

Thea Stilton

THE CAVE OF STARS



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SURPRISE!

Nicky opened her eyes just before her **ALARM** went off. She'd set it very early because she wanted to go for a run before getting to work on the **farm**.



She immediately turned off the alarm and carefully got out of the bunk bed, trying to be as quiet as a mouse. But . . . **CREAK!**

The ladder groaned under her paw.

“Is it already time to get up?” mumbled her friend Charlotte from the bunk below.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you,” Nicky said. “I’m going **RUNNING**, but you can still sleep for a bit!”

“Don’t worry — I think I’ll get up. I can make a good **breakfast!**” Charlotte said.



SURPRISE!

Then she looked her friend in the eye and frowned. “Nicky, are you okay? You seem off.”

“Nothing gets past you!” Nicky smiled. *Charlotte* was a new friend, but she was a





sensitive mouselet who'd quickly understood Nicky.

"I'm a little **sad** because my stay here is ending," Nicky said.

"Well, you can come back whenever you like. Consider the **BROWN FARM** your home in New Zealand!" Charlotte said. Her family owned the farm.

"I would love to come back here with my friends the **THEA SISTERS**," Nicky said with a dreamy smile.

Charlotte gave her a strange grin. "I think your **WISH** may come true — and maybe even sooner than you think!"

As Nicky left for her run, a light pink **DAWN** began to brighten the sky. The mouselet let her gaze wander over the green **fields** that



SURPRISE!

surrounded the farm. Then she took a deep breath of fresh air and pumped herself up. “Time for a few more miles in **New Zealand!**”

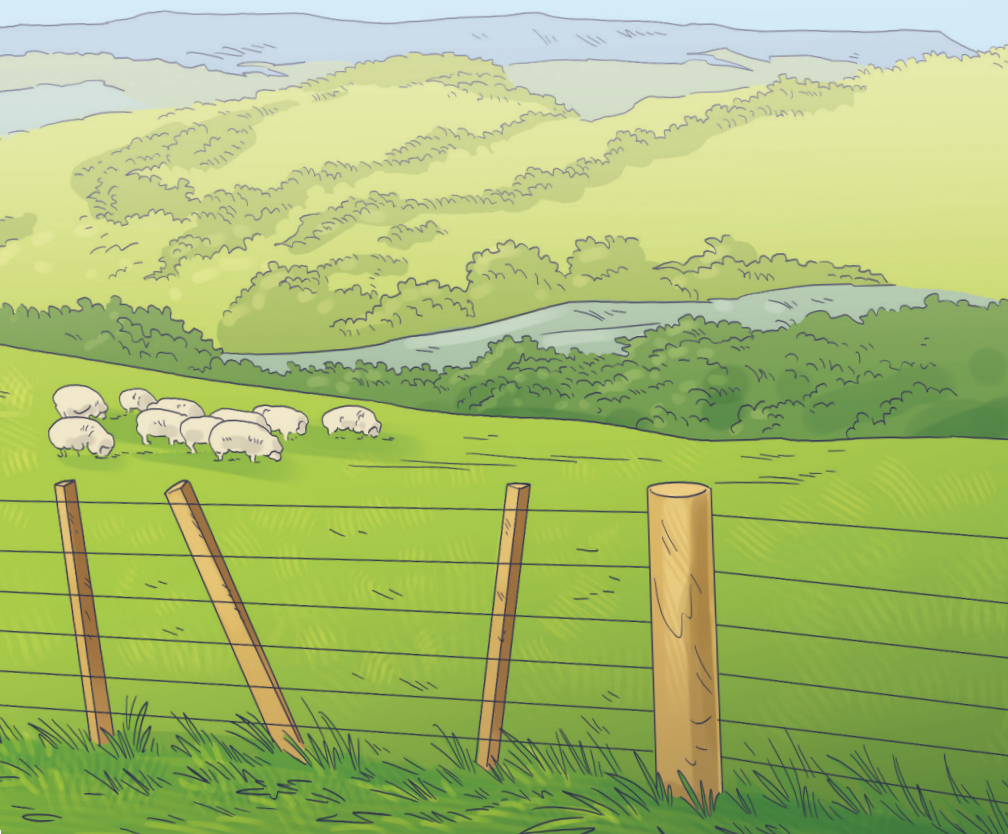
When Nicky returned, the **SUN** was higher in the sky and the whole farm was awake. She



SURPRISE!



slowed her pace to a quick walk, taking in every detail around her: the green grass, the fluffy coats of the **sheep** grazing nearby, the sounds of the cows that she knew by name, the smell of **EGGS** and **BEANS** that were





SURPRISE!

frying for breakfast, and the sparkling laugh of Charlotte, who appeared in the open kitchen window.

“I’ll miss all of this,” Nicky said to herself.

When she had decided to spend her break **working** on a New Zealand farm, she couldn’t have imagined that six weeks would pass so quickly. And now just a pawful of days



New Zealand

New Zealand is an archipelago (group of islands) in the southeast Pacific Ocean. It is made of two large islands — the **North Island**, home to capital city Wellington, and the **South Island** — as well as many other small islands. While both islands have mountain ranges and forests, the South Island also has glaciers, sounds, fjords, and plains, while the North Island is warmer and has more sandy beaches, farmland, and an active volcanic and thermal area.

The islands were originally inhabited by the Māori, a Polynesian people who first arrived about a thousand years ago. Europeans sighted the land in the 1600s, and Great Britain annexed it as a colony in 1840. New Zealand has been independent since 1947 and is a member of the British Commonwealth. It currently has more than five million inhabitants, and while the majority are of **European** descent, there is a strong **Māori** culture still present.





were left until her return to **MOUSEFORD ACADEMY** on Whale Island.

I have so many things to tell my friends!
Nicky said to herself. *I think about them so much that sometimes it seems like they're here. I can almost hear their squeaks.*

Just then Nicky heard a squeak from the kitchen. "And at that point, I told myself to calm down."

Great Gouda! That sounded just like . . .
"Colette! Don't exaggerate!" Nicky recognized Paulina's **CHEERFUL** squeak.

The mouselet stopped in her tracks. How could she hear the voices of her best friends from thousands of miles away?