

DIVE INTO A HILARIOUSLY UNPREDICTABLE WORLD

WHERE EVERY PAGE IS
PACKED WITH LAUGHTER

You're probably wondering what could be
SO FUNNY that you should read this book
over all the **OTHER BOOKS** on the shelf.

Is it the **UNICORN** causing **CHAOS** in a suburban home?

I mean, the story about a backyard **MUSEUM**
OF WEIRD THINGS is pretty good.

You could even flick to the back and find out what happens when
TWINS take their competitiveness **TO THE NEXT LEVEL!**

Look, I don't have time to get into all the reasons
THIS BOOK RULES, but trust me – Emma Holland
is the new queen of comedy and her stories and
poems will have you **IN STITCHES**.



STORIES

FOR
THE

KID NEXT
DOOR

Emma Holland



Emma Holland

STORIES

FOR THE

KID
NEXT
DOOR

ART BY
Chris Kennett

THE TOUCH POOL

The most interesting thing about Brooke, according to her classmates, was that she lived next to the aquarium. When I say 'next to', I don't mean 'down the road from' or 'around the corner of', I mean literally **DIRECTLY NEXT DOOR TO**. You could walk out of Brooke's house, take fifteen to twenty steps to the left, and you'd be at the front door of the aquarium without breaking a sweat. If she wanted to, Brooke could finish eating lunch at 1 pm and be making eye contact with a squid at 1.02. If she'd had calamari that day, she could even double up.



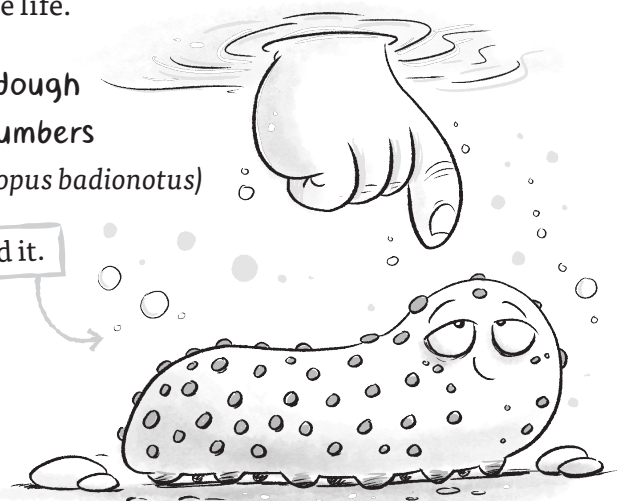
Brooke was very popular at school. Every kid wanted to go to her house to play. As soon as they got there though, the inevitable question would be asked:

'CAN WE GO TO THE
AQUARIUM?!'

No one ever wanted to just stay at Brooke's house. To make matters worse, this wasn't just a standard, run-of-the-mill aquarium. The aquarium next to Brooke's house had the largest touch pool in the southern hemisphere. Any sea creature you could think of or dream of touching, they had it. They even had animals you'd never even thought about in your whole entire life.

☆ Cookie dough
sea cucumbers
(*Isostichopus badionotus*)

They had it.



☆ Caribbean spiny lobsters
(*Panulirus argus*)

They had it.



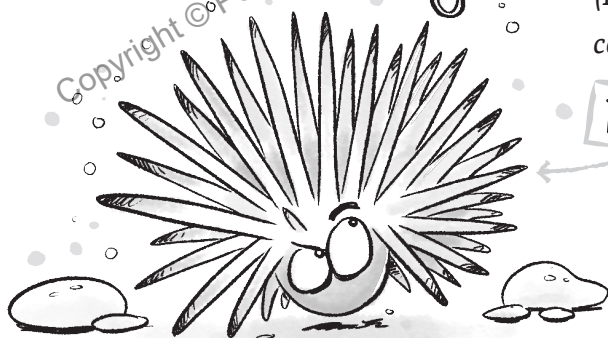
☆ Ochre Sea Stars
(*Pisaster ochraceus*)

They had it!



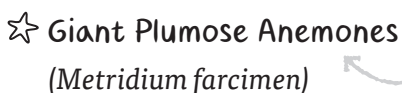
☆ Banded Sea Urchins
(*Echinothrix calamaris*)

THEY HAD IT!



☆ Giant Plumose Anemones
(*Metridium farcimen*)

THEY HAD IT!!!





Hermit crabs, sea sponges, blood stars, purple urchins, reef rays, Atlantic moon snails, crown conches, skeleton shrimp, sculpins, horseshoe crabs, blue-spotted maskrays, coral catsharks, painted anemones, feather duster worms –

THEY! HAD! IT!

All Brooke's classmates wanted to do all the time was go to the touch pool, and she was sick of it.

'Why doesn't anyone want to play at my house? What's so good about the stupid aquarium anyway?' she asked her friend Elise Adams, exasperated.

'Are you kidding me?' Elise Adams replied. 'They have a **TOUCH POOL**, so you can touch things you normally aren't allowed to!'

'Why is that so good though?' asked Brooke.

'Well,' said Elise Adams, 'when I go to the beach with my parents and explore the rock pools, they always tell me I'm not allowed to touch anything. They tell me I have to leave things as I found them. But at the aquarium, boy oh boy, I GET TO TOUCH

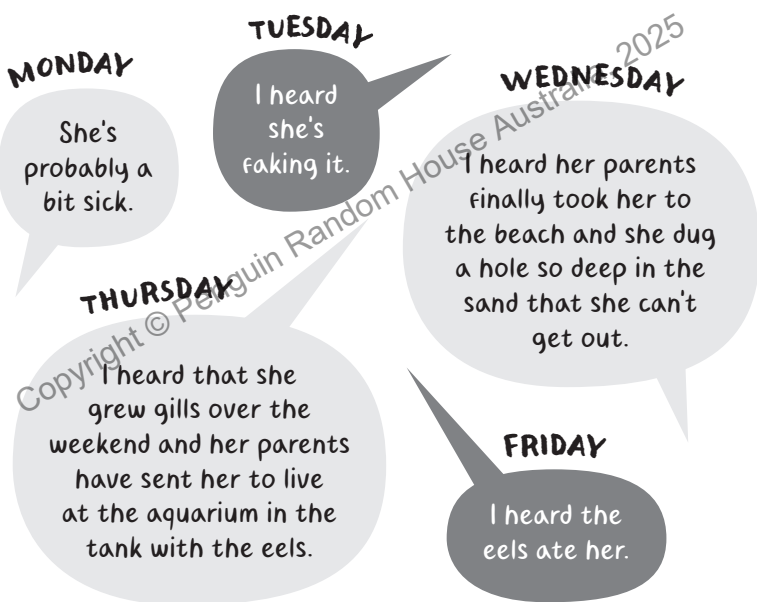
EVERYTHING.

It feels naughty, but you don't get in trouble.'



Brooke scrunched her brow together in thought (and jealousy that Elise got to go to the beach. 'Why would we go to the beach when the aquarium is next door?' Brooke's parents would often say.)

After that day, Brooke didn't come to school for a whole week. Her absence was the talk of the town. Each passing day that she didn't show up, her classmates' chatter would get more outlandish.



Most importantly, though, her classmates were wondering when she would get back so they could score an invite over to her house.

The following Monday, just as school was starting, the classroom doors crashed open and Brooke strode into class with an uncharacteristic **SWAGGER**.

‘Sorry I’ve been away,’ she said casually. ‘I was building something.’

Elise Adams gasped. ‘We thought you’d been eaten by eels! I mean, I didn’t. Everyone else did, though.’

Brooke turned to address the entire class. ‘I’m inviting everyone here over to my house after school today. Bring your hands.’

The class cheered and high-fived – the perfect palm warm-up exercise.

'FIELD TRIP!'

screamed Freddy Florentino.

That afternoon, the moment the school bell rang, every kid raced to meet Brooke at the school gate. She planted a top hat on her head and summoned the stray children.

‘Come one, come all,’ she shouted, waving her hand in the air.

Once her tour group had congregated, Brooke led them on the short walk to her house. Her classmates

were buzzing, all a-chatter, talking about which marine animals they were most excited to see and, more importantly, touch.

As they arrived at Brooke's house, the group was so distracted by the aquarium next door they didn't even notice a large piece of rolled-up fabric perched neatly on her home's front gate. Brooke stood atop the gate and cleared her throat to refocus the attention on herself.

'Welcome one, welcome all, to the greatest attraction this town has even seen!' Brooke announced, tipping her top hat. 'I present to you -'

She pulled a rope attached to the fabric roll, unfurling a large cloth sign that sprawled across the front gate:



The children murmured to each other, confused. Were they not going to the aquarium?

'What does that mean?' asked Freddie Florentino.

Brooke smiled and took her hat off, using it to gesture behind her. 'Are you sick of adults telling us what we

can and can't do? Well, complain no more. This museum is full of things you normally aren't allowed to touch, but in here you are free to lay your hands on everything and anything!

The disappointment of not going to the aquarium quickly turned into a palpable excitement as Elise Adams squealed, 'When does it open?!'

'Right now!' Brooke opened the front gate and her classmates came spewing in, running at full speed around the side of the house and into her backyard. What they arrived at was nothing short of magnificent.

Brooke had fully transformed her back garden into an interactive museum, and it had **EVERYTHING**.

☆ Precious statues from art galleries

(Monumentus delicatius)

She had it.

☆ Matches to play with

(Combustion starteus)

She had it.

☆ Glassware from her aunt's house

(Expensivius objecteus)

She had it.

☆ A bucket of rusty nails

(Tetanus giveus)

She HAD it.

☆ A horse you can feed without
your palm being flat
(Bitey McBitey)

SHE HAD IT.

☆ Scissors you can carry
on a running track
(Donot trip)

SHE HAD IT.

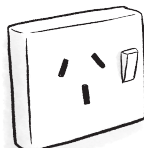
Raw chicken, her neighbour's aggressive dog,
ceramics from the plant store, the TV
remote while her dad was watching
something, mud, snakes, poison ivy,
electrical sockets, medicine
cabinets, the concept of time,
the surface of the sun



SHE!

HAD!

IT!



There was a restaurant table set up where you could finally play with your food. Elise Adams immediately jumped into action, twirling spaghetti around her fingers, pressing holes in the mashed potato and moulding the chocolate mousse into sculptures.

Freddie Florentino immediately found the box of small objects: safety pins, single Lego pieces, batteries, magnets. He went to stick his hand in before Brooke grabbed it.

‘Sorry, Freddie, this area is strictly for ages four and under.’

Freddie Florentino didn’t mind, he simply went to the white couch to climb all over it with his shoes on.

The museum was a hit! Brooke was so happy. It finally seemed like her classmates just wanted to hang out at her house instead of the aquarium. Everything was finally working out. Just as Brooke was starting to enjoy her new normal, she was interrupted by a **SHRIEK.**

‘OH MY GOSH!’

Elise Adams screamed.

Brooke turned to her in fear. Had she been bitten by the funnel web? Had she snagged her clothing on an exposed cable?

Elise was pointing away from the Museum of Forbidden Touches, and towards the aquarium. A staff member was unfolding a new sign out the front:



NEW ADDITION
TO THE
TOUCH POOL:
SHARKS!

As each classmate read the sign, a chain of enthusiastic **SCREECHES** rippled around Brooke's yard. They immediately dropped their forbidden objects and began to stampede towards the aquarium.

The earth shook; Brooke dropped to the ground, covering her head for protection as backpacks and feet stampeded around her. They stormed past her and straight to the aquarium, pouring into the doors like toxic waste.

Once the mob noises had faded and the grass had re-stabilised, Brooke lifted her head slowly. She rose from the ground, looking around at the desolate remnants of her museum. Rusty nails all over the ground, jelly up the sides of the horse's stable, a couch that was once white now covered in dirty shoe prints. Brooke sighed and pulled a safety pin from her hair. As she took in the chaos and destruction around her, she only had one thought.

'How did I not think of sharks!'



TWO FARMERS

Upon a farm due north of town,
within a sprawling pasture,
a scarecrow stood, freshly built
to avert a bird disaster.

Made from wads of straw and hay,
a creature crows most hated.

But one small problem stood in the way:
he was not yet decorated.

The scarecrow wore no flannel shirt,
not hat, not pants or snood.

If one were to view this fella now
they'd surely consider him **NUDE**.

Without a fearful outfit on,
the local crows would cluster.
They'd pick apart the growing plants.
They'd feed till bellies bust-a.

Two farmers stood abreast the build,
arguing to and fro.
They couldn't agree on what to put
upon their new scarecrow.

Farmer Joe, a classic guy,
wanted a frightening aura:
a fearsome glare, an old straw hat,
all made with native flora.

Farmer Pete, a new-age dude,
sought an air of peace.
He wanted to give it kinder eyes
and softer fabrics, like fleece.

'Why don't we just stick with tradition?'
said Farmer Joe, all gruff.
He tightened the straps on his overalls
(which were all mucky and rough).

'Perhaps it's time for a new approach,'
chirped Farmer Pete, all mellow,
adjusting the button on his tall raincoat
(so long, so big, so yellow).

Said Joe, 'We'll dress him in old shirts,
with dangling rags and shreds.
A tattered look, a spooky feel,
dark eyes upon his head.'

Said Pete, 'Perchance a different way,
let's reassess our needs.
What if we clothe him in silverware
and sprinkle him with seeds?'

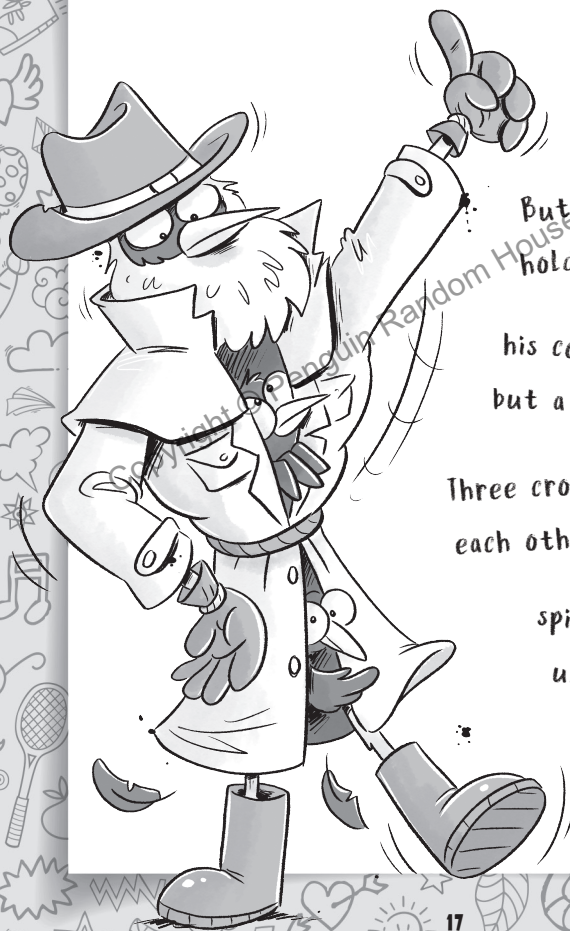
'Let's put a pitchfork in his hand,'
proclaimed Joe with force.
'Or shower him in berries and fruits,'
squawked Farmer Pete, of course.

'Do you want crows to infest our fields?'
yelled Farmer Joe in rage.
'That's an open invitation
for crows to come engage.'

Adjusting his jacket, Pete replied,
'I just don't like things scary.
Why can't we have a soothing feel
on this already eerie prairie?'

As Pete was trying to make his case
his coat began to move.
His body seemed to romp around,
a strange and lumpy groove.

'What's that ruckus on in there?'
asked Joe, his brow now tense.
'Oh nothing!' said Pete, his coat a-flutter.
'Just doing a little dance!'



But Pete couldn't
hold it any longer;

his coat was
but a sheath.

Three crows, stacked on
each other's shoulders,

spilt out from
underneath.

'BIRDS!' screamed Joe.

'GET OUT OF HERE!'

his arms flailing around.

'FILL YOUR BEAKS!' yelled crow number one.

**'GRAB ANYTHING
FROM THE GROUND!'**

Chaos ensued, as Farmer Joe
yelled and swung and slapped
and the three crows that used to be Pete
skreighed and swiped and flapped.

All the chaos of the fight
loosened the scarecrow's base.
in one fell swoop, he tumbled down,
an act devoid of grace.

The thump of his body hitting the soil
scared the birds near dead.
With beaks half full and without a coat,
the three crows quickly fled.

The scarecrow lay upon the field,
the farm now rid of pests.
Joe held onto his small straw hand
and let him finally rest.

Joe stood by his fallen creation,
a now-sole farmer and herder.

'I understand now why they call
a group of crows a **MURDER**.'

THE GIRL WITH THE PALINDROMIC SMILE

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SMUG GUMS