

City of Wind

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The wind was rattling the roof of the house and attacking the windows. Thomas was lying awake in his bed. For the first time in his life, it seemed uncomfortable. Right bed, wrong room. Only this morning (though it seemed to Thomas as if it had been a year) had he woken up in his cozy room in Palmerston North, but now he was in his new house in Wellington. While in Palmerston North, Thomas thought that it was the windiest city in the world. The first few hours in Wellington proved Thomas wrong.

Thomas's mum and dad spent almost the whole day packing and talking to the driver of a big truck that had carried all their stuff to Wellington. Because his help was not needed, Thomas, meanwhile, had to entertain himself by wandering around, and sometimes breathing on a window and drawing stick men with his finger. Thomas was a little worried and anxious since he didn't know anyone in Wellington, but in two days he would be going to a new school. Now he didn't want to sleep at all.

Thomas slowly got out of bed and moved to the window. Shifting the curtains, he caught a glimpse of the stormy night. He should have seen the Wellington Waterfront, but the clouds were blocking out the moon, so Thomas couldn't see a thing.

Thomas stood there for a few minutes, but just as he was about to go back to bed, the clouds shifted, and Thomas saw a strange shadow descending from the sky just above the waterfront. The shadow resembled a gentleman in a top hat who was holding a cane. Thomas blinked, puzzled. It was still there. Thomas rubbed his eyes. It was STILL there. Unexpectedly, the man waved his cane jauntily in greeting, and was gone. Thomas started to feel drowsy and forgot all his worries. He stumbled back to bed and instantly fell asleep.

Thomas woke up as the sunlight flooded through a gap in the curtains. The curtains swayed in the morning breeze. Thomas was in such a good mood, that even the weather seemed to be celebrating. He jumped out of bed and pulled on his favourite t-shirt and shorts. He attempted to smooth his grown blonde hair and skipped off to the living room. His mum and dad were already waiting for him to go out for breakfast.

Half an hour later, Thomas was eating poached eggs on toast that he had ordered in a waterfront cafe. A big, hairy bumblebee was clumsily trying to land on his glass of apple juice.

"Mum, can I *not* go to school tomorrow?" asked Thomas.

Mum gently stroked his hand and said:

"I know you're worried, darling. But it will be alright. I am sure you will find new friends."

“Remember we met your new teacher, Mr. Appleyard? You liked him, he will help you,” added Thomas’ dad.

“Okay,” sighed Thomas.

They finished eating. Thomas’ dad needed to go to work for a couple of hours. Thomas and his mum decided to go for a stroll on the waterfront, then visit Te Papa.

RING! RING! Thomas’s mum’s phone was ringing. Shoving a \$10 dollar note into Thomas’s hand, and answering the telephone call at the same time, Thomas’s mum whispered:

“Buy yourself an ice cream, and come back here to play on the playground!”

Thomas nodded and ran off towards an ice cream kiosk.

“Hello!” said a lady in the ice cream kiosk energetically. “What can I get for you?”

“Can I please have one scoop of black doris plum?” asked Thomas, handing the lady the \$10 note. “And a friend,” he added inwardly.

The lady scooped the ice cream and put it on a cone.

“Here you go!” she said, handing it to Thomas.

“Thank you!” said Thomas, heading off towards the playground.

He sat down on the side of the playground and licked the ice cream, wondering how many licks it takes to finish a scoop. His mum waved at him, smiling, still talking on the telephone. A seagull came up to Thomas and squeaked loudly.

“What, lonely too?” asked Thomas with sympathy.

The seagull tilted its head to the side but didn’t reply. Suddenly, Thomas noticed a honey-yellow amber cane head. Inside it was a perfectly preserved dragonfly. Thomas slowly raised his head. The cane belonged to an old gentleman in a top hat.

The gentleman was looking at him, smiling.

“Nice day, isn’t it?” said the gentleman kindly.

“Y-yes.” mumbled Thomas.

He went back to eating his ice cream. Suddenly, he saw the dragonfly swiftly turn its head to look at him. Thomas blinked. The dragonfly was still looking at him.

At the same moment, a bird-like voice came from down below:

“Can I have that ice cream?”

Thomas looked down. The seagull was staring up at him.

“Ex-excuse m-me?” said Thomas.

"I said 'Can I have that ice cream?'" said the seagull in a slightly irritable voice.

"It's... it's not good for you. And anyway, aren't you supposed to eat fish?" said Thomas, not knowing what he was saying.

"Meanie!" squeaked the seagull and walked away, lumbering from side to side.

Thomas looked up at the gentleman to see if he had noticed those mystical events. But the gentleman had disappeared.

Thomas's mum had finished talking on the telephone.

"Sorry, darling, I need to go to work. I'll take you to Te Papa, and dad will pick you up in an hour," she said apologetically.

"OK, mum," replied Thomas, absolutely perplexed.

Te Papa was fascinating. Thomas found himself examining the colossal squid over and over again. One of these times, while examining the colossal squid, Thomas heard a familiar voice behind him:

"What a strange creature! Did you know that this is the biggest colossal squid ever caught?"

Thomas wheeled around and saw the glistening amber cane head. This time the dragonfly in the amber cane head was fluttering its wings. Thomas looked up. It was the gentleman again.

"Yeah, I wonder what it ate!" said another voice behind Thomas, "Anyway, good that it doesn't eat humans!" added the voice in an undertone.

Again, Thomas wheeled around. The second voice belonged to a sandy-haired boy of about his age.

"It eats fish and other squids, luckily," said the gentleman, smiling, and walked around to the other side of the squid.

"Hello!" said the sandy-haired boy to Thomas, "My name is Jake, what's yours?"

"I'm Thomas, nice to meet you!" said Thomas politely the way his mum taught him.

"The giant squid *is* really something, isn't it?" said Jake, "When I grow up I will be a marine biologist... or a cricket player. This exhibition is my favourite by the way, what's yours? "

"I don't really have one..." said Thomas shyly.

"That's alright, have you seen the whale heart yet?" said Jake quickly. He seemed to be a very talkative boy.

"No... But I would like to see it!" replied Thomas.

"Let's go there, then, it's this way. The whale heart is way bigger than the colossal squid. You can even climb inside!"

It was hard to stop Jake from talking.

Thomas' time at Te Papa was very fun and flew by fast. Thomas soon found himself saying goodbye to Jake.

"I have to leave now. Sorry, Jake," said Thomas. Then, looking at the expression on Jake's face, he said very quickly, "I'm sure we will meet each other again, though."

"See you," replied Jake sadly.

Thomas walked down the stairs wistfully. It was sad leaving Jake, though they had only known each other for less than an hour.

"Oh, there you are, Thomas! I nearly lost you!" called Thomas' father from the entrance.

Together, Thomas and his dad walked out of Te Papa. They were heading home.

"What's up, buddy?" asked his dad.

"I made a new friend."

It was Thomas' first day at school. Thomas and his mum got out of their car in front of the new school. There was turmoil all around. A sudden gust of wind blew Thomas' uniform hat off his head.

"Be careful, Tom!" called Thomas' mother.

Thomas turned around to pick up the hat, but a sandy-haired boy wearing the school uniform was already picking it up, beaming at Thomas.

"Mum! That's Jake! The boy I met at Te Papa yesterday!" yelled Thomas happily, "We are in the same school!"

At the same time, a gentleman in a top hat who was holding a cane was standing on the Wellington Waterfront, looking out to the sea. He was talking to the amber cane head.

"So, Lady Rose," he was saying to the dragonfly in the amber, "our business is over here."

"Certainly, Mr. Wind!" agreed the dragonfly.

And with a heavy gust of wind, they were gone.