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Sunken Forest by Des Hunt

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Yet another excellent tale by this talented author. Des Hunt links his love of the environment, his knowledge of science, and his finely tuned awareness of young people with his obvious writing skills. False accusations, plenty of action, tough adults, manipulative unkind boys, a massive eel, a revenge-seeking girl, a landslide ... there is plenty here to keep the young reader turning the pages.

Twelve-year-old Matt has shifted to Gisborne (Gizzy) to live with his Nana. His father is in prison and his mother struggles to cope with the family and its limited finances.

As often happens, his first friends at his new school are not the nicest of boys and his life soon slips from bad to worse. Shifted into a new class for a tough outdoor education camp at Lake Waikaremoana with ex Territorials running the activities, Matt is able to show his skills and develop new interests.

While his reputation as a thief travels with him, he nevertheless makes new friends, learns the difference between revenge and justice, and shows his true courage and selflessness – in his friendship with and concern for Elsa, and in his dramatic rescue of Cam, the bully.

There are yet more twists and turns in the plot of this novel. Dialogue and character development occur naturally, along with descriptions of the environment and some scientific explanations of natural phenomena.

Des Hunt handles the development of friendships, including boy-girl friendships of this age group very well, making this a book that will be enjoyed by both boys and girls. Recommended for readers 10-13 years.

Author's website:

www.deshunt.com

Reviewed by Chris Wright

