

CALL THE PUFFINS!

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To Huw - C.H.

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*I promise to be unflappable,
To bravely cross the sea and sky,
To rescue eggs and also birds,
It may not work, but I'll always try.*



○ Welcome to ○
THE ISLAND OF EGG





LEAVING HOME

One early morning, inside her warm burrow, Muffin the puffin stretched her wings.

She opened one eye. Then she opened the other one. It must be time to wake up.

Muffin loved her burrow under the earth, full of fluff, feathers and friendly birds. It was always snug and safe.

She loved Mum and Dad's bedtime stories about a giant mystery egg that was as blue as the night sky and older than the cliffs themselves.

'All eggs must be cared for,' Mum and Dad said.

As she lay blinking in the darkness, she thought about Mum asleep by her big orange feet and Dad asleep by her head. This was home – the only world she had ever known.



Muffin's head popped out of the burrow into the breezy morning air. She hopped through a clump of pink flowers and looked down at the bright sea. Her heart hammered inside her fluffy white chest. Today was a special day. Today she would fly to the Island of Egg and start her new life in the Puffin Colony.

Mum and Dad collected fish for breakfast.

'Are you excited?' asked Dad.

'A bit.' Muffin nibbled her breakfast.

'Are you feeling nervous as well?'

Mum asked.



'Yes,' she said. She couldn't eat any more. The fish kept sticking in her throat. She left some breakfast behind, and Mum gulped it down.

'Don't worry, love, put on your uniform and let's see how you look.'

Muffin stood proudly in the new uniform. The yellow backpack and the cap were amazing. The backpack felt strange, square and hard. The straps hooked over her wings. There was nothing to put inside it yet but soon it would have all sorts of useful things. The cap sat neatly on Muffin's smooth head. She tried wobbling her head to the left... then to the right.

'It's a good fit, Muffin,' Mum said.

Muffin liked the picture on the cap:



a flying puffin with the sea below.

'I just wish...' She shook her head sadly.

They all looked down at Muffin's feet.
'Stop worrying. Your feet are beautiful,'
said Mum.



But Muffin knew her feet were odd. They were orange like all puffins' feet but hers turned up at the front so it was sometimes difficult to dig with her claws. Muffin had never seen another puffin with feet like hers.

'Maybe you could hide one foot under the other,' suggested Dad.

She slid one foot on top of the other one, breathed in hard and tried to balance

with her back very straight.

‘That’s it. Pretend you’re a tree,’ said Dad.
‘With branches growing out of your head.’

She tried to think of branches.

‘Good tree, Muffin,’ said Dad.

Muffin wobbled and fell over.

‘Standing with one foot on top of the other is silly,’ said Mum. ‘Trees have big wide roots, just like you, Muffin.’

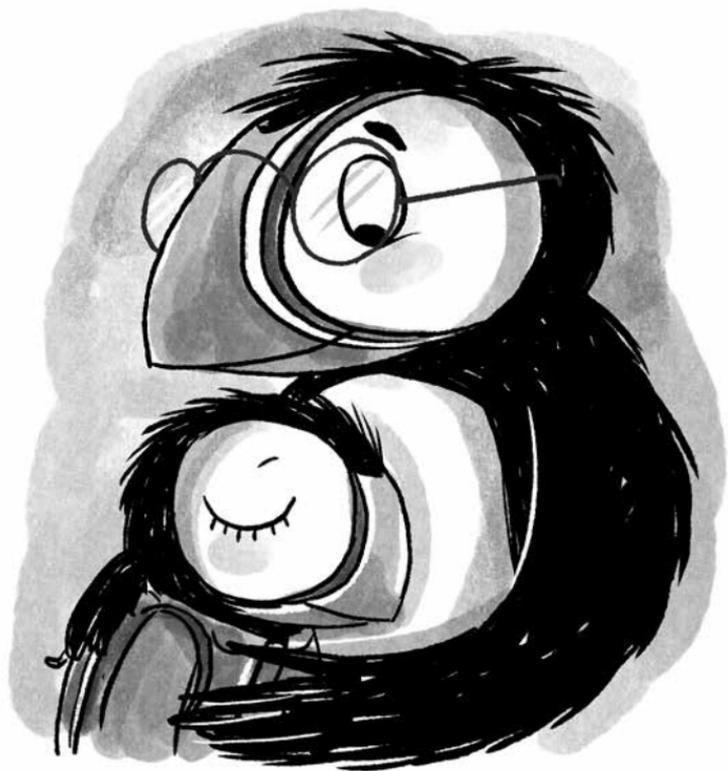
‘I was only trying to help,’ Dad said pulling her under his wing. ‘When I was a young puffling...’

‘We don’t want to hear about when you were a puffling!’ Mum laughed.

Muffin pulled away from Dad’s warm feather wrap.

She had another worry. What if nobody liked her?

'Remember,' said Dad, 'everyone is a bit worried on their first day, but you soon get used to it.' Dad had explained to her that, when they arrived on the island, she would have to show what she could do, 'so they can put you in the team where you fit best'.



Muffin had already decided she wanted to join the Puffin Rescue Team. Dad had told her so many times how exciting it was being a rescue puffin, learning lots of new things. You had to listen and help each other. You had to be brave. You had to be fast. What could be more fun than that? But, of course, she might not be chosen. She fluttered her wings and hopped up and down. Part of her wanted to set off for the island. But another part of her wanted to hop back down the burrow, stay at home and never come out.

Mum gathered her up in a warm feather wrap. 'Time to go,' she told her. 'And remember, whatever happens we are really proud of you.'