



The Lesson

by Emelia King, year 8,
Evans Bay Intermediate

Author's note: The following is based on a true story that was told to me by my great-grandmother. While the story is real, most of the names are fictional.

Elsie gave a small sigh as she watched her granddaughter whizzing around the field. Cece was rambunctious, feisty, and – most importantly – persuasive, and she'd finally persuaded Elsie to let her drive the ride-on mower.

"I'll stay in the field out front, Granny, where you can watch me with your eagle eyes," she'd said. "Consider it a favour! I'll be mowing one of your overgrown lawns."

So there Elsie was, anxiously stirring a cup of tea and reminiscing about when Cece had been a baby. It seemed like a lifetime ago, and in a way, it was.

Elsie recalled a very different driving session, a long time ago, with a *much* more disastrous ending. Just as she reached for a second spoonful of sugar, there was an ear-splitting *screeeech* and the ominous sound of cracking branches. OK, maybe the ending wasn't so different.

The corners of Elsie's mouth twitched into a smile as she took in the scene.

The mower had crashed into a hedge.

Elsie opened the window. "Get in here, you silly little girl," she called out affectionately. "Make sure you're in one piece!" She sat back, her brow furrowed. The scene was uncommonly familiar ...

"Granny?" said a timid voice.

Elsie jerked back to reality. Cece was standing in the doorway, her wild auburn hair strewn with leaves, a small cut on her cheek.

"Granny?" she said again, her eyes wobbling with tears.

"None of that, silly goose," Elsie said kindly. "Are you OK? Come and sit down. I'll tell you a story. You're not the first one to crash. My father did something similar, though not into that exact hedge. Sit down. I'll tell you what happened."

It was around 1920, during Elsie's teenage years. Her father sat down at the breakfast table with a thump. "I want you to teach me how to drive," he said.

He may as well have dropped a bomb on her head. Elsie sat there, dumbstruck. "How ... how to drive?" she stuttered.

"Yes, how to drive! The world is moving, and I want to move with it. You know how to drive, and I don't."

"Of course, Dad. I just ... um ... come outside, and I'll teach you the basics."

As usual, Tilly stuck her nose in. Little cousins, in Elsie's opinion, were worse than siblings. "Watcha doing, Elsie?"

"Go away, Tilly!"

"Won't." She stuck out her tongue. "You're teaching Uncle Harry how to drive, aren't you?"

"None of your business. Get your nose out of it." Elsie shoved Tilly out of the way and stormed out of the door.

"MUM! DAD! AUNT BETH! ELSIE IS TEACHING UNCLE HARRY HOW TO DRIVE!" Tilly yelled, racing to join them on the street.

Elsie's father was standing by the car. "What are you smiling about?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said unconvincingly. "It seems there will be an audience."

Elsie bit her lip nervously and pointed inside the car. "You push that pedal to make it go forward, and you use the wheel to steer. Piece of cake." She stepped back. "Just drive to the end of the street and stop. Don't worry about any other cars. You know how quiet this street is."

"Elsie ..." her father protested.

"Off you go!" she said with a smile. "You'll be fine, Dad."

"But Elsie ..."

"Go!"

Her father got in the car, looking pale, and began to move cautiously down the street.

"Faster, Harry, faster!" shouted Uncle Peter. "A snail would beat you at the rate you're going!"

The car sped up a tiny bit.

"Faster, faster, faster!" shouted Tilly, skirt flying as she jiggled on the spot.

The car went a little faster. And a little faster. And a little faster. It was only when it was halfway down the street that ice flooded Elsie's veins. She had forgotten to show her dad how to use the brakes.

She gave a shriek and ran down the street, yelling desperately, trying to tell her father how to stop. The car was getting faster by the second, and Elsie could do nothing but watch as it left the safety of their little road and entered the main street.

A scream echoed in Elsie's ears, but she barely registered it – she was too fixated on the moving car. It was halfway across the main street. Her heart was pounding. Possibly, just possibly, no other cars would come and possibly, just possibly ...

There was a screech, then the ominous sound of cracking branches. The car had hit a hedge.

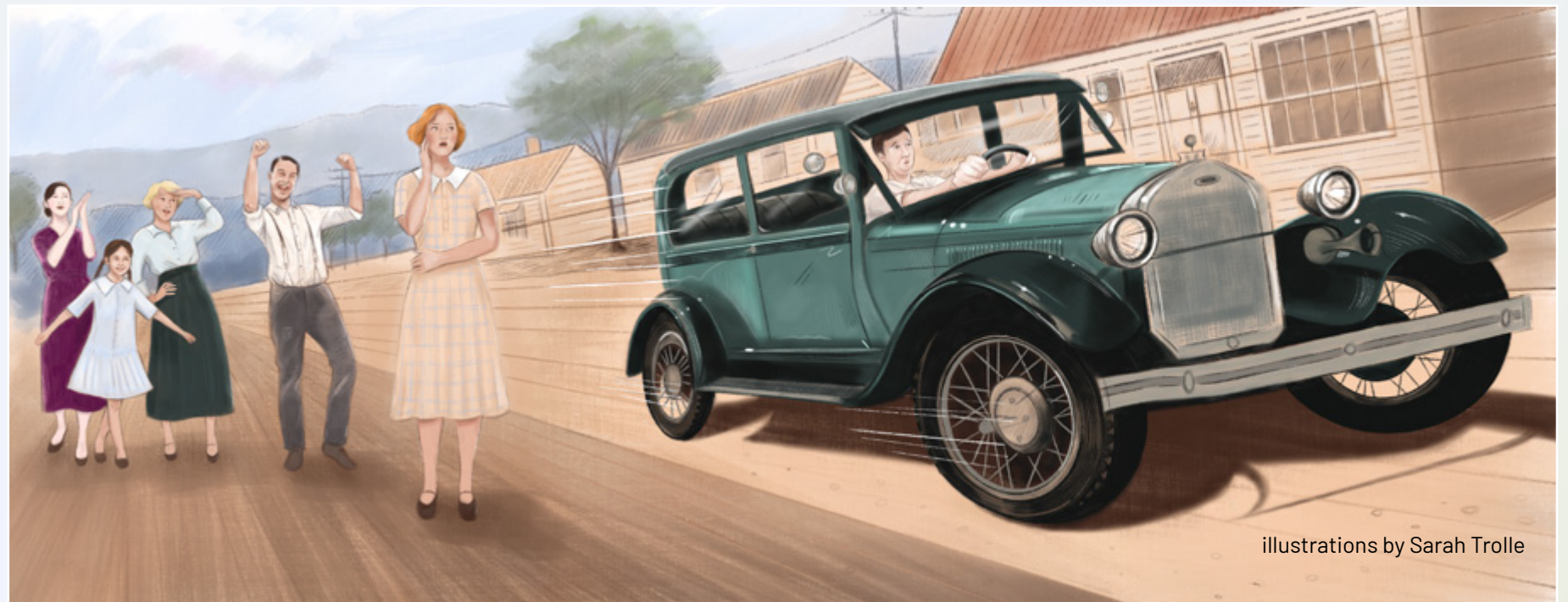
Back on the couch with Cece, Elsie said, "I'll never forget the terrified thought that

flew through my head. *I've killed my father!* We all sprinted down the road. By that point, I was laughing hysterically – or maybe I was crying. Father was OK, barely had a scratch, and he was laughing, too – big, heaving belly laughs that set us all off.

"We chuckled later, but in the moment, I tell you! Anyhow, the car didn't get off as lightly. Neither did the hedge. But all's well that ends well," Elsie chortled. "What a day!"

She hauled herself off the couch and went to the kettle. "I think you've learnt a lesson, Cecilia Brook. That persuasive charm of yours can sometimes get you into a tight spot."

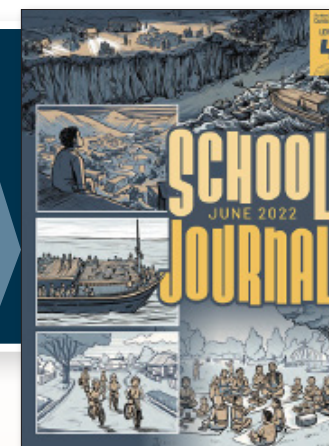
"Yes, Granny," said Cece, stifling a laugh. "But now I know that I got it from you."



illustrations by Sarah Trolle

The Lesson

by Emelia King, year 8, Evans Bay Intermediate
illustrations by Sarah Trolle



Text and illustrations copyright © Crown 2022

For copyright information about how you can use this material, go to:
<http://www.tki.org.nz/Copyright-in-Schools/Terms-of-use>

Published 2022 by the Ministry of Education,
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
www.education.govt.nz

All rights reserved.

Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

ISBN 978 1 77690 569 0 (online)

ISSN 2624 3636 (online)

Publishing Services: Lift Education E Tū

Editor: Susan Paris

Designer: Simon Waterfield

Literacy Consultant: Melanie Winthrop

Consulting Editors: Ariana Tikao and Emeli Sione

SCHOOL JOURNAL LEVEL 4 JUNE 2022

Curriculum learning area

English

Reading year level

N/A

Keywords

accidents, ākonga writing, driving, family story, grandparents, humour, inherited traits, lessons, memories, student writing, tūpuna