

A Girl Called Dog

Dog's heart raced. She knew these words – knew them in a way she'd never known the words that Uncle spoke. Inside her silent heart, words rose up like a country rising from the sea. The dream-like blur of the huts, the river, the great trees, shimmered into focus, and a memory, a real memory of a time before Uncle, grew inside her like a bright bubble.

She remembered a beach by a river, just like this. She remembered the light on the water, the dry warmth of her mother's arms around her, the safe smell of her mother's skin and the line of blue parrots against the green. Her mother's voice had whispered – whispered words that named the trees, the water, the birds and herself!

The boy stepped out from under the trees into the clearing where the guest hut stood. He had been away from the village for a few days and hadn't seen their visitor. "Hello," he said, a little surprised to find a child rather like himself. "Who are you?"

The answer was in Dog's heart, where her mother had put it. In a voice so tiny it seemed to come from far away, Dog spoke.

"I'm named after the blue macaw," she said. "I'm called Mintak."

by Nicola Davies