



HOW HEMI CLEANED HIS ROOM

by Steph Matuku

CHARACTERS: HEMI · TIA · POPOTO · MUTANT FISH (played by two actors) · RUBBISH

Scene: **HEMI** and **TIA** are at the beach.

HEMI. Hey, Tia! Why are you wearing my shorts?

TIA. Hey, Hemi! Why are you wearing my hat?

HEMI. Because I couldn't find *my* hat. Our bedroom is a mess – your stuff is everywhere!

TIA. Your stuff is everywhere, too!

HEMI. Maybe we should ask Mum to buy a bigger house. Then we wouldn't have to share a room.

TIA. Doubtful. They cost like a million dollars. Mum can't even afford to buy me some decent shorts. I'm stuck with these ugly ones.

HEMI. Those are my shorts!

TIA. True. That explains why they're so ugly.

HEMI. That's it. There's no option. I'm getting my own land so I can build my own place.

TIA (*amused*). Sure you are. How do you plan on doing that?

HEMI. I'm going to pull it up from the bottom of the ocean, just like Māui.

TIA. My hat must be too tight for you. It's squishing your brain, isn't it?

HEMI (*ignoring his sister*). I have it all figured out. Look.

HEMI takes a jawbone from his pocket. It's attached to a piece of string.

TIA. Yuck! Where did you get that?

HEMI. From the beach. It's a baby whale's jawbone.

TIA. A sheep's jawbone, more like.

HEMI holds the string and throws the jawbone into the sea.

HEMI. Now we just have to wait for a bit.

TIA (*shaking her head*). Sometimes I can't believe we're related.



HEMI (excited). He ika nui kei taku aho! I've got a big fish on the line!

HEMI tugs on the string, and the **POPOTO** appears, wrapped in a fishing net.

POPOTO. Help! Get this thing off me! Bad hug, bad hug!

TIA. It's a dolphin in a net! Quick!

TIA and **HEMI** unwrap the dolphin.

POPOTO. Thanks! These stringy jellyfish are very clingy. I was swimming along, minding my own business, and it came up and gave me a big hug. "Oh, that's nice," I said, "but your hug's a bit tight, get off!" The more I wriggled, the more it hugged me. I can only conclude that stringy jellyfish lead sad, isolated lives.

TIA. It's not a stringy jellyfish!

POPOTO. What is it, then?

HEMI. It's a fishing net. People use them to catch heaps of fish.

POPOTO. A net? That doesn't sound fair. People are obviously very greedy. I eat one fish at a time. I only take what I need. Anyway, thanks for your help. I might leave while I have the chance.

The **POPOTO** swims away, and **HEMI** throws the jawbone again.

TIA. Maybe that dolphin has a point ...

HEMI (not listening). Come on, new land! Come on, new bedroom!

TIA. Come on, new brother!

HEMI (tugging and pulling). He ika nui kei taku aho!

HEMI is struggling, so **TIA** helps him. They pull up the **MUTANT FISH**.

TIA. Ew. What is that?

MUTANT FISH HEAD 1 (offended). I'm a fish, of course.

HEMI. With two heads? And four flippers?

MUTANT FISH HEAD 2. So? You've got two heads and four flippers.

TIA. We're two different people! And these aren't flippers – they're arms.

MUTANT FISH HEAD 2. Arms? Never heard of them.

HEMI. Do your parents look like you?

MUTANT FISH HEAD 1. Only when they're swimming back to back.

It all happened when I was just an egg –

MUTANT FISH HEAD 2 (interrupting). And I was just an egg.

A giant cloud of floating sludge drifted over me and changed me.

MUTANT FISH HEAD 1. And me! I hatched into ...

The **MUTANT FISH** spins around, showing off.

MUTANT FISH HEAD 2. Ta da! This! I can swim very fast, but sometimes I argue with myself.

MUTANT FISH HEAD 1 (pointing to the left). I want to go this way.

MUTANT FISH HEAD 2 (pointing in the same direction).

I want to go this way!

MUTANT FISH HEAD 1. No. This way!

TIA. It's the same way!



MUTANT FISH HEADS 1 and 2. Who asked you?

Come on. Let's go.

*The **MUTANT FISH** swims away.*

TIA. The wonders of the deep! Are you going to try again?

HEMI. I suppose so. But this is the last time. I'm getting a sore arm. Cross fingers.

***HEMI** throws the jawbone. He gets a bite.*

HEMI. He ika nui kei taku aho!

***HEMI** and **TIA** pull up a big pile of **RUBBISH**.*

TIA (holding her nose). Pooh! What a pong!

RUBBISH. Rubbish!

TIA. Exactly.

HEMI (to the rubbish). You shouldn't be in the ocean.

RUBBISH. Why not? There's heaps of other rubbish to hang out with, although we prefer the term marine debris. We're a serious threat to fish, seabirds, marine reptiles, marine mammals ... (proudly) we've got it covered!

HEMI. That's terrible!

RUBBISH. Rubbish!

TIA. Exactly.

RUBBISH. Not exactly. I've already told you – it's marine debris. Stop minimising our efforts! We're not called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch for nothing.

TIA (exasperated). That's it! Hemi?

***HEMI** understands his sister's look and wraps his piece of string around the **RUBBISH**. **TIA** helps.*

RUBBISH. Oi! Get off.

HEMI. No way. You're coming with us! Let's go, Tia.

TIA. What about your new land?

HEMI. To be honest, I think the best option is to clean up the land we've already got. Don't you agree?

TIA (nodding). We can start with our bedroom – that'll give us more space.

HEMI. All right, but we'll take this rubbish to the dump first. What time does it close? (He looks at his watch.) I wish it wasn't so late. The sun's almost setting. You know, Māui once –

TIA. No.

HEMI. Got more hours in the day by –

TIA. No!

HEMI. But I know how to make flax ropes!

***TIA** ignores her brother and leads the **RUBBISH** offstage.*

HEMI (calling after his sister). I've already got the jawbone!

TIA (from offstage). No!

HEMI. Sisters!

***HEMI** exits, looking glum.*

illustrations by Allan Wrath

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