

THE SURVIVAL STORY OF THE NONA SIBLINGS

AUSTRALIA

Twelve-year-old Stephen was trying desperately to keep his head above the salty waves.

He was treading water next to his sisters, Norita and Ellis. Their faces looked pale and scared as they bobbed up and down in the rough sea, doing their best to stay afloat. Nearby, their mum, dad and young brother were clinging on to the family's only life jacket.

"Swim over there!" their dad shouted, pointing towards a rocky outcrop. It seemed a very long way away. The siblings didn't want to leave their parents, but their dad insisted. He knew the three older children were good swimmers.

GETTING TO THE ROCK
WAS THEIR ONLY CHANGE
OF SURVIVAL.

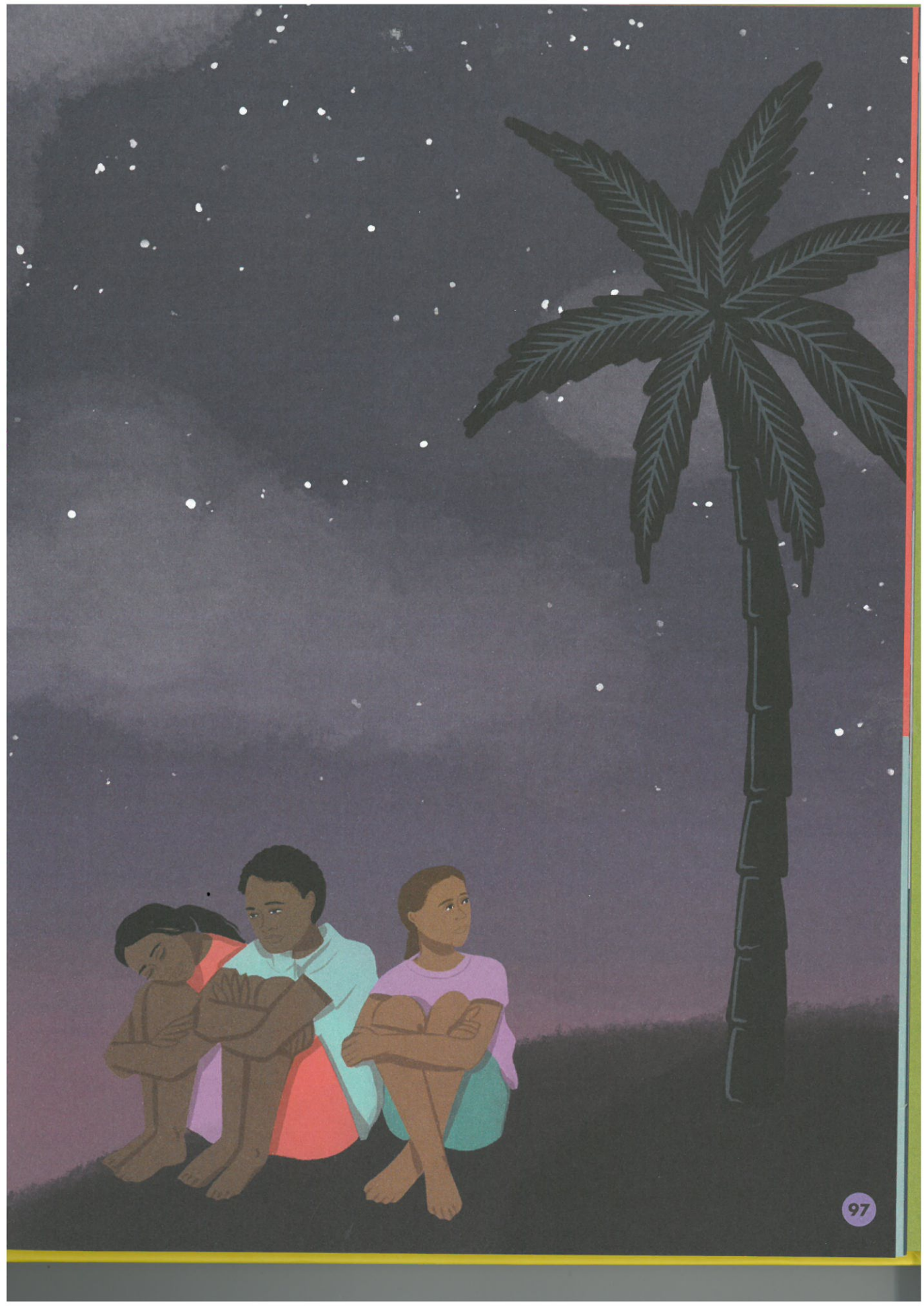
"Come on," said Ellis, the eldest sister. "Let's swim. Quietly." They all knew that sharks lived in these waters and they

didn't want to attract their attention. The three began swimming. Stephen turned around to see if his parents and brother were following, but they were still huddled in the water, clinging to the life jacket and holding on to each other.

Before the accident happened, the children had been in the boat, on their way to a birthday party with their parents. The family lived on Badu Island, part of the Torres Strait islands, which lie north of Australia. The party was on Thursday Island, a two-hour boat trip away. Halfway through the journey, disaster struck. The engine of their small dinghy failed and their boat was swamped by the waves. It capsized in the rough seas and the whole family were thrown into the water.

NOW THEIR PARENTS WERE
GONE AND IT WAS TERRIFYING.

It was a long, hard swim and it was three hours before the children finally



reached the rock. It was tiny, no more than 4 metres wide. They clambered on to it and clung together, shivering as the sea crashed against its rocky sides.

For three days they waited to see if anyone was coming to rescue them. Being thirsty was the worst thing. There was no rain, no fresh water at all, and all they had to eat were some oysters they found on the rock. The children realized that they couldn't stay there any longer. They could see an island in the distance and knew they had to try to get there. "We have to swim – or we'll die," said Stephen.

Plunging into the sea, the three children swam towards the island. They set off in the morning and didn't get there until the

afternoon. The island was deserted and only the size of a football pitch. But there was one palm tree. The children rushed to get the coconuts and tore the husks off with their teeth. After three days without water, the coconut water tasted so good.

Ellis, Stephen and Norita were stranded on the island for another three days, when suddenly they spotted something in the distance coming towards the island. It was their uncle in a boat. The children ran to him, crying, as he landed on the beach. They were hungry, thirsty and weak. But they had worked as a team, looking after each other and using their knowledge of the islands to help them against the odds. After surviving for six days on their own, they were hailed for their courage and bravery.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR BOAT CAPSIZES

Your boat has capsized and left you in the sea without a life jacket. Here is what you need to do:

- The water might be very cold and could make you go into shock, which you need to avoid.
- Fight the urge to swim until your body has adjusted to the temperature. This will take up to 90 seconds.
- To do this, lie on your back and float until you can catch your breath. Move your arms and legs gently to keep yourself afloat if you need to.
- Your clothing can also help you float, as it traps air between layers as you fall into water. The less you move, the more air will stay trapped.
- When you have adjusted to the water temperature, you can start to signal for help or swim to shore.
- Remember to always wear a life jacket if you can.

MAKE A RESCUE SIGNAL

If you ever find yourself stranded or injured and in need of rescue, getting help should be a priority, and to do this you need to attract attention. Never make a rescue signal unless you really need rescuing though.

- A fire is a great way to attract attention. During the day, gather leaves, grass and damp wood to create a lot of smoke, and by night, burn drier wood to make the fire even brighter. Make sure you build your fire in a clear area away from dry grass and trees – you don't want to accidentally start a wildfire.



- Three fires arranged in a triangle is an international distress signal.
- You can also arrange objects on the ground, such as rocks, wood or any reflective materials that you can find, to spell out 'SOS' or to make a large triangle. This will help you alert a passing helicopter or plane.



- Use a torch or shiny object to reflect direct sunlight at the people or vehicle you are trying to attract. Three short flashes, three long ones, and three more short flashes spells 'SOS' in Morse Code.



HOW TO CRACK A COCONUT

1. The hairy outer layer of the coconut is called the husk. You need to pull this off.
2. At one end of your coconut you'll see three dents that look a bit like two eyes and a mouth.
3. Between the two eyes you should find a 'rib' or 'seam'. Follow this to the middle of the coconut and imagine a line that runs around its fattest part.
4. Use a rock to crack the coconut along this imaginary line – after a few taps it should break in half.
5. Smell the inside of the coconut before you eat any – if it smells mouldy or sour then don't eat it. Otherwise, you can drink the water and then you can use a sharp stone or shell to scrape out the white 'meat' and eat it.

