



# **Band 4**

## **Reading Stimulus**

# THE WHARF

Moonlight shone on the boats, picking out winches and wheelhouses, windows and ropes. In the darkness Tommy could see the *Tip Toe* nestled in close against the timbers, as contented-looking as a cow in her barn. A movement in the vessel's stern caught his eye. Tommy blinked, but whatever it was, or whoever it was, had vanished. Instantly he was fully awake, straining around to see out of the car's rear window. Another movement, a flitting shadow, crossed the small deck.

'Hey, stop!' he yelled. 'There's someone onboard the *Tip Toe*!'

Tommy's father looked sharply across at him, then brought the big car to a crunching halt in the gravel.

'What?'

Tommy pushed open his door and sprang out, poised to run.

'There's someone on the *Tip Toe*!'

'You sure?'

Tommy nodded hard. 'Yeah! Yes! Come on! Hurry!'

His father took off his sportsjacket, laid it on the front seat, and then went around to unlock the car boot.

'Come on!' Tommy urged, twisting from one foot to the other. 'Quick!'

Frank Callahan straightened up, flicked a torch on and off, then at a heavy jog set off for the dark warehouse. He ordered Tommy to slow down in a whisper that sounded deadly serious.

Quickly they crossed the gravel carpark, passed by the warehouse, and set off along the wharf. What little sound their feet made on the heavy timbers was blotted out by the creaking of the trawlers. Tommy stared intently into the

darkness, desperate to see and hear. Beside him his father's breathing sawed in his ear, sounding like the huffing of a bear.

Ten metres from the *Tip Toe* Frank Callahan switched on the torch. The white beam speared over the black water, then raked upwards to pinpoint a crouching figure. Whoever it was ducked, and a clanging sound rang out, as if a half-full can had been dropped or kicked over.

'Don't move!' Tommy's father shouted, his voice thundering out over the water.

The figure hesitated, then leapt across to the flat timber platform. By the light of the torch all Tommy could make out was dark hair, jeans and scrambling tennis shoes. He made a move to head the person off, but was knocked flying. A splinter shot up his fingernail, skin peeled off his palms. His own dad had flattened him.

For a moment Tommy lay still, his head filled with the woozy stink of petrol, then unsteadily he climbed to his feet. He saw the man they were after try to dodge around his father, heard a thumping sound, heard glass breaking, and saw a body hit the timbers. Someone swore.

The torch beam was gone.

'Mongrel!' Tommy heard his father grunt.

Tommy raced forward, fear wrenching at his stomach, his breath rasping. Somehow the lights of Sunshine Bay had got mixed up with the stars and together they all swung in one big dazzling bunch.

'Stay there!' his father shouted.

Tommy ignored the order. He could see a sprawled body held down by a twisted arm and a choking collar. So this was what his old man was like when he was really mad. Dangerous.

'Go home and call O'Keefe! Move!'

# SIMON FRENCH

## REFLECTION

Simon French writes about his novel *All We Know*.

Like most of my writing, *All We Know* began as some quick sketches and impressions – little fragments of conversations, descriptions of a house

I once visited, a friend's composed music, somebody's discarded family snapshots I found at a rubbish tip ...

Most of all, it was me – the teacher – sitting listening to my pupils' 'news' sessions where all manner of family stories were related, or out on playground duty, soaking up a soundtrack of skipping chants and soccer shouts. And sometimes, I'd be standing with my class at morning assembly trying to keep a straight face and thinking, 'Assemblies were exactly the same when I was a kid!'

As a teacher, I could see that some things about childhood and school life never change, that experiences overwhelmingly are common across the generations. I knew that *All We Know* had to be from a girl's point of view. It had been asked of me on numerous occasions by readers of my two previous books and, besides, I figured it would be a worthwhile writing exercise. Being a male and writing a story from a girl's point of view was difficult at first, but as the story's jigsaw pieces fell into place, I found Arkie a progressively easier person to write about. The entire story in fact became like a video in my mind, all the characters larger than life to me. It was a story I enjoyed writing very much.

## EXTRACT

from *All We Know*

Mr Clifton had playground duty that day, and some of the discontent followed him outside. Kylie, Rebecca and a few others marched up to him and said, 'Hey Mr Clifton, why are you really leaving?'

'Yeah, is it because you're sick of us?'

'Don't you like us?'

'Are you getting married or something?'

'I reckon it's pretty slack about you leaving before the end of the year, Mr Clifton.'

He sounded impatient and almost angry when he answered, 'Look, I explained it all to you back inside. I told you, very honestly, that leaving was a hard decision, but one I had to make. You've been a great class to work with; don't spoil it now by coming up to me and speaking like that.'