

One Woolly Jumper

story by Marian McGuinness | illustrated by Sylvia Morris

BONNIE OPENED the front screen door and bounded inside. She dumped her backpack in the hallway and hooked her parka on the hallstand.

'Mum ... I'm home!'

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

'Mum, where are you?'

Clicketty-clack, clickety-clack.

'Mum, what's that strange noise?'

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

Bonnie found her mum in the kitchen, knitting. She clapped her hands excitedly.

'Mum, are you having a baby?'

Baaaa, baaaa came a cry from the corner next to the fireplace.

'No, love,' Mum laughed. 'I'm knitting for lots of noisy, mischievous, weeing babies. But this one's for Rosie.'

Bonnie was disappointed. She'd secretly wished for a baby brother or sister to play with.

She grabbed a baby bottle and lifted Rosie out of the playpen. Rosie was their poddy lamb and she was warm and cuddly. Bonnie called her Rosie because the insides of her ears shone bright pink in the sunlight.



Baaaa ... Rosie nudged Bonnie for the bottle. She latched onto its long teat.

Vvvt ... vvvt ... vvvt ... Rosie greedily suckled as her tail wiggled and her ears twitched.

'Mum, I don't understand,' said Bonnie as she fed Rosie. 'Why are you knitting for our lambs when they're born with woolly jumpers?'

Mum stopped knitting. 'Love, this drought's gone on for so long that the sheep are starving. Dad's been up early in the cold with the newborns. There are more twins, and their mums don't have enough milk to feed them both ... well, you know what happens.'

'The smaller twin is abandoned, just like Rosie.' Bonnie's eyes filled with tears. 'They have no mum to love them or feed them or keep them warm.' Bonnie cuddled the lamb. 'Oh Mum, how will you ever knit enough jumpers?'

Bonnie popped Rosie back into the playpen. Bonnie then grabbed a spare pair of knitting needles from her mum's quilted bag. 'Mum, can you teach me to knit?'

Bonnie followed her mum's instructions. She threaded the knitting needle through the first stitch, looped the wool around the needle tip, and somehow, like magic, drew the needle and wool back through the loop. With her fingers twisting like a pretzel, Bonnie slowly started to knit. *Clack clack. Clack clack.* Bonnie concentrated with all her might. A stitch fell off her needle and made a hole. 'Oh, this is too hard,' she said. 'I'm never going to learn.'

'Everything takes time,' said Mum. 'Keep going, love, the poddies need your help.'


After many tries, Bonnie soon got into a rhythm.

Clickety-clack clickety-clack.

The next day Bonnie took her wonky-looking knitting to school.

At lunchtime, to escape the cold spring winds, she knitted under the pepper tree.





Her friends Juniper, Harriette, Frankie and Lucca joined her. They were curious.

As Bonnie *clickety-clacked* she told them about the freezing lambs.


The next day her friends sat with her under the pepper tree with their balls of wool. But they didn't have knitting needles; they had chopsticks, pencils, drumsticks and a couple of bamboo skewers. 'Everything takes time,' said Bonnie, as she taught them how to cast on the stitches. Soon, after many *clack clacks* ... they were all *clickety-clacking*.

By the end of the week, the whole school was *clickety-clacking*!

Mrs Williams, in the tuckshop, knitted between recess and lunch.


Mrs Howard, the art teacher, taught the children how to knit arty styles.

Mr Spiro, the maintenance man, knitted in his shed when he finished his school duties. And Ms Tanner, the librarian, sat in her cosy chair and knitted while the children read stories to her.



All through the cold, windy spring, the children and teachers knitted. Some jumpers looked like spiders' webs. Some looked like dreamcatchers or fishing nets. All of the jumpers would keep the little poddies warm.

'But there are HUNDREDS of orphaned lambs,' sighed Bonnie to her friends as they huddled under the pepper tree. 'They ALL need jumpers!' She then realised something. 'Wait, I've got an idea!' she announced. 'Who wants to help?'



That afternoon, Juniper, Harriette, Frankie and Lucca sat around the table in Bonnie's kitchen. They brainstormed ideas for a flyer on a piece of butcher's paper. Harriette, the best drawer in their class, worked on the design. Juniper and Frankie worked on the words to use, while Bonnie wrote out the pattern for the woolly jumper. 'I'll go to Dad's work and print them,' said Lucca.

Later that week after school, the five friends walked around town popping the flyers and knitting patterns into all the letterboxes. They stuck them on electricity poles, and in shop windows and handed them to interstate truckies who were delivering goods.

When the kookaburras stopped laughing, the cockatoos stopped screeching and the windmills stopped clattering, all you could hear across town was the clickety-clack of knitting needles.

Soon there were HUNDREDS of little woolly jumpers.

'But the drought is everywhere!' sighed Bonnie as she slumped again under the pepper tree with her friends. 'There are THOUSANDS of poddy lambs who need woolly jumpers!'

She tried to think of another solution, but ... she couldn't.

It was too noisy!

Clickety-Clack, Clickety-Clack, Clickety-Clack, Clickety-Clack.

The story of Bonnie's knitting was spreading across the country.

A week later as Bonnie was working on a maths worksheet in class, she saw the post office truck drive down the dusty school driveway.

At the school assembly, Bonnie was called up to the stage where there were dozens of boxes piled up.

Mrs Jensen, their principal, scanned the rows of children sitting on the floor. She tapped the microphone to make sure it was working. 'Children, sometimes when you think you won't be heard because you are only one voice in a whole choir of voices, I want you to think of Bonnie.'

Bonnie shuffled her feet in embarrassment. 'All these boxes are addressed to Miss Bonnie and her little lambs,' said Mrs Jensen proudly, 'and Bonnie, I'd love





you to open them and show everyone what's inside.'

Bonnie tingled with excitement. She pulled open the cardboard flaps and took out hundreds of beautifully knitted woolly jumpers. Some had stripes, some had checks. There were colourful Fair Isle jumpers and ones with fancy collars. There were jumpers in footie team colours and ones with pom-poms and bobbles.

And as the icy wind whipped across the paddocks, and the last crystals of spring frost crackled on the drought-stricken land, Rosie smiled as the poddy lambs happily *baaa-baaa-ed* in their cosy woollen jumpers.

Bonnie opened the front screen door and bounded inside. She dumped her backpack in the hall. She hooked her school hat on the hallstand.

'Mum ... I'm home!'

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

'Mum, where are you?'

Clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

Bonnie found her mum in the kitchen, knitting. She looked at the tiny lemon and white woollen shape falling from her mum's knitting needles.

'Mum, you don't have to knit for the poddies anymore. They've all got woolly jumpers.'

'Ah, but this one's not for the poddies, love.'

Bonnie clapped her hands excitedly.

'Mum, are you having a baby?'

Mum nodded. 'And your baby brother or sister is going to need a few woolly jumpers.'

Bonnie was so excited, she danced around the kitchen. She grabbed the spare knitting needles.

'Okay, Mum. Can you teach me how to knit for a baby human?' ■

How
marrvellous!
I wouldn't mind
a woolly jumperrr
to suit my new
jodhpurs too!

