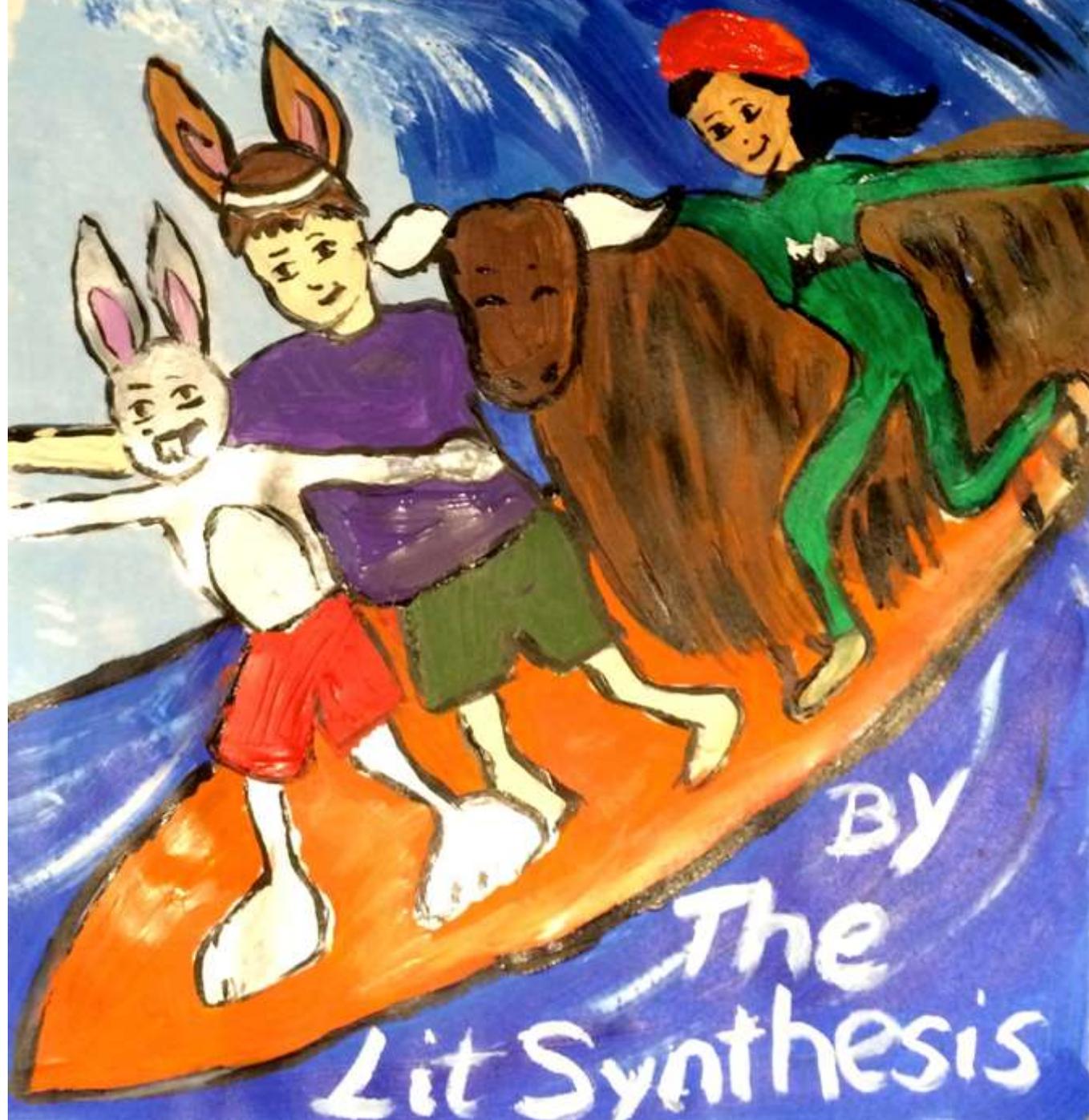


Surfing for Egg-cellence



By
The
Lit Synthesis

Team name: Lit Synthesis

Team members: Erin Bock, Maddison Burmaz, Johanna Lee, Annalisa Phan, Emily Rice, Fahid Talukder, Chloe White, Luke Willis, Hussna Yawary,

Task: On the 22nd of May 2016 at 8 am, an email was sent giving us 12 hours to write a tale incorporating a Sport Coach, a Mountain Guide and an Easter bunny in a Surf Club for a big day out– and if that wasn't enough we also needed to include the words: Delicious, Nonsense, Hums, Cracked, Danger.

Recommended reader age group: 10-16 year olds

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First and foremost I would like to thank Annalisa Phan and Johanna Lee, the former for her organisational prowess and the latter for hospitality and baking sensations. I would also like to thank Erin Bock, Maddison Burmaz, Johanna Lee, Annalisa Phan, Emily Rice, Fahid Talukder, Chloe White, Luke Willis, Hussna Yawary for illustrating and writing the story.

The twelve hours we had to write this story were stressful, crazy, and absolutely amazing, I would love to thank The Kids' Cancer Project for hosting the event as well as our donors for helping support us through this event.

Message to Kids

Hey Kids,

I hope you enjoy our story - it may be a little eggcentric, hopefully you'll enjoy reading about surfing, yaks and crazy bunny adventures.

Remember to always follow your heart and be eggceptional!!

Stay positive!

Erin, Maddie, Jo, Anni, Em, Fahid, Chloe, Luke and Huss

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Chapter 1 - The Royal Academy



Kevin switched off his morning alarm and as he stretched he mumbled to himself, "Another day, another chance to strive for egg-celence." He had worked at the academy for over 10 years now - the only human on the prestigious staff - and every day, starting at 5.45am sharp, he followed the same routine. First, he stepped out onto the frosty lawn; it was meticulously manicured. He quickly paced around the field, ensuring all the hurdles were perfectly in-line. As coach of this Academy, everything had to be egg-sact. Coach Kevin only accepted the highest level of commitment and egg-spertise from his pupils. After all, this was the 'Royal Easter Academy for Gifted and Talented Rabbits'. The next stop on his morning survey was the maze and house-simulation area. They all seemed to be in perfect order – just as Kevin had left them. He trudged back through the large iron gates towards the Academy, the words *Strive for Egg-celence* carved into the stone above the heavy wooden doors. Inside the entrance hall, all was quiet. Good, thought Kevin, he always wanted his students to be well-rested before athletics training. Next came a quick visit to the kitchens to inspect the many neatly stacked sacks of carrots. Then, it was through the 'Egg-speriment' Lab and to the Chocolate Gallery, and finally to the Workshop. Here he examined all of yesterday's projects. Not only did his rabbits egg-cel at athletics, they also had to make the best Easter Eggs. He quickly weighed all the eggs, assessed their shine and ensured all the patterns were appropriately detailed and not cracked. Kevin jotted down a few names in his notebook of bunnies that would need some egg-stra work, but moved on, generally satisfied with the bunnies' performance so far. He left the kitchens and headed for the trophy cabinet at the entrance to the Academy, definitely his favourite place in the school. By this time, he could hear the bunnies downstairs

beginning to stir in the warren. He hurried towards the cabinet and sighed contentedly as he approached – so much had been achieved at this school! He affectionately picked up the largest cup in the room for “Most Egg-celent Student in Speed, Athleticism and Efficiency” – the most prestigious award of the Academy. It was awarded for the last three years running to one of his best students: Brian Bunnikin. He sighed happily, the efficiency of these rabbits was his greatest achievement. Never again would a child miss out on an egg on Easter. *Never again...*



Kevin hurried back towards the field outside to begin the day of training. He stopped to look in the window of the ‘Kit Nursery’. Here the youngest pupils were just beginning their journey with the Academy. The tiny bunnies hopped around the classroom eagerly, some shaping eggs with colourful play-dough, others colouring in patterns and playing hide-and-seek, tails twitching with excitement. Kevin was pleased to see the final-year students neatly lined up in the courtyard, waiting for him. Perfect, thought Kevin, these bunnies were so close to being ready for graduation, it gave him a shiver of anticipation.

He blew a short, sharp note on his carrot whistle.

“Alright, bunnies! Ready? 1, 2, 3!” Shouted Kevin.

“Ears! Feet! Tails! Nose! Find the path! Off we go!” chanted the bunnies in unison - they lived and breathed the school motto.

Despite their enthusiasm, something didn’t sound quite right, but Kevin couldn’t put his finger on it. He decided to continue with the routine.

“Bunnies! Time to do some work” he shouted, “Twenty star jumps, then move into Formation Two!”

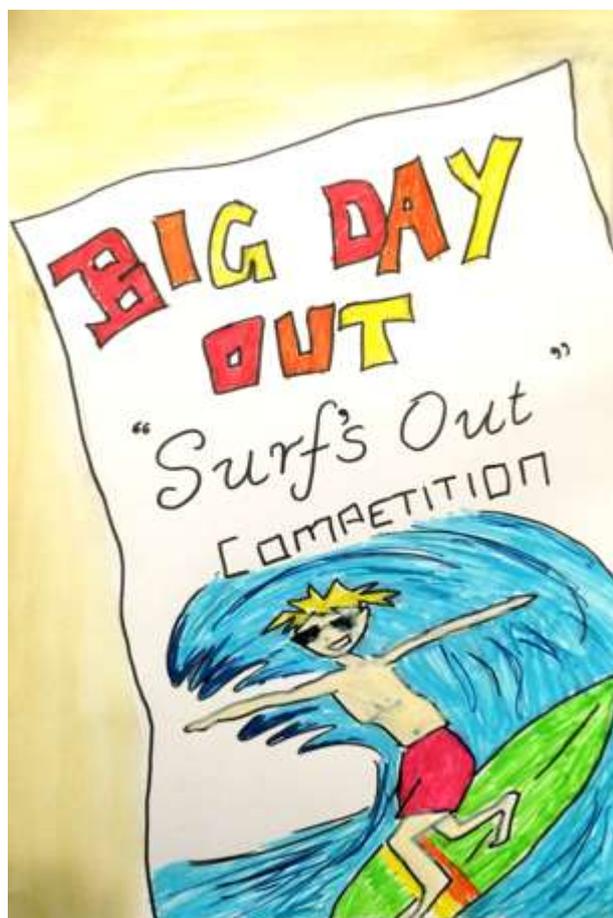
They moved quickly and easily through the exercises, Kevin was pleased with their progress. But to his horror, he noticed that the formation lines were of unequal length...

“What?!?!” barked Kevin angrily once he realised – someone was missing. Enraged, he walked through the bunnies, checking off their names in his head. They looked at his furious face nervously as he walked through them.

“Where is Brian?” he spluttered. Nobody answered.

He had been a perfect coach for over ten years! He would not, could not, report a missing bunny to the Board of Bunnies. Especially not their prized student, Brian Bunnikin. This was not acceptable. He stormed back through the school, into the warren and into Brian’s room, fuming all the way. No bunny of his was disobedient. How dare Brian miss training - he must have slept in. He barged angrily into Brian’s room, expecting to find the bunny curled up under his blanket. Instead, the bed was empty. He could not find the rabbit under the bed, nor in the wardrobe or at his desk. Frustrated, Brian searched through his drawers – nothing! He kicked the pillow angrily off Brian’s bed. A piece of paper fluttered off the bed.

“The Big Day Out, “Surf’s Out” Competition” read Kevin. He let out a long sigh as he considered his next move...



Chapter 2 - Sauntering In

Poh never understood why people liked to practice their yelling wherever she went. Even the cars appeared to be joining them in an almost aggressive uproar. The first time this happened she stopped and listened, wanting to join this odd, daily ritual but Yak didn't like the sounds.

"Why are city folk like this? Barely anyone yells in the mountains but suddenly you get to the city and everyone congregates in the morning just to be as loud as possible."

Poh yelled, barely audible to Yak below her.

"Yak", Yak responded with barely a grunt.

"I know, you don't need to tell me again."

Yak had explained the concept of a morning rush hour before, but Poh didn't believe in rushing. So Yak continued, sauntering along with the cars on the freeway. It was a strange sight for those around them, a young woman riding a yak, but this is the way it had always been. It had always been Poh and Yak – the dynamic duo trekking through mountains, guiding eager tourists through explored and unexplored territory. Poh, though only twenty-six, had been on her own since she was six. She had come from a very reclusive village at the edge of Mount Everest, never discovered by an outsider, where young children were sent at the age of six out to explore the world (Yak would say kicked out more than 'sent'). She met Yak soon after, a fellow wanderer, and off they went, fast friends! Climbing mountains in their stride, trekking through rivers, canoeing, white water rafting, sky diving (sometimes with a parachute, sometimes without), base jumping, cave exploring... all while working as a mountain guide, though most of the time it was just the two of them alone. Mostly, they avoided the city. Why then, were they currently trekking down a highway with such gusto?

Poh was trying to return to her village, but her acceptance back home was conditional on her having travelled the world and experiencing everything a human, or yak, could do. She had made amazing progress for her age and thought she was done until a poster caught her eye and she felt a flutter in her heart. The usual energy had welled up inside her, there was another adventure to be had! It turns out that she had spent so long in the mountains that she had forgotten to ever visit the beach. She had never even seen waves, those 'majestic mountains of the sea'! The advertised competition would mark her entry into the world of surfing... and Yak's too of course.



A gruff voice rumbled through the sounds around them, "Are you okay, miss?"

Poh became suddenly aware of the flatbed truck rolling alongside them, "Why wouldn't I be? I'm heading to The Big Day Out "Surf's Out" Competition!" Poh was always one to think the best of people, but Yak was worried the man may be annoyed by their presence. However, a quick onceover of the truck driver put him at ease, as the man's large smiling face was reminiscent of a shopping centre Santa's... actually, had Poh had a photo on his lap last year?

"I'm heading there as well! I may not look like it, but I used to love surfing. But that Yak doesn't have enough horsepower to get you there in time, either get that Yak some coffee or jump in my truck and I'll give you a lift." The truck driver offered.

A sauntering pace may be the perfect way to relax before a big competition but Yak wasn't one to put in even that small amount of effort unnecessarily. Poh dismounted with a jump and a shake and bounded around into the truck. Yak joined in and squeezed into the truck's passenger seat, accidentally moulding Poh into the driver's stomach and the driver's face smeared onto the window. That would have been the first moment the driver regretted inviting a Yak onboard. Another would come the following day, when he found his passenger seat had grown a layer of Yak hair.

After pushing Poh and Yak back, the Santa look-alike asked, "Are you going to compete or watch? Been surfing for long?"

"Of course I'm going to compete! This is going to be amazing! I've already done my 200 push-ups, 200 sit-ups and 20km run as a warm up today. I'm going to smash this competition!" Poh exclaimed, barely able to contain herself. "Do you know where I can buy a surfboard? I haven't got one, never even touched one before."

"Yak," groaned Yak.

"I'm not overconfident! You're just too worried." Poh replied to Yak. "He is always like this, but it's only because he cares. As long as I remember SPF-100, I know I'll be fine" She told the driver.

The driver was confused, "I guess sun protection is important but I thought you would only need SPF-50?"

"No!" exclaimed Poh. "SPF-100: 100% effort for speed, power and flow. That's my surfing motto."

"Yak," agreed Yak.

The driver simply nodded and looked ahead at the road. It was times like this that he was reminded not to pick up random hitchhikers. At least this one was just talking to a Yak. "Does that yak just say Yak?"

"Oh no, sometimes he hums!" Poh said, trying to contain her excitement. But a quiet moment later the dam holding back her enthusiasm burst open, "This is going to be so, so, so amazing. It reminds me of the time Yak and I were white water rafting with a group of German tourists and we were flying everywhere. Yak loves adrenaline so I knew we would have a good time with him as the lead rafter and..."

Two hours later, with Poh still deep in the telling of her never-ending story, the driver had almost started to miss the cacophony of peak-hour traffic. Just as she took a breath, the car turned a corner and all three of them were engrossed by the sparkling sea and beautiful curling waves that came into sight. Poh forgot her story and the driver deemed the entire trip worth it. This was a sight that never aged or withered, the power of the sea touched all.

Poh shouted a quick thanks to the driver and pushed Yak out of the truck. With a quick leap she was back on Yak's back, racing down to the shoreline where a crowd had gathered. This is exactly what she had pictured and she wanted to charge right in. The worried crowd began to scatter at the sight of a charging Yak but their fear changed into a weird bemusement as they noticed the small woman on top of him.

Poh and Yak charged past the crowd towards the table with a "Sign-up here!" banner across the top. From a commanding position atop her yak, she looked down with a confident gaze that told the officials why she was here.

Chapter 3 – Beached Brian

Brian looked on wide-eyed (and wide-eared) in amazement at the icy blue waves rolling and rumbling along the pristine beach strip which was outside the Surf Club. “This is going to be an egg-cellent day!” He eggs-claimed, he was finally about to fulfil his dream of being a surfer. Brian wasn’t your everyday beach-goer, what with his brick-red board-shorts and not-so-matching Easter-egg basket. But what Brian lacked in appearance he more than made up for in his animated egg-citement.

This was Brian’s first time away from the ‘Royal Easter Academy for Gifted and Talented Rabbits’ by himself and he aimed to make the most of it. At fourteen bunny years’ old, Brian was at the confusing stage in his life where all young bunnies were expected to make the transition from kittens (not *those* kittens!) to full-fledged Easter Bunnies. While his brothers and sisters at the Academy were all eager to pledge themselves to an egg-topian future, Brian dreamed much bigger... 6 metres bigger in fact, imagining himself riding colossal waves like the great sea-master and renegade bunny before him, Jimmy Hoppington. Whereas Jimmy was able to choose how to live his life, Brian had been anything but free at the Academy, and now he finally had the chance to break out on his own!

“I’m never going back to the Academy, this is my life now,” stated Brian, after all of fifteen minutes at the beach. “I’ll show them all, I’m going to make real waves out in the surfing world!”

While he mused about his defiance, the Surf Club’s loudspeaker buzzed overhead: *“Welcome one and all to the annual Big Day Out, “Surf’s Out” Competition! Hope all you budding waveriders have your board and SPF-50 ready, and are ready to hit the deck! Round One will commence in 30 minutes, so make sure you’ve all registered!”*

With the first round so close by, Brian felt a sudden surge of nervousness. While he’d secretly spent a lot of time researching surfing techniques at the Academy, and practised boarding on the sandy bunny hills nearby, he’d never actually tried boarding in water. Trying to brush aside his unease, he approached a passerby surfer.

“Hey dude, are you ready to HANG TEN?!” He yelled, a bit too enthusiastically.

The bemused surfer mumbled a reply and hurried along away from Brian. Slightly perturbed by this, Brian ambled closer towards the shoreline.

On his way he passed by two other surfers, fresh from the sea. One had brown dreadlocks, matted from sand, and the other boy was in a daze gazing out to sea.

“Hey bros, how radical is this comp looking today?!” Brian enthusiastically exclaimed.

“Yeah it’s rad, little bro,” the guy with sandy dreadlocks casually replied, letting out a friendly laugh. His dazed friend just looked confusedly at Brian and moved on.

“Gotta catch up to him lil dude, see you out there,” the guy with dreadlocks said, in a very chilled way. He gave a small fistbump to Brian and moseyed off. Brian was stoked by this exchange. He had very studiously worked on his beach lingo, spending hours on Youtube listening to surfers say a variety of things, primarily “dude” and “surf’s up!!”.

Brian eventually found himself at the surf shed. It was oddly quiet, although a small crowd had formed nearby – Brian heard some bizarre murmurings about a “yak”. He took the opportunity to sneak to the front rack and have a look at the remaining surfboards. While most of them were your typical ocean-themed swirly boards with the occasional fluorescent one, Brian was astonished to see that there was one surfboard with an arrangement of Easter eggs decorated on the back. Brian felt conflicted... while he’d run away from the Academy and Kevin to escape his Easter life, he couldn’t help but feel drawn to the board.

“Uh... how much is it, Surfboard Man?”

He didn't receive a response as the server at the shed was preoccupied, staring at a yak. Brian grabbed the board but then hesitated; despite his rebellious streak, he was a good-natured bunny at heart, and had every intention of paying for the board, however he had no idea how much it cost! Feeling extra generous, he decided to leave a whole FOUR bags of gold (chocolate) coins at the desk, and walked away.

“HEY!” Yelled the server, who had finally noticed Brian walking off with the surfboard. “Were you planning on paying for that board, or do I have to call the authorities?”

“What? Oh no, I left some money on the counter. I wasn't sure juuust how much to give, so I left extra just in case!” Brian replied helpfully, not really sure why the server was upset.

“Is this some kind of joke? You left chocolate, NOT money!”

“But chocolate is money! Kevin always said chocolate was a part of the liquid economy!”

“So you do think this a joke...” growled the server, visibly bristling.

“No I...” Brian stumbled in confusion, not understanding what he did wrong.

Just as they were about to continue, a large shadow dwarfed the livid shopkeeper. Turning around, the shopkeeper's jaw dropped, as a pair of beastly green eyes gazed down at his.

“Yak...” breathed the shopkeeper.

“Yak,” replied Yak, the somewhat out-of-place Yak.

“I'm sorry, is there a problem here?” quizzed the smiling woman who stepped out from behind Yak.

“This young ‘man’ was attempting to take a surfboard without paying for it,” grumbled the shopkeeper.

“I wasn't!” protested Brian.

As this continued, the woman suddenly reached into her all-purpose multifunctional wetsuit™ and pulled out a wad of cash.

“This should cover the both of us, and more. Don't worry, it's on Yak!”

As the shopkeeper stared on in bewilderment, the woman and her Yak walked away. Not wanting to stay behind, Brian quickly followed after them.

“Hey! Thanks for helping me out back there. I'm never been here before and I don't really know what's up with everyone and why they're so grumpy, but I'm so pumped for the competition!” He exclaimed breathlessly, “Oh, I'm Yak- I mean Brian, by the way.”

“Hi Brian, I'm Poh. It's very nice to meet you.” She replied.



Chapter 4 - On the Lookout

The beach was packed when Kevin arrived – how on earth would he find that mischievous bunny here? Kevin could not get over how irresponsible Brian had been. Didn't he understand the importance of his role? Hadn't he learnt anything from the Academy? He should know the danger of being discovered. Kevin sighed. He was supposed to be training bunnies – the most noble occupation of all, not wandering around some stupid beach at some stupid surf competition!

"I'll just have to find him, get him back quickly and maybe we'll be in time for the 2pm training," thought Kevin to himself, "the Board of Bunnies won't ever need to know about this."

He hurried down the beach, his eyes scanning for a familiar fluffy tail.

Further down the beach, Brian was on a high now that he had been helped out by the friendly Poh. After all, surf, sand and sunshine – could life get any better? Well, he guess he wouldn't have minded a little more tail room in his boardshorts. But otherwise, things were radical! Brian followed his twitching nose to the 'Delicious Dogs!' sign where some surfers were cooking up a storm.

"One sausage sizzle please, dude" said Brian confidently at the BBQ.

"Coming right up little dude, do you want onions with that?"

"Umm I'd rather some carrots please"

"Oh, ah, ok?" the surfer laughed. "You're such a riot".

Brian laughed along with the surfer, a bit unsure what was so funny, but happy to have another new surfer friend. Not wanting to make another chocolate coin mistake, he left three luxury chocolate eggs on the counter and wandered towards the waves to see how the other surfers were going.

Having spotted Brian, Kevin watched the exchange with horror. You can't pay for food with chocolate eggs! He ran down the beach and hurriedly handed the surfer at the BBQ a \$5 note and apologised.

"Thanks man, keep it chill," replied the surfer.

Kevin huffed off, rolling his eyes. "Keep it chill?" He grumbled. "What does that even mean?"

He ran in the direction that he had seen Brian hopping, but unfortunately the bunny was lost to the crowd. Kevin's finding skills, honed by years of running Egg Hunt drills at the Academy, were second to none, and it would have usually taken him mere seconds to find a pair of grey bunny ears in the sea of tanned beachgoers. But today, Kevin's skills were letting him down. The smell of sunscreen and sausage sizzle filled the air, and for a moment it was as if he was in another place, another time. He shook his head from side to side, as if trying to pour out the nostalgic thoughts. It had been a long time since he had been surrounded by so many human people, let alone spent time at a beach like this one... just like the one at which he had spent so many happy days as a child before... before... No. He could not look back. He had chosen his path many years ago, and the Academy was his life now, it was all he had. And this arrogant rabbit was going to put the whole operation in danger!

There was a small knot of guilt in his stomach for having allowed one of his students to go missing. But more than anything, he was cross. He had to find the blasted bunny, and fast. He took a deep breath, tried to block out the smells and sounds of the beach, and walked into the crowd of surfers, eyes peeled.



Chapter 5 – The Competition

Brian looked at the beautiful blue water. His paws felt the heat of the sand. He could do this, he thought to himself. He jumped off with gusto as he raced straight towards the blue, with each hop, he felt his determination build until his paws felt the cool water. This felt so right, he thought to himself as he threw himself onto his board and began paddling, his sights set on the beautiful rolling waves coming towards him. He got to the break and sat on his board as he looked at the beach, watching a girl do an amazing lightning-fast cutback manoeuvre as she caught a wave in. He needed to focus, he thought to himself, as he took a deep breath and looked back at the break – he could do this.

Still on the beach, Poh looked at the water and nodded her head confidently.

“Looks like a piece of cake,” she told Yak.

“Yak,” Yak replied,

“I know, I know – I won’t count my chickens before they hatch,” she told him matter-of-factly. “Let’s do this!” She raced off with determination, as if this was just another mountain which she climbed on her morning climbs. Her foot hit the water and she jumped. Come on Poh, she told herself, relax - remember SPF-100. She took a deep breath, continued into the water and threw herself onto the board.

S for speed she thought as she tried to speedily paddle through the water. *P for power* - she thrust herself through the water forcefully with her arms. *F for flow* - she glided through the water and managed to get to all the other surfers. She looked at the wave coming towards her, remember; just another mountain, she thought to herself. She stood up with swiftness onto her board, brought out her ice-picks and got ready to climb the mountains of the sea. She heard something in the distance and turned. Yak was at the shoreline.

“Yak,” Yak called loudly. Her eyes widened.

“Right!” Poh called and put the ice-picks back into her multifunctional wetsuit™ and sat back down on her board. Yak had told her what to do. She began paddling hard as the wave approached, and just as it got to its peak, she threw herself up and stood tall on the board. There - she could do it! She was surfing!

Kevin looked around the crowd of surfers. There was still no sign of Brian. He saw a shaded table with a bunch of good-for-nothing surfers. “Hi there,” he said to the one who looked the most professional – which was not saying much.

“Woah! Nice ears, bro!” She said in awe - referencing the bunny ear sweat-band that Kevin wore with pride each day.

“What can I help you with, little dude?”

“I’m looking for a rabbit,” he said. “Have you seen one?”

“No little dude.” She said. Kevin was rather annoyed she was calling him little, as he was taller than she was.

“Are you sure? Seen anyone with a fluffy tail?” He asked.

“Nope.”

“Bunny ears?”

“Nope.”

“Twitchy nose?”

“Nope.”

“Large two front teeth?” Kevin asked, eggs-asperated.

“My cousin!” The woman laughed; Kevin could feel a vein pop on his forehead.

“He was wearing red board-shorts!” Kevin cried, turning away - she was obviously no help, he thought to himself.

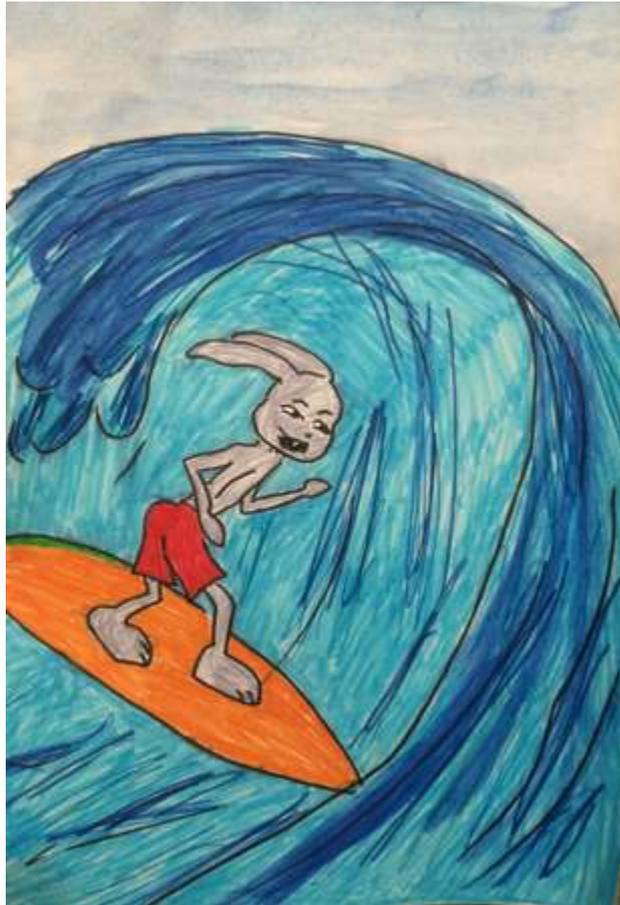
“Wait – are you talking about the little dude with the beauty mark shaped like a basket?” she asked.

“What?” Kevin asked surprised. “Y-yeah.”

“I know the little dude! Cutting some real surf, man – check it out!” She said and pointed. Kevin gritted his teeth as he turned around and saw Brian. Sure enough, he was surfing. He went over and frowned – fool, he thought to himself, bunnies couldn’t surf. Brian was sitting on his board waiting for a wave. He put his hands on his hips and waited, fully expecting the young bunny to fail and arrive back on shore with his ears down in embarrassment. Beside him, a girl with a beanie and wetsuit on was surfing a wave as if she were a beginner – couldn’t even turn! He snorted, what sort of a competition was this? A big wave came into view behind Brian, and he began to paddle. Kevin frowned as he watched his student jump up on the board with ease and begin gliding through the water. Brian suddenly jumped up from the board, twisted in the air and landed smoothly back down.



“LOOK AT THAT BOY GO!” someone roared through the Surf Club loudspeaker. Kevin’s mouth was wide open as Brian smoothly glided to a stop and somersaulted into the water as the wave washed out. “And that’s the end of the first round!” The announcer continued over the P.A. “We have the little unknown pocket of dynamite Brian in first place!” The man cried.



Kevin clenched his jaw – he had to do something, he needed to do something! He wouldn't sit down and watch Brian throw away all his responsibilities and ruin his life with surfing – as his coach, he couldn't let him do that. He saw the surfers come in and went straight over to Brian. The colour drained from the boy's face.

"What on EARTH do you think you're doing?" he cried.

"Coach!" Brian stammered. "What are you doing here?"

"Taking you back, that's what I'm doing! Come on – stop with this ridiculousness."

"Please, Coach, just listen to me."

"I will not listen to this nonsense!" Kevin cried. "Bunnies are not meant to surf!"

"It's who I am! It's all I want to do – please!"

"Fine, you want to surf? Go ahead," Kevin barked. "But don't think I'm going to sit on the sidelines and see you waste your time, when you should be training hard to make sure that every child has an egg when it's Easter."

"Coach, please, watch me. You'll see how amazing it is. It's what I'm meant to do," he said, "I want you to support me."

"You have no idea how much you've disappointed me," he replied and looked down.

"You've let me, the academy and all the children of the world down. Go ahead then – you want to surf, surf, but you're on your own." Kevin turned around and walked off. Brian watched him go. He'd never seen his coach so upset.

Chapter 6 - The Second Round of Competition

“Competitors ready!” The announcer called over the loudspeaker.

It was time for the second round of The Big Day Out, “Surf’s Out” Competition and everyone was ready to get back into the waves. The competitors were lined up along the shore, Poh was ready to go in her multifunctional wetsuit™, and Brian was pacing along the sand, waving at everyone and rubbing his right foot (it was his lucky rabbit’s foot.) The other competitors were staring at him with slight confusion...

“I don’t understand how his... fur isn’t weighing him down when he surfs?” Muttered one of the competitors, who had not scored as highly as Brian in the first heat. Brian overheard, and blushed. He had expected some sort of trash talk, he got it all the time at the Academy. However, Kevin was usually there, defending everybunny and cheering Brian on. Thoughts of Kevin left a bad taste in his mouth, and his head was still echoing with the words of their argument, so he pushed them aside. He had to focus on the competition. He gave his right foot another brisk rub; he had a feeling he’d need some extra luck this time.

Meanwhile, Kevin was staring out into the distance then to his toes, then back to the distance, then back to his toes. He was raging with anger and the thoughts of his past were haunting him, more strongly than they had in a long time. He hadn’t meant to be so harsh with Brian. He knew the bunny had a good heart. Still, he stood by his convictions - he knew it was for the best and there was no way he would ever stay to watch while his student threw away all of the egg-celence they had been striving for.

In his haste to leave, he stumbled into something big and distinctly woolly. A... yak?
“Yak,” the creature exclaimed, pushing him back down towards the beach. The strange creature did not stop shoving until Kevin was back on the sand. He was quickly pegged in on all sides by excited spectators, leaving him no choice but to stay, and to watch Brian.

“Everybody ready?... On your marks, get set...” the commentator began. “GO!”

The swell had picked up, and the surf was bigger than anyone could have imagined. The waves seemed double the size they had been this morning. The less gutsy competitors were too scared to go in. But not Brian, and not Poh. “I can do this!” Brian said to himself, diving into the scrambling waves. But his voice wobbled, and as much as he tried, he could not get the disappointed look on Coach Kevin’s face out of his mind. He waited for a good wave, trying to calm his mind and keep his fur from quivering.

While Brian waited, Poh started cruising along the waves. Following her mantra of “SPF-100!”, she blazed out into the far break, racking up many points for her gnarly commitment. From within her multifunctional wetsuit™ she brought out her flute, which she started playing to calm some dolphins that she saw in the distance. As a wave came around, Poh used her zen skills to do a meditation pose as she surfed, embracing the moment. At that moment, the pod of dolphins came towards her surfboard, and alas, Poh realized that instead of her intended soothing flute melody, she had played a dolphin dancing song, and the pod came over to dance around her instead. Unfortunately, this caused Poh to topple off her board into the dancing dolphins, and she could not continue the heat.

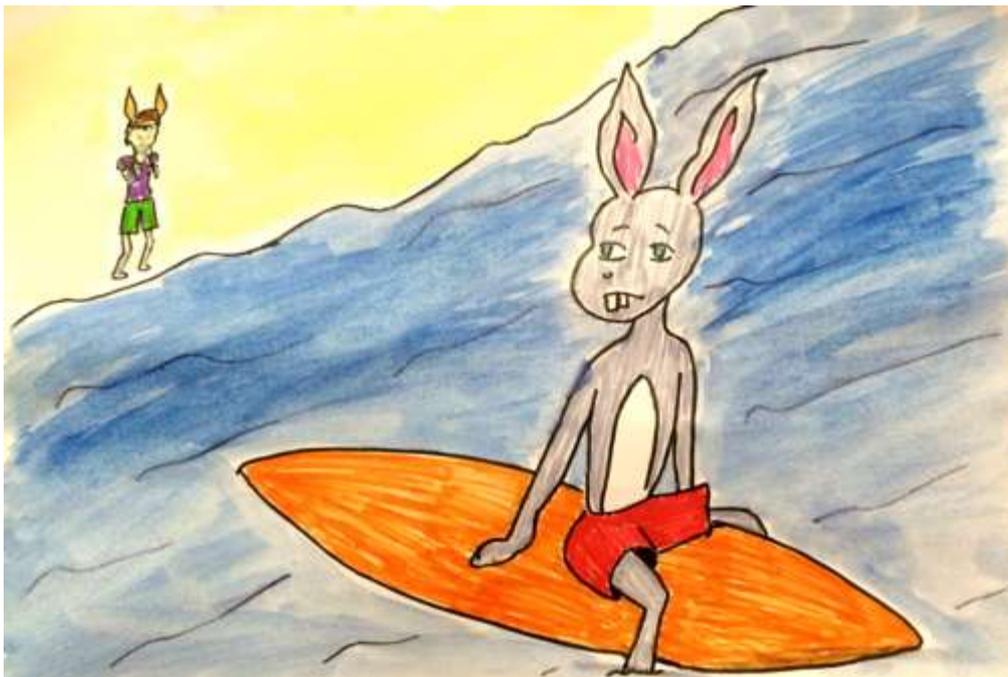


Back at the main break, the competition progressed and the remaining surfers tried to out-manoeuvre one another with their signature moves. One person performed a bottom turn, while another did a bend and backside snap. Brian nearly caught a couple of waves, but at the last minute he duck- no, bunny-dived below them. His self-confidence just was not the same as it had been in the first round.

“What’s he doing?!” Yelled Kevin to a random watcher. “He could lose everything by doing this.”

“What is this nonsense?” Exclaimed another disgruntled spectator.

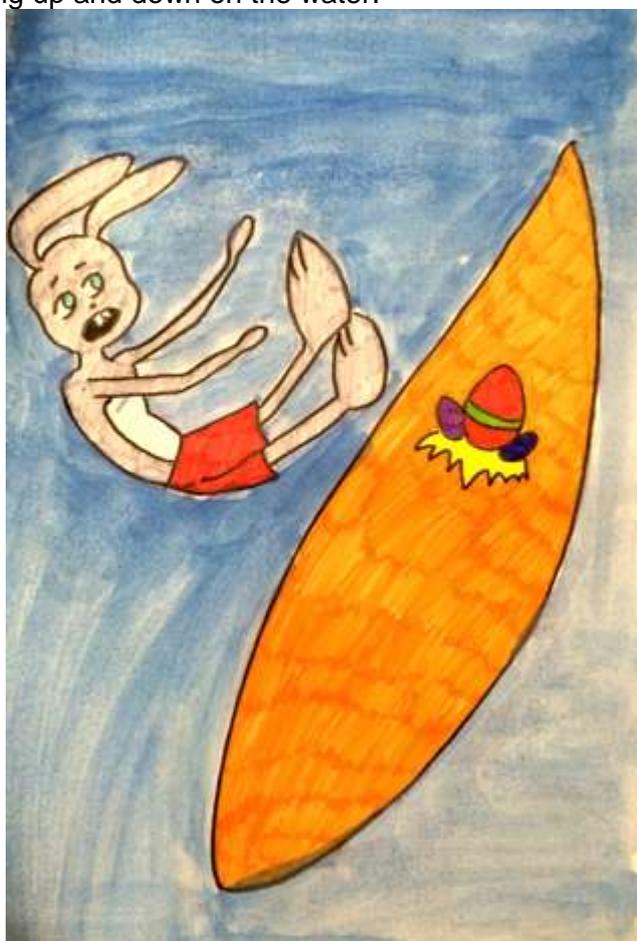
“He’s like a totally different dude.” said another spectator. Yak rolled his eyes, for someone who didn’t care, Kevin was sure getting into it.



Out on the waves, Brian's mind was clouded by his argument with Kevin. He thought that if he could catch the most perfect, egg-normous wave, Kevin would have no choice but realise that Brian was meant to be a surfer. Sure enough, it was not long before a perfect set of waves could be seen approaching from the distance. Appreciative murmurs were heard from the crowd on shore. Brian let the first two cut-glass beauties pass beneath him - his whiskers were trembling too much to concentrate. But, when the third wave came up, he knew he had no choice.

He paddled out to it, but even an untrained eye could see he was distracted. The first part of his ride was still a masterpiece of technicality - he executed some spectacularly clean carves along the sheer face of the wave. But then it came time for something more ambitious. He knew there was only one move that might make Kevin pay attention, an aerial manoeuvre he had invented called The Carrot Hopper. He spun. On the beach, the audience gasped. But when it came time to focus on a graceful landing, all he could see were Kevin's words floating in front of him, "Disappointed... Me... On... You're... Own..."

Mid-air, his lucky rabbit foot cramped, and his landing was awkward and clumsy, with the board bouncing up and down on the water.



He heard groans from the crowd back on shore. It was not an epic fail, but it was certainly not a victory. He knew he had little chance of placing in the second round... and even less chance of winning Kevin's approval.

Dejected, Brian paddled back to shore and sat down. All of his earlier confidence had left him.

Meanwhile, Poh happily cruised back to shore after her dance party, grinning from ear to ear.

Chapter 7- Kevin has a Change of Heart

Back on the beach, the scores were revealed. As suspected Poh was out of the competition, but Brian had just managed to scrape through to the grand final. Despite not continuing, Poh was super excited to see the final race. In her excitement she turned to Kevin, who happened to be standing next to her, and introduced herself. "Hi I'm Poh. I'm so excited- this is going to be the wildest round yet!"

Kevin turned in surprise to Poh, she was the beginner he had seen surfing next Brian earlier. "Hi, I'm Kevin. I don't mean to be rude but weren't you knocked out of the last round? How can you be looking forward to this final round when you can't even compete for first place?"

"Yak yak yak. Yak yak, YAK! Yak yak yak yaaaak yak yak. Yak yak... yak. Yak yak yak Yak yak yak yak yaaak yak... Yak yak, yak yak!" exclaimed Yak.

A tear ran down Poh's face in the long silence that followed Yak's speech. How could a yak know such deep and meaningful things? And where did he learn such eloquent speech? Yak really understood the important things in life. "You are exactly right, Yak! It's not the destination, but the journey that matters." Said Poh. She turned to Kevin, "I know I'm not going to get first place, but I have loved every minute of it. I have tried something new, I've made some new friends, and I even danced with dolphins. I don't want to ruin this amazing experience by a bit of an obsession with winning!"

"Yak." said Yak.



"Yak just reminded me about when he was young, he used to be obsessed with being the best. He was the strongest in all of Nepal, until one day a Yeti came to Yak's village. Yak wanted to prove to the whole village that he was the strongest, so he challenged the Yeti to a competition. Yak lost in front of the entire village and his pride was hurt so much that he banished himself from the village. He forgot that meeting a Yeti should be an amazing experience, as exciting as meeting Santa... or the Easter Bunny. He forgot that having someone stronger in the village would mean more time for him, and less work for the village. His obsession ruined an amazing moment and he has regretted this for a long time. Since I first started wandering with Yak, he has taught me to never let winning get in the way of living the wonder and amazement of life."

Kevin stopped in surprise “Obsession?” He considered the word carefully as Poh and Yak continued walking down the beach. Was that what was holding him back from supporting Brian? Was it his obsession with producing egg-cellent Easter Bunnies at the Academy that made Brian’s choice to be a surfer so difficult?” He was deep in thought as Poh approached Brian...

“Well done, friend.” Exclaimed Poh, excitedly.

Brian sat dejectedly waxing his surfboard. “No way, I sucked. How could I have made such a basic error?”

“Nah Brian, you went straight for that mountain of a wave. That was like so cool. None of the other surfers went for it. Who cares if there was a little bit of a mistake, you gave it a shot!”

“This was my one chance to prove to Coach and the surfers that I am meant to be a surfer and that I’m more than just a... more than just a... just a...” Brian admitted to Poh.

“Yak yak” said Yak.

“Hahaha” laughed Poh at Yak’s comment. “More than just an... Easter Bunny? I don’t understand the metaphor, Yak!”

Brian glared at Yak for trying to tell Poh his secret. “Poh, thanks for trying to make me feel better but I would rather just be alone right now. I guess I need to start preparing for the final.” He shuffled off to wax his board, leaving Poh and Yak to watch the activity on the beach.

Chapter 8- Bunnies Don’t Surf

While Brian had still made the Grand Final - his surfing dream -it brought him no joy. Brian no longer knew what he was, or who he was. He'd been told by his parents to be a bunny- thrown into the academy and forgotten about- with his twenty-three other siblings still at home.

"Be the Easter bunny," was all they repeated to him. Kevin had been his only true father figure, and he wanted to hear him say he was proud. For that he had to be "Brian". Brian the non-surfing Easter Bunny. However, as much as he wanted Kevin to be proud he also wanted to be free.

He passed by some of the surfers; the guy with the dreadlocks, the dazed looking guy and the girl with the lightning cutback. "Hey Dudes," called Brian "there's some real dumpers out there today. It's like a triple chocolate whirl easter egg with sprinkles...cough...I mean...it's like the gnarliest waves I've ever seen... dudes?"

He could see them looking at him strangely. As he walked away he heard the guy with the dazed look slowly ask: "Does that boy look, you know, kinda odd to you?". The question was quickly met with a hit across the head by the girl and a death glare from the man- everyone knows you can't ask why people look weird! And they liked Brian.

"I'm just making a fool of myself" Brian thought as he left; and this was supposed to be his big day out.

Brian watched the last round before the grand finals. The surfers in the heat were all well seasoned professionals. Blazing power and speed, matched with the technical prowess of veteran surfers. Was it even possible to beat them? Did it even matter?

"We will now begin the Grand Final. Calling all contenders to the start line." Came the call over the speakers.

"Hey Bri." Called out Poh.

"Yak." Added Yak.

"Good luck out there." Poh said, hand outstretched enthusiastically for a high five.

"Thanks, Poh." Brian said, with a forced smile as he picked up his surfboard ready for his round, leaving the high five, un-fived.

"Yaaaak." Yak said sadly after the Bunny.

"Too true, Yak. Too true." She nodded.

In the water, things only felt worse for Brian. First wave he paddled hard but hesitated and so the next thing he knew he was dumped and struggling for the surface. "Bunnies Don't Surf".

He tried to paddle onto the next wave, only to be dumped again. Through his gasps for air, he could almost hear his father say "You're just a nuisance." By the third wave he barely even tried. "You're letting all the children down" he thought. By the fourth wave, he let it pass by him. Bunnies don't surf.

"Come on little bro" the dreadlocks guy whispered as murmurs of "what's going on" echoed from the spectators. All were confused how the blazing newcomer could be falling so far behind.

"This isn't the Bryan, we've been watching earlier today." Cried the host over the Surf Club's loudspeaker. "Let's give him a cheer".

All the surfers yelled to Brian, the strange new comer with the crazy moves and kind words for everyone.

Yak let out an almighty, "YAAAAAAAK" which was the most inspirational thing anyone had ever said to anyone, ever. But even with ears as big as his, Brian may as well have been deaf and so he let the waves continue to go by.

"I'm nothing." He thought.

"Hey Kev, wonder what's happenin' with the boy out there?" Poh asked, looking at Kevin confusedly. If Brian wasn't touched by Yak, she doubted he could be touched by anything.

Kevin didn't speak as he was too busy using all his might to hold back tears. This wasn't what he wanted. Where was Brian's smile, that egg-cellent smile? Brian wasn't even enjoying the ride. "That's it" he mumbled, when he realised he couldn't take it anymore. "I am nothing if not first and foremost his Sports Coach and Mentor. And Brian needs me."

"EARS, FEET, TAIL AND NOSE. FIND YOUR PATH AND OFF YOU GOOOO!!!!" he screamed as loud as he could.

Somehow Brian heard, and in a moment something cracked in Brian's head like a GIANT caramel EGG! He could see it all before his eyes. The path he was meant to take was there, he could see it, feel it, smell it. 'Never give up,' he thought as he paddled faster and faster, until he felt the rush of power beneath him. He popped up with all the speed of a master Easter bunny trying not to be seen.

Focussed on the water, he looked forward. He stretched out his ears to hear the waves secrets and smelt the salt through the air. He was ready. Right now there was just one path that mattered. "The ride ahead of him," he thought with a smile as he performed a perfect bottom turn.

He gave his all, using his ears, feet, tail and nose to create the most incredible manoeuvres the crowd had ever seen. He carved through the wave with such speed and grace, he left the shape of an Easter Bunny and an Easter Egg blazing white in his wake. He withdrew behind the lip of the wave, riding the barrel as if it was a burrow. Then surprising everyone, he kept peeping round the corner. He walked to the nose of his shortboard and waved, then jumped back, landing back on the middle of the board and sped hastily ahead. He shifted his weight onto the rail for his next manoeuver. There was only one way he wanted to go. UP!

He gave a perfect approach to the lip he wanted to launch off, bunny hopping and pumping to generate thunderous speed. Finally, he was ready. Compressing his legs for the hop of his life. And LAUNCH! Brian's Bunny Air Manoeuver!

He sent the board flying through the air. He went onto his front paws whilst in flight, making an egg shape with his legs in the air and then landed gracefully on the board, curving back into the face of the wave as he prepared for his next manoeuver. Each movement flowing effortlessly into each other

"I AM BRIAN BUNNIKIN AND BUNNIES CAN SURF!" He screamed into the roaring surf. But words could never describe the joy he felt. He was committed to every wave. Every set of manoeuvres were innovative and progressive and distinctly bunny, inspiration being drawn from his years as Easter Bunny. He let his "carrot hopper" flow into a cutback. He infused every movement with the strength, power and flow gained through training with Kevin. He was making this wave his own. He was himself.

The crowd went mad for it as they cheered louder and louder, but none cheered as loudly or as proudly as Kevin.

Chapter 9 - Tear-jerking Tales and Trophies

The crowd was roaring, the waves were crashing, Yak was "yakking about" – but Brian did not hear any of it as he stepped out of the whitewash and onto the warm sand. Poh gave him a large thumbs up and the dreadlocks guy gave him "the surfer nod" (a true

honour that only surfers know). Fellow grommets ran up and congratulated him on his out-there technique and original style, but he barely noticed.

Salt was up his nose and sand was in his ears, but his eyes were bright, and they darted about the beach – there was only person he was looking for. Then he saw him. His old coach emerged from the throng of onlookers and the other spectators moved back, leaving the pair facing each other in a small clearing. There was a pause – for a moment, neither knew what to do or say. Then, with a boisterous nudge, Yak pushed the student and his trainer together into what can only be described as a big bunny hug.

“Wasn’t that...?” began Brian.

“That was...” said Kevin at the same time.

“...totally gnarly!” they both said together.

“That back-handed barrel was awesome!” said Kevin, his moustache quivering with childlike delight, “And that airtime was – whoah. Seriously, whoah!”

“Thanks! I call it Brian’s Bunny Air Manoeuvre!” said Brian, “But wait – you know surfing lingo? How? You never even leave the warren!”

“Oh, there is a lot you don’t know about me, boy. I had a life before the Academy, you know. I was a child once, before... Well, let’s just say I was forced to grow up quick, and to grow up tough. Maybe too tough.”

“What happened?” the young bunny asked. Kevin’s eyes had a far-off look, and a muscle on his chiselled jaw twitched sadly.

“Well, son, you might not have noticed, but I take the Thrill of the Hunt very seriously. When I say I want my students to egg-cel, I mean it – boy, do I mean it. For many years now I have thought of little else but eggs and bunnies, bunnies and eggs – I don’t even know what came first anymore. But it wasn’t always this way. I was young once too. Just a typical carefree kid, with hopes and dreams and hobbies. I’d go out with friends, surf every weekend – boy, I loved to hit the beach. And every night, before bed, I’d take out my pen and mark off the number of days left until the next annual Egg Hunt... just a typical carefree kid. But then, one... black... day... everything changed.” A cloud had drifted in front of the summertime sun, and a chill came into the air as Kevin told his story.

“It was just like any other Easter morning. I had had my high-protein meal the night before. I had gone to bed wearing my custom-made suit with melt-proof egg-storing pockets. My alarm went off exactly twenty-eight minutes after sunrise, which I had calibrated to be optimum hunting time. Oh, what boyish innocence! I rose, did my stretches, so excited! Full of anticipation! And then... and then... nothing.” His voice was pained, his eyes misty. “Not a single egg left behind.”

“Not one?”

“Not one. It was... egg-ceptionally cruel. I was just eighteen years old. I’ll never know why it happened, how it happened – but on that day, I vowed to myself that it would *never* happen again. You could say that I became... a basket-case. “All eggs left behind” became my motto. That’s actually when I got this tattoo,” – he flexed his bicep – “I came to the Academy the next day. And I never left.”

“Whoah, dude” said Brian.

“Whoah, indeed” said Kevin, solemnly. “But today, Brian, for the first time in a long time, I remembered what it was like to be young. When I saw you on that wave I remembered how it felt to be doing something just because it felt great, just because you loved to do it. I have chosen this path in life, but you can choose your own trail. Find the way that makes your nose twitch, your feet thump, your ears wiggle – if that means surfing, then go surf, son. You have my blessing. I’m proud of you.”



Brian's tail tingled in happiness, but it was bittersweet. "Thanks, Coach. That means a lot to me, dude. Surfing *is* my passion, but today I realised something, too. When I heard your words out there, it hit me. Being an Easter bunny is who I am, and I don't ever want to lose that. If being a surfer means having to give up being a bunny, then maybe this wave has ended, know what I'm saying, man?"

"Wait right there, amigos!" Poh had chimed into the conversation. "It's like Yak's always saying, 'Life's like riding a wave, it's all about finding your balance.'"

Kevin and Brian looked at her. "That is a radical quote, man," said Brian, giving her the high-five he had rejected earlier, "But you didn't hear. I was just telling Coach here that I guess my wave-riding days are over."

"But why? It's a metaphor, you see! Why can't you balance surfing and bunny duties? And by the way, you're a rabbit!? That is so inspirational. I just thought you had lots of body hair! Wow. Life is such a journey and I am *really* enjoying the ride right now."

"Well," began Kevin, "I guess there *could* be an opening at the Academy for egg-stracurricular surfing lessons."

"And we could incorporate some gnarly board-painting sessions into our Egg Deco classes?" Brian was hopping with excitement.

"That could be a bit egg-cessive" said Kevin, but then, catching a glimpse of Brian's drooping ears, he added, "but we can consider it."

The squeak of a microphone alerted them to the fact that the trophy presentation had begun. A hush fell over the crowd as the dreadlocked Surf Club president began to announce awards in the different categories.

"...and now, brethren, for the ones we have all been waiting for. I present the Gnarly Nugget Trophy to our gutsiest contestant. Congratulations... POH EVEREST!"

Poh fist-pumped so hard her multifunctional wetsuit™ ripped at the shoulder seam.

"Finally, the winner of The Big Day Out, 'Surf's Out' Competition, goes to, for the first time ever, a grommet – that's a first-time contestant. Congratulations... BRIAN... Bunnikin?"

“So stoked right now,” said the young bunny as he accepted his trophy, his nose twitching with emotion, “but I couldn’t have done this without my friends, and my coach. I guess what the day has taught me is that when things get a bit scrambled, there’s no point turning into a hot, cross bunn..err dude. Sometimes things get a little choppy out there and you’ve got to crack a few eggs but they don’t all have to be in the same basket, know what I’m saying? Just ride the wave of life through the rabbit-holes of uncertainty. When you get dumped, you’ve gotta keep your eyes on that shiny egg hidden behind the horizon, are you feeling me? Just hop back on your board and burrow onwards. Take your friends with you...” he looked at Kevin, and Kevin looked back, “...but leave all eggs behind.”

There was a smattering of confused applause from the crowd, but to those who understood, his speech meant a lot.

Poh had her hand clasped in a fist over her heart, her eyes closed, and was nodding appreciatively.

Kevin was smiling his biggest smile in the last ten years.

And Yak “yakked” with unmistakable approval.



Epilogue

"I am so excited to be in the Royal Easter Academy!!!" Exclaimed Poh. "This is such a once in a lifetime opportunity."

"Yak?"

"You are right, Yak, I meant to say that I am so *egg-cited*." Laughed Poh. "So where are we putting Brian's trophy?" She held up the trophy and walked down the Academy's main hall where Brian, Kevin, Poh and Yak were all standing. "Does it go with the 'Most Sporty Rabbit' trophies? Or with the 'Fluffy Tales Creative Writing' award?"

"I think I know," Kevin said, as he took the trophy carefully and walked out of the trophy room and straight to his favourite trophy cabinet at the very entrance of the Academy, where only the most prestigious awards were kept. He put the trophy in the centre.

"There," he said, "so everyone can know that Easter Bunnies are able to do anything they set their mind to."

"Thanks, Coach," Brian said earnestly, and they all cheered.

"What's on the cards next?" Poh asked.

"Well," Brian began, "I'll actually be training the younger bunnies with Kevin. And of course, I'll hit the beach whenever I can - there's another surf competition next month. Coach might even have a go, too!" Kevin grinned like a proud father as they walked out to the classroom and saw young bunnies trying to practice their surf moves on the grass and painting their surfboards as if they were Easter eggs.

"Do you need any more help?" Poh asked, "I wouldn't mind hanging around here."

"I thought that you were going back to your village?" Brian asked, surprised. Poh looked at Yak,

"I think we'd like to stay here for a bit," Poh said slowly, "we've never stayed in the one spot for too long, and it would be nice to teach young bunnies how to climb a mountain like a real adventurer!"

"That would be great!" Brian said brightly,

"Yeah, I'd *love* more help," Kevin said, and Poh blushed.

"Well - I *love* helping," Poh replied.

"*Yak*," Yak chimed in.

"That's right," Poh said, "Yak'll be here too."

"What a helpful yak," Brian said,

"Actually, I'm a buffalo," said Yak and they all stood there in shock.

"Um..."

The Egg-cellent End



Summary/blurb

When it seems as though the weight of the world is on your shoulders sometimes you just feel the need to escape. This is the story of Brian, a rabbit destined to be an Easter bunny who's not so sure that's the right path for him. Follow the adventures of some unlikely friends as Brian tries to find his new path. Will Brian be able to escape from the world of Easter and the gruelling training that's required? Can an obsessive coach, a well-travelled mountain guide, a friendly yak and a couple of surfers help Brian follow his dreams? Or will he forever be locked in a world of chocolate?

Reviews of your book

"Absolutely eggcellent" - Anonymous

"Inspired me to give up smoking" - Bill Clinton

"Never read anything so amazing before in my life" - J R R Tolkein

"I liked the bit about the Yak" - Yak

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