

Home to TI

My parents had always talked a lot about TI. They were always telling me how green it was, how warm, how blue the sea was, and how colourful the flowers and birds were. Even though they hadn't been back, they still felt as if they belonged there.

But I didn't. I was from western Queensland. I loved the desert and the rocks, and the lakes and the claypans. I loved red earth and brown rocks and hills, milky-coffee coloured creeks and parched white skies. I loved Currawinya best in summer, when the air was so dry it felt as if it was sucking moisture from my body, but I loved it in winter too, when the night air was so cold that it bit at the inside of my nose, and the sky was filled, absolutely filled, with blazing white stars.

The other thing I loved was to draw my special places. I'd always drawn and painted, but for my fourteenth birthday that year, Mum and Dad gave me something I really wanted—a huge box of special oil pastels. Once I'd started to use them, I knew that oil pastels were my medium. They seemed to be just right for the way I worked, and the things I drew. The drawings seemed to fly off my artist's block—drawings of shallow, sedge-lined lakes, creeks, plains and piles of rocks. When I looked into my box now, I could see how much of the reds and browns and yellows I'd used. Some of the pastels were just stubs. I needed to stock up, I thought.

Mum and Dad were still at the computer. Now they were onto an airline site, checking out flight times and fares. This was looking serious. This time, it looked as if they meant it. "Mum, Dad," I said quickly. "Do you think—aren't you needed here? I mean, it is the holidays soon..."

Though December and January were the hottest times of the year at Currawinya, it was the time when lots of families visited the park. They camped, and fished, and walked, and looked at the wild birds and animals. The camping ground outside the park was often full in the school holidays. Dad couldn't really afford to be away.

Mum and Dad looked at each other uncertainly.

“Oh!” said Mum.

“Maybe...” said Dad.

Whew! I thought. Saved! It looked as if TI was off.

Then I saw their faces change. They’d made up their minds. Dad said definitely, “This is special. If we don’t go now, we never will.”

“This is it,” Mum agreed. “We’ll go right after Christmas.”

And Dad pulled out his credit card and booked the tickets. Oh no! I thought. Prickly heat! Itchy sea water! Biting insects! Blood-sucking leeches! And what about the vampire bats?

“That’s it,” Dad said. “It’s done!” Mum and Dad hugged each other. They were so excited. “I just can’t believe we’re really going!” Mum said. Neither can I, I thought gloomily.



“Better get onto the Internet,” Dad said to me the next day. “You’ll need to stock up your oil pastels. You’ll be wanting to do some drawing on our trip, won’t you?”

“Don’t know,” I said. “Maybe.” I thought briefly about not taking my oil pastels at all, just to show them, but then I thought that was silly. And if Dad was willing to buy me a whole lot of new colours, I might as well have them. I got onto the art supplies site I used, and started selecting colours. Dad watched me. After a moment, he stopped me. “Why are you picking those colours?”

I was surprised. “Because I need them,” I said. I looked at the reds and browns and yellows on the screen. “I’ve used up a lot of these colours.”