

BOOKRAPT™

THE BAY OF PLENTY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ASSOCIATION INC
www.bookrapt.org.nz info@bookrapt.org.nz



The Day My Father Became a Bush - Joke van Leeuwen

Publisher: Gecko Press

RRP \$19.99

Many children are the victims of civil war and have no control over how or where they will live and with whom. This thought-provoking story about a young girl caught in a war-torn country gives insight into the challenges she copes with.

Toda's pastry chef father must join the army. He tells her about some things soldiers need to learn, including camouflage. When he leaves home to fight in the war, she pictures him wearing branches and hiding among bushes.

Toda's grandmother comes to live with her, but the fighting soon reaches their city. Her grandmother decides to send Toda across the border to live with her mother. Even though she hasn't seen her mother for years, Toda will be safer with her. Her grandmother decides to stay behind to protect their home and possessions.

Plans are made for Toda's dangerous journey and she sets off in the company of a few adults. It isn't long before she finds herself left to make her own way. Her thoughts show her inner conflict and anxieties about what to do and how to keep safe.

As she tries to find the border, Toda meets various strangers - but whom can she trust? One shows her kindness, others might harm her, while most have their own worries and are indifferent to her. Even though she is afraid and confused, Toda is determined to carry on.

The author gives a child's-eye view of war and the complex ways that it affects children. Toda discovers that finally crossing the border leads to more problems. Unfamiliar places, different language and customs, foreign food, and even her name must change.

This is an excellent book for adults to read with children. There are many topics that could be shared and discussed.

Reviewed by children's book author Jean Bennett

Author's website:

<http://www.jokevanleeuwen.com>

