

# *ADVANCE READING PROOF*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LAUREN ST JOHN grew up surrounded by horses, a pet giraffe, warthogs, cats and dogs, on a farm and game reserve in Zimbabwe, the inspiration for her award-winning White Giraffe series as well as *The Snow Angel*. *Dead Man's Cove*, the first in her Laura Marlin mystery series, won the Blue Peter Book of the Year Award. Her bestselling One Dollar Horse series was followed by YA horse thriller, *The Glory*, and middle-grade mysteries *Kat Wolfe Investigates* and *Wave Riders*, winner of the Crime Fest Best Crime Novel for Children. A passionate conservationist, Lauren is the founder of Authors4Oceans, an ambassador for the Born Free Foundation, and a patron for Mane Chance Animal Sanctuary. When not writing, she is a full-time valet to her cats, Max and Skye.

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# FINDING WONDER

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**Lauren St John**

Interior illustrations by Marie-Alice Harel

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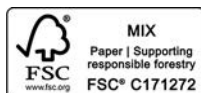
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2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

*For my father, who gave me my dream horse,  
Morning Star,*

*For my mom, who showed me India, Greece and the  
Seychelles,*

*And for my sister Lisa, who keeps me believing that, for  
every question, nature has an answer . . .*



*Tell me, what is it that you plan to do with  
Your one wild and precious life?*

MARY OLIVER





# FEARLESS FIRE

*(Illustration to come)*



# 1.

## Lottery

When death came to Roo Thorn's door, it found her dreaming.

She knew it was a dream because she was at a pop concert with a friend, two treats that never entered Roo's waking universe.

Her imaginary friend was yelling something and trying to tug her away, but Roo was having too much fun. She was mesmerised by the band's drummer; by his wild, flying hair and blur of arms and sticks. His cymbals flashed like flames.

The singer gave up trying to make herself heard and flounced off the stage. The guitarist and keyboard player followed. Beneath the dazzling lights, the drummer thrashed on. The bass thudded in Roo's chest like an extra heartbeat.

Now she really did want to escape but she was trapped. Hemmed in by the sweaty, dancing crowd, she began to panic. Where was her friend?

'POLICE! OPEN THE DOOR!' commanded a disembodied voice, shattering the dream like glass.

Roo struggled upright. Blue lights strobed her bedroom, uninterrupted by the frayed curtains. Somewhere in the night, a siren popped.

It didn't surprise her that the cops were parked outside. Grimsby Grove was that sort of street. If it wasn't a punch-up involving the boys at No. 8, it was the dodgy dealers at No. 33.

World-weary constables often knocked on the 'Thorns' door, asking if Roo or her father had witnessed some incident or another, but never before had they knocked after midnight.

She wondered if an ambulance crew had the wrong house. Unlike some of their neighbours, the elderly couple next door were the sweetest people anywhere, but Mr Badawi had kidney problems and emergency services had been called out twice in the past week.

The pounding started again.

'Dad!' shouted Roo. 'Dad, wake up, there's someone at the door!'

To a regular person, that much would have been deafeningly obvious, but when it came to her father, Roo had learned not to take anything for granted.

Scrambling out of bed, she tripped over a line of model horses, sending them flying. Over the years, Roo had been told by everyone except her dad that she'd grow out of them.

Sometimes she felt guilty that, aged eleven and a half, she still staged whole Olympic events over the furniture in the flat, leaping upturned chairs, the old coffee table, and the tatty arm of the sofa, with Fearless Fire – the chestnut with the white blaze – clutched in her right hand.

In those moments Fearless Fire was as real to her as the chestnut showjumper on the poster on her bedroom wall. Wonder Boy, owned by teenage star Rhianna Cooper, was Roo's dream horse.

'If I had a horse like Wonder Boy, I'd be the happiest person on earth,' she'd told her dad. 'He's perfect in every way. I hope Rhianna knows how lucky she is. Perfect talent, perfect home, *and* a perfect horse.'

‘Ruby Roo, perfect plus perfect plus perfect doesn’t always add up to happy or lucky,’ her father had chided. ‘Life is not arithmetic. It’s messy and complicated. Joy comes in unexpected packages, and when you’re least expecting her. Sometimes you find Joy in the last place you look.’

And then he was off again, reminiscing about the time he’d collided, quite literally, with Joy, Roo’s mum, as he’d rounded a corner on a London street, him on shore leave from the navy, and her walking on air after graduating from the Royal College of Nursing.

Ironically, thinking about Joy tended to make Roo’s dad sad. Very soon, he’d remember that he had to nip out on some urgent errand or job-seeking mission (usually involving the Hare & Tortoise pub) and be gone for hours and hours. A couple of times, he’d been gone all night.

‘When I win the lottery, everything will be different,’ he was always saying. ‘We’ll get our lives back on track again. I’ll buy you your dream horse.’

*When I win the lottery* was the soundtrack to their days.

Flicking on lights and picking up speed in response to a fresh bout of hammering, Roo banged on her dad’s bedroom door.

Silence. No surprise there.

She was about to barge in and shake him awake when the knocking started again.

‘I’m coming, I’m coming,’ Roo shouted to the invisible visitor, breaking into a trot along the passage, her mind already whirling with excuses.

*I’m so sorry but my dad has a migraine/bad back/has flu. No, he can’t be disturbed.*

Out of habit, she did a sweep of the living room, scooping up a pizza box and a couple of cans and tossing them out of sight behind the sofa. For ages she'd prided herself on keeping a spotless home the way her mum used to but, recently, she'd been letting things slide.

That's what grown-ups never understood. Kids got tired too.

Deep breath. Best smile.

Roo unlocked the door.

A policewoman, truncheon raised to rap once more, seemed startled to see a child. She blinked, peering past Roo in her too-small pyjamas.

'Where's Mum, sweetheart?'

The blue light of the squad car swirled like a lighthouse beam, warning of deadly currents and jagged rocks ahead.

Inside the vehicle, another officer was spelling out her address on his radio. 'Thirty-two *Grimsbly* – Golf, Romeo, India, Mike, Sierra, Bravo, Yankee . . . *Grove* – Golf, Romeo, Oscar, Victor, Echo . . .'

The chill that rippled through Roo had nothing to do with the arctic wind or grubby January snow. It was as if she knew what was going to happen before it happened.

A gaunt young man scurried from the shadows. 'Apologies, Officer Pooran. I came as quickly as I could.'

It was Roo's new social worker. The one who didn't believe her father's excuses about her frequent absences from school. The one who kept trying to catch Roo out. Only now, his fox face looked pale and anxious.

'Ruby lost her mother a couple of years ago,' he told the

policewoman. 'It was just the two of them, Roo and her dad.'

*Was.*

The past tense slammed into Roo's chest like a cannonball.

Before they could stop her, she took off running down the passage. Her dad's silent bedroom was empty, the bed neatly made.

His last words returned to her as clearly as if he were standing right in front of her. Still smiling.

Still breathing.

*Ruby Roo, you go on to bed. I'm going to nip out to buy a lottery ticket. Back in five minutes. You never know, it might just be our lucky day.*

## 2.

# RED COAT

*Was he coming or going?*

Roo's eyes were dry, as they had been since Officer Pooran and Iain, the social worker, had sat her down and carefully explained, as if she were hard of hearing, that her father had dropped dead outside No. 16, exactly halfway between the Thorns' flat and the corner shop.

'The owners at No. 16 are away and the cousin who's housesitting didn't know where your dad lived,' the policewoman explained. 'She rang for an ambulance, and they called us. It was a couple of hours before a neighbour was able to point us in the direction of your flat. Dad had no ID on him, you see.'

'Was he coming or going?' Roo asked again.

'Excuse me?'

'Was he on his way to the corner shop or heading home? He only went out to get a lottery ticket. He thought it might be his lucky day.'

Roo felt as if a porcupine was lodged in her chest. It hurt too much to cry. '*Our* lucky day.'

Officer Pooran and Iain exchanged glances.

'Life can be cruel like that,' sympathised the policewoman. 'Sadly, the paramedics suspect that your dad may have had a microscopic heart muscle defect he didn't know about. Strikes without warning and can affect anyone at any age.'



Twenty-three-year-old footballers even. It was a heart attack waiting to happen.'

*A heart attack waiting to happen.*

The words scrolled through Roo's brain on a loop. Ever since her mum had been struck dead cycling to work, Roo had lived in fear of another bad-news knock at the door. Now the worst had happened.

'Oh,' was all she could manage.

'Ruby, you've had a huge shock and must be exhausted,' said Iain, looking at the clock, now ticking towards 1.30 a.m. 'We need to get to you to a safe space. Somewhere you can be with family or friends. It says on your file that your only next of kin is an aunt, your mum's sister. Are you happy for me to call her? Do the two of you get on?'

Roo had a vivid memory of a screaming match between her father and her aunt a year earlier. Six months after Roo's mum died, Joni Jackson had shown up unannounced to find Roo not at school and her dad asleep on the sofa in the middle of the day.

Her views on childcare had not gone down well.

'Don't you dare lecture me on responsible parenting when you've never had a child and don't know the first thing about raising one,' Roo's father had shouted. 'When did you last have a proper job? Go away and don't come back until you've taken a long hard look in the mirror. Anyway, Roo's very happy, aren't you, Roo?'

'Very,' Roo agreed defiantly. 'Dad's the best dad in the whole world.'

She'd watched through a slit in her bedroom curtains as Joni's orange VW camper, decorated with flowers, butterflies, and a

grinning surfer cresting a wave, lurched away down the street. The Thorns hadn't seen her since.

Iain was waiting for Roo to respond. 'Your Aunt Joni, is she nice?' he pressed. 'Do you enjoy visiting her?'

Roo was not about to inform him that she was more familiar with the postcards her aunt had mailed from New Zealand, Greece, and the Himalayas than she was with Joni herself.

As to where her aunt lived now, Roo had no clue. A surfing grotto in Devon? A yurt in Pembrokeshire? A garret for starving artists in Paris?

What did Joni even do? That much had never been clear.

It didn't matter. Roo's choices were stark. Either her aunt took her in, or she'd be deposited in a care home, where she'd wait in vain for someone to adopt her.

'Joni's the best aunt in the world,' lied Roo.

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'That's not my aunt.'

Roo's voice was husky with tiredness and despair. Unsurprisingly, Joni Jackson had proven tough to track down. She'd changed her number and moved several times. When her new contact details were finally unearthed, her phone was switched off, and had stayed that way for most of the day.

Consequently, it was after dark and nearly nineteen hours after the police knocked on the Thorns' door when headlights swung into the driveway of the foster home where Roo had spent the day.

Her aunt had told Rayleen, the social worker who'd taken over from Iain at the end of his shift, that she'd be arriving at 'eight on

the dot' and here was a visitor, at eight on the dot.

Roo peered between the blinds. She'd been expecting the orange camper, not a Porsche SUV with blacked-out windows.

The driver's door opened. Elegant legs encased in knee-length black boots stepped into the mashed-up snow. A slender figure in a red coat and scarf, woolly hat pulled down low, strode briskly up the path.

'That's not my aunt,' Roo repeated, recoiling slightly. The Joni she remembered had been cuddle-shaped and wearing a tie-dye T-shirt and flares with leopard-print patches on the knees.

'What do you mean, that's not your aunt?'

Rayleen, a stolid person with a no-nonsense attitude, moved with speed to the hallway. There were raised voices outside as the social worker demanded photo ID.

Next, the stranger in the red coat burst into the room.

'Oh, Roo, what a thing to happen,' she cried. 'What a terrible, terrible thing. I'm so sorry.'

Before Roo could object, she was enveloped in scarlet cashmere and breathing in orange blossom perfume and hair that smelled of coconut. She'd been cold all day, but now a wave of heat flooded her veins.

'Madam, stop! We need to sort out this question of your identity,' railed Rayleen. 'Ruby, do you know this person? Is she your aunt?'

Roo tugged away awkwardly. This Joni dressed nothing like the old Joni, but the warmth of her, the concern in her hazel eyes, was the same.

She nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

Joni squared up to Rayleen. 'I'd appreciate it if we could get the formalities over as quickly as possible. I'd like to get Roo home.'

### 3.

## FOREVER IS A LONG TIME

The drive 'home' passed in a tear-streaked blur of city lights. Roo couldn't take in anything Joni was saying. Something about a new partner, Gary; a new job at a spa in Chelsea; and a new apartment: Gary's.

'It'll be a squeeze, but we'll adapt. And Gary will adore you, you'll see. He's away on business. Back late tonight. You'll meet him in the morning. The main thing I want you to know is, I'm here for you and always will be. You can count on me.'

Roo didn't answer. She was tired to the bone. Words were just words. What grown-ups promised and what they did were two different things.

*When I win the lottery . . .*

She sank into a daze, stirring when Joni pulled into an underground car park. A spotless lift whisked them up to a penthouse overlooking the Thames.

The lift doors opened to a vision of white and chrome and acres of polished wooden floor. The bathrooms were so large and shiny that Roo was afraid to wash her hands.

Despite being four times the size of the Thorns' council flat, the penthouse had just two bedrooms, one of which was being used as Gary's study.

'He won't mind,' said Joni, pulling out a sofa bed and wrestling a duvet into a cover.

The room was so small that, once in bed, Roo was sandwiched between a printer and more electronics than an air traffic control tower. When Joni handed her a mug of malted milk, Roo's nervous hands tipped half of it on to a white rug.

'I'm sorry, I'm sorry,' Roo panicked, tears searing her eyes again.

But Joni could not have minded less. 'Roo, it's my fault for making it too hot,' she said with a smile. 'Don't give it another thought.'

Roo must have fallen into a coma sleep after that, because next, she was roused by hushed voices – her aunt's and a man's. Gary, she assumed.

'I didn't even know you had a niece,' he was saying. 'Poor kid. Tragic to be orphaned at such a young age.'

'Yes, it's utterly devastating. She's asleep in your study. It'll take a bit of juggling at first, but we'll find a way to make it work.'

'Course, 'course. No problem at all, babe. She's welcome. Only . . . uh, how long's she staying?'

'Roo's lost both her parents, Gary.' There was a sliver of steel in Joni's tone. 'I'm – *we're* – her family now. She's staying forever.'

There was a loaded silence.

'Forever is a long time, Joni.'

As their footsteps faded away, Roo clung to her namesake, a floppy-eared kangaroo, a long-ago gift from her mum.

Beneath her pillow was Fearless Fire. The other nine horses, a small bag of clothes, and a framed photo of her parents laughing in happier times were her only possessions.

The picture had been taken at her old riding school, a falling-down, held-together-with-love-and-string place in East London. When her mum was alive, Roo had had lessons there

every school holiday from when she was five. These days, the only fences she soared over were in her imagination.

Usually, when Roo was unhappy or lonely, she pretended she was living Rhianna Cooper's perfect life. She imagined waking up in Rhianna's luxurious bedroom at Starwood Farm, putting on breeches and boots, and strolling down to the yard to groom and tack up Wonder Boy.

Now all she could think about was her father, snatched from her too soon, and about the virtual strangers who'd taken her in.

*Forever is a long time, Joni.*

Hot tears soaked Roo's pillow. If they didn't want her, she'd run away.

## 4.

# SHORTCUT

Two weeks after moving into the penthouse, Roo looked up from the lunch table to find Gary regarding her as if she were a fly who'd landed in his soup.

To begin with, businessman Gary, smooth as silk in his suits and designer sweats, had been all polite concern and barely concealed pity for her.

After what she'd overheard, Roo didn't trust him, but, to his credit, he'd made an effort to be pleasant and charming. He was a clean freak, though, and prone to moany remarks such as, 'Roo, would you mind putting the lid back on the toothpaste – *if that's not too much to ask.*'

Numb with grief, Roo didn't have the energy to be upset by them. Besides, it was a relief to be in a pristine home that someone else had tidied.

Today, however, Gary's charm had taken a vacation. Tension swirled around the walnut dining table.

'They can't do that,' Gary ranted.

'They already have,' said Joni, buttering a roll for Roo. 'Don't stress about it. There are plenty of jobs in the world. I can turn my hand to anything.'

Roo could tell that by the way her aunt's knee jiggled beneath the table that she was more concerned than she was letting on.

Earlier, Roo had heard her aunt being sacked over the phone by the spa in Chelsea.

‘I understand that your clients want massages, but my niece has lost her dad,’ Joni had said to the caller, her words carrying through the thin wall of the bedroom. ‘I refuse to palm her off on a childminder she doesn’t know. For the time being, I need to be with her, taking care of her. If you can’t understand that, then go ahead and fire me.’

Judging by the abrupt end to the conversation, her employer had done just that.

‘You should sue,’ Gary told Joni over lunch, stabbing a pickled onion with his fork and pointing it at her.

‘I’m not going to sue,’ Joni said tiredly.

‘Well, you’ll have to do *something*. There are bills to pay and now we have *three* mouths to feed.’

He glowered at Roo, who was wriggling in her chair while anxiously making patterns on the table with salt and pepper grains. ‘Stop fidgeting,’ he snapped.

Things moved fast after that.

Putting a protective arm around Roo, Joni pleaded with Gary to ‘BE KIND.’ Gary responded by being extremely UNKIND, demanding to know when he’d be getting his study back because he had a Very Important Conference coming up.

‘We also have theatre tickets for *two*, not three. Kids were never part of the deal, Joni,’ he snarled.

‘They are now,’ Joni replied calmly. ‘Roo’s my family.’

‘Well, she’s not mine. You can have me or the child, but not both. You choose.’

Roo burst into tears at that point because she couldn’t believe



that she was about to be orphaned for the second time in a fortnight.

But her aunt only hugged her closer.

‘I choose Roo,’ she informed a slack-jawed Gary.

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When Roo had pictured herself running away, she hadn’t imagined she’d be running away *with* her aunt, whose confident hands now gripped the worn wheel of her orange camper.

The headlights cast a weak glow up a spookily dark country lane. A red-eyed creature skittered across the potholes and shot beneath a hedgerow.

They’d taken a shortcut.

‘It’s annoying that my phone battery died, but we’ll be fine,’ Joni had said cheerfully as they’d exited the motorway. ‘I’ve been to the campsite so often I could find my way blindfolded. The sooner we get there, the sooner we’ll get a bite to eat and some kip.’

The ease with which Joni had walked away from her life made Roo suspicious.

‘How are you going to look after a child when you can’t even look after yourself?’ Gary had yelled as Joni wheeled a suitcase containing her clothes and Roo’s meagre possessions out of his penthouse. ‘Next to “irresponsible” in the dictionary, there’s a photo of you.’

Joni never looked back. Out on the street, there’d been a spring in her step as she’d hailed a cab to drive them to the home of the friend who took care of her orange camper.

Roo was no mechanic, but even she knew that older vehicles struggled to start in winter. The ones on her street had coughed and wheezed in the cold, and sometimes only spluttered into action after much cursing, pushing, and battery jump-starting by several people.

Surprisingly, 'Betty', Joni's ancient camper, had roared to life with the perkiness of a squirrel chasing down a nut. Her interior smelled of mildew, but she was clean and well-stocked with camping gear and cans of beans and long-life cashew milk. It was almost as if she'd been kept ready for a quick getaway.

Had Gary been aware that Betty was stashed in Joni's friend's garage with a full tank of petrol and a month's worth of supplies? Somehow Roo doubted it. If he had, surely Betty would have been parked beside his Porsche in the underground car park.

The only explanation was that Betty had been Joni Jackson's secret.

What other secrets did her aunt have?

'Where should we head to, Roo?' Joni had asked as she'd climbed into the driver's seat a couple of hours earlier. At the time it was barely 6 p.m., but night had fallen hard.

She'd handed Roo an AA Road Atlas, as if they were heading to the beach on a summer's day, not fleeing London – that's what it felt like to Roo, fleeing – for parts unknown, on the bleakest winter evening in memory.

'How about we aim for the coast?' Joni persisted in the chirpy manner of a fitness instructor. 'When did you last see the sea, Roo?'

'Don't remember,' mumbled Roo, although of course she did. A day trip to the beach in Brighton was the last fun thing she'd

done with her mum and dad. A month later her mother was gone, knocked from her bike by a garbage truck.

After that, the fun had gone AWOL from the Thorns' lives.

While her aunt had made a call, Roo had stared blankly at the book of maps. Ever since the police had come knocking, she'd felt lost in a labyrinth with no path out.

The way Roo saw it, her future had been stolen. The road ahead was treacherous. She couldn't go backwards in time, and she felt too broken-hearted to move on. She was stuck.

She'd returned to the present to find Joni lifting the road atlas from her unresisting hands.

'Tell you what, Roo, we'll draw up a proper plan tomorrow once we've had a good night's rest and a hearty breakfast,' said her aunt. 'We'll be spending tonight at Green Acres Holiday Park, the best campsite in West Sussex. You'll love it there. Their Ranch House Café will have a crackling fire and fab organic food.'

Starting the engine, she'd cranked up Betty's feeble heater.

'Joni, are you sure this is a good idea?' her friend had asked, shivering at the window. 'It's hardly the best time of year for a camping trip. I'm sorry I don't have room for you, but I can loan you cash for a hotel?'

'Thanks, Celia, but there's no need to waste money on a hotel when we have Betty,' Joni had replied airily, putting the camper into gear. 'Anyhow, you know me. Once I get the wind in my sails, I like to go, go, go.'

'Yeah, I do know you,' Celia had muttered in a way that didn't exactly fill Roo with confidence.

A memory came to Roo. Her mum shaking her head about Joni being a 'hippy and a rolling stone'.

The phrase had lodged in Roo's mind, aged seven, because Joni, who'd stopped by their flat for a coffee with a tattooed, Harley-Davidson-motorbike-riding boyfriend in tow, looked nothing like a stone. Her mum had explained that she meant Joni was a free spirit who came and went with the breeze.

'A "rolling stone that gathers no moss" is someone who moves too swiftly to be dragged down by bills and other responsibilities. My sister's a hard worker when she works, I'll grant her that, but she can't stick to anything.'

How long would Joni stick to being an aunt? That was the question weighing on Roo's mind.

Now, as Joni steered Betty along a country lane so narrow that frosty twigs scratched at her sides, Roo's gaze went to the rucksack at her feet. It bulged with the brown paper parcel that the concierge had handed Joni as they'd left Gary's apartment block.

'The man who delivered it was in a rush, but said to make certain you received it.' The concierge scowled. 'Like there was some doubt.'

The moment Roo saw the sender's address, Doukis & Jain Solicitors, Brick Lane, she'd guessed the parcel had something to do with her dad. Her heart had done an agonising flip.

Joni had avoided her eyes as she stuffed it into Roo's half-empty rucksack. 'Let's open this when we're settled for the night, shall we, Roo?'

Despite this unpromising start, her aunt had managed to make the first part of their journey to West Sussex enjoyable. She'd played music that lifted Roo's spirits so much that, for a while, she'd almost felt happy. Their unplanned adventure had started to feel like an actual adventure.

Roo had never been camping. Everest climbers and survival experts excepted, she'd never in her life heard of anyone actively choosing to go camping in winter. The idea was strangely thrilling.

As the miles passed and the 'Big Smoke', as her dad had called London, fell behind them, Roo breathed easier.

She wasn't sorry to be saying goodbye to Gary and his sterile penthouse. Nor did she miss the council flat she'd shared with her dad. Too many memories. Within days of her father's passing, a new family had moved into No. 32 Grimsby Grove, erasing the Thorns' life there as if it had never been.

For those reasons, Roo had been glad to leave town . . . right up until Joni took the shortcut. Twenty stressful minutes on, the music had stopped, and Roo's stomach was once again a knot of nerves.

At the wheel, Joni frowned in concentration. Roo had a horrible feeling they were lost, though her aunt had yet to admit it. She was quite sure they'd passed the same crooked tree three times.

To distract herself, she prodded the rucksack containing the brown paper parcel with her trainer. The package was soft and squishy. It didn't seem big enough to contain thirty-six years of her dad's life.

A tear trickled down Roo's cheek. Before another could follow, her nostrils twitched. There was a faint whiff of burning.

An amber warning light flashed up on the dashboard.

'Ignore that,' said Joni, steering the camper along another rutted lane. 'Just Betty showing her age.'

As she spoke, the amber light turned red.

'Don't worry, Roo,' said Joni, sounding worried. 'She's probably low on oil or water. I'll stop and take a look. I'm pretty sure we're nearly at the campsite.'

She pulled in beside a field gate and turned off the engine, but it was already too late. Betty was coughing up smoke like a flu-stricken dragon.

In one fluid motion, Joni unclipped Roo's seat belt and grabbed a fleece. 'Roo, get out, quick, and take your jacket and rucksack with you!'

The instant she leapt into the biting cold, Roo knew they were in trouble. Beneath her flowery bonnet, Betty spat sparks.

Joni made no attempt to douse them with the mini fire extinguisher. Instead, she flung open the camper's rear doors and hauled out the suitcase and a large blue backpack.

'Joni, look!' cried Roo. 'Betty's leaking!'

Her aunt's horrified gaze followed Roo's to the oily puddle collecting beneath the camper's low-slung belly.

'She's going to blow,' Joni yelled incredulously. 'Betty's gonna blow. ROO, RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!'