

# The Sad Taniwha



Written and illustrated by  
**Robert Prins**

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by Robert Prins

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**Special thanks to June, Lucas and Lilah  
for a great afternoon in the park  
looking for taniwhas.**

Lucas and Lilah spent the morning making fishing rods from bamboo stakes and string they had found in their dad's vegetable garden.





When they finished, they ran to their mother. “Can we go fishing in the creek? Pleeese?”

“Yes, you can go,” their mother replied. “But don’t fall in or you will get caught by the taniwha.”

“What’s a taniwha mum?” asked Lucas.

“The taniwha is the guardian of the creek. If you are lucky you might see him, but don’t fall in or he might get you,” Mum said.

“We’ll be careful,” Lilah said.





At the creek, Lucas and Lilah lowered their fishing lines into the water. Then they waited. They waited a long time – almost a minute – but they didn't see any fish.





Suddenly Lilah sat up straight. “Did you hear that?” she asked Lucas.

Lucas could hear it too. It sounded like someone crying. Then they both heard a faint voice call, “Help!”





Lucas and Lilah left their fishing rods on the bank of the creek and ran along the edge of the water to see who needed help.





“Help!” they heard again.

“There!” called Lucas.



Down in the creek was the taniwha. He had enormous eyes, a big mouth with lots of teeth and a pointy tongue, a long body like an eel, and dragon spines all the way down his back.

A taniwha should have looked frightening, but this one looked sad. Great big tears were falling from his eyes and splashing into the water.



Lilah sat down beside the creek near the taniwha. “Are you the taniwha?” she asked.

“Yes, I am the taniwha, the guardian of the creek,” he replied.

“Why are you so sad?” Lilah wondered.

“I am sad because I have to leave my home. All the fish and all the crabs have gone away because of the rubbish in this creek. Now I am lonely. I have lived here for 250 years with all my friends, and now that they have gone, I have to move too. Boo hoo!” And with that the taniwha started crying again.





“We could be your friends,” Lucas suggested.

The taniwha looked up. “Would you?” he said.

“Of course,” said Lilah. “What can we do to show you that we are your friends?”

The taniwha thought for a moment. “Can you clean up the rubbish? Then my fish and crab friends might come back too.”

“We can do that!” Lucas and Lilah said at once.





“I’ll get a rubbish bag,” said Lucas.





“And I will start pulling rubbish out of the creek,” said Lilah, as she picked up an old milk bottle someone had dumped.



It was a big job. It didn't take long for Lilah and Lucas to collect a huge sack full of rubbish that people had dumped in the creek. No wonder the taniwha was so sad!

Lucas stood back to look at the creek. It looked much cleaner now. He was sure the taniwha would be happier.





When they got home, Lucas and Lilah put all the rubbish they had collected into their wheelie bin. The rubbish truck would take it all away on Thursday.



Suddenly Lucas remembered. “Our fishing rods!” he yelled. They ran back to where they had been fishing and picked them up.

As Lucas and Lilah stood looking at the creek, they heard a voice. It was the taniwha.





“Thank you for being my friends,” he called. “Thanks to you, I can keep living in the creek. Come and see me again sometime.”

A taniwha tail waved at them from the water.

“We will,” they called.







***A taniwha is a mythical creature from traditional Māori stories. They live in rivers, lakes and in the sea. Sometimes taniwhas are considered dangerous, but at other times they are known as the guardians of the waters they live in.***





Lucas and Lilah discover a very sad taniwha while they are out fishing. The taniwha says he is moving out. Can Lucas and Lilah do anything to help him change his mind?



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