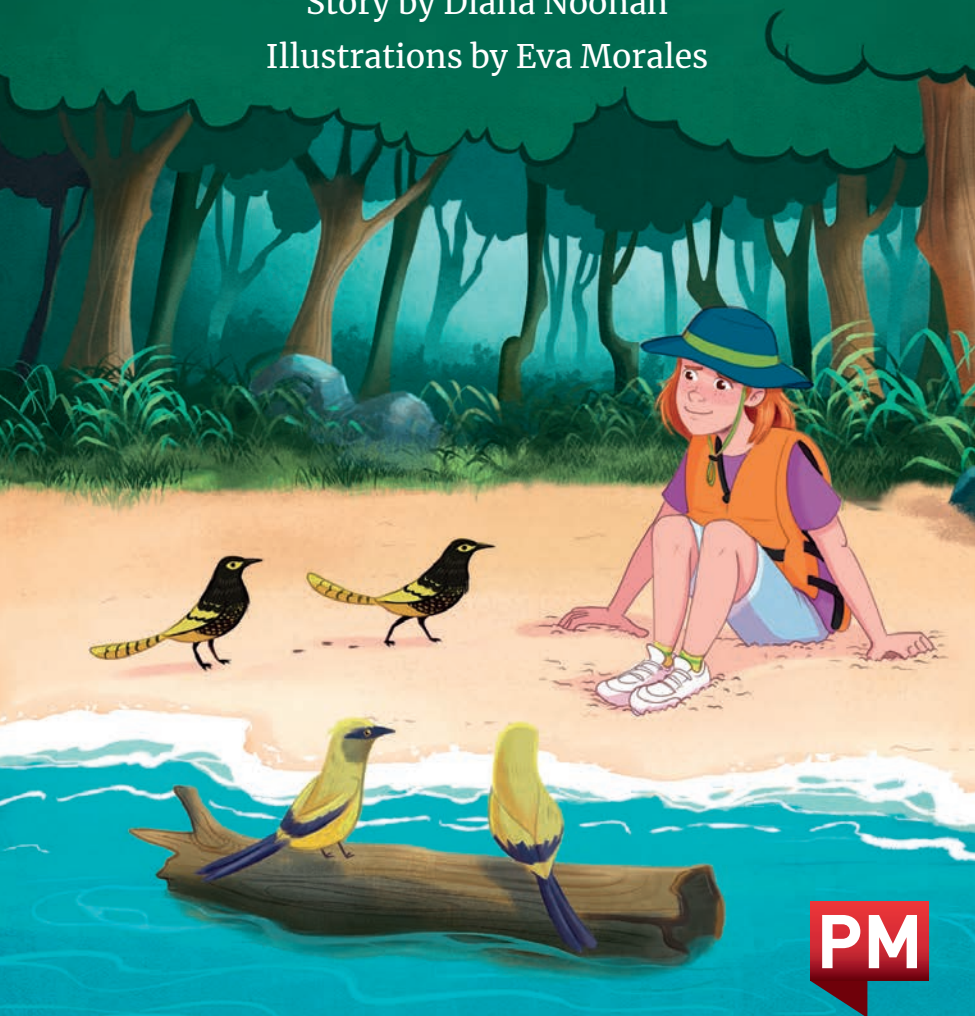


Alone in Bellbird Bay

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Chapter 1

Worrying About Grandad



It was Saturday morning, and school holidays were just one week away. Isla was in the kitchen, helping Dad load the dishwasher before the two of them left for archery club. Mum and Ed, Isla's big brother, were filling water bottles to take to their soccer games. But before Mum could put her bottle in her backpack, her phone began to ring.

"It's Grandad," said Mum, peering at the phone's screen as she answered the call. "Hello, Dad," Isla heard Mum say.

"Poor Grandad," said Ed, as Mum walked into the next room with her phone to her ear. "He must be feeling lonely again."

Isla felt sad. Ever since Gran had gone to live in the care home two months ago, Grandad often phoned Mum because he was lonely.

“It will take time for Grandad to get used to not having Gran in the house,” said Dad.

But Isla couldn’t stop thinking about Grandad, all alone in his little house beside the sea. She looked at the photo of Gran and Grandad on the fridge door. It had been taken before Gran had started forgetting things and getting lost when she went for walks.

When Mum came back into the kitchen a short time later, Isla thought she looked as if she had been crying.

“If only Grandad would join some groups,” said Mum in a shaky voice. “Then he would have some company and be much happier.”

Isla thought about all the different groups she and her family belonged to, and the friends they made there. During the week, she and Ed went to after-school clubs and drama lessons. Dad went to art class, and Mum went to her photography group. On the weekend, there was archery and soccer.

“Why won’t Grandad join a group?” Isla asked Mum.

“It can be hard to make changes,” said Mum, “especially when you have to do it on your own.”



That morning at archery, Isla couldn't get her arrows to hit the target.

"Try to concentrate," Dad encouraged her, but it was no good. Isla just couldn't stop thinking about Grandad being all alone. And she couldn't stop thinking about Gran in the care home, a whole hour's drive away from him.



When Isla and Dad were driving home from archery club, Isla suddenly had an idea that made her feel a little happier. She waited until they got home and everyone was at the table having lunch before she shared it.

"It's school holidays next week," she said, helping herself to one of Mum's famous cheese toasties. "I could go to stay with Grandad to keep him company."

"Don't you want to go to the library holiday program like usual?" asked Mum. "You always look forward to it."

"I do like having fun at the library," said Isla, "but this time, I'd rather be with Grandad."

Mum and Dad looked at each other.

"Please?" begged Isla.

"Let your dad and me have a think about it," said Mum.

An hour later, when Isla was reading in the living room, Mum appeared with a smile on her face.

"I've just been talking to Grandad again," she said. "He's very much looking forward to having you stay for the first week of the holidays."

Isla jumped up and gave Mum a big hug.

“Thank you,” she said. “I can’t wait!”

But as Isla went back to reading her book, she started to worry again. She could keep Grandad company for a week, but she couldn’t stay with him forever. What would he do for company when she returned home, and he was alone again?

Maybe I can help him join some groups and make new friends, Isla thought.

Chapter 2

Grandad and the Birds



The next Saturday, early in the morning, Dad helped Isla pack her bag to take to Grandad’s. Then he carried it out to the car for her. Ed was waiting in the driveway to say goodbye. Mum was already in the driver’s seat.

“Have fun at Grandad’s,” said Dad, opening the car door for Isla.

“Say hi to Grandad from me,” said Ed.

Mum backed the car out of the driveway and tooted the horn goodbye. It was a long way to Grandad’s, but Mum had packed some sandwiches for lunch.

“We’ll call in at Gran’s care home on the way,” said Mum, “and we can share them with her.”

Isla wondered if Gran would remember who she was, but Mum said that even if she didn’t, Gran would still enjoy the visit.