



Aussie Bites

Still the best!

Mr Moonlight



Jane Carroll

Illustrated by **Anne Spudvilas**

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Puffin Books

PUFFIN BOOKS

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The Aussie Bites story

In 1996, Puffin developed the Aussie Bites series as a response to the need for short chapter books to bridge the reading gap between picture books and novels. Our aim was to encourage confidence in young readers by providing them with well-written, relevant stories that were both easy to read and entertaining.

The success of the Aussie Bites series has exceeded our wildest expectations. Over one million copies have been sold, and the books, which are produced entirely in Australia, are still in constant demand. Many of the titles have now been published internationally. Kids, parents and teachers love them, and they're easy to recognise by their trademark 'bite' in the corner.

**Aussie Bites – helping children develop
a taste for reading!**

PUFFIN BOOKS

Aussie Bites

Mr Moonlight

Mr Moonlight is mysterious and beautiful, and he lives under Tom's house. But Tom can't tell anyone – because if Mad Bill finds out about him, Mr Moonlight will be in great danger.

Tick the **Aussie Bites** you have read!

☐

MR MOONLIGHT

Jane Carroll

Illustrated by Anne Spudvilas

☐

A CHOOK CALLED HARRY

Phillip Gwynne

Illustrated by Terry Denton

☐

SAVING MOONBEAM

Sherryl Clark

Illustrated by Anne Spudvilas

☐

ELEPHANT MOUNTAIN

Janeen Brian

Illustrated by Sally Rippin

☐

FOOL'S GOLD

Margaret Clark

Illustrated by Andrew McLean

☐

ROLAND AND EUGENIE

Rachel Flynn

Illustrated by Craig Smith

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CHAPTER 1

A STRANGE NOISE

For Jane, who found him first, and
Oliver, Bella and Penny. J.C.

For Kiernan and Arlia:
thanks so much. A.S.

CHAPTER 1

A STRANGE NOISE

‘What was that noise under the house last night?’ Tom asked at breakfast time.

‘I didn’t hear a thing,’ said Dad.

‘Rats, probably.’

‘It could have been rabbits,’ said Mum. ‘We’ll have to get rid of them, Frank. They’ve dug a nice cosy burrow down there so they can come out and eat the garden whenever they like.’

‘It wasn’t rabbits,’ said Tom.

It wasn’t rats either. Rats scuttled in the ceiling and squeaked. They gnawed at the rafters.

‘What sort of noise was it?’ asked Tom’s little sister, Tyler, between mouthfuls of cereal.

‘Freaky,’ replied Tom. He frowned as he tried to remember the strange sound. ‘Something was thumping around under there. It was yowling and coughing. And it made a choking noise, like it was being strangled to death.’

‘Stop it, Tom,’ said Mum. ‘Tyler’ll never get to sleep tonight if you go on like that. It was probably a possum. They make a terrible racket.’

‘I know what possums sound like, Mum. They growl like a lawnmower starting up. This was different.’



‘Was it a bunyip?’ asked Tyler.

‘Yeah, and it’s going to creep out tonight and jump on your bed.’

Tyler ate another mouthful of cereal. ‘It won’t do that,’ she said.

‘It’s a friendly bunyip.’

Tom took his lunchbox from the kitchen bench and stuffed it into his schoolbag. He looked at Tyler. 'If you want to ride with me this morning you'd better hurry up.'

Tom liked riding to school, even on cold winter mornings. He liked cracking the ice on the puddles in the road with his bike wheels, and racing the galahs that flew along beside him. He and Tyler held their breath every time they passed Pong Corner, where fox-shooters hung dead foxes on the fence. Sometimes Tyler stopped at the creek to float sticks under the bridge, and then Tom rode on without her.

But when they came to Mad Bill's

place, both of them always rode as fast as they could.

Mad Bill kidnapped animals and kept them in cages on his farm. He took them out one by one, killed them, and skinned them. That's what the kids at school said. They said he stuffed their skins and gave them glass eyes so they looked alive, and he put them in his house.

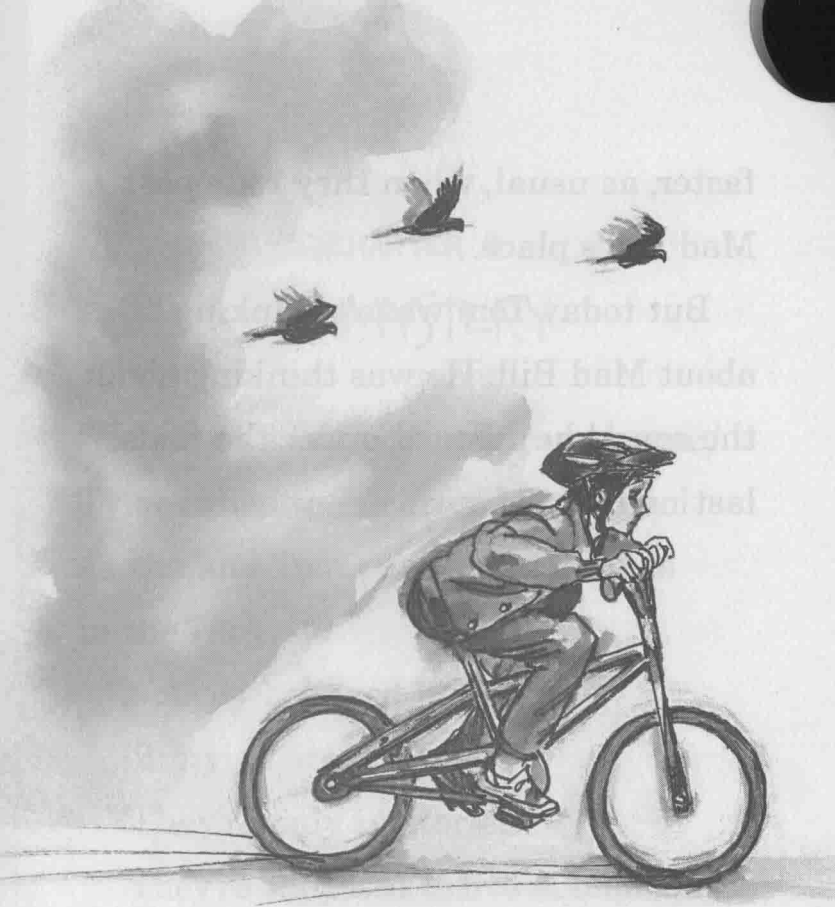
If anyone ever lost a dog or a cat, they reckoned Mad Bill must have got it. Mum and Dad said that was nonsense, but Tom couldn't help wondering if the kids were right.

Recently Mad Bill's granddaughter, Shona, had come to live with him.

She was tall, with black eyes and black hair.

On Shona's first day at school Mr Chapman, their teacher, told everyone that she came from the outback, a long way over the mountains. He wanted her to talk about her home and family, but she looked at the desk and said nothing. When he asked her how long she was staying with her grandfather, she shrugged and pulled the hood of her jacket over her head.

At school there were only two classrooms: one for Big Kids and one for Little Kids. Shona was in the Big Kids with Tom. No one talked to her much.



This morning Tom found a good frozen puddle and felt the ice splinter as he rode through it. *Crunch!* He raced the galahs, and held his breath at Pong Corner. He and Tyler pedalled

faster, as usual, when they rode past Mad Bill's place.

But today Tom wasn't thinking about Mad Bill. He was thinking about the sound he'd heard under the house last night.



This morning I'm found to find a frozen and the first of the winter's an unexpected sign of the fall and traced the chain and tested the handle at Pony Corner the and I'm surprised

CHAPTER 2

A MYSTERY

‘We’ve got a bunyip under our house,’
Tyler called to her friends at school
as she and Tom parked their bikes
in the rack.

Nobody believed her.

‘Bunyips aren’t real.’

‘They’re only in stories.’

‘They’re supposed to live in billabongs.
They never live under houses.’

‘We have too got a bunyip!’ shouted
Tyler. But her friends had run off to
play. Only Shona, swinging on a swing,
was left to listen to her.

'I believe you,' she said.

'My brother saw it,' Tyler told her.

'It's got scales like a dragon and sharp teeth. It makes a terrible noise.'

'Tyler!' exclaimed Tom. 'She's

