

Dear reader,

This is a tale that simply had to be told.

Let me vouch that every word is true and Mr Author has done quite a job in capturing the excitement, wonder and, dare I say, fear that my little adventure brought to me.

Of course, it's never the same as being there but let me assure you that there is quite a buzz in the cloud forest (even among those silly cassowaries) that this story is being read by children the world over. Naturally enough, everyone wants to know how they come across in the tale (I expected the birds of paradise to be vain creatures, but the dugongs? Gosh!)

Though I begged and pleaded with Mr Author to put up the whole story here (along with other thoughts and mutters from me - a sort of commentary, if you like), he would not acquiesce. 'They may not buy the book, Widodo,' said he and so there we are. But at my insistence he has added a spot where you can 'Register your interest', which means, tell him you want to buy the book when it comes out.

Then we'll all be a lot happier.

Love Widodo

P.S. Now that you've opened this Pdf, if you right click it you can open it in Acrobat and save it somewhere (if you wish to load it up to your iPad for example).



WIDODO THE TREE KANGAROO WHO WENT SNORKELING

ACT I

Widodo the tree kangaroo knew life had endless ways of delighting him.

Every morning, as he nibbled on his figs, he gazed across the rainforest and watched the sun float up out of the sea. Then before it could rise too high, he ran down his tree trunk - face first - and headed off exploring. Even with all his travels and all the creatures he'd met, there remained in the back of Widodo's mind a very puzzling mystery. How many more suns were waiting to float up out of the ocean? And what else was living out there under the sea? Though he would wonder about this nearly every day, Widodo knew there were still plenty of wonderful things left to discover right there in his rainforest. Besides, he had decided it was time he travelled to where no tree kangaroo had ever ventured before - across The River!

And he wasn't going to let the fact he couldn't swim a stroke deter him.

One morning, very early, he bounded down to the sand by The River and, making sure his paws didn't get wet, tapped a turtle that was asleep next to a twisting palm tree on the top of his shell. Rap, rap, rap.

'Excuse me,' said Widodo. 'Are you awake?'

The turtle popped his head out of his shell and blinked three times.

'Yes, I'm awake! Of course I'm awake. What's the matter?'

'My name is Widodo,' said Widodo. 'I'm a tree kangaroo. I would like you to take me to

The Other Side of The River. I've been watching you swimming for a number of days and if you go nice and slowly I'll be able to hold on, I should think.'

It was quite a plan. Widodo was pleased he'd got all the points out so quickly. The turtle blinked again and frowned.

'What's a tree kangaroo?' he asked.

This threw Widodo a bit.



'I live up there in the tallest fig tree in the rainforest,' he said, pointing over his shoulder. 'Very high up. I've been watching you swimming about and I'd like you to take me across The River on your back because ...'

'My goodness! You live all the way up there?' said the turtle, straining his head to look up.

'Yes. But I want to get to The Other Side of The River, and so I thought ...'

'Why don't you just swim across?' asked the turtle.

'Because I'm a tree kangaroo and tree kangaroos don't swim,' replied Widodo.

(This is not strictly true. Widodo had simply never shown an interest in learning how to swim.)

Eventually, after the turtle had gotten over the shock of meeting a kangaroo that climbed trees and couldn't swim, he agreed to carry Widodo across The River on his shell, and so he did. He dozed on the far shore while Widodo explored then, when the sun had shuffled across the sky a bit, carried him back home again.

That night, Widodo couldn't sleep. He sat looking at the stars blinking out over the ocean. He was a little confused. The day had started with him very excited about the possibility of traveling to The Other Side of The River, and it had all gone very well. But somehow, it hadn't been as exciting as he had hoped. It had all looked pretty familiar in fact. The most upsetting part was he'd met a group of tree kangaroos who'd been living there for as long as any of them could remember! They looked a little different from him with deep black fur and white fluffy collars, but they were tree kangaroos all right.

Nevertheless, from that day on, most mornings Widodo would climb down to the riverbank and have Matius ferry him back and forth. (Widodo had finally managed to ask the turtle his name. This had aided the friendship.) Each night Widodo would tell all the other tree kangaroos who would listen everything he'd seen. (Though it was becoming rather tedious and he was tempted to begin embellishing the details due to the fact that everything on The Other Side of The River was consistently proving remarkably similar to everything on His Side Of The River.)

One afternoon, midstream, Widodo gazed down into the water as two silver fish swam past. He nearly fell off in surprise.

'Did you see that?' he cried. 'Matius! Two fish!'



Matius stopped swimming.

'Ha, ha, ha!' he laughed. 'Two fish! Ha, ha, ha.'

Widodo sat up straight and frowned.

'What's so funny about that?'

'Two boring, silver fish! My goodness!' said Matius. Then an idea jumped at him. 'If only you could see The Reef, Widodo. The Splendid Reef. There are fishes out there in hundreds of colours and coral as tall as the tree you live in. Two silver fish! Ha, ha, ha!'

That night, Widodo sat in his fig tree looking out to the ocean again.

He began to sing to himself.

If there were trees across the surface of the sea

I'd soon have solved this intriguing mystery

Where hides the sun? Or perhaps it's 'suns', for every morning out pops a new one

In truth, no tree-dwelling roo I've ever met

Has dared to swim out to discover yet

Where the ocean ends and the suns emerge and the waters press apart in a great surge

The days are clear, while the nights are cool and black

And then, it appears, somehow the sun comes back

'I'll be the first one,' he thought. 'The first tree kangaroo to see The Splendid Reef!'

And he smiled to himself as this time, he was sure, he wouldn't find other tree kangaroos sitting waiting for him.

The very next morning, Widodo gripped Matius's shell as he swam down The River towards the ocean.



'You're going to love it,' said Matius. 'I promise you, The Reef is wonderful.'

Three dugongs interrupted their grazing to watch the rather odd sight of Matius, with Widodo on his back gritting his teeth, swimming through the breakers and out to sea. There wasn't a tree (or any kind of shrub, for that matter) to be seen. Everywhere was water. Widodo looked behind him. The rainforest, the land, the beach had all disappeared. This must be where the suns come up each morning, thought Widodo. He peered down, hoping to see one of them. Then, all of a sudden, Matius stopped paddling.

'Here we are, Widodo,' he said.

Widodo looked left and right. All he could see were seagulls ducking and diving into the water.

'I'll dive down and show you all the best bits,' said Matius. 'Just follow me.'

'Wait!' cried Widodo. 'I can't swim!'

'Oh! Well, then? Why don't you just poke your head under the water and I'll swim around and you can have a look that way?'

This is bound to succeed, thought Widodo. He did just as Matius suggested. He lay down, took a deep breath, then poked his head under the water and saw - **fluffiness**

He thought he could, almost, make out fishes swimming back and forth and it all seemed quite colourful, but everything was fluffy. He popped his head out again.

'All the fishes are blurry,' said Widodo.

'Blurry?' said Matius, and he stuck his head under to check. It all looked fine to him. 'Are you sure?'

Widodo looked again. Yes, blurry and fluffy and fuzzy. And there were no suns to be seen either. Not one.

It was disappointing, although Widodo had to admit, he'd seen things no tree kangaroo had ever seen before (even though he didn't know exactly what he'd seen and he hadn't seen it, or them, very clearly at all).

As they headed back to the beach, Widodo, his nose still wet, was thinking so hard of how he would describe the underwater world to all the other tree kangaroos back home that he failed to notice black clouds forming in the sky directly above him. Then the sun vanished and large drops of rain began to fall.

Widodo didn't mind the rain. He was used to it. But out in the middle of the ocean it was a bit more frightening.



'Matius!' he shouted. 'It's starting to rain.'

'Grip your paws in tighter, Widodo,' said Matius. 'I'll try to get back to the beach before it really sets in.'

The ocean began to move up and down. The rain fell harder.

'We'd better stop,' said Matius. 'We'll wait it out. If I were by myself, I'd swim back underwater.'

'No, no, no,' stammered Widodo. 'I want to get back now.'

'The storm will only take a moment,' said Matius. 'Trust me Widodo. It will be over soon.'

Widodo knew Matius was right. Every afternoon a sudden storm blew in from the sea and drenched the rainforest. This time though, he was frightened. Very frightened.

'No Matius, you must take me back right now!'

Against his better judgement, Matius did what Widodo said and swam on through the waves whipped up by the storm, rolling towards the shore. Widodo blinked and blinked as the rain splattered in his eyes. He could see the beach. Matius swam up to the crest of a wave, then whooshed down the other side. Then up again he'd swim.

'Hang on, Widodo!' he cried.

And just as he did, a huge wave hit them. It sent Matius spinning upside down in the water. Another wave followed. And another and Matius lost all sight of Widodo. He swam to the surface and looked in every direction but saw only waves, foaming and breaking. He dived down again and swam in a circle as fast as he could and then, far away, he saw four brown, furry legs kicking frantically. Matius flapped his fins, flew through the water and lifted Widodo up to the surface. With all his strength, he held him in his beak and swam for the beach.

'I've got you Widodo,' he thought. 'I've got you!'

With a final effort Matius lunged for the safety of the soft sand. Widodo landed on his back, coughing up a mouthful of seawater.

'Thanks Matius,' he whispered, before he closed his eyes and collapsed with exhaustion

