

The Cat, the Car and the Tsunami

Story by John Carr

Illustrations by Andrea Bianchi



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The Cat, the Car and the Tsunami

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Published by Wendy Pye Publishing Limited for SPCA Education

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Illustrations by Andrea Bianchi

ISBN: 978-1-99-102068-0

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Distributed in New Zealand by The SPCA

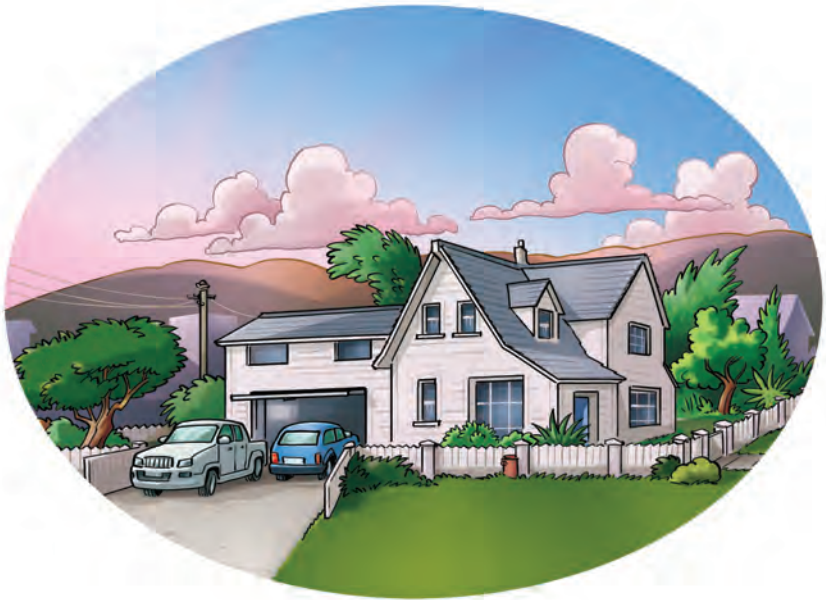
50 Westney Road, Mangere, Auckland 2022

Replacement copies can be purchased from: spca.nz/storybooks

Printed in China through Colorcraft Ltd, Hong Kong.

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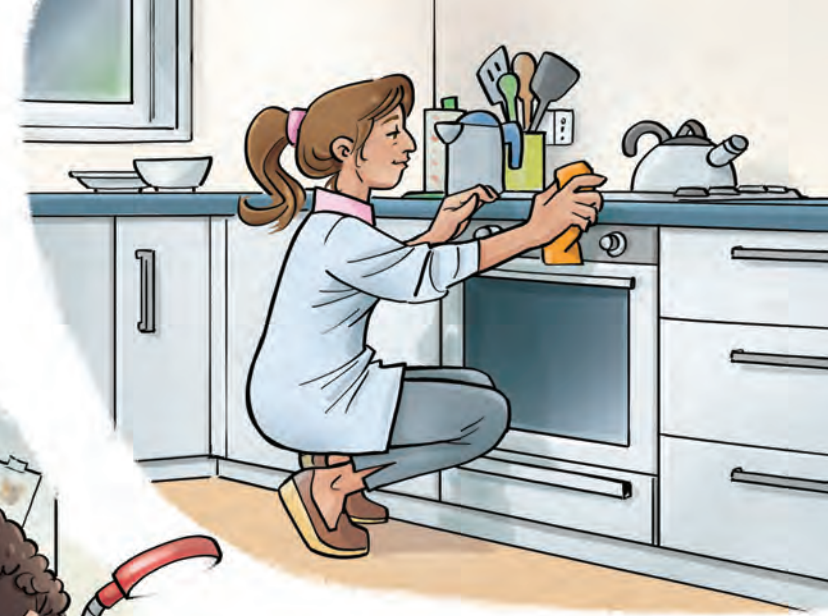


Chapter 1

Malik was in his bedroom studying while browsing the web. Mum was cleaning up in the kitchen and Dad was in the lounge listening to Zara read.

Amina was watching Teen Pop Quest on TV with her cat, Whiskers, purring quietly on her lap. It was a normal evening in the Hasan house.

At 7:47pm, everything changed.



Without warning, Whiskers leapt off Amina's lap. She rushed out of the lounge and through the open kitchen door faster than a bolt of lightning.

Before Amina could wonder what had alarmed Whiskers, she felt it. The floor shook and the lights flickered. Then came a low rumbling and the smashing sound of a vase hitting the floor.

"Earthquake!" shouted Mum as she stumbled from the kitchen. "Get under the table!"

Dad and Zara were already under it. The floor was shaking so much it wasn't easy to walk. Amina joined them just as Malik staggered through the door.

"Earthquake!" he shouted, but they already knew. Malik dropped to the floor, crawled to the table and covered his head with his hands.



For a minute that seemed more like an hour, the ground rocked and rumbled. Then it stopped. Stunned and silent, the family helped each other to their feet. Mum was the first to speak.

“That was quite a long quake,” she said.
“Everyone OK?”

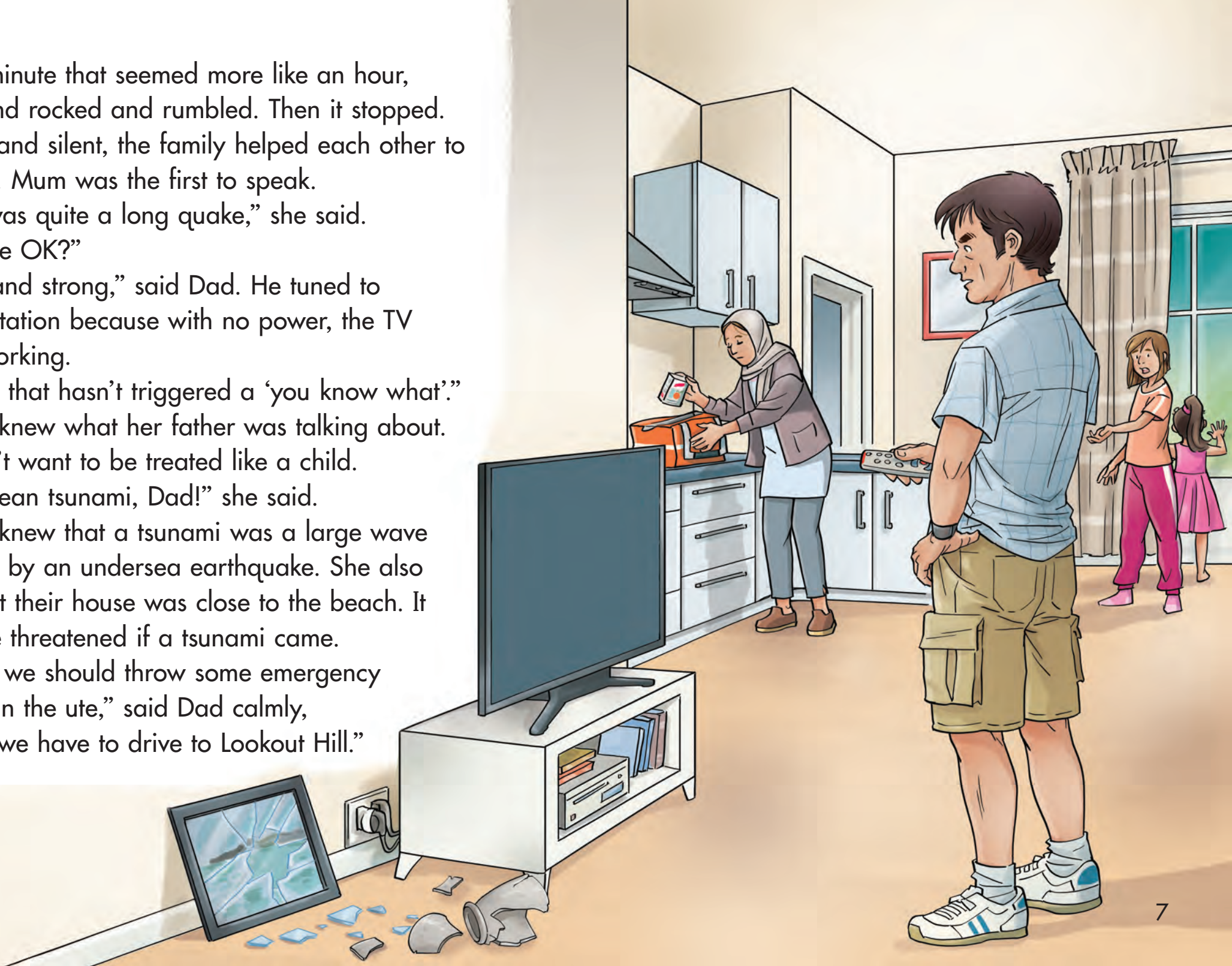
“Long and strong,” said Dad. He tuned to a radio station because with no power, the TV wasn’t working.

“I hope that hasn’t triggered a ‘you know what’.”
Amina knew what her father was talking about. She didn’t want to be treated like a child.

“You mean tsunami, Dad!” she said.

Amina knew that a tsunami was a large wave triggered by an undersea earthquake. She also knew that their house was close to the beach. It would be threatened if a tsunami came.

“I think we should throw some emergency supplies in the ute,” said Dad calmly, “in case we have to drive to Lookout Hill.”



Chapter 2

Water containers, emergency food and first-aid supplies were put into the ute. Then Malik went to check on the neighbours. Mum filled several bags with things the family might need. She packed clothes, blankets, pots, torches, laptops, chargers and gumboots.

It was Amina's job to listen to the radio and scan the civil defence website for information.

"There's been a 7.1 earthquake under the sea, 500 kilometres from here," she reported. "They're not certain yet if it has triggered a tsunami. They say that everyone near the coastline should prepare to evacuate."



Everything was in the ute. Malik belted Zara into the car seat.

“OK,” said Mum. “Let’s go! Have we forgotten anything?”

“Just Amina,” said Zara.

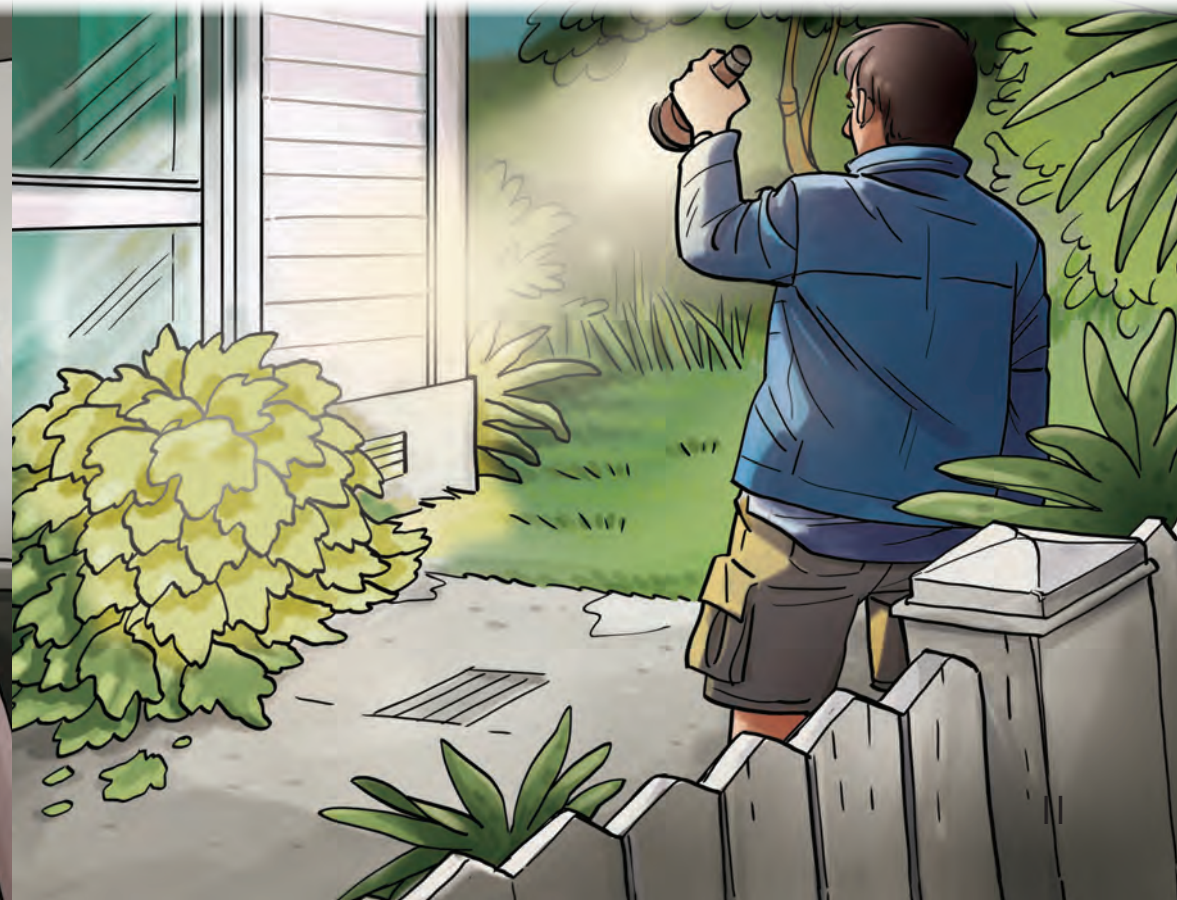
“I thought Amina was here,” said Mum in a shocked voice.

“I’ll get her,” said Dad. He jumped out of the ute and rushed inside. Amina wasn’t in the house.

Dad went out into the darkness. He wondered where Amina might be. Suddenly it came to him.

“Whiskers!” he said to himself. “Amina will be looking for her!”

In the shock of the earthquake, everyone had forgotten about the cat. Whiskers was an indoor cat, but she had run into the garden behind their house. Dad hoped that was where Amina had gone, too.



Suddenly, the air was filled with a loud siren. This was the tsunami alert telling people to evacuate immediately. Mum came running from the ute.

“Amina will be in the garden trying to find Whiskers,” Dad said. “Don’t worry! I’ll get her. You take Zara and Malik. I’ll bring Amina and Whiskers up in Malik’s car.”

Mum hesitated. She didn’t want to leave anyone behind. But with the siren blaring and a civil defence warning vibrating on her phone, she knew the plan made sense.



The siren was still blaring when Dad found Amina. She had Whiskers held tightly in her arms. Dad took off his jacket and wrapped Whiskers tightly in it so he could carry her without getting scratched.

“Come on, Amina,” he said. “We’ll go in Malik’s car now. Mum and the others are already heading up the hill.”



Chapter 3

Amina, Dad and Whiskers clambered into the car. Whiskers hadn't been in a car since her last vet visit almost a year ago. She fought hard to escape as Amina did her best to hold the stressed cat close to her body. But Whiskers was too strong. She leapt onto Dad's lap, scratching his legs before trying to jump through the closed window.

Luckily the traffic was moving slowly. Dad would have struggled to control the car if Whiskers jumped again. This time she jumped into the back seat of the car. She landed on one of Malik's old wetsuits and attacked it furiously with her claws.

Half-way up Lookout Hill, they stopped in a line of traffic. Whiskers was still attacking the wetsuit but with less intensity and less panic in her eyes. Dad smiled and handed his phone to Amina.

"Text Mum," he said. "Tell her we're stuck half-way up Lookout Hill. We are safe from any tsunamis. We might still be in danger of being ripped to pieces by a very stressed cat."



Whiskers was asleep on the shredded wetsuit when the siren stopped. The tsunami alert was over. It had been a false alarm. Although there had been a small surge of water, it was safe to go home. On the way down Lookout Hill, Dad drove very slowly and steadily so as not to wake Whiskers.



When they were all home, Mum picked up the pieces of her vase and tidied up the lounge. Amina and Zara were ready for bed.

“Can Whiskers sleep in my room?” asked Amina. “Yes,” said Mum. “She seems calmer now but you must try to get a good night’s sleep. Tomorrow we have some planning to do.”



Chapter 4

Mum's planning session involved being better prepared for an emergency evacuation. Everyone agreed that Whiskers had to be an important part of their plan.

"We lost time looking for Whiskers," said Mum. "If a large tsunami had arrived, we could have lost Whiskers, Amina and Dad as well."

Dad agreed. "We lost blood, too," he smiled. He looked at the scratches on his arms and legs.

"Remember, I lost a wetsuit as well!" said Malik.

"Kids," said Mum, "you have a week to come up with an evacuation plan that keeps us all safe, including Whiskers."

"OK," said Malik. "But don't be surprised if it costs money."

"That's no problem," smiled Mum. "If we have to, we can always sell your car to pay for it."



Malik and Amina researched emergency plans for animals. They presented one they thought would work best.

“First, we need to add supplies for Whiskers into our emergency supply kit,” said Amina. “I’ve made a list, though we have most of the things already.”

“I’ve got photos of Whiskers and her vaccination record on my phone,” said Malik.

“Excellent!” said Mum. “Is that all we need?”



“No!” said Malik. “We need a cat carrier to keep Whiskers and us safe in the car. It was really dangerous having her loose like that. I found one on Nice Neighbours Online. It’s free, so we don’t need to sell my car.”

“But we have to get her used to getting in and out of the carrier without becoming distressed,” added Amina. “I can do that, but it will take time and lots of cat treats. Then we have to get her used to taking short car trips inside the carrier.”

“And that will make the next part of our plan much easier,” said Malik.

“Oh! What’s that?” asked Dad.

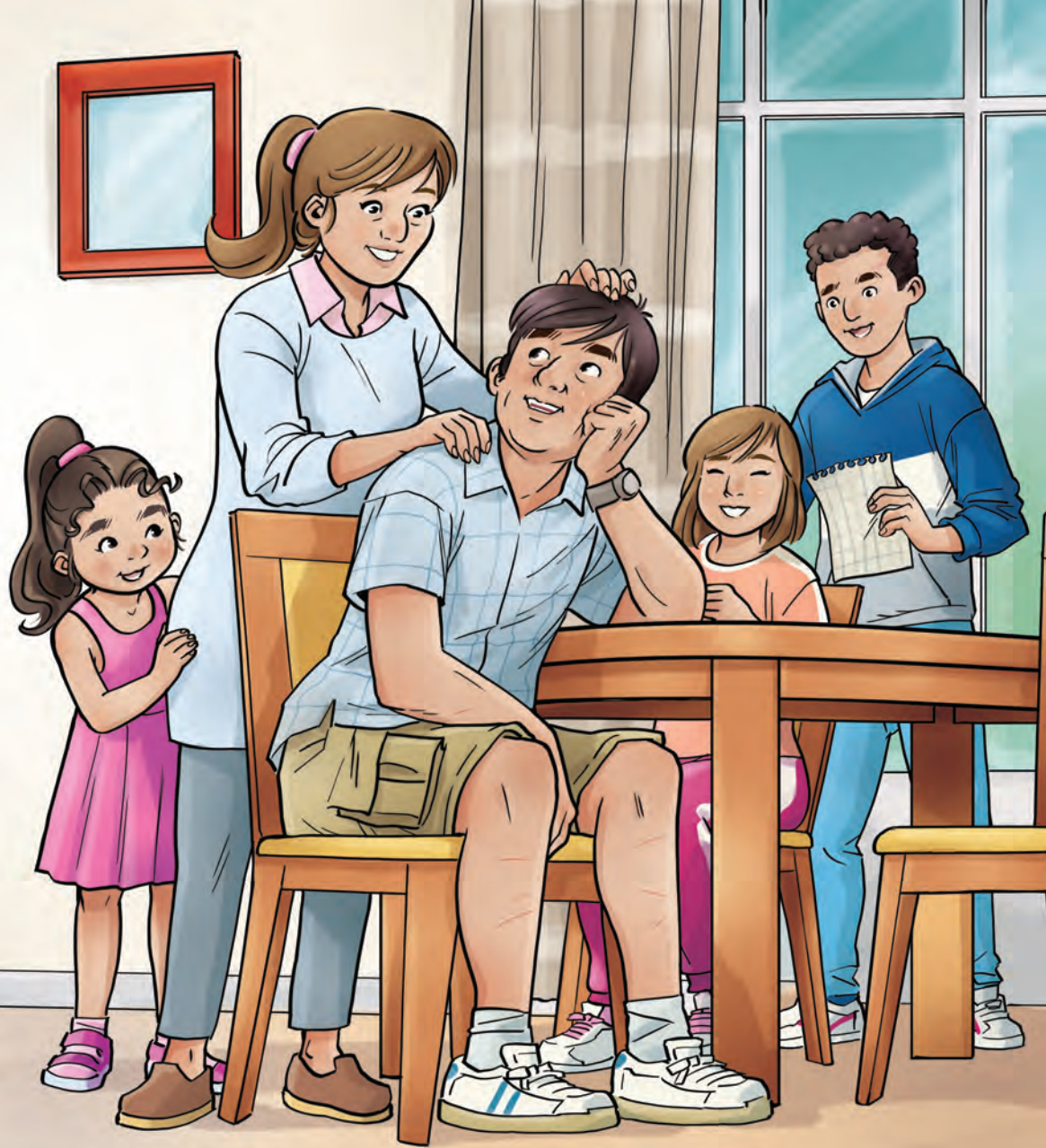


“Microchipping!” said Amina. “We need to take Whiskers to the vet to get her microchipped and registered. If she’s ever separated from us, it will be easier for SPCA or the vet to contact us when she’s found.”

“We just need to make sure we always keep our contact details on the microchip up to date,” added Malik.

Mum was impressed with the plan.

“I like it,” she said. Then she smiled. “Maybe we should get Amina and your father microchipped as well!”



Being Emergency Prepared

Facts and Tips

- Talk to an adult about creating an emergency plan so that everyone in your home knows what to do. Making sure you're prepared to keep your animal(s) safe in the event of an emergency is a key part of responsible animal guardianship!
- An emergency plan for every member of your whānau is important – this includes your animals. There are three essential steps to be taken: 1. Create an emergency plan. 2. Prepare emergency kits. 3. Practise your plan.
- A good way to make sure you have everything your animal will need in their kit is by thinking about the five domains – nutrition, environment, health, behaviour, mental wellbeing. Your family should ensure that you're still able to meet these welfare needs, no matter where you and your companion animals go.
- If you need to evacuate your home, take your companion animals. If it's not safe for you, it's not safe for them. Make sure your safe evacuation place will take your animals or have contact details for kennels, catteries and animal friendly motels.
- Ensure your companion animals are microchipped and that your contact information is registered with the New Zealand Companion Animal Register. If your whānau move house, be sure to go online and update contact details on your animal's microchip.

Visit spca.nz/kids to learn more about caring for animals before, during and after emergencies

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ISBN 978-1-99-102068-0

