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Rasmas by Elizabeth Pulford, illustrated by Jenny Cooper

Publisher: Scholastic NZ

RRP \$19.00

This thought-provoking read-aloud book for young children deals sensitively and positively with loss, loneliness, a second-mum, and shifting homes.

Rasmas is a goat described by Danny's Gran as being "a bit on the wild side". Motherless Rasmas is soon following equally motherless Danny around Gran's farm. One day Danny's father introduces Rona, who he eventually marries. When they all move to Rona's city apartment, Danny has to leave Rasmas behind.

The story is told sparingly, with the illustrations adding at least as much again to the storyline. The fun Danny and Rasmas have together is obvious, as is Danny's first appraisal of Rona with his searching one-eyed pirate look. The wedding day makes Danny feel included – his outfit is identical to his father's, and even the goat is in the action.

While Danny is sad to leave the farm and Rasmas, and he is lonely in the city, it is clear that he does not resent his new mum – or forget Rasmas. Jenny Cooper's illustration for the sentence *Danny's heart leaked a little every time he thought about Rasmas* is perfect.

Elizabeth Pulford's use of language is simple and spare, with some delightful word choice:
*the coloured leaves were swirling
and whirling like a wild-wind skirt*

and further alliteration:
*and so it was that in a splash of sun,
in a small square yard ...*

Also available in Te Reo Maori.

Reviewed by Chris Wright

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Illustrator's website: www.thearts.co.nz/artists/jenny-cooper

