

# and His Extraordinary Vegetable patch

# BIANCA C. ROSS Illustrated by tabitha Emma Bray

\_\_\_\_\_

Published in Australia by Farinet Pty Ltd

First published in Australia in 2014

© Text copyright 2014, Bianca C. Ross

© Design and Illustration copyright Farinet Pty Ltd

Herbert Peabody ° is a registered trademark of Farinet Pty Ltd

Printed in China by 1010 Printing International

Contact details: hello@herbertpeabody.com

Website: www.herbertpeabody.com

Cover design, typesetting: Chameleon Print Design

The right of Bianca C. Ross to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This book is a work of fiction. Any similarities to that of people living or dead are purely coincidental.

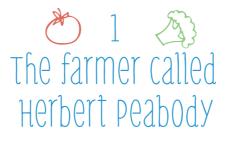
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Ross, Bianca C. *Herbert Peabody* ISBN :978-0-987595-50-8 pp118 This book is for those who believe that if you really work at something, extraordinary things can happen.



I.	The farmer called Herbert Peabody	Ι
2.	Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery	7
3.	Herbie's very special visitors	17
4.	The big lunch problem	23
5.	The sad visit to Huffelton	33
6.	The dreadful night	41
7.	The extraordinary vegetable patch	49
8.	The magic pots	61
9.	The crazy idea	69
10.	The magic day at Mulberry Tree Farm	77
II.	The big surprise	89
12.	The magic	99





erbert Peabody was a farmer who lived on a farm that had cows, olive trees and a big, big vegetable patch. There was a beautiful garden too, with yellow and pink tulips, a lush green lawn and a very purple wisteria-covered archway that announced the arrival of spring every year.

Herbert — or "Herbie", as he was known to his family and friends — was a very happy farmer. One morning, like every other morning, he woke to the crow of the old rooster who lived in the chicken coop next to the big vegetable patch. Herbie popped out of bed and dressed himself in his favourite overalls with the green pocket. He made his way to the kitchen to prepare himself

a breakfast of muesli with nuts and honey, and tea with real tea-leaves, because tea tasted better when it came from a teapot.

After breakfast, Herbie brushed his teeth and headed outside to sit on the wooden bench under the old mulberry tree and read the newspaper. He liked to know what was going on in Huffelton. That was the town Herbie's farm was in, and his farm was called Mulberry Tree Farm, after the very tree Herbie was sitting under. The mulberry tree was one hundred years old, and its branches were wide and low, which made it a very good tree to read under.



When Herbie had finished, he pulled on his green Wellington boots and headed over to the big vegetable patch, next to the old red barn. He had built the patch himself using planks of wood that had been part of a cow pen in the old red

#### The farmer called Herbert Peabody

barn. The wood was so old that it had turned a silvery grey, like the colour of the moon.

Herbie needed very good soil in the vegetable patch to help the vegetables grow, so he had made a compost heap. When it had turned into good soil, he would dig it into the patch with his long-handled garden shovel. Herbie liked the rich dark colour of the soil. It was like a crumbly chocolate cake. And the worms who lived there liked the soil as much as Herbie liked chocolate cake. They ate all day and night, making the soil healthy and ready to be planted with seeds.

Herbie took a small spade and made little hollows that became beds for the seeds. He then covered each seed carefully with the good soil, patting it down with his hands so all the seeds felt safe and warm and ready to grow.

The seeds were very thirsty after being planted so Herbie gave them a big drink of water from his watering can. As he was watering, he made up a special poem to recite to the seeds. He liked the sound that words made when they rhymed and he thought the seeds might too. He tapped his left foot to make a rhythm.



The farmer called Herbert Peabody

Hello there, little seeds It's great to meet you here today It's time to get you planted To start you on your way.

His left foot started stomping.

With good soil around you And warmth from the sun This little drink of water Will make growing lots of fun!

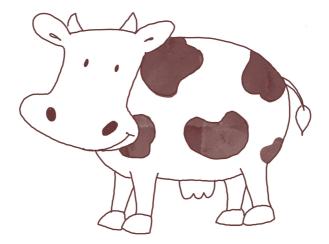
And then Herbie started bouncing.

With some lovin' and attention Soon you will have grown The tastiest fruit and vegetables That I have ever known!

And then he started jumping!

Yo, grow! Yo, grow, Yeah, grow, Yo, GROW!

He ended with a very BIG jump, and it was so big that it made him tumble over, and that made him giggle. The cows who lived in the paddock across from the big vegetable patch saw Herbie jumping to his rhyme and they knew that seeds had been planted, which was very exciting.





ne warm summer morning, the rooster crowed his morning call and Herbie jumped out of bed, dressed himself, made some muesli and drank some teapot tea. Today was Friday, the day when he made his weekly fruit and vegetable delivery to Theo Knead-a-lot, Huffelton's famous baker.

Herbie put on his Wellington boots, took a basket and headed outside. As he approached the vegetable patch, he saw something amazing.

"Wow!" he exclaimed.

Some of the little seeds had sprouted through the dirt, poking their heads out into the sunshine. Suddenly the soil around the pumpkins began to move.

"Hello, Herbie!" It was the worm who lived in the big vegetable patch. "It's so exciting to see your new crop!"

"Isn't it wonderful? The warm sunshine, the soaking rain and your work in the soil have helped make it possible. The way that the little seeds sprout is very special. It's just like ... magic!"

"Yes, that's it!"

Herbie's left foot started tapping and he burst out with a rhyme.

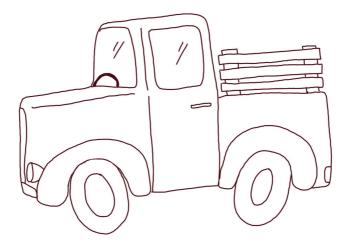
It's fabulous to see This veggie patch so full Of little seedlings growing It's really magical!

Worm giggled and wiggled goodbye, because worms can't really wave goodbye. Herbie picked some crunchy carrots and ripe corn, put them in his basket and headed over to his rumbling green truck to drive into Huffelton to Theo's bakery.

Herbie liked driving his truck into town. He bumbled down the pebbly driveway and turned



left. Pine trees lined both sides of the road and they had grown so tall that they reached each other in the middle making a long dark green corridor. Through Herbie went until he came to Huffelton Lake where he caught a glimpse of the long wooden pier to which three rowboats were tied. He passed by the playground with the big slippery slide where he used to play, and when he reached Huffelton School where his niece Clementine and nephew Digby went he tooted his horn and waved. The children playing in the yard waved back because everyone knew Herbie and his rumbling green truck.



Across the roundabout he went into Main Street where the post office, Huffelton Theatre and the town hall that was painted yellow stood in a row. The Mayor of Huffelton was heading out to a meeting and he saw Herbie and tipped his hat. Herbie tipped his back, found a parking spot in front of the shops and stopped his truck outside Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery.

"Hello, Theo!" he called as he walked in.

"GOOD MORNING, Herbie!" bellowed Theo. He was big and jolly and had a booming voice to match. He was an excellent baker, and his baking was so good that sometimes he had to hide his scrumptious cakes to stop himself from eating them. But that didn't work very well because if you hide something yourself, you know exactly where to find it.

The wooden shelves along the back wall of the bakery were lined with his famous bread, and delicious pies, cupcakes and colourful tarts crammed the glass shop counter.

"I'm here to make my weekly delivery," said Herbie.

"Excellent!" exclaimed Theo as he took the



Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery

basket from Herbie. "I must say that this carrot cake is especially excellent because I made it with the carrots you gave me the other day."

Even though Herbie was cheeky, he was very modest. He blushed and looked down at the floor because he didn't quite know how to accept compliments, especially when they were given very loudly.

"Thank you," he mumbled, and although he was still blushing, he felt very pleased that Theo liked his carrots. "I might actually buy one of your carrot cakes for my niece and nephew who are coming to Mulberry Tree Farm for the school holidays. My sister Henrietta is dropping them off tomorrow. It will be the first time they have ever stayed over and your cake will make the perfect welcome morning tea."

"Splendid," said Theo. He took the cake, placed it in a box and handed it to Herbie. "Now, Herbie, I have to ask you something."

"Yes, what is it?"

"I need to increase my orders of your fruit and vegetables."

"You do?"

"I do. You see, a lot of people around here who used to supply me with fruit and vegetables don't grow them anymore."

"Really? Why is that?"

"People seem to be too busy to grow food nowadays. I like to use the freshest ingredients that are grown nearby so that my baking tastes the best it can. If I can't find new suppliers soon, I won't be able to bake anything."

"Oh dear!"

"And if I can't bake anything I will have to look at closing down my bakery."

"Oh no! That is no good at all. I will try to be ready for your bigger orders whenever you need them, Theo. We cannot have your bakery closing down."

"Thank you, Herbie. In the meantime I just hope that you and your big vegetable patch will have enough produce to supply me over the next season." Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery

Herbie said goodbye, jumped into his rumbling green truck and set off back to Mulberry Tree Farm. He thought about Theo's request. "I hope my big vegetable patch will have enough produce for Theo's orders. Huffelton would not be the same without his famous bakery."







he next morning at ten o'clock Herbie heard Henrietta's car roll up the pebbly driveway. He was always happy to have visitors, and he was especially happy to have his niece and nephew coming to stay, so he raced outside to greet them under the wisteria-covered arch.

"Hi, Uncle Herbie!" Clementine and Digby called as they gathered their bags from the car. They had only ever visited Herbie for lunch or dinner so staying at Mulberry Tree Farm was something new.

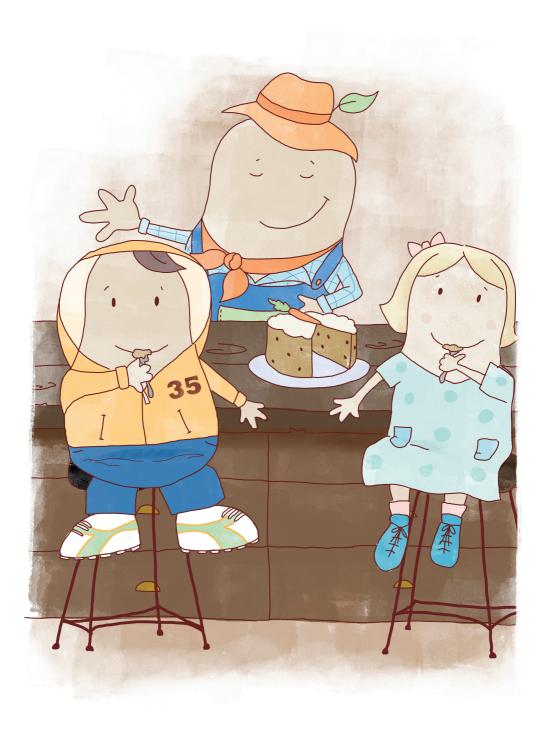
Clementine was in year four at school and she was a very good guitar player. Digby was in year three and played football for the Huffelton Brumbies.

"My dear HERBERT!" waved Henrietta. She was an opera singer and had performed in many productions in lead roles. She adored being onstage and could be quite dramatic offstage too. "Thank you SO much for looking after Clementine and Digby over the school holidays. I won't stay too long now because I have to get back to the theatre and rehearse for my tour."

The four of them walked up the path to the cottage. "Can we sit on the tractor stools?" asked Clementine as they entered the kitchen.

"Of course," Herbie replied. He had built the kitchen himself using an old timber shop counter, and a wooden filing cabinet. They were both dented and cracked, but he liked them exactly as they were. He had found two brown stools in a shop in the city that looked like tractor seats so he'd bought them, and when he took them





back and sat them at the kitchen bench they looked as though they had been there forever.

Herbie made a pot of teapot tea and cut Theo's delicious carrot cake. He passed each of them a slice.

"This is the BEST carrot cake I have ever tasted!" exclaimed Henrietta.

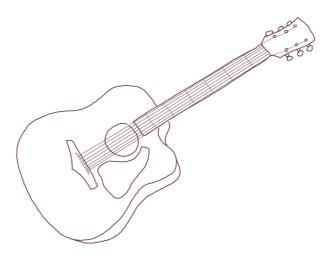
'Thank you. This morning I—" began Herbie. "Did Theo Knead-a-lot make it?"

"Yes, he—"

"With your carrots?"

"Why, yes. Did you know—"

"Oh I knew it! That Theo Knead-a-lot is a baking wiz," Henrietta bubbled, "and with your



delicious produce, Herbie, it is no wonder that his baking is so GOOD!" And she twirled on the spot and ended with a large round of applause.

Herbie looked at the floor and started blushing, but he felt flattered that Henrietta liked his carrots.

"Oh Herbie!" cried Henrietta. "There's no need to be so modest! Now, have some delicious cake!"

"Thank you." Herbie smiled as he took the cake, and he felt a rhyme coming on. His left foot started tapping.

How good it is to be here Hangin' out with all of you Eating super yummy carrot cake There's so much we can do!

And then he started bouncing

Clementine and Digby It's so cool you've come to stay I think we'll have a great time Here on your holiday!

Henrietta cheered and clapped wildly, and Clementine and Digby giggled.

Herbie smiled so much that his eyes crinkled up. Little did he know that something big was about to happen. And that something would change things forever.



he four of them were under the wisteriacovered archway to wave Henrietta goodbye. She hugged Clementine and Digby and

hopped into her car. "Be good for your Uncle Herbie," she told Clementine and Digby. "He is wonderful and when I return

I am sure you will have some fabulous stories to tell me about what the three of you got up to!"

"I will," said Clementine. "It will be fun staying here."

"And you, Digby?" asked Henrietta.

Digby shrugged.

"Will you be all right?"

"I'll be okay," said Digby quietly. "I have your

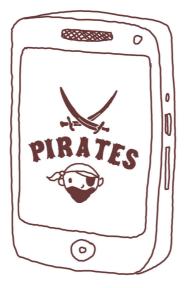
old phone so I can play *Pirates*. I'm up to level eight and there's only two to go until I finish building the pirate tower."

"Then everything is settled," she said as she waved goodbye.

"We can't wait to hear about your tour!" called Herbie.

The three of them waved as Henrietta drove down the white pebbly driveway. Then they made their way back to the kitchen.

Digby was a little gloomy. He pulled out his phone as he sat on the tractor stool and started playing *Pirates*.



2 4

"How about some lunch?" Herbie asked brightly.

"Yes please!" replied Digby, putting his phone on the bench. "What shall we have?"

"How about we pick some fresh vegetables from the big vegetable patch?" suggested Herbie.

"But they'll be all covered in dirt," said Clementine, "and I don't want to get grubby in the garden before we eat."

"Oh," started Herbie, "I was thinking we'd spend some time in the vegetable patch this afternoon. It's fun to pick fruit and vegetables."

"Perhaps we can see what's in the pantry," suggested Digby.

"Good idea," said Clementine. "The food is already clean and that means we can eat sooner."

"Okay," said Herbie, but he didn't really think it was okay at all. If he could get Clementine and Digby outside into the sunshine to dig around in the vegetable patch he knew they would love it.

They went over to the pantry, and peered in. Digby rummaged through a crate of vegetables hoping to find something interesting.



Clementine stood on tiptoes and slid a jar of homemade chutney out of the way to see if there was something more exciting.

"Do you have any biscuits?" she asked.

"I'm afraid not," said Herbie, "but we have fresh fruit and vegetables."

"I don't really like vegetables," said Digby. "They're boring unless they're in a cake. Can we snack on some more of Theo's carrot cake?"

"Well, I suppose so," said Herbie and he cut two more slices. Clementine and Digby gobbled them down.

"Uncle Herbie," began Digby as he finished his cake, "do you have a phone charger? Mine is packed at the bottom of my bag and I'd like to get to level nine of *Pirates* by the end of today. I'm up to the part where I'm the captain of a tugboat that chugs out on a wavy sea to fight the pirates."

"I don't think my charger will work on your phone, but how about we play a real life version of *Pirates* outside! Why don't we put on some Wellington boots and head out to the big vegetable patch?"

*"Pirates* is set on a wild sea, and you need to hear the boom of the cannons and the crash of the waves to really experience the game. I think I'd rather watch TV."

"So would I," said Clementine. "Is that okay?" "Sure," said Herbie. "I am going to go outside — in the sunshine." He stood for a moment, waiting to see if they were tempted to join him, but Clementine was already perched on the armchair and Digby had jumped onto the couch.

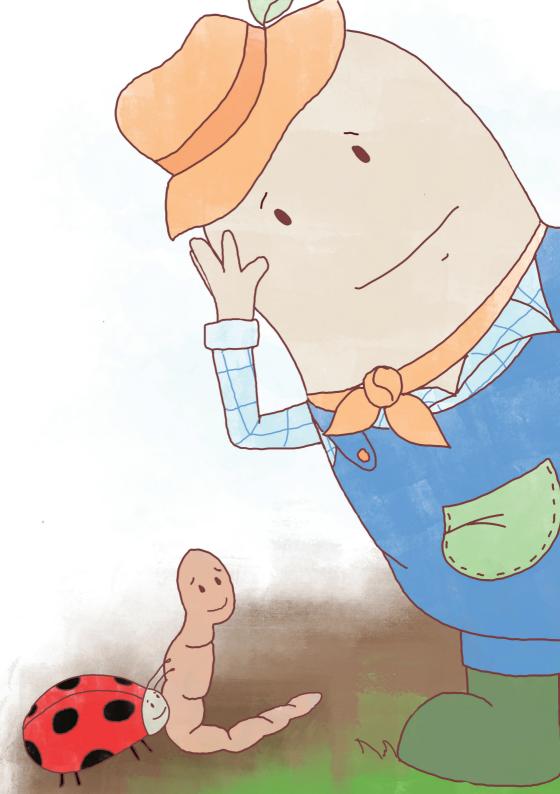
"Okay," said Clementine. "See you soon." She grabbed the remote and switched on the TV.

Herbie pulled on his Wellington boots and plodded over to his big vegetable patch. He was worried about what he would give Clementine and Digby to eat over the holidays. It seemed their first day at Mulberry Tree Farm was not going well.

He took his spade and started digging at the base of the tomatoes. Worm wiggled up to see what was happening.

"Hello, Herbie!" he said.

"Hello, Worm," mumbled Herbie.



"Are you all right? You don't seem to be your chirpy self."

"It seems Clementine and Digby don't like to eat fruit and vegetables so I don't know what I will give them to eat over the holidays."

"Oh dear," said Worm.

"And they would rather watch TV and play phone games than come outside and see the big vegetable patch. It seems they don't understand how magical it all can be".

"That is very sad."

"I just wish there was something I could do."

By this time, their friend, Ladybug, had flown over from the rose bushes. "Hello, Herbie. Hello, Worm. Is everything all right?"



"Clementine and Digby won't come out and see the vegetable patch," said Herbie, cupping his hands around one of the tiny seedlings.

"That isn't very good at all," agreed Ladybug.

"Maybe you could make up a rhyme, Herbie," suggested Worm.

"Yes, that will help," added Ladybug.

Herbie tried to think of some words that sounded the same.

*In the garden here today, You can play ... er, stay ... A horse says "neigh"...* 

He couldn't come up with anything. He tried to tap his left foot but his Wellington boot seemed extra heavy. His smile had turned upside down into a sad face.

"Perhaps I will rhyme a bit later," was all he could manage to say.

Worm and Ladybug were very concerned. They had never seen Herbie looking so miserable. He said goodbye and trudged off towards the cottage. Things were not good.



erbie slowly made his way back inside to find Clementine watching TV and Digby playing *Pirates.* 

"Uncle Herbie, we're still hungry. Can we go into Huffelton to Theo Knead-a-lot's bakery to buy some lunch?" asked Clementine.

"Can we?" asked Digby. "We could get some of his sausage rolls. Sometimes, he supplies them for our school lunch orders and they're delicious!"

"What a good idea," said Herbie. He was worried that the carrot cake hadn't been enough for them to eat for lunch. "I will make a delivery of tomatoes as well."

They started to get ready to leave and Herbie headed towards the door to go outside to the vegetable patch. Clementine looked puzzled.

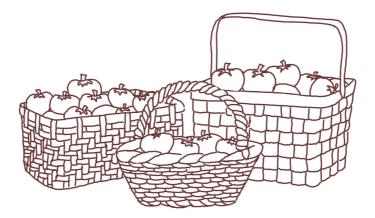
"Uncle Herbie, don't you keep your tomatoes in the fridge?" she asked.

"I keep some tomatoes in the fridge, but the ones that we will take to Theo are ripe and ready to pick from my big vegetable patch."

"But aren't they very dirty?" asked Digby.

"Well, yes, they are when they are in the patch, but vegetables need dirt to be able to grow. And once they've grown, you wash off the dirt so they are ready to eat."

Herbie went out to the big vegetable patch and filled three baskets with red ripe tomatoes.



The sad visit to Huffelton

He hoped that some of the magic would rub onto Clementine and Digby if they each took a basket into town.

Herbie returned to the kitchen with the baskets and the three of them jumped into the rumbling green truck and drove to Huffelton.



They parked in the main street, gathered the baskets and headed for Theo's famous bakery. As they came closer, they saw Theo standing outside. Rather than busily baking, he was holding a big blue bucket of soapy water in one hand and a yellow sponge in the other, washing the front window.

"Hello, Theo!" called Herbie as they approached.

Theo looked up slowly. He didn't wave and he didn't smile. His boomy voice didn't call back and he didn't look very jolly at all.

"Hi, Herbie," he said quietly.

Herbie was worried. "I think you know Clementine and Digby. They sometimes order their school lunches from you," he said, hoping to lift the mood.

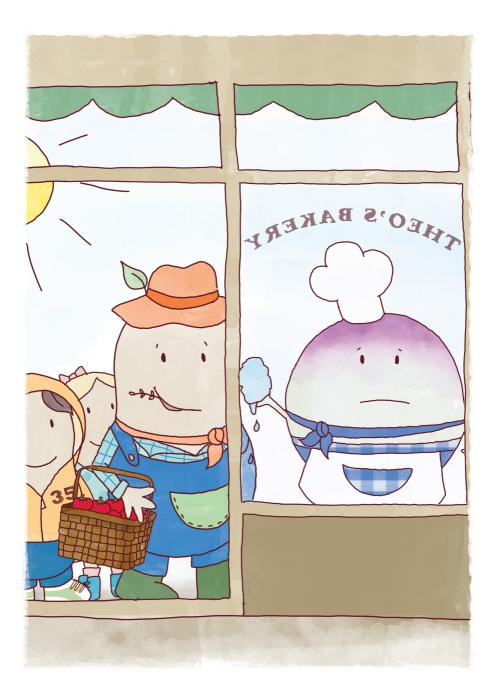
"Yes, hello," whispered Theo as soapy water dripped from his sponge onto the footpath making a big puddle of sad tears.

"Theo, we had some of your delicious carrot cake today. It was the best cake I have ever had," said Clementine.

"It was!" added Digby. "And now we'd like to get three sausage rolls like the ones you deliver for our lunch orders!"

Theo's shoulders drooped as he looked at the puddle on the footpath. "I'm sorry, but there aren't any left."

Herbie was looking through the bakery window and he noticed something was different.



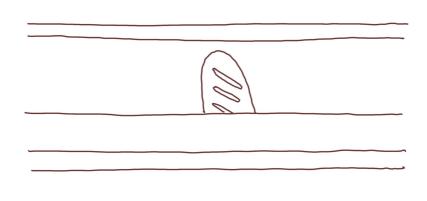
The glass counter display of colourful cupcakes was almost empty, and Theo's famous bread only filled half the shelves behind the counter.

"Theo, what has happened to your bread and cupcakes and tarts?

"The local produce is at an all-time low, so there isn't a lot for me to bake with and that means there is less to sell. I can't seem to find any new suppliers for next season, so it seems as though I might have to shut down my bakery."

"Oh no. That can't be true!"

"I'm afraid it is."



"But Uncle Herbie has three baskets of tomatoes from his vegetable patch right here," said Clementine. "Perhaps you could make some tomato cake? Everyone likes tomato sauce, so tomato cake might be a new best seller."

"Thank you, but even three baskets of tomatoes are not enough to keep my bakery open for very long."

"Is there anything at all we can do to help?" asked Herbie.

"We could help wash the windows," said Clementine.

"It's okay," replied Theo softly.

"We understand," said Herbie. "Let me know if you change your mind."

Herbie, Clementine and Digby picked up their baskets, made their way back to the rumbling green truck and took a long, sad drive back to Mulberry Tree Farm.

"Theo's bakery can't close down," said Digby. "We won't have anywhere to get lunch orders."

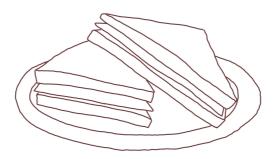
"I really need to think of something to help him," said Herbie, "but I don't know where on earth to start."



erbie, Clementine, Digby and the tomatoes were back in the kitchen at Mulberry Tree Farm. Herbie found enough cheese in the fridge to make three sandwiches for a late lunch.

"It's sad about Theo's bakery," said Clementine.

"I think it's sad that we couldn't get any sausage rolls for lunch," said Digby, reaching for his phone.



For the rest of the afternoon, Digby played *Pirates* and Clementine watched TV. Herbie sat with them feeling worried that this could be the most boring school holidays Clementine and Digby would ever have.

Evening came and after more cheese sandwiches for dinner, they all brushed their teeth and Herbie tucked Clementine and Digby into the bunk beds in the guestroom.

"Can you please leave the lamp on?" asked Digby. "I like to have some light at night."

"Of course."

"Sleep well, Uncle Herbie," they said as they snuggled in.

"You too," whispered Herbie.

Herbie went into his bedroom and climbed into bed, hoping that tomorrow would be a better day. Maybe he would watch more TV or download the *Pirate* game that Digby played.

His eyes began to feel very heavy. All of a sudden he heard a noise that sounded like waves. He sat up and went to hop out of bed, but instead he was in a tugboat that was on a big wavy sea.

"Har, har, haaar!" called a voice above the

# The dreadful night

waves. "It's not long until we get to Theo's famous bakery!"

Herbie peered through the porthole to see ... a pirate! His big black hat blocked out the moon, and one of his eyes was covered with a patch. His other eye looked straight at Herbie!



"Har, har, Herbie. Huffelton's fruit and vegetable supply has run out!" cried the pirate. "Theo Knead-a-lot has nothing to bake with so my crew and I are going to knock down his shop and build a big Pirate Tower!"

Herbie tried to call out but he couldn't make a sound. The ship sailed closer to his tugboat, and Herbie saw two more pirates standing on the ship's deck. One was waving a black flag with a skull on it and the other was holding a map of Huffelton. Herbie opened his mouth, but no words came out.

"Pirate Tower will be the biggest tower you have ever seen, Herbie!" shouted the first pirate.

"And soon it will be so big that we will sail over to your big vegetable patch and build another tower there too so you won't be able to supply any of Theo Knead-a-lot's orders and he won't be able to bake anything ever again!" yelled the second pirate as he waved his map in the air.

The third pirate laughed his pirate laugh and waved his ugly flag. Herbie wanted to duck away from the porthole and hide, but he was glued to the floor. Suddenly, his Wellington boots appeared and hurried over to where he was standing at the window. Worm and Ladybug crawled out of the boots.

"Herbie!" cried Worm. "You have to do something."

"You have to stop the pirates!" shouted Ladybug.



With one eye fixed firmly on the pirate ship, Herbie reached down and put on his boots. He clambered out through the porthole onto the deck of the tugboat as the pirate ship sailed straight towards him.

"No, pirates, NO!" he yelled, shaking his fist at them.

The pirates laughed as their ship sailed on towards the tugboat.

"Stop right NOW!" commanded Herbie.

But the ship did not stop. It was so close now that Herbie could almost reach out and touch the pirate's big black hat.

"I will not let you take away my vegetable patch and make Theo's bakery close down! I will not!"

"Har, har, haar!" laughed the three pirates, and the big ship loomed its black shadow over the tugboat.

"No, no, NO!" yelled Herbie. And then he jolted straight up in his bed.

His eyes were wide open as he searched for the ship and the pirates and the big black hat. But they weren't there. Neither was the tugboat or the black flag or his Wellington boots.

"Worm? Ladybug?" called Herbie. But it was just him in his snuggly bed, safe in his bedroom. The sun was starting to rise over the old red barn, and the rooster crowed his good morning call.

"I must have been dreaming about Digby's game," said Herbie. He hopped out of bed and



pulled open the curtains. Instead of seeing any pirates and a rough sea, a cow in the paddock looked back at him and mooed.

"I had a nightmare," realised Herbie, "a very bad nightmare. And if I don't think of something to help Theo, some of this nightmare might become real. There might not be pirates, but if Huffelton can't supply enough fruit and vegetables for Theo's orders then his famous bakery will disappear. I will have to work out a way to make sure that doesn't happen."

And he popped out of bed to make some teapot tea.



lementine and Digby woke soon after and Herbie helped them prepare their breakfast. Clementine had some nuts and seeds muesli and Digby had two pieces of toast with honey.

No one seemed to want to go outside, so Herbie sat on the tractor stool while Clementine and Digby watched TV. Herbie tried to read the newspaper but the noise was very distracting and he found it hard to concentrate. His mind drifted back to the scary pirates taking over Theo's famous bakery in his dream.

Everyone was quiet until Digby's tummy rumbled, and this made the three of them smile.

"Sorry," said Digby, "but that cheese sandwich wasn't enough for my dinner last night and I'm even hungrier than before."

"We can't have you feeling hungry on your holiday," said Herbie. "Your mum won't let you come and stay here again! How about we make a second big breakfast with some scrambled eggs and tomato sauce? We can use the tomatoes I picked for Theo yesterday."

"But don't you need a jar of sauce?" asked Digby.

"We could use a jar, but let's make this one ourselves with these tomatoes. In fact, I might eat one now."

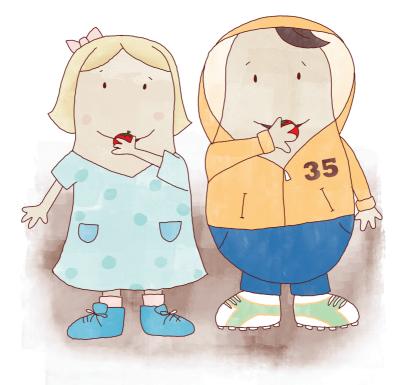
"But shouldn't you add some pepper and salt? Or make it into sauce first?" asked Clementine.

"You don't have to. Sometimes I will pick one when I'm out in the vegetable patch and eat it right from the vine. Here, taste one of these and let me know what you think."

Clementine and Digby looked at each other and then at the tomatoes Herbie now held in his hand. It seemed very strange to eat a raw tomato with nothing sprinkled over it. The extraordinary vegetable patch

Clementine bit into her tomato first and Digby followed. They chewed slowly. Neither of them said anything.

Herbie's smile started to turn upside down again. It seemed they didn't like his tomatoes. But then the silence was broken.



"Uncle Herbie!" exclaimed Clementine. "This is one of the most delicious things I have ever tasted!" "Yes! It is sort of tasty," said Digby, still with his mouth full.

Herbie's smile was back. "I am very glad you think so! Would you like to see how they grow?" he asked.

"We've only seen clean fruit and vegetables at the shop. I have never seen any actually growing," said Clementine.

"How about we put on some Wellington boots and head over to the vegetable patch to have a look?"

Clementine nodded. She was curious to see what Herbie was talking about.

Digby picked up his phone that was sitting on the bench to start playing *Pirates*.

"Come on, Digby," said Clementine, "you can play that later. Let's see what Uncle Herbie has to show us."

Digby grumbled and put his phone down.

Herbie brought out some spare Wellington boots that he kept in his laundry for guests so they pulled them on and the three of them made their way over to the big vegetable patch.

The sun sat above the old red barn and dewy



leaves shimmered in its light. For just a moment, the magic was real and it was there to see.

"Look at all these plants!" exclaimed Clementine as they approached the patch.

"And look at these strawberries. They are so red!" said Digby.

Clementine touched the bushy green top of a carrot and Digby patted a dark purple eggplant.

"This is the most amazing garden! Look at all the different colours!" said Clementine.

"I never really knew that this is how food grows!" said Digby. "It's not like anything I've ever seen before."

"No," said Clementine, "it's very special."

"It's just like ... like magic!" cried Digby.

Herbie smiled so much that his eyes crinkled up. "Oh, I'm so glad you know what I mean! Growing food is a very special thing to do!"

"And it tastes so good!" smiled Clementine.

Herbie's heart felt happy, and as he watched Clementine and Digby in the patch, he made up a rhyme just for himself. The extraordinary vegetable patch

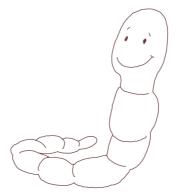
Finally it's working The magic here is real Now I know that sharing it Is the best thing I can feel!

"I thought *Pirates* was fun, but this is super cool!" exclaimed Digby as he poked his finger into the dark crumbly soil.

As Herbie stood watching Clementine and Digby, Worm wiggled over to talk to him.

"Hello, Herbie. I see Clementine and Digby have changed their minds about being in the vegetable patch."

"Yes," said Herbie. "They have seen the magic ..." His voice trailed off. "Worm, you have given me an idea!"



"That's more like the Herbie I know," said Worm, and he wiggled away into the crumbly soil to leave Herbie to think.

Herbie's idea was big. It was really big. It was so big that it was kind of crazy!

"I know what to do!" he shouted.

"About what?" asked Clementine, somewhat surprised at Herbie's outburst.

"About how to save Theo's famous bakery!"

"Really?" asked Digby excitedly.

"The three of us need to spread the magic of growing food, ready for next season! Then we can save Theo's famous bakery!"

"But we can't," said Digby. "We don't have a vegetable patch."

"We don't even have a proper garden. We only have a courtyard," said Clementine.

"That is true," replied Herbie, "but fruit and vegetables don't always have to grow in a garden."

"They don't?" asked Clementine.

Herbie felt a rhyme coming on. His left foot started tapping.



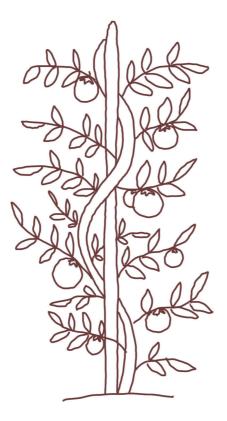
Growing fruit and vegetables Can begin today There isn't all that much you need To start you on your way!

He started bouncing.

You don't need a big garden So come along with me You'll be surprised how easy Growing fruit and vegetables can be!

And then he started jumping!

Let's grow, Let's grow, Yeah grow, Let's GROW! The extraordinary vegetable patch



Herbie ended with a very big jump that was as high as the tomato plant.

"We've got no time to waste. Come with me."



erbie hurried past the big vegetable patch into the old red barn with Clementine and Digby following closely. Herbie emerged with three empty pots.

"Growing food is quite easy," he explained. "In a few simple steps the plants are ready. Then you need to nurture the magic and it will come!"

"Really?" asked Clementine.

Herbie's left foot started tapping.

*Here's some empty pots They're the first thing that we need We'll fill them with good soil So they are ready for the seed.* 

There was a big pile of compost dirt at the

back of the old red barn, so they headed around with the pots. Herbie dug with his long-handled shovel and they filled their pots with soil.

"What comes next?" asked Digby excitedly. Herbie's left foot started tapping again.

Now it's time to stop and think What we want to grow You decide what you want to eat And it's those seeds that we'll sow!

They went into the old red barn and found an assortment of seeds sitting on a rickety wooden shelf.

"Can we grow some basil?" asked Digby. It looked green and bushy in the photo on the packet.

"And how about some red chilli?" suggested Clementine. She loved the spicy taste and bright red colour.

"Yes! Both of them grow very well in pots. Perhaps we can grow some peppermint too," suggested Herbie.

"Okay!" said Digby. "This is fun! Now do we plant the seeds in the pots?"

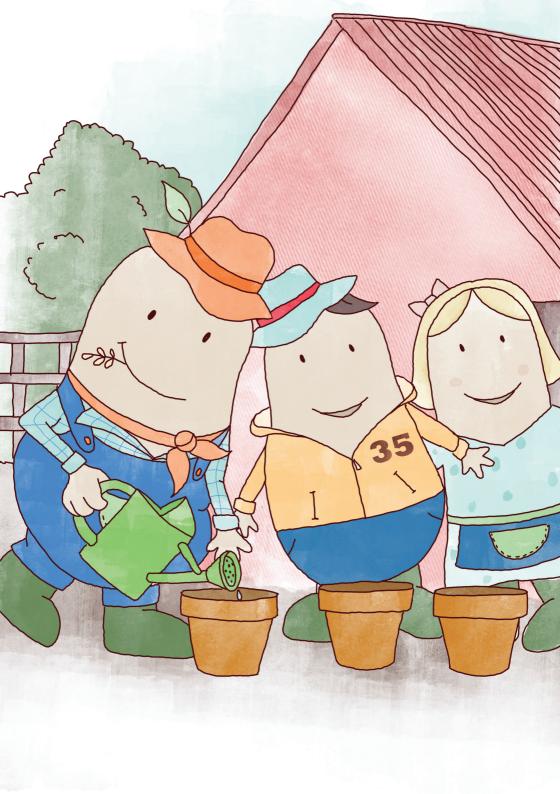


Herbie smiled and nodded keenly. "Yes. This is my favourite part!" He found two small spades and handed them to Clementine and Digby so they could make indents in the soil for the seeds.



"The dirt feels so soft and good!" Digby said as they patted the dirt down. "I understand why you enjoy this part so much, Uncle Herbie."

Herbie smiled. It was fun planting seeds with Clementine and Digby in the sunshine at Mulberry Tree Farm. He felt his left foot start to tap again.



Now the seeds need water To start them on their way They need to have a drink Just a little, every day.

Herbie filled a watering can from the tank and gave the seeds a drink. When that was done, Herbie felt another rhyme, and as his left foot started to tap, Clementine tapped too.

The seeds need the sunshine So they can grow their best If you put them in a sunny spot The seeds will do the rest.

"Our courtyard is in the sunshine for most of the day. We can put them out there!" said Digby.

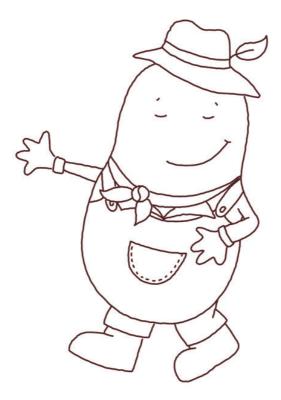
Herbie's foot kept tapping. "There is one last thing that I find helps the seeds to grow."

"What is it?" asked Clementine, her foot still tapping.

"A magic rhyme that goes like this ..." Herbie was so excited that he forgot to bounce and went straight into jumping. The magic pots

Yo, grow! Yo, grow, Yeah, grow, Yo, GROW!

He jumped high into the air, and Clementine and Digby jumped too.





A fter a few more days, the school holidays had come to an end, which meant it was time for Clementine and Digby to return home. As they packed their belongings, Herbie found an old cardboard box for the pots so they would stay safe in the car on the way back.

The sun was starting to set over the hill at the back of Mulberry Tree Farm when they heard Henrietta's car make its way up the pebbly driveway. Clementine and Digby raced out to hug their mum while Herbie prepared a pot of teapot tea.

"You'll never guess what we did!" said Clementine happily.

"We're spreading magic to help Theo keep his famous bakery!" said Digby.

"Wonderful!" yelled Henrietta as they walked through the wisteria-covered archway towards the cottage. "I can't wait to hear about it!"

"Welcome back, Henrietta!" said Herbie as he poured the tea. "How was your tour?"

"It was excellent, thank you, but enough about me for now. I want to know what the three of you have been doing!"

They finished their tea and then headed outside to the big red barn. Clementine and Digby showed their mum the pots they had planted.

"Thank you for everything, Uncle Herbie!" smiled Clementine.

"I can't wait to tell my school friends about it!" said Digby.

"That's IT!" shouted Clementine.

"What's it?" asked Digby.

"Our classmates can spread the magic too! If each of them had a pot, think of how many pots there would be, all growing food for Theo to bake with next season and save his bakery!"

"Yes!" exclaimed Digby. "We could get all the pots together so that it would be just like a big, big vegetable patch!"



"That's fantastic!" exclaimed Herbie. "I think this plan will save Theo's famous bakery!"

They all agreed that it was an excellent idea so the four of them headed back inside and gathered around the kitchen bench to make a plan.

"How about if I write to your teachers and invite them along with your classmates to Mulberry Tree Farm for a planting day?" asked Herbie. "Everyone can plant two pots each and then take them back to your school to grow. We can donate the first lot of produce to Theo to get him back on track and then you can all become his official suppliers!"

"Do you really think it could work?" asked Clementine.

"I do!" replied Herbie.

"But how will everyone get here?" asked Digby. It was quite a way out of town to Mulberry Tree Farm.

Herbie's left foot started tapping.

Let's make an invitation To your friends, from all of us To visit Mulberry Tree Farm On the school excursion bus!



"That's a super idea!" said Clementine, "Mum, can you talk to the head teacher to see if we can make it happen?"

"Yes, I will do it tomorrow on your first day back from holidays. I think your teachers will be amazed at what you have all come up with!" said Henrietta.

Herbie wrote out two invitations in his best handwriting and handed them to Clementine and Digby.



The crazy idea



"I hope our idea works," he said.

They packed the car, and Herbie placed the box of pots with the seeds safely in the back. He put his hands around one of the pots and whispered, "Little seeds, I hope you can help us rescue Theo's famous bakery."

He waved goodbye to his family and the seeds as the car started down the white pebbly driveway.

"Everyone can know the magic of growing food," he thought. "I just hope we can gather enough of it to save Theo's famous bakery."





vening had almost come once they arrived home. Clementine and Digby took the pots out to the courtyard and sat them in a spot to catch the last rays of the sun.

"Remember Uncle Herbie told us that the seeds will need some water every day," said Clementine.

"Yes, let's get that old watering can from the laundry cupboard," said Digby.

They found the watering can, filled it up, and gave the seeds a drink. The seeds were very grateful for the water because the car trip had made them thirsty.

"It's exciting that we are spreading the magic!" said Digby.

Clementine agreed. "I just hope we can get our classmates to spread it with us so we can save Theo's famous bakery."

The next morning, they got ready for school and hopped into Henrietta's car with Herbie's invitations. They drove towards the main street of Huffelton, past Theo's famous bakery, around the roundabout and arrived at school.

Henrietta headed straight to the school office where she met with the head teacher. Her name was Mrs Bluebell and she thought it was a great idea for the two classes to visit Mulberry Tree Farm. "I will arrange for the excursion to happen this week on Thursday! And if all goes to plan, our school would be very happy to work out an arrangement to be official growers for Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery," Mrs Bluebell said.

Clementine and Digby took the invitations to their class teachers.

Clementine's teacher was Miss Winkle. As she read the invitation to visit Mulberry Tree Farm she smiled. "I think this is a marvellous idea," she told Clementine. "Did you know, when I was seven, my photograph was in the newspaper because I found a mushroom the size of a dinner plate?" Clementine was amazed.

Digby's teacher Mr Tidswell was very happy to receive Herbie's invitation. "I think this is a top idea. Did you know, Digby, my big brother won a prize for growing the biggest pumpkin in the district where we grew up?" Digby thought that was super cool.

And so it was arranged that the school excursion to Mulberry Tree Farm would happen on Thursday.

When Clementine and Digby returned home from school they called Herbie with the exciting news. There were twenty-seven children in Clementine's class and twenty-three in Digby's.

"All together that makes fifty children!" cried Herbie's voice through the phone. "If everyone plants two pots that will make one hundred plants which will supply Theo with all he needs until he can find some new suppliers. I will head to the Huffelton nursery tomorrow and arrange for a delivery. It will be their biggest order ever!"

On Thursday morning the children, Miss Winkle and Mr Tidswell all boarded the school excursion bus bound for Mulberry Tree Farm.

Herbie waited excitedly for his guests to arrive. He had lined up the one hundred pots outside the old red barn and he had worked out that his compost heap would have enough soil for all of them.



It was a warm sunny morning, and Worm and Ladybug made their way to the end of the vegetable patch to see Herbie.

"Good luck for today!" called Ladybug.

"I can feel the magic starting already!" said Worm smiling.

"Thank you," said Herbie. "And thank you for your encouragement!"

Just then, they heard a rumble on the pebbly driveway and up drove the big school bus. Clementine was sitting at the front and Digby six rows back. They both waved and smiled at Herbie.

The bus stopped and the door swung open.



Miss Winkle greeted Herbie and invited him on board to tell the children what the plan was for the day. Herbie felt nervous about meeting so many people at once, but he also felt very happy about sharing the magic of growing food to help Theo. That made him smile and everyone smiled back.

"Welcome to Mulberry Tree Farm. My name is Herbert Peabody. You can call me Herbie."

"Hi, Herbie!" chanted the children. They were excited to visit a farm.

Herbie started to think of a list of what everyone would need: a pot, some dirt, the seeds.

Then his left foot started tapping.

Welcome to Mulberry Tree Farm! It's great that you could come I'm hoping you will learn something And most of all, have fun.

I could stand here and tell you What it is you'll need to do But let's get off the bus right now And the magic will help you! The magic day at Mulberry Tree Farm

Herbie hopped off the bus and led the way to the vegetable patch. Clementine and Digby, Miss Winkle and Mr Tidswell and all the children followed. They stared in wonder at what was before them.

"So that's how cucumbers grow!" cried Sebastian, who was in Digby's class.

"I never knew corn grew on a big stalk!" said Mary-Anne, who was Clementine's classmate.



Herbie gathered everyone around at the end of the vegetable patch near the old red barn.

"We are here today for a very important task," he announced. "We need to help Theo

Knead-a-lot save his famous bakery. He might have to close down because there is not enough local produce to bake anything with."

Alarmed voices called out.

"But what about our school lunch orders?"

"Does that mean there will be no amazing sausage rolls?"

"Someone has to do something!"

"Well, the good news is that we can!" Herbie said. "We are going to plant pots of seeds to grow fruit and vegetables for next season. Once we're done, the pot plants will go with you back to your school so you can care for them while they grow. Then when the fruits and vegetables are ready, we will deliver them to Theo so he can begin baking again."

"HOORAY!" shouted the children.

"And we are going to keep this top secret so that we can surprise Theo when it happens."

At that very moment, a sunbeam caught Herbie's eye through one of the corn stalks. He was sure he saw the shape of a pirate ship sailing off into the distance.

The children lined up and Herbie, Clementine



and Digby helped them plant the pots. They even helped Miss Winkle and Mr Tidswell. Soon enough one hundred pots were planted with seeds and given a drink.

"I suppose we will have to wait a little while before we see anything," said Mary-Anne.

"That's right," replied Herbie "Even though we can't see anything happening now, the seeds are already working hard under the soil. They will need a drink of water every day so they can grow and sprout up through the dirt."

"I'm not sure I will be very good at the waiting part," said Sebastian.

"Yes, I like to see things happen!" agreed Digby.

"I know exactly what you mean," replied Herbie, "but when those little seedlings appear and the plants start to grow, I promise you that it is worth the wait. In the meantime, there is something else you can do to help the seeds grow."

His left foot was already tapping. Clementine and Digby joined in. They remembered what Herbie was going to do. The magic day at Mulberry Tree Farm

Yo, grow! Yo, grow, Yeah, grow, Yo, GROW!

And in the one hundred pots, in the lovely soil where no one could see, the seeds finished drinking the water and soaked up the energy from the sun to get ready to grow into plants. The magic was already starting.



The trip to Mulberry Tree Farm was a success. Everyone was excited to take the pot plants back to school and find a sunny spot for them so they could settle in and start growing.

Herbie waved the bus goodbye from the pebbly driveway and he couldn't stop smiling. He was so excited that he raced around to the big vegetable patch to tell Ladybug and Worm.

"What an amazing day!" said Ladybug.

"We knew you would think of something!" said Worm.

Herbie's left foot started tapping.

Thanks Worm and Ladybug For talking here with me I had to share how magical The idea turned out to be!

And then he started jumping

I'm so glad to hear that The pots will soon be making Magic so that they will grow And Theo can keep baking.

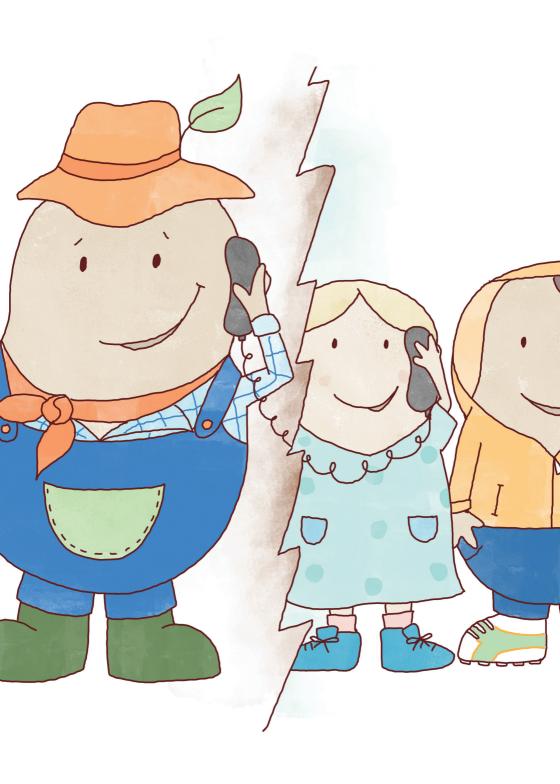
"The magic is spreading!" cried Ladybug.

"It is. I just hope we have enough time to save Theo's bakery," said Herbie.

Not very long afterward, Herbie was tending to the patch when his phone rang. It was Clementine and Digby calling from school.

"Uncle Herbie!" Clementine said excitedly. "The plants have grown both at our house and at school and some of our produce is ready! We'd like to make a delivery to Theo tomorrow."

"This will be the biggest delivery Theo has ever had!" said Herbie. "I will call him and



arrange a meeting at the bakery tomorrow. I will pretend that it's only me coming."

"Yes, that way our delivery will be a huge surprise!" said Digby enthusiastically.

"I can't wait to see his face when he sees you two and all your friends as well!"

They hung up and then Herbie called Theo.

"Yes, Herbie, I can meet you at the bakery tomorrow, but there is nothing much to see," he said sadly.

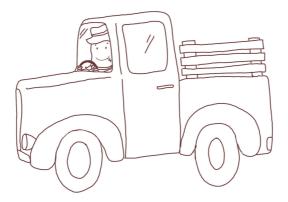
It took all of Herbie's might to keep the biggest delivery ever a surprise.

He found it difficult to sleep that night. It was more exciting than the night before his birthday!

He woke up before the rooster crowed, popped out of bed, ate his muesli and drank his teapot tea all before six o'clock! The school bus was arriving at Theo's famous bakery at nine o'clock and it seemed as though those three hours were the longest time Herbie had ever known.

Finally it was time to go into Huffelton to meet Theo. Herbie jumped into his rumbling green truck and smiled all the way as he drove

# The big surprise



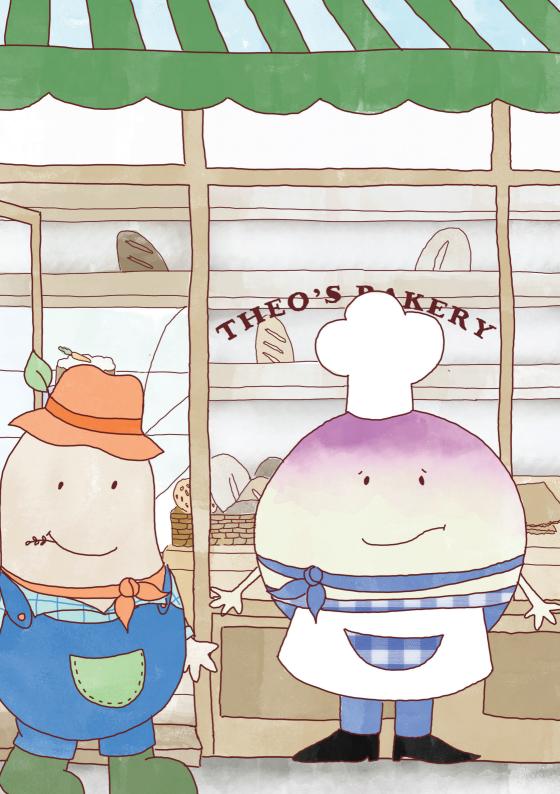
to town. He knew he would have to try very hard not to reveal the surprise delivery when he saw Theo.

He parked across the road to leave room for the school bus to park. As he hurried towards the bakery he saw Theo standing at the front door.

"Hello, Herbie," mumbled Theo.

"Hi, Theo," said Herbie, looking at the floor to hide his big smile. "Thank you for meeting me. Clementine and Digby ... I mean I have something for you."

Theo looked puzzled. He could only see Herbie yet he was sure Herbie had mentioned Clementine and Digby. He turned around to see if they were behind him, but no one was there. Then he peered around Herbie to see if they



were hiding there. But they weren't. It was all very mysterious.

Herbie stifled a giggle.

"What is the something you have for me?" asked Theo.

"Well, you see it's something kind of magical," said Herbie, still trying to hide his smile.

"Is it down here on the floor?" Theo asked.

Luckily for Herbie the school bus was coming around the roundabout. "No, it's there!" cried Herbie, pointing to the bus.

"Herbie, are you feeling all right?" asked Theo.

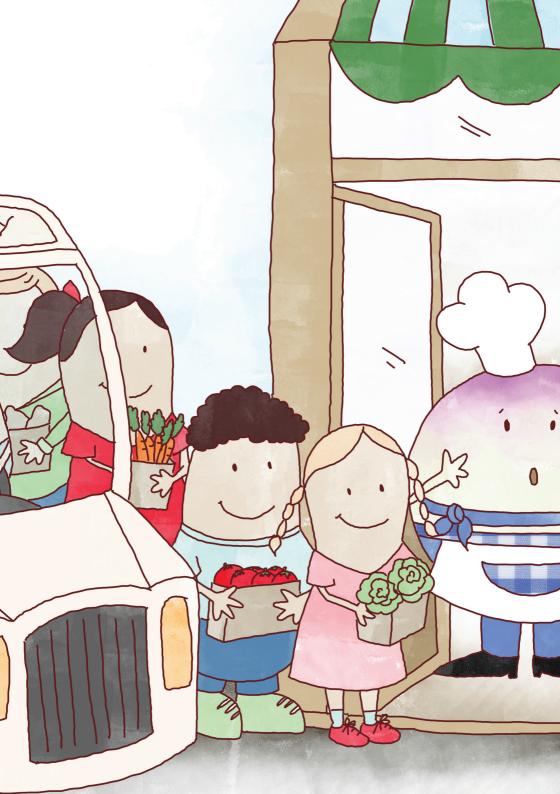
"Come on, Theo!" cried Herbie, and he grabbed Theo's hand and dragged him over to where the bus was parking.

The door swung open. Clementine hopped off first with a bunch of basil. Next was Digby with a basket of potatoes. They grinned at Theo.

Theo looked at Herbie, who was now beaming.

Mary-Anne was next with a bundle of spinach and then Sebastian with a bunch of lettuce. They both smiled at Theo.

Theo stood as still as a statue. He stared in



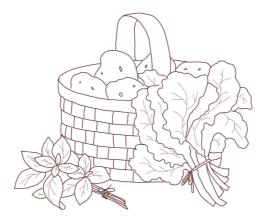
## The big surprise

disbelief at the amazing sight before him. More of the children filed off, each holding different produce, and Theo looked as though he was going to faint!

"It's ... it's ..." he stammered.

"It's magic!" said Herbie smiling as his eyes crinkled up. "We couldn't let your famous bakery close down, so Clementine and Digby and their friends are your new produce growers until we can find you some more suppliers!" And he gave his friend a big hug.

Theo started to laugh. "Oh, Herbie, thank you, thank you!" he exclaimed. "This is amazing!"



Everyone clapped and cheered and felt very pleased that they were able to help. Theo collected the produce and thanked them all. "Be on the lookout for a special lunch order delivery for everyone!" he boomed.

Herbie was very glad to hear Theo back to his loud, jolly self. Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery was saved and all was well in Huffelton. The magic was real!



he next morning the rooster crowed his morning call and Herbie popped out of bed, dressed himself and made some muesli and teapot tea. When he had finished breakfast, he brushed his teeth and went outside to sit under the mulberry tree to read the newspaper. As he sat down on the wooden bench he couldn't believe what he saw. There on the front page was a photo of Theo Knead-a-lot standing outside his famous bakery holding a big freshly baked cake. Herbie looked more closely and saw that the cake was decorated with colourful icing. There seemed to be a big carrot in the centre, and next to it was a figure that looked very much like him! Herbie peered closer to read some writing that was across the cake. It read:

Yo GROW!



"I see we have a famous farmer before us!" said Ladybug. She had fluttered over and was sitting on one of the low branches of the mulberry tree.

"I don't know about that," giggled Herbie. "All I did was help my friend."

"I think you did more than that."

"Really?"

"Yes. You have shared something very special with Clementine and Digby and everyone in Huffelton," she said as she took off for the big vegetable patch.

Herbie smiled, folded up the newspaper and followed her across. He was very pleased to see the next season's vegetables starting to sprout. It had been a summer full of surprises, and now



with Theo's famous bakery secure in Huffelton, Herbie was looking forward to autumn arriving, bringing new vegetables and fruits to eat.

"Hi, Herbie!" called Worm as he wiggled up through the crumbly dirt.

"Hello!" smiled Herbie.

"Your new crop is looking great. All your work is paying off."

"It is, and with your encouragement, I was able to save Theo's famous bakery."

"It is our pleasure," smiled Worm. And then he saw Herbie's left foot tapping.

This summer's been amazing What a journey it has been I never could have imagined All the things that I have seen.

His left foot started stomping.

With Clementine and Digby Staying for their holiday I've seen it's good to look at things In a different kind of way.

102



Herbert Peabody

Then he started bouncing.

Sharing things with people Really is such fun And the best thing about magic Is to share it with everyone.

And then they all joined in and jumped!

Yo, grow! Yo, grow! Yeah, grow! Yo, GROW!

And Herbie, Worm and Ladybug jumped high in the air, so high that they all fell over!

After they had picked themselves up, Herbie said, "Thank you again for your encouragement."

"It was you who did it, Herbie," said Worm, and he wiggled a goodbye.

"It was!" agreed Ladybug and she flapped a farewell.

Herbie waved goodbye and headed into the

## The Magic

kitchen. He made another pot of teapot tea and as he sat on the tractor stool at the kitchen bench he thought how lucky he was to be able to share the magic of growing food, and he felt very happy that other people could now pass it on too.



# Author biography

Bianca. C. Ross is a writer, a small-time farmer and a friend of Herbert Peabody.

One day when she was sitting in the garden at her farm, which is very much like Herbert Peabody's farm, she had an idea. She decided she would write about her friend Herbert Peabody, the farmer who digs food.

She'd always enjoyed being read to when she was little, especially books with pictures. And she'd grown up in a house that had a big vegetable patch in the backyard. It was the tomato her dad had picked straight from the vine and handed to her that made such a strong impression. Confused, she'd asked him how she should eat it, and she was skeptical when her dad had told her to chomp straight into it. But she did, and the sweetness of that homegrown tomato had her hooked at first bite.

### Author Biography

The idea to write about Herbie had been brewing for a while. She had always liked healthy food and this led her to work at some big food companies in Australia including dairy and fruit juice companies. She had always enjoyed communicating, and this saw her working in different ad agencies in France, Singapore and Australia.

So on this day, she decided to sit down and write about some of the adventures her friend Herbert Peabody had shared with her. This is Herbie's first adventure.

## ACKNOWledgements

To Luke Harris for his art direction and for being so welcoming to the world of writing.

To Les Zigomanis, editor and author extraordinaire, for his encouragement and belief in my writing. Thank you for being my mentor.

To Orme Harris for her editing and encouragement.

To Tabitha Emma Bray for bringing Herbie and his friends to life so beautifully.

To my family and friends for their encouragement for my wily schemes! A very special thanks to Mum, Dad and Nan, who brought me up to believe I can do anything if I put my mind to it; and to Nick for going into this farming caper on Mulberry Tree Farm in the first place, a farm that just happens to look very much like Herbie's!

# Afterword

"This is the best thing you'll ever eat," Dad said smiling at me. I trusted my dear dad, but I was sceptical. How could the tomato he had just picked off the vine next to his shed taste better than my favourite food, hot chips? Ever since we'd planted the little tomato seedling, I had been waiting impatiently for this vine to flower and then somehow make tomatoes. It was all very mysterious to a nine year old. How on earth did a tiny green plant make something for people to eat?

Dad handed the tomato to me and smiled as I studied it.

"How do I eat it?" I asked.

"Just bite into it."

"But don't we need to cook it or put pepper on it?"

"I think you'll like it just the way it is."

### Herbert Peabody

With nothing to lose, I took a bite. To this day I can still taste the sweetness. I remember the firm texture too. I was hooked.

Growing up in a house with a veggie patch and fruit trees was exciting. Every year my whole family would pick peaches and stew the ones we couldn't eat, storing them in the big chest freezer to enjoy heated up with ice cream during winter.

Fast-forward twenty-one years when my husband Nick and I moved in to our beautiful first home. It had a small back yard and my request was to make a veggie patch. His grandfather had kept an impressive veggie allotment when Nick was growing up, so he was very keen to keep his Pop's tradition alive.

We planted tomatoes and beetroot, as well as some basil and rosemary. We waited for the flowers to arrive and watched the bees spreading pollen. And then the tomatoes came.

Our senses of smell and taste can take us back in time, and on this sunny day in our backyard, that day with Dad was never more vivid. I was as excited at thirty years old as I was at nine. So

### Afterword

was Nick. And the tomato he picked from our vine was as delicious as the one my dad handed me all those years ago.

I often talk about these times with my friends and their experiences of growing food as children, and we reminisce about how magical it was to eat the food that was grown at your own house. It's fabulous to see the resurgence of growing your own vegetables. Perhaps it's due to the popularity of cooking shows and how we're learning something that our grandparents always knew – that fresh is best.

While there's a lot of fodder for adults, I saw an opportunity to create something to encourage a re-connection between children and their food. A character who they could relate to. Someone who's a little bit cheeky and likes to have fun, just like them.

And that was the inspiration for Herbert Peabody. Herbie is the main character in this series of illustrated children's books. Reading books to children is very important for their learning, and there's something very special about sharing a story with a child.

### Herbert Peabody

Herbie is a farmer who lives on a farm that has cows, olive trees and a big, big vegetable patch. He is an active member in his community in the town of Huffelton, and is the favourite uncle of his niece Clementine and nephew Digby. Herbie's adventures centre around problem solving and co-operation and he soon learns that with some hard work and a little bit of magic, extraordinary things can happen.

Not everyone lives on a farm, but everyone can be connected with their food. Soil, water and sunshine, and a bit of love are all that's needed to grow food. And it's something valuable that we can teach our children. Connection with food reduces waste – you simply don't want to throw away your own hard work!

It is my and Herbie's aim to help children become interested in something that is not only very good for them, but is also a magical experience. Growing veggies helps get children outside where they can learn to nurture and care for a garden and appreciate what they grow. And it creates memories that really do last forever.



Herbert Peabody is a farmer who grows fruit and vegetables in his big, big vegetable patch at Mulberry Tree Farm.

When his niece Clementine and nephew Digby come to stay for the school holidays, Herbie can't understand why they know so little about vegetables.

But there's a bigger problem: Theo Knead-a-lot's famous bakery is under threat and he needs Herbie's help.

Can Herbie teach Clementine and Digby about the importance of vegetables? And with some hard work and a little bit of magic, can they make something extraordinary happen?

