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***The Lazy Friend* by Ronan Badel**

Publisher: Gecko Press

RRP \$24.99

The sleepy sloth hanging from a tree is lucky to have good friends watching out for him while he is napping. The sloth, snake, frog and an emerald toucan are all content with their comfortable lives in a lush forest. But suddenly the tree holding the dozing sloth comes crashing down.

Snake is alarmed to see a forestry worker load the felled tree onto a truck, with sloth still clinging to a branch. Determined to rescue his slumbering friend, snake slithers onto the truck. A perilous journey unfolds as the truck bounces off down the rough track.

The expressive illustrations tell the story without any words being necessary. With each turn of the page readers can follow the visual drama and develop their own version of the events. Snake's bravery as each challenge rushes towards him is astounding - while sloth sleeps on, unaware of the dangers. It's a triumph of loyalty and courage, even if the friendship appears rather one-sided.

Gecko Press have published a selection of wordless picture books to encourage readers to add their own words and storylines to the evocative illustrations. The series are all quality hardback books produced in an easy-to-hold landscape format.

Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett

