

Chapter 1 The other side of the world

“Wow, each time I think I’ve seen all the movies I find another channel!” Pim said happily. He held up the remote control which was connected to his seat. “There are hundreds of games. This plane must have a giant computer system. A couple of terabytes at least.”

“I’ve no idea what you’re talking about,” Maritska said as she looked for a mirror in her shoulder bag.

“Bytes are the units of information on a computer,” explained Pim. “A kilobyte is one thousand bytes—”

“Whatever.” Maritska stopped him before he could say more. “The games are for little kids like you and all the movies are boring. The only thing I want to do is sleep.”

Pim leaned back in his seat. It really annoyed him that his sister wasn’t interested in the plane’s technology. “You can go to sleep if you want. The seat tilts all the way back like this.” Pim pushed a button in the armrest. His seat dropped backwards with a sudden bump.

There was a shout from the row behind as the movement knocked the passenger’s drink off his table.

Pim jumped up and leaned over the back of his seat. The man in the row behind was mopping spilt coffee-off his trousers.

“Sorry,” said Pim brightly, “I keep forgetting that when I move my seat it shakes your table.”

“I know,” replied the grumpy passenger. He had an Australian accent.

“This flight feels like it has taken a lifetime.” Maritska stared at her reflection and rubbed her tired eyes. “I want to go to sleep in a bed. A real bed. My old bed.”

“That’s impossible,” Pim raised his seat back. “Your old bed is fourteen thousand kilometres behind us now.”

3 remote control [riːməʊt kənˌtrəʊl] Fernbedienung • 13 to lean [liːn] sich lehnen
• 15 to tilt [tɪlt] sich neigen • 19 to knock sth off [nɒk] etw. herunterstoßen •
21 to spill sth [spɪl] etw. verschütten • 23 bright [braɪt] fröhlich

Maritska sadly stared at the map on the video screen. It showed a small, white plane with a long, red trail. The trail India and went all the way back to Dubai, the place this flight had left twelve hours ago. The flight they were on before was from Amsterdam to Dubai. That journey had taken seven hours.

“It’s so exciting! We’ve travelled half way around the world!” Pim jumped up and down in his seat. The movement rattled the breakfast tray of the man in the seat behind. “I’m going to see a new country!”

“Hey kid, stop it!” The passenger in the seat behind got up and looked over Pim’s seat. “You’ve not stopped wriggling and talking since we took off. How about giving me some peace and quiet?”

“Yeah, calm down,” Jake put a hand on Pim’s knee.

“Sorry,” Jake turned to the man behind, “he’ll keep still for the rest of the flight.”

“I wasn’t doing anything.” Pim folded his arms grumpily.

“It won’t happen again. Will it?” Jake fixed his dark brown eyes on Pim.

“Stop bullying him,” Maritska told Jake.

“You’re always moaning at me,” complained Pim. “I’m only a little kid. Who are you to tell me what to do?”

“Your older brother,” replied Jake.

Pim and Maritska looked at each other and both gave a small laugh.

“I’m so bored, I give in. Show me how this stupid game thing works.” Maritska pulled a remote control out of her armrest and passed it to Pim.

Pim’s bad mood disappeared at once as he began to teach his sister how to handle the plane’s entertainment system.

10 to rattle [ˌrætl] klappern • 10 tray [treɪ] Tablett • 14 to wriggle [ˈrɪŋɡl] sich winden • 19 to fold [fəʊld] verschränken • 20 to fix [fɪks] hier: richten • 23 to moan [məʊn] klagen, sich beschweren

Jake plumped up his pillow and leant his head against the plane window. Pim and Maritska's talking slowly disappeared into the background as he stared down at the endless ocean. Through the clouds he saw tiny waves on the Timor Sea. It was thousands of metres below their double-deck jet.

Jake hated being the eldest in the family. A couple of years ago, just after his fourteenth birthday, their parents had begun working far away from Holland. Pim, Maritska and Jake went to live with their aunt and uncle who worked long hours and were not at home very often. The job of keeping Pim under control always seemed to fall on Jake. It was bad enough when Pim was ten, but since he had turned twelve Pim was always doing crazy things. Jake often had to tell him off. Even if Maritska, who was fifteen, was annoyed by Pim's behaviour, she'd take her younger brother's side. They'd giggle and whisper to each other, just like they were doing now.

A great loneliness flooded over Jake. Right now, even though he was among hundreds of other people on the plane, he felt like the only person on earth. Looking down at the sea, Jake wondered what his future held.

Jake was so lost in his thought he almost missed what was happening in the world outside. Suddenly he saw something. "There's something below us!"

The plane vibrated violently. The overhead lockers rattled. There was a loud 'Bing!' as the 'fasten seat belts' sign lit up. The cabin crew stopped serving breakfast.

"Is it a UFO? Are we being chased by fighter planes?" Pim tried to look out of the window. Maritska held on to her armrest so tightly her knuckles went white. She began to cough. After she had been sick a few years ago, she always did this whenever she was nervous.

1 to plump sth up [plʌmp] etw. aufschütteln • 1 pillow [ˈpɪləʊ] Kissen • 17 to giggle [ˈɡɪɡl] kichern • 17 to whisper [ˈwɪspə] flüstern • 19 to flood [flʌd] (über) fluten • 27 'fasten seat belts' sign [ˈfɑːsn ˈsiːt belts saɪn] Anschlagzeichen • 31 knuckle [ˈnʌkl] Fingerknöchel • 32 to cough [kɒf] husten



"Nice guesses, but none of those," Jake said to Pim. "Don't panic, it's just a bit of turbulence," he told Maritska. He pointed to the horizon, "You should see this."

Maritska and Pim leaned over and looked out of the window. "What are we meant to be looking at?" asked Pim.

"There's land in sight," replied Jake. "It's Australia."

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have arrived in Darwin. Local time is five minutes past eight in the morning," said the flight attendant over the intercom.

The plane engine stopped roaring as the plane rolled to a halt. There was a loud 'Bing!' as the 'fasten seat belts' sign went out.

"On behalf of the captain and crew we'd like to thank you for flying with Oceanic Airlines."

Pim opened the overhead locker and pulled out his enormous rucksack. The bag next to Pim's moved forward.

"Ow!" The passenger behind the kids cried out as the other bag fell on him.

"Oops. Sorry," said Pim.

10 flight attendant [ˈflaɪt əˈtɛndənt] Flugbegleiter/-in • 10 intercom [ˈɪntəkɒm] Sprechanlage • 14 on behalf of [ɒn bɪˈhɑːf ɒv] im Namen von • 15 Oceanic [ˌoʊʃiˈænik]

"Going on to Adelaide, are you?" The man asked as he held his head.

"No. We're going to Argyle Downs. It's a cattle station in the outback," Pim replied.

5 "Good," the man said as he got up from his seat. The kids saw his trousers were dirty from the drinks which had spilled each time Pim had moved his seat. "With a larrikin like you out of the way, the rest of us can get a bit of peace and quiet."

10 A final announcement came over the intercom, "Would the De Groot family please make themselves known to a member of the cabin crew."

Jake, Maritska and Pim took their bags and pushed past the other passengers.

15 "We're the De Groots," Jake said to the male flight attendant near the exit.

"Your parents arranged for someone to take you to your connecting flight." The steward signalled to a young woman who was waiting at the gangway.

20 "Hi, I'm Alison." The woman walked up to them. She gave the kids a dazzling smile. "Follow me."

A wave of hot air swept over the kids as they stepped off the air conditioned plane.

25 "Oh, look!" cried Maritska as they walked into the airport. She saw duty free shops on the other side. "They have Clinique. And Calvin Klein!"

Pim played around with his mobile phone. "I've got a signal! It has logged on to the network," he shouted happily.

30 Instinctively Maritska and Jake switched on their phones. "Mine hasn't," said Maritska. "How about yours?"

Jake checked his phone. "Nothing."

"Did you set up international roaming before you left?" asked Pim smugly.

Maritska and Jake shook their heads.

"I did." Pim smirked.

"Techno geek," said Maritska jealously.

5 "You guys need to clear immigration," Alison carried on. "I can't come with you because of security. Once they've stamped your passports, follow the signs to baggage claim."

"Won't our bags be taken to our connecting flight?" asked Jake.

10 "Your next flight is from a different airport." Alison focussed her attention on Jake. "After you've collected your bags and gone through customs, follow the exit signs. Turn left at the yellow car hire desk. Walk fifty metres. Turn right at the blue taxi sign. I'll be waiting at the doors to the car park. Got that?"

15 Jake thought he remembered the directions. He didn't want to look stupid, so he nodded.

"What's a larrikin?" asked Pim as he fished his passport out of his rucksack.

"It's Aussie slang for a badly behaved kid. Why do you ask?" replied Alison.

"It's what a man on the plane called Pim," answered Maritska.

25 Alison tried not to laugh and told Pim strictly, "Behave yourself. I don't want you sent back home for being cheeky." Alison pointed them towards the immigration department's booths. "See you on the other side," she said as she left them on their own.

30 The lady on the desk scanned their passports, stamped them and waved the kids through with a friendly, "Welcome to Australia!"

It didn't take the kids long to find the baggage claim and collect their bags. Jake put them onto a trolley.

"I want to push it!" said Pim.

3 Argyle Downs [ɑ:'gaɪl daʊnz] Rinderfarm • 3 cattle station [ˈkætl steɪʃn]
Rinderfarm • 21 dazzling [ˈdæzɪlɪŋ] strahlend • 22 to sweep [swi:p] fegen •
30 to switch sth on [swɪtʃ] etw. einschalten • 34 smug [smʌŋ] selbstzufrieden

2 to smirk [smɜ:k] feixen, hämisch grinsen • 3 geek [gi:k] Freak • 6 to stamp [stæmp] stempeln • 6 baggage claim [ˈbæɡɪdʒ ˌkleɪm] Gepäckausgabe •
26 cheeky [ˈtʃi:ki] frech • 27 booth [bu:θ] Kabine • 33 trolley [ˈtrɒli] Gepäckkuli

Jake wasn't in the mood for an argument, so he let Pim take the trolley. "OK. But watch where you're going."

"Ow!" Jake heard a man cry out. He turned round to see Pim wheel the trolley over a man's foot. It was the same man who had sat behind them on the plane.

"Sorry!" said Pim brightly. The man looked at the kids angrily as they walked off and disappeared through the customs barrier.

"OK, which way now?" Maritska asked Jake after the last set of sliding doors closed behind them. They found themselves among many other travellers in the terminal.

"Umm," Jake looked around. There were so many people coming and going. It was really noisy. He tried hard to remember Alison's directions.

Jake was relieved to spot the car hire desk. "We turn right at the yellow desk."

"You sure?" Pim began to reply, "I don't think so, I think we should go –"

Jake cut him off. "I'm not stupid. I know which way to go," Jake replied. "I'll push the trolley. Follow me. And keep up!" Jake took control and walked confidently through the airport. Pim and Maritska trailed behind.

"I told you. We're going into the airport, not out of it," Pim said as they came up to a bank of ATMs and Foreign Exchange desks.

"Where's the taxi sign?" Jake's eyes searched left and right.

"Kids! Where do you think you're going?"

They turned round to find Alison running towards them.

"You were going in the wrong direction! Lucky I saw you before you got totally lost. Didn't you turn left at the yellow desk?" asked Alison.

"Stupid Jake turned right," said Maritska angrily. "We've only been in Australia for five minutes and he's got us lost."

"We should never follow you, Jake," Pim joined in. "You always get things wrong."

Maritska and Pim snickered with each other.

"No worries," said Alison brightly. She took the trolley from Jake and led the way to the car park.

Jake's cheeks burned with embarrassment. He was angry he had made another mistake the others could tease him about.

Jake's mood darkened as they walked outside into the humid air and dazzling sunlight of the Darwin morning.

Jake had hoped the family's move to Australia would bring them closer together. But it seemed like things were going to be just as difficult between them as they had been back home in Holland.

Chapter 2 Clouds on the horizon

As soon as they got into Alison's minivan, Pim phoned their parents to let them know they had arrived safely. Maritska and Pim sat up front with Alison. Jake sat quietly in the back. He still felt stupid about losing his way at the airport.

"Yeah, yeah, we're all fine. The flight was cool." Pim held his phone in the air. "Say hi to Mum and Dad!"

Maritska and Jake shouted a greeting.

"OK. I know. See you soon." Pim switched his phone off.

"How come I didn't get to speak to them?" asked Maritska.

13 noisy [ˈnɔɪzi] laut • 15 relieved [rɪˈli:vɪd] erleichtert • 15 to spot [spɒt] entdecken • 24 bank [bæŋk] hier: Reihe • 24 ATM [ˈeɪtiːəm] Geldautomat

6 to snicker [ˈsnɪkə] kichern • 9 cheek [tʃi:k] Wange • 10 tease sb [ti:z] sich über jmdn. lustig machen • 13 humrid [ˈhju:mɪd] feucht

"They said phone calls are very expensive over here," replied Pim.

Jake remembered how furious his parents had been when Pim had used his mobile phone to call them in America. They had received a huge bill so they had told Jake to make sure Pim was more careful with his phone in the future.

"Here we are," said Alison.

She pulled off the road and drove towards a group of low buildings. An orange windsock was blowing in the wind in the distance. Small planes were dotted around a large, flat airfield.

"Is this it?" asked Maritska. "It doesn't look much like an airport."

"Well it's small. But it's busy." Alison smiled. "Most of the cattle stations fly their workers in and out of this place. It's also a base for the flying vets and flying doctors. Oh, and the flying teachers fly in and out of here too."

"Does everyone fly in this country?" asked Pim.

"The Northern Territory of Australia is a big place. It'd take over a day to drive to Argyle Downs. And you'd have a pretty difficult journey since no road goes all the way there!" replied Alison.

The kids climbed out of the van. They stood together and narrowed their eyes in the strong sunlight.

A man suddenly ran out of one of the buildings. He wore beige shorts and a shirt. A wide-brimmed hat shielded his eyes from the sun. As he got closer they saw that he looked about sixty years old, but his energy and strong legs seemed as if they belonged to a much younger man.

"G'day!" The man held out his hand in welcome. "Don't say a word. Your parents talk about you all day long." The man studied the kids carefully. "Long blonde hair, a bit of a princess, but pretty as a picture. You must be Maritska."

10 to blow [blɔʊ] wehen • 11 to dot [dɒt] übersäen, sprenkeln • 27 wide-brimmed ['waɪd brɪmɪd] weitkremmig • 27 to shield [ʃi:ld] abschirmen • 31 G'day (Aust.) [gə'daɪ] Guten Tag!

Maritska was a little offended by the 'princess' comment, but smiled proudly at the mention of her looks.

"Hair the colour of carrots, full of energy and a computer geek. You must be young Pim." The man ruffled Pim's hair.

Then he turned to Jake. "Curly black hair, dark serious eyes and someone you could trust your life with. You must be Jake."

Jake smiled happily. He was proud that his parents described him like that.

"But a terrible sense of direction," the man laughed.

Jake's smile disappeared at once. Maritska and Pim joined in the fun at his expense.

"Still, you can't have it all," said the man and slapped Jake on the shoulder. "I know all about you lot, but you don't know anything about me yet. I'm Raymond Cooper Argyle, proud owner of Argyle Downs cattle station and pilot for the last part of your journey. Call me Ray!"

Ray and Alison quickly unloaded the kids' bags. Ray winced as he heaved Pim's rucksack onto the plane. "What have you got in here, gold bars?"

"It's my laptop, my iPod, my Nintendo and my Playstation," replied Pim.

"Crikey," said Ray and rubbed his left shoulder. "It's a pity we haven't got any electricity at the ranch."

"What?!" Pim's eyes opened wide in horror.

Ray laughed. "Just joking."

Now Jake enjoyed a laugh at Pim's expense.

Ray carried on, "Of course we've got power. Your mum and dad couldn't do their scientific work in the dark. What do they call it? 'Industrial biology'. Whatever it is, they've helped breed a new sort of cow. They give more milk, eat less grass and don't get sick. When this new herd arrives at

4 to ruffle sth [ˈrʌfl] etw. zerzausen • 7 to trust sb with sth [trʌst] jmdm. etw. anvertrauen • 13 expense [ɪkˈspens] Kosten • 14 to slap [slæp] klopfen, schlagen • 20 to wince [wɪns] zusammenzucken • 21 bar [bɑ:] hier: Barren • 24 Crikey! (coll) ['kraɪki] Meine Güte! • 32 to breed [brɪ:d] züchten

the cattle auction I'll see the dollars roll in. If some thieves don't steal the money first, that is."

"I heard about the robbery on the TV news," said Alison.

5 "A couple of men with guns held up the auction last night," Ray told the kids. "They got away with over a million dollars in cash."

"I never realized there'd be so much money at a cattle auction," said Alison.

10 Ray chuckled. "People get rich from cattle sales in Australia. They used to make money from mining out here. There were tin and opal mines left, right and centre. Then they all ran dry. Luckily we've still got cows."

15 Maritska watched nervously as Ray put their bags on the plane. It was really small. It had a single propeller at the front and only four seats inside. "How long is the flight?" she asked and gave a small cough.

"About three or four hours depending on the weather," replied Ray. He noticed the kids studying the plane. "Now you can see why there wasn't room to bring your mum and dad to meet you." Ray threw their last bags in the back, closed the door and slapped the plane's side. "Hop on. You're up front with me," he told Jake. "The little ones in the back."

25 "But I want to sit in the front!" shouted Pim.

Ray shook his head. "In a light aircraft like this it's important to balance the weight. If you want to leave your computer stuff behind then you can ride up front."

30 "OK. I'll sit in the back," said Pim. The thought of not having his games and computers really upset him.

Ray chuckled as he helped Pim into the plane. He rubbed his right arm, "Good. I wouldn't want to unload your bags. I almost pulled a muscle getting them on board!"

35 Alison watched the other kids climb into the plane. Its single propeller began to spin and the wind from it blew

her dark hair around her face. "Bye, kids! Have a safe trip!" she shouted.

5 Inside the plane Jake tightened his seat belt. He watched Ray concentrate as he flicked switches and slipped on a headset. Jake looked over his shoulder. Pim and Maritska sat down in the back seats. Pim was playing around with his mobile phone while Maritska nervously chewed her hair. "Turn off your phone, you'll have no battery left. I don't think you should have it on in the plane anyway," Jake told Pim. Then he turned to Maritska. "And Mum says 10 chewing your hair is really bad behaviour."

"This phone's battery lasts for days," replied Pim. "And I'm not calling anyone. I'm just playing a game." Pim carried on what he was doing.

15 "And if you don't tell Mum, then she won't know what I'm doing, will she?" Maritska said to Jake angrily and continued to chew her hair.

20 "Victor Hotel Whisky Tango Golf to tower. Request permission for takeoff. Over," Ray said into the microphone.

"Runway clear for takeoff. Over," came a quiet reply over his headset.

25 The kids turned round in their seats and waved goodbye to Alison. Their small plane rolled forward. It paused for a moment. The propeller suddenly began to spin much faster. The plane accelerated and sped along the runway. A few minutes later they were high up in the sky.

30 Darwin shimmered in the heat to their north. Ray's plane turned to the right and the city slipped away. Jake saw an endless area of land open up in front of them.

"Quite something, this country!" shouted Ray over the noise of the propeller. "A few hours' drive out of the city and you're in the desert. A young couple in a camper-van

4 to flick sth [flik] etw. betätigen/umlegen • 4 switch [switʃ] Schalter • 7 to chew [tʃu:] kauen • 12 to last [la:st] hier: halten • 18 to request sth [ri:'kwest] etw. erbitten • 19 permission [pə'miʃn] Erlaubnis • 26 to accelerate [ək'seləreɪt] beschleunigen • 28 heat [hi:t] Hitze • 33 camper-van ['kæmpə,væn] Wohnwagen

got in trouble down there a few years ago. They had gone off the road and their van broke down. The police found them a couple of days later. It turned out they were only a few miles off the highway."

5 "Were they OK?" asked Maritska nervously.

Ray sadly shook his head. "Dead as doornails. They didn't have any food or water and it was hot. The only people who can survive those conditions in the wilderness are the Aborigines. One of the workers on my ranch took off without a word last year. He came back six months later. He had walked to Alice Springs and back. Said he needed to see a mate!"

"He walked there and back?" asked Jake.

"Those guys do it all the time," nodded Ray, "and without maps. They know which way to go by the songs they sing. They tell them where the waterholes are, the best places to find bush tucker and the like."

The kids looked puzzled.

"'Tucker' is the Aussie word for food. Wallabies, dingoes, roos. They know how to track them and hunt them. They know which grubs and ants you can eat and which will poison you," explained Ray. "That's what we call 'bush tucker'."

Pim started talking excitedly about eating disgusting things. Maritska was shocked by the idea of eating insects. This made Pim imagine even more awful things to eat.

The kids in the back teased each other and laughed as Ray told more of his stories. Jake watched the land below them change. Every so often there was a small town or a station. Then Jake realized they had flown for an hour and he hadn't seen a single building or road.

He noticed that Ray had gone very quiet. He followed Ray's eyes. Thick clouds had suddenly blown up in front of them. They had come out of nowhere.

6 dead as doornails [ˌded əz ˈdɔːneɪlz] mausetot • 8 condition [kənˈdɪʃn] Bedingung • 18 puzzled [ˈpʌzld] verwirrt • 22 to poison [ˈpɔɪzn] vergiften • 24 disgusting [dɪsˈɡʌstɪŋ] ekelhaft

"Buckle up, kids," said Ray firmly. "It's gonna get bumpy."

Jake tightened his seat belt. Ray turned sharply to the right. But before the plane could turn, it was suddenly in the middle of the clouds.

5 Maritska screamed as the plane shook violently. There was a loud rattle and it was like someone had thrown brown sand across the windscreen. Everywhere around the plane there were clouds of red sand. Ray switched on the windscreen wipers. 10

"What is it?" shouted Jake.

"A sandstorm!" Ray called out. "Wasn't on the forecast. No worries. We can go round it."

Ray pulled back the throttle. The plane climbed, but the shaking got worse. Ray moved the throttle to the left. He had to fight really hard to control the plane. Suddenly he let out a cry of pain. His right hand dropped from the controls. The plane's nose went down. 15

"We're going down!" screamed Maritska.

The plane quickly plunged towards the ground. 20



1 to buckle up [ˈbʌk] sich anschnallen • 1 firm [fɜːm] fest, bestimmt • 8 windscreen [ˈwɪndskriːn] Windschutzscheibe • 10 windscreen wiper [ˈwɪndskriːn ˈwəpə] Scheibenwischer • 14 throttle [ˈθrɒtl] Steuerknüppel • 20 to plunge [ˈplʌndʒ] stürzen

"Help me pull her up," gasped Ray.

Jake was scared, but had no choice. He reached across and grabbed the right side of the throttle with both hands.

With Ray using his good hand on the other side, the two of them managed to pull the throttle back. It took all of Jake's strength to fight their fall. After what felt like hours, the plane slowly began to climb.

With a final rattle and shake, the plane reappeared from the cloud. The windscreen wipers cleared the windscreen and they saw blue sky again.

"Phew," said Pim. "That was great!"

Jake took his trembling hands off the throttle. But he wasn't as relieved as Pim. Ray's face had gone deathly white. There was sweat on his forehead. Ray was trying to use both hands on the controls but he was having difficulty moving his right arm.

Ray jiggled his headset. "Does anyone read me? Over," he shouted into the microphone. There was no reply. "Kids, I'm sick. I have to land," he croaked.

"Here?" cried Maritska. Some of the sand had blown off the windows. The kids saw they were in the middle of nowhere. "Why can't we carry on?"

"Something is up with my heart," gasped Ray and held his chest.

Jake turned to Maritska and Pim, "I think he's had a heart attack."

"What? What?!" Maritska's eyes were wide with terror.

Jake remembered the safety card from the big plane. He shouted back to Pim and Maritska. "Put your heads on your knees! Place your hands over your head! Brace yourselves!"

In spite of his pain Ray tried hard to keep the plane under control. The ground got closer. The wheels narrowly missed a rock.

6 strength [stɹeŋθ] Kraft • 12 to tremble [trembl] zittern • 14 forehead [fɒrəd] Stirn • 17 to jiggle [dʒɪɡl] wackeln, rütteln • 19 to croak [krɒk] krächzen • 24 chest [tʃest] Brust • 30 to brace oneself [breɪs] sich abstützen/vorbereiten

"Mayday. Mayday," Ray gasped into the microphone. He fell forward on the throttle. The plane's nose sank to the ground.

Jake pushed Ray away from the controls. He grabbed the throttle and pulled it back. The nose lifted a little, just enough to stop them from immediately crashing.

"What do I do?" shouted Jake. "Ray!"

Ray's eyes flickered. With an enormous effort he took the controls with his left hand. The plane's propeller slowed. Jake saw an area of smooth land up ahead.

Ray guided the plane towards it. The wheels brushed the sand. The plane rattled violently. There was a loud 'Bang!' as the plane's tail hit the ground.

The plane rose into the air a little as Ray tried hard to keep it under control.

Maritska screamed hysterically.

"We're going to crash!" Pim cried.

"Keep your heads down!" shouted Jake. He was afraid they were about to die. He didn't want his brother and sister to see their plane crash into the sand and rocks.

There was a series of loud cracks. Jake turned round and saw the plane's tail rip off and fall away. The bags in the back flew out and fell to the ground. Only centimetres more and Pim and Maritska's seats would have been ripped out, too. Wind blew through the cabin from the open hole.

"Stay near the plane. You'll be OK." Ray's eyes dropped shut and his head fell onto his chest.

The plane hit the earth and slid across the ground.

Jake leaned forward and pressed his face onto his knees, held his head and shut his eyes. He knew what was about to happen to them would be horrible; he just hoped that it would be over with quickly.

6 immediately [ɪ'mi:diəti] sofort • 8 to flicker [flɪkə] zucken, flackern • 8 effort [ɛfɔ:t] Anstrengung • 11 to brush [brʌʃ] hier: streifen • 13 tail [teɪl] hinteres Ende, Schwanz • 22 to rip off [rɪp ɒf] abreißen