

# THE CASE OF THE MISSING EMU



## Prologue

If you are going to save Parliament from disaster at only ten years old, then having your best friend by your side is probably the way to do it.

Mila and Kai are detectives. Well, detectives in training anyway. They learnt from the best. Kai's mum was a Senior Sergeant with the Australian Federal Police and always solving thrilling crime cases. With Mila's super code-cracking ability, and Kai's ability to spot and capture details with his trusty camera ... they were a sleuthing duo not to be messed with.

But after a long dry spell of no mysteries to solve, Mila was getting frustrated. She lay on the grass in Kai's front garden looking bored.

'Kai,' she moaned. 'I can feel my brain starting to shrink. If I don't get cracking on a mystery soon, I'll lose my super-sleuthing powers. Do you think your mum will let us help her with the case she's working on?'

'Um, I don't think we're going to need my mum ... Is that a kangaroo?' Kai exclaimed. 'Where on earth has that come from?'

Kai was right. A kangaroo was jumping full bolt up the quiet dead-end street heading straight towards them.

'Help, help, HELP,' cried the kangaroo. 'My friend Emu has really done it this time. Yes, Emu has crossed the line, gone too far. Oh what a disaster!'

Kai and Mila stared at each other, then at the flustered kangaroo. 'What's your name? How can we help?' they asked.

'My name is Kangaroo. I live with Emu on the Commonwealth Coat of Arms at Old Parliament House. Emu was muttering last night about having a duty to bring all Australians together, and when I woke up this



morning Emu was gone. All that was left was a sticky note with the letter **E** on it. The Prime Minister is leading the tour for a special school excursion tomorrow and we must have Emu back on the Coat of Arms before all the students arrive. Will you please help me?’

‘This is just the kind of case we are great at solving. Never fear, Mila and Kai are here!’ Mila shouted, excitedly.

Kai rolled his eyes and groaned. ‘Oh Mila, we need to work on our catchphrase. But yep, I’m in. Where do we start?’



## Chapter 1

'It's a bit early for a party isn't it?' Mila asked, straining to hear the faint sounds of music in the air. They all listened carefully.

Emu always loves a good party,' Kangaroo pondered. 'I'm sure that's a great place to start the journey.'

'What are we waiting for?' Mila started running.

'Hold up, I want to get a photo of where the trail has begun.' Kai said, snapping the letter **E** with his camera.

Following the music, the trio raced off and soon came to a park where a crowd of people were gathered for what looked to be some kind of ceremony.

The Australian National Anthem was playing.

*'Australians all let us rejoice ...'*

'Hmm, rejoice ... I've always wondered what that word meant,' Kai said thoughtfully.

'Oh, it's one of Emu's favourites,' Kangaroo replied. 'It means to show how joyous and delighted you are. Like these people now, they are all rejoicing because they are so happy their friend has become an Australian citizen today.'

'Look – another sticky note on the speaker over there,' Mila blurted in excitement.

Running over to it they saw it was the letter **E** again.

'I can see Emu's prints in the mud here, they are pointing over there towards that sandpit,' cried Mila. Dashing over to the sandpit, she picked up another sticky note showing the letter **R**.

Meanwhile, Kai was busy snapping photos of the



sandpit. 'Look at the sand guys, it looks like golden soil in this light, doesn't it?'

Kangaroo's eyes gleamed. 'That's another line from the Australian National Anthem. I wonder if Emu is giving us clues from the lyrics of the song?'

*'We've golden soil and wealth for toil.'*

'If that's the case, what could the next clue be?' asked Kai. 'What does the word toil mean, Kangaroo?'

'It means to work hard. So wealth for toil means that there is a reward for working hard.' Kangaroo stated. 'Like those soccer players – they're working hard so they can win more games.'

'Ooh, look,' Mila cried as one of the players kicked a goal. 'There's a sticky note on that goal post ... and it has the letter **F**. We're really on a roll now!'

'What's the next line in the Anthem, Kangaroo?'

*'Our home is girt by sea,'* Kangaroo sang. 'It means that

Australia is surrounded by sea.'

They all looked around.

'But we are nowhere near the sea,' pointed out Kai.

Mila started to race towards a pond in the park. 'Look, over here. There is a small island in the pond and I can see a bright yellow sticky note on the statue in the middle. That must be it, an island surrounded by water!'

Kangaroo hopped between each stepping stone in the water, grabbed the sticky note and headed back to where Mila and Kai were waiting.

The letter **D** appeared on the note.

'Well, we have quite the collection so far,' said Kai, holding all of the sticky notes together. 'Are there any other lines in the Anthem that can give us a clue as to where Emu might be?'

*'Our land abounds in nature's gifts,'* is next,' said Kangaroo. 'Nature's gifts ... hmmm. Well, we are surrounded by



nature here in this park. Where could Emu have left the next clue?’

They all looked around, but the park was getting full of people by now and there wasn’t anything obvious.

‘Hang on a minute, nature’s gifts ... gifts are tied with ribbons,’ thought Mila. ‘Look at that tree over there, it has a red ribbon wrapped around it, leftover from the Christmas carols that were held here last year. And look, there is a yellow sticky note on it. Let’s go!’

They all reached the tree and Kai reached for the note. The letter **N** was written.

‘Wow, we have collected six letters so far,’ Kai exclaimed. ‘**E, E, R, F, D,** and **N**’.

‘**EERFDN**, well that isn’t a word, is it?’ Mila questioned.

‘No, it’s not,’ agreed Kangaroo. ‘But look over there! Is that Emu running out of the park gates?’

‘Quick,’ yelled Kai. ‘Let’s catch up before Emu escapes again.’



## Chapter 2

'Oh no, we've lost Emu again,' cried Kai.

Mila, Kai and Kangaroo chased Emu out of the park and up the street that led into the heart of town. They were standing in front of their local bank looking around, but Emu seemed to have vanished.

Over near the ATM, something shiny on the ground caught Mila's eye.

'Take a look at this,' she exclaimed. 'It's a 50-cent coin. I've never seen one this sparkly. It must be brand new.'

'Wow, that's a beauty,' replied Kai. 'I'd love that for my collection at home. I'm fascinated by the different

details on each one. I've noticed they all have the Queen's head on the back. Why's that, Kangaroo?'

'Great question Kai. It's because one side of the coin has an Australian symbol and the other side has the symbol of the monarch,' Kangaroo explained. 'A monarch is the ruling king or queen of the time. Her Majesty The Queen was our head of state and the Queen of Australia when this coin was made.'

Kangaroo continued. 'There are many other symbols of the monarchy found in Australia. Take the Australian National Flag flying in front of this bank, for example. Can you see its three elements on the blue background? The Union Jack, the Commonwealth Star and the Southern Cross. The Union Jack at the top left corner represents the history of British settlement in Australia.'

'Oh, that's starting to make sense,' Kai said. 'So does that mean other flags have symbols on them as well?'

'Hey, what's that on the bottom of the flagpole,' interrupted Mila. 'Another sticky note!'



Mila bent down to collect the note. The letter **A** was scrawled on it. 'That's Emu's next clue. I wonder how many more there are to find?' she asked.

'We haven't got much to go on,' Kangaroo pondered. 'Perhaps we should look at the other symbols on the Australian National Flag. The Southern Cross might be a good place to start. Let's head to the Observatory and I can show it to you in more detail.'

After arriving at the Observatory, Kangaroo pointed out the Southern Cross in the dark night sky of the domed ceiling.

'The Southern Cross is a constellation of five stars that can easily be seen from the southern hemisphere,' Kangaroo described. 'It's shown on the Australian National Flag in white and is a reminder of Australia's geography.'

'Look up there, I can see a sticky note next to the Southern Cross constellation,' whispered Kai.

'Yes, there it is,' replied Mila. 'It has the letter **E** on it. But

look, there are two sticky notes. I can see another one next to that really bright star. It has the letter **N**. What could that be for?'

'Ah, yes of course,' said Kangaroo, excitedly. 'There's one more element on the Australian National Flag, below the Union Jack – a white Commonwealth Star, or Federation Star. Its seven points represent the unity of the states and the territories of the Commonwealth of Australia. The star is also featured on the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, where Emu and I usually sit.'

Looking around, there didn't seem to be any other sticky notes, so they headed outside into the bright sunshine.

'Hey Mila, there's our school across the road,' said Kai, pointing. 'Let's go and get a drink from the water fountain. All this hunting has made me thirsty!'

After having a drink, they settled down under the shade of the large gum tree in the courtyard and thought about their next move.





'Where would Emu have gone next?' Mila questioned. 'We've covered all of the symbols on the Australian National Flag.'

'What about the other two flags flying next to the Australian one?' Kai pointed to three poles at the front of the school where the flags were blowing gently in the wind. 'What can you tell us about the red, black and yellow one Kangaroo?'

'That's the Australian Aboriginal Flag. It was designed by an artist named Harold Thomas in 1971.' Kangaroo said. 'Look at the flag's coloured rectangle. The top half of the flag is black to symbolise Australian Aboriginal peoples. The red at the bottom represents the earth and the colour of ochre, which has special ceremonial significance and the circle of yellow in the centre is the sun. Mr Thomas said that the colours of the flag represent Australian Aboriginal peoples' spiritual connection to the land.'

Kai jumped up. 'We have a huge mural of the Australian Aboriginal Flag in the playground. Let's go and check it out.'

'Yes, but before we do that let Kangaroo explain the other flag. I've always seen it flying but I've never understood its meaning,' Mila stated.

'Isn't it great?' said Kangaroo. 'It's the Torres Strait Islander Flag and was designed by the late Bernard Namok from Thursday Island.'

'I love the symbol in the middle,' agreed Kai. 'What does it represent?'

'The green at the top and bottom of the Torres Strait Islander Flag represents the land,' Kangaroo described. 'The blue is the sea and the black lines are the Torres Strait Islander people. The centre shows a white Dhari or headdress representing their culture.'

'Wow, it's so clever the way flags represent parts of a culture,' said Mila. 'Why is there a white star underneath the Dhari?'

'Good question,' agreed Kangaroo. 'The star is an important symbol for navigating the sea. The points of the star represent the five island groups in the Torres



Strait and the white symbolises peace.'

'Well, there are no sticky notes on the flagpoles this time.' Mila sighed. 'Let's go and check out the mural like Kai suggested.'

Mila and Kai raced off, with Kangaroo bounding closely behind. They arrived at the big mural on the side of the hall.

'Oh Kai, you are so clever!' said Kangaroo, with glee. 'Look, there is a sticky note next to the Australian Aboriginal Flag on the mural. It has the letter **O** on it.'

Kai collected the note and carefully placed it in his pocket with the others.

Mila sat down on the log next to the creek noticing another sticky note. 'Oh look, this one has the letter **E**,' she said. 'Perhaps Emu left it here because the creek has grass on either side, representing the blue and green on the Torres Strait Islander Flag. Gosh, we are getting really good at unravelling these clues.'

'Yes, but we haven't spotted Emu for ages and time's getting on,' said a worried Kangaroo. 'There's no time to lose. Let's keep going.'



### Chapter 3

'Alright, let's look at what we've discovered so far?' Mila said. 'We've learnt the importance of the words in the Australian National Anthem and the way that symbols represent meanings on our flags. These both relate to Australia, but what could come next?'

'Maybe Emu wants us to learn more about the things that make Australia special? Kai responded. 'I'm sure there are loads of ways that our country is unique. Any ideas, Kangaroo?'

Kangaroo looked around. 'Yes, there are so many wonderful symbols that represent our country. They can be found right across our vast land. Take this Golden Wattle for instance,' Kangaroo said, pointing to the

green and gold flowering plant in a nearby garden. 'It's Australia's national floral emblem.'

'What's an emblem?' asked Kai.

'It's just a fancy word for a symbol that represents a country,' Kangaroo answered. 'Our floral emblem is the wattle because not only does it display our national colours of green and gold, but it's also an important part of our history. Australian Aboriginal peoples used wattle as a source of food and shelter, and for hunting tools, musical instruments and medicine. Wattle has been in the lives of every Australian who has lived in this land.'

'Look!' said Mila, peering at the tree trunk. There is a sticky note on it with the letter **R**. If green and gold are our national colours, perhaps they will lead us to the next clue.'

Kai, Mila and Kangaroo looked around. In the garden next to the wattle, stood a washing line with clothes drying in the hot afternoon sun. Right in the middle of the line hung a green and gold football jersey.



'Over there, another note!' Mila exclaimed, pointing to the jersey.

In one powerful jump, Kangaroo hopped over the garden fence and retrieved the note. Returning to Mila and Kai, they all looked at it. This time, the letter **A** was written.

'Kangaroo, why are our national colours green and gold?' Kai asked. 'Why didn't they choose colours from our special flags?'

'Lots of people wonder that,' Kangaroo said to Kai. 'It's because gold, or yellow, conjures images of Australia's beaches, minerals, grain harvests and the fleece of Australian wool. Green represents the forests, eucalyptus trees and the Australian landscape.'

'I'd never thought of it like that before,' he replied. 'Surely we must be getting close now?'

Kai gathered the notes and put them in his pocket with the others. 'It's almost dinner and we are running out of time.'

'Let's put our heads together and think,' Mila instructed. 'Emu has left us clues on symbols that represent Australia. We've had a tree and our national colours. Are there any other symbols we are missing, Kangaroo?'

'Well, there is one more very important one. Our national gemstone, the opal,' Kangaroo answered. 'It's famous across the world for its brilliant colours. In Indigenous stories, a rainbow created the colours of the opal when it touched the earth. It's also known as the *fire of the desert* and is a powerful symbol of Australia's dry desert lands. Has either of you ever seen one?'

'Ooh, yes,' Mila cried. 'My grandma has a beautiful brooch with a white opal. It shines like a rainbow when the sun catches it.'

'I've never seen one,' said Kai, sadly. 'I'd love to have a look one day.'

'Perhaps it could help us with the next clue,' Mila replied. 'My grandma only lives a few streets from here. Why don't we go and take a look now? She wears it every day and I'm sure she'd love to show you. It seems



we've reached a dead end here anyway?'

They all agreed this was a good plan and set off at a run, and a hop. As they approached the house, Kai pointed to an object on the floor near the letterbox.

'Hey, what's that?' he asked. 'It's catching the light, look at all the colours. It's beautiful!'

'I can't believe it,' Mila cried. She rushed over and picked it up. 'It's my grandma's brooch! It must have fallen from her blouse when she collected the mail. Wow, she will be so grateful we found it.'

'And look at the letterbox,' shouted Kai in excitement, as he pulled another sticky note from the opening. 'The letter **E**.'

'But we've almost run out of time,' declared Kangaroo. 'The sun is setting and we haven't seen Emu all afternoon. Oh, what are we going to do?'

'Well, we have so many letters,' said Mila gently. 'Let's sit down in my grandma's house and see if we can put

them all together. I'm sure the three of us can figure out Emu's message if we work together!'



## Epilogue

Kai spread the sticky notes out upon the kitchen table at Mila's grandma's house.

### E ERFDN AENOE RAE

'What does that mean?' Mila asked, scratching her head.  
'It makes no sense.'

Kangaroo was stomping a foot on the kitchen floor.  
Thump, thump, thump.

'What's wrong Kangaroo?' Kai asked.

'I've got something stuck on my foot!'

Kai reached down and looked at the bottom of Kangaroo's raised foot.

'It's a sticky note with the letter **W**,' he cried. 'You were the last clue, Kangaroo! You, Emu and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms! You are one of our most important symbols.'

### E ERFDN AENOE RAE W

'But it still doesn't make sense. We're missing something.' Mila moaned in frustration.

'I've got it,' Mila gasped in excitement. 'What's one thing kangaroos and emus have in common?'

Kangaroo gasped, with a growing smile. 'Oh, very clever Mila! Kangaroos and emus have difficulty walking backwards.'

'Maybe we need to reverse the order of the letters?' Mila said, getting to work on the sticky notes.

### WE ARE ONE AND FREE



'That's it,' Mila cried. 'This must be the message Emu wants to share with everyone.'

Kai and Mila looked around, but Kangaroo had vanished.

'Why would Kangaroo leave us when we're so close to finding Emu?' asked Kai in confusion.

'Oh I really hope they are both back on the Coat of Arms,' Mila gulped. 'Let's go and see.'

Kai and Mila raced off to Old Parliament House. Hardly daring to breathe, they looked up. There was the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.

'They're both there, look,' Kai whispered, breathing a sigh of relief.

Mila moved closer and peered up at the Coat of Arms. It was gleaming in the setting sun. 'We did it, Kai! Another case solved.'

As they started to leave, Mila glanced back and took one last look at the Australian animals standing tall and

proud. She couldn't be sure, but she thought she saw Emu give her a cheeky wink, and there was definitely a very relieved expression on Kangaroo's face.

