones" and a "tired heart") and atmospheric, slightly surreal illustrations that help evoke the old woman's strange new world. Highly recommended for ages 5 to 9 years. *DW*

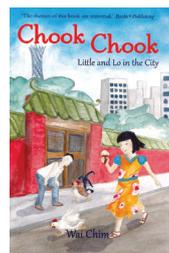


Digger Dog written by **William Bee**, illustrated by **Cecilia Johansson**, **Nosy Crow, h/b,**

RRP \$22.99

One day Digger Dog catches the scent of a particularly delicious buried bone, so he fetches his spade and starts to dig. Digger

Dog realises the ground is too hard and the bone is too deeply buried, and so uses his big yellow digger instead. Alas, the ground is still too hard and the bone is still too deeply buried. Not one to give up easily, Digger Dog employs bigger and bigger diggers until, in a glorious fold-out double-page spread, we see Digger Dog driving the biggest digger in the world. After much rumbling and shaking, the world's biggest digger digs up the world's biggest bone, which happens to come from a gigantic dinosaur skeleton. Bee has created a stoic and resourceful character in Digger Dog, with the unshakeable belief that when it comes to diggers, size does matter. Johansson's clever use of perspective showcases each digger in all its glory, with lots of amusing construction-site visual jokes thrown in. For those who love big diggers, this book is a dream come true. Recommended for ages 18 months to 4 years. *VZ*



Chook Chook: Little And Lo In The City

written by **Wai Chim**, **UQP, p/b,** RRP \$14.95

This is the sequel to *Chook Chook: Mei's Secret Pets*, in which

a young girl, Mei, befriended two tiny chicks, Little and Lo, and tried to keep them a secret from her recently widowed, and grieving, mother. In this follow-up novel, Little and Lo have been accepted as part of the family, and Mei couldn't be happier. But then Mei's mother marries the local butcher, who moves into their small farmhouse, bringing his young son and his own chicken. Mei and her pets, feeling squeezed out, run away from their rural home to the city of Guangzhou, where Mei's older brother Guo has just begun his university studies. Not surprisingly, Mei and her feathered friends soon find

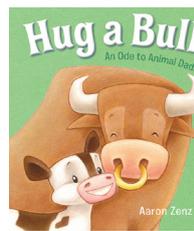
DAVID'S PICK OF THE MONTH



Toda's father is a pastry chef, but when fighting breaks out in the south of their country, he is conscripted into the army and given a manual that shows him how to camouflage himself as a bush. Toda thinks this is silly, but when the war soon catches up with the young girl, she discovers everything about war is silly. This is a funny and poignant novel about war as seen through the innocent eyes of a young refugee. The war and the countries involved are not named and are clearly fictional, but the removal of any context for the conflict only serves to heighten its absurdity. As Toda travels from her threatened home to the refuge of her mother's home in a neighbouring country, she gets to see many aspects of war: how conflicts start and quickly escalate; the jingoistic attitudes of the military; the pettiness of bureaucracy and the randomness of borders. Often puzzled but never pessimistic, Toda reflects that when it comes to war, "Nothing in the world made any sense". Highly recommended for ages 9 to 12 years.

The Day My Father Became a Bush written and illustrated by **Joke van Leeuwen**, **Gecko Press, p/b, RRP \$16.99**

themselves caught up in one crisis after another in the big city. The predicaments are child friendly and often comic, usually involving the two chickens going berserk, and the way the author resolves these situations is imaginative and light-hearted. The story also explores themes such as family and belonging. Recommended for ages 7 to 10 years. *DW*



Hug a Bull: An Ode to Animal Dads written and illustrated by **Aaron Zenz**, **Bloomsbury, h/b, RRP \$19.99,**

ebook, RRP \$4.99

In the sea of books released for Father's Day, this is one of the sweetest. We meet a range of animal dads and their cute offspring engaged in playful and loving interactions. Each anthropomorphically rendered animal is introduced with a clever play on words designed to amuse adult readers, such as "Father is a stag so dear" and "Take a look - my dad's a gander". We learn that a male alligator is a bull, a male donkey a jack and a male kangaroo a boomer. Twenty-seven animals are featured, all including the name for the male of the species. Zenz's gentle, lilting rhymes are perfect for reading aloud and his highly expressive pencil illustrations convey the emotional connections between fathers and children. An adorable book for fathers to share with their little ones. Recommended for ages 18 months to 3 years. *VZ*



Voyage To The Volcano written by **Tom Banks**, **Five Mile Press, p/b,** RRP \$14.95

Billed as a 'Great Galloon Adventure', this is the second book in a new series of comic adventure novels featuring the improbable but glorious Great Galloon - a gigantic, airborne sailing ship under the command of the heroic Captain Meredith Anstruther.

Set in a steampunk world of about 100 years ago, the plot is very loosely about Captain Anstruther's quest to rescue his kidnapped bride, Isabella, from his evil brother, Zebedia, who pilots his own strange vessel, the submarine-like Sumbaroom. A lot of the narrative momentum is dissipated by an excessively busy, Terry Gilliam-like environment of strange contraptions and colourful characters, some of whom are not always clearly introduced (you wouldn't realise one of the main characters, Stanley, is blue, furry and has a unicorn's horn, unless you looked closely at the cover illustration). Nevertheless, this is an enjoyable romp that, as the publishers accurately describe it, is pirate-y, adventure-y, steampunk-y and furry. Recommended for ages 7 to 10 years. *DW*

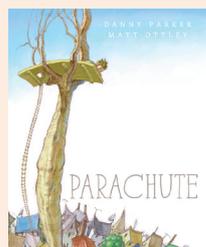


Crinkly Book of Aussie Animals: from the bush illustrated by **Jill Brailsford**, **Walker Books, cloth**

book, RRP \$12.95

This newly released cloth book is part of a series of four books exploring animals from the Australian outback, the ocean and the nest. Each light, hand-washable, eight-page book is made from soft fabric, which has an engaging crinkly texture and sound when pages are touched or turned. Brailsford showcases one animal per page, and her colour palette shows the animals in black silhouette placed on stark-white, uncluttered backgrounds. The simple text introduces each animal along with an accompanying action such as "koala sleeps", "echidna scratches" and "wombat digs". Other animals in the series include emus, goannas, geckos, frill-necked lizards and brologas. These are the most appealing cloth books to come onto the market all year. Highly recommended for ages 6 months to 18 months. *VZ*

VERONICAH'S PICK OF THE MONTH



Toby always wears a parachute, which is tucked up safely in his backpack (the anxious boy copes better with the travails of life when the 'chute is on his back). One day Henry the cat is stuck up a tree and can't get down. Toby carefully climbs the tree, unfurls the parachute, places Henry inside and lets his relieved cat float safely to the ground. The boy is now up the tree without a parachute, and it is here that he starts to find a new kind of courage. Toby's confidence is bolstered as he successfully navigates his way down the tree, and in time he no longer carries his parachute. The use and eventual abandonment of a safety net is a common theme in children's literature, and it is explored here with honesty and great sensitivity. Parker respects Toby's fearful nature, and the text sits very lightly on the page, allowing Ottley's masterful oils, pastel and pencil illustrations to take the reader on the boy's journey from anxiety to self-confidence. A simply wonderful book. Very highly recommended for ages 3 to 7 years.

Parachute written by **Danny Parker**, illustrated by **Matt Ottley**, **Little Hare, h/b, RRP \$24.95**

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