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***Dappled Annie and the Tigrish* by Mary McCallum** illustrated by Annie Hayward

Publisher: Gecko Press

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Annie is a curious nine-year-old who has discovered surprises that exist alongside the real world, just on the edge of vision where they are seen one moment and, in a blink, they are gone.

Annie loves to visit the hedge beside her home and wriggle in close to Mr and Mrs Hedge and the other trees that have grown together over the years. She listens to their leaves rustling and whispering and, sometimes, she can see their faces. Recently, she has heard something strange stirring, “a deep dark sound like a wave breaking in a cave”.

One morning, Annie’s father is late home from the nearby lighthouse he maintains. Her mother wants to complete some painting and asks Annie to look after her younger brother, Robbie. It is one of those off-kilter days when the usual routine is disrupted and almost anything can happen - and it does. Annie and Robbie are catapulted into an exciting, perilous journey tinged with magic.

Descriptive writing draws readers into the adventure. “How huge he was, his eyes endless and without edges, like the sea from the lighthouse windows. His fur glowing. Annie thought if she touched it with the tips of her fingers, they would burn.”

The delicate black-and-white line drawings and intricate illustrations have a nostalgic style, reminiscent of classic 1950s children’s books. The detailed colour plates invite readers to walk right into the landscape and become part of the story.

Dappled Annie is an enchanting tale of bravery and loyalty. It will remind readers that the world can be a magical place.

Reviewed by children’s book author Jean Bennett

Illustrator’s website:

<http://www.anniehaywardart.co.nz/>

