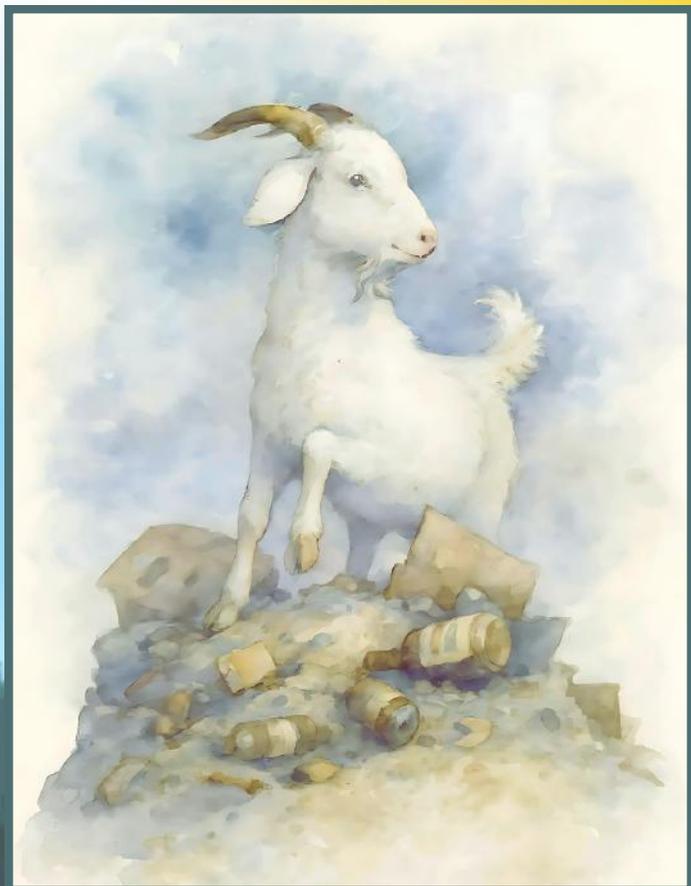


Molo,
king of the dump



by Pandora Alberts

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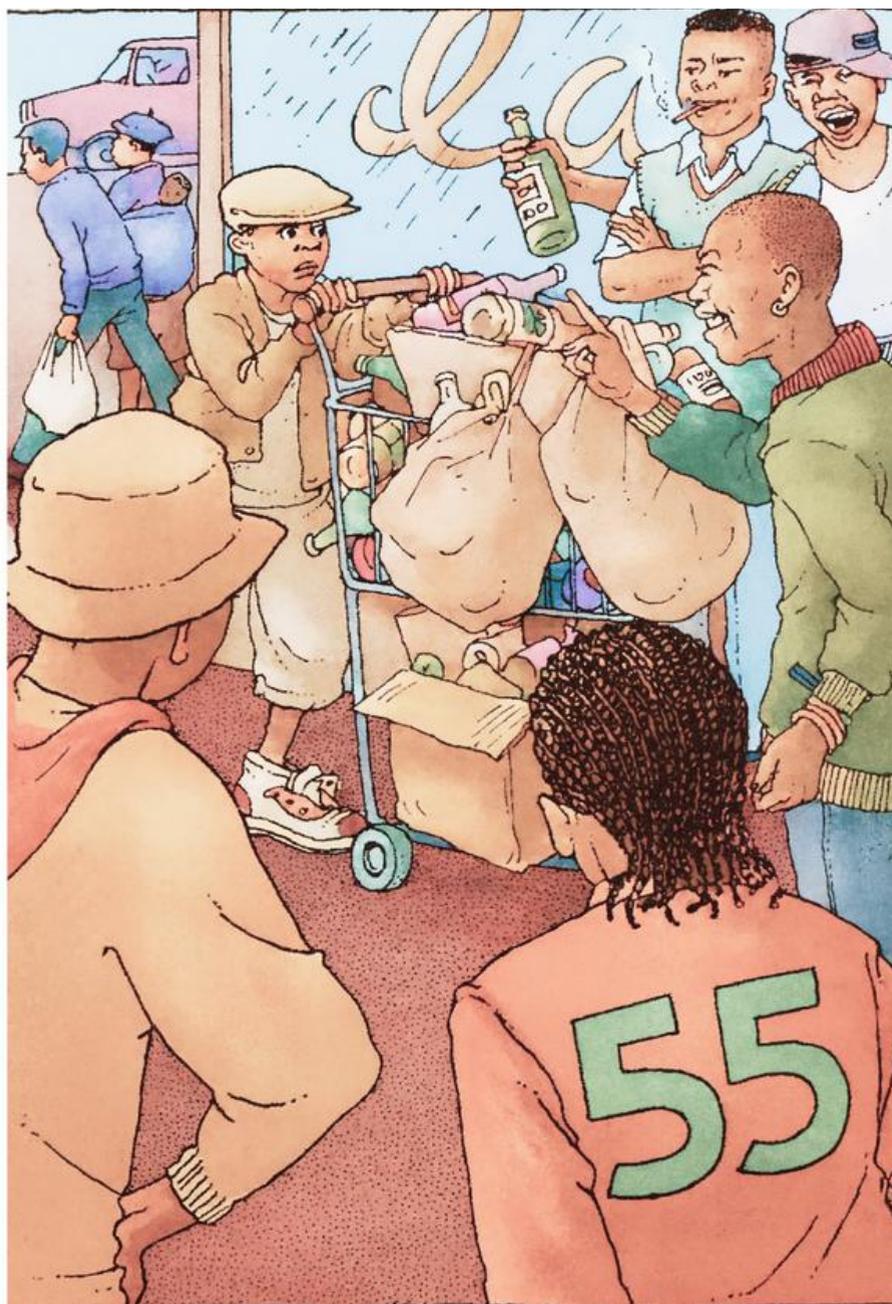
Life on the Dump

Ever since he can remember, Vusi has lived on the rubbish dump. He doesn't know how old he is, but old Gogo Mieta says she thinks he must be eleven or twelve. He is small and shy.

Sometimes when he pushes his squeaky old wire trolley to town to sell the glass bottles and cans he has collected, the big city boys tease him. They point to his dirty white cap and call out: "Here comes a 'kiewiet' bird! Look at his skinny legs! Fly away, fly away!"

Vusi tries not to say very much. He keeps to one side. If he makes any money, he hides it in his shoe. Later he will buy red sausage and fruit and bread for Gogo Mieta to make sandwiches. Sometimes he has enough left to buy a cool drink. Life on the dump is hard. Vusi wears clothes that have been thrown away and scratched out of black bags and piles of burning garbage. In the winter he is always cold and the rain makes the sores on his legs sting.

His hair always smells of smoke and his hands are cut from digging through rubbish. He wears odd shoes. They are too large so he must stuff them with rags to keep them on his feet.



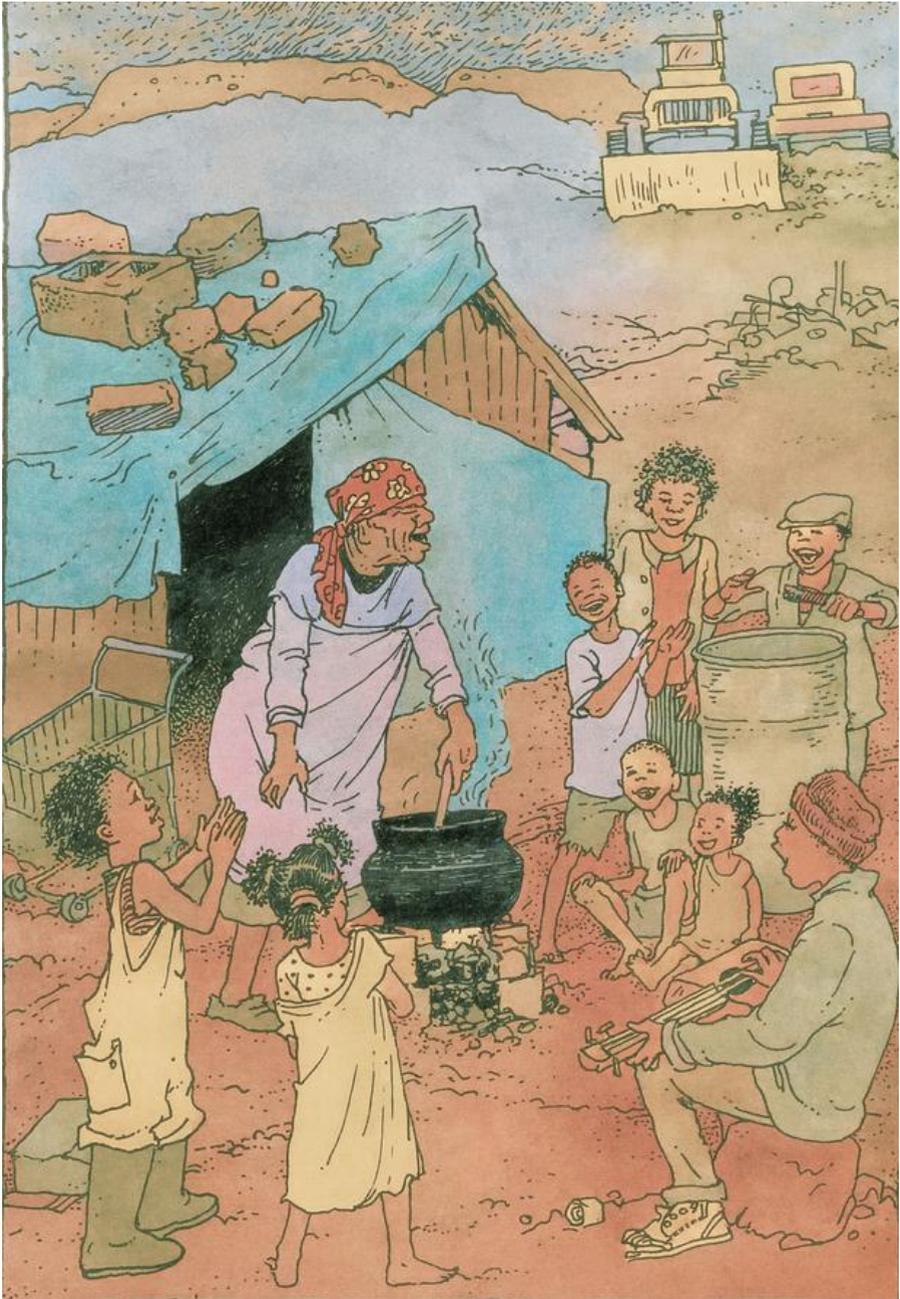
Shoes always lose their mates in the garbage trucks. Vusi wishes that people would tie the laces together before they throw them away.

Today is Sunday, and Sunday on the dump is special. The fires that make the stinking smoke have almost gone out. The huge bulldozers that push the piles of rubbish are parked and silent.

Vusi does not have to push his trolley down the free-way into town.

All the children in Gogo's shelter help to make soup in the black pot. The best thing is when they sing together. Gogo teaches them hymns and one of the older boys plays his guitar.

Vusi beats a forty-gallon drum. They sound amazing!



A friend called Molo

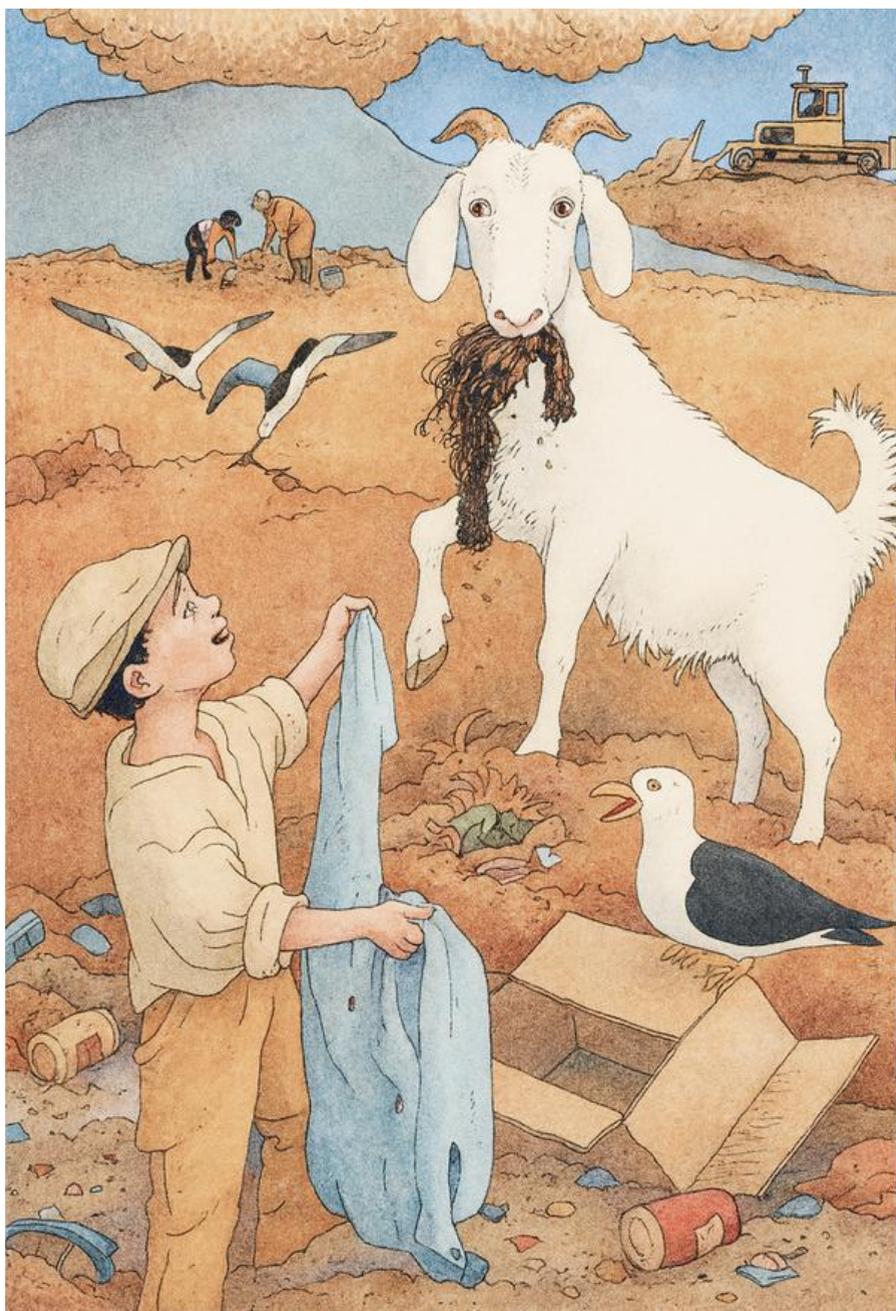
Today something is missing. The big white goat who lives on the dump has not been seen anywhere. Vusi loves the goat. He has given him the name “Molo,” because it seems as though the goat greets him every morning when they meet on the mountains of garbage. Molo is half wild. He doesn't allow anyone but Vusi to touch him. They often spend whole days together. When Vusi finds something special he holds it up for Molo to see.

“Look at this, Molo Goat,” Vusi says. “A huge red shirt, with some buttons left. Don't you like it?”

Molo looks at him sideways with his yellow eyes and Vusi is sure he answers: “Ho, Vusi, I have no use for that red shirt. Look what I have. Some pineapple tops and a delicious old sock!” Molo is always hopping and scrambling. He stands on the very top of the heaps as though he owns the dump.

“We are going to put that goat in our stew pot,” warns Gogo. But Molo is too agile to be caught. He just shakes his beard and gallops away.

Now Vusi scrambles about searching for Molo. Has he ended up in someone else's cooking pot?



He looks all over the dump but can find no sign of Molo.

“Molo! Molo Goat!” Vusi is very worried.

“Come and eat your food while it is hot,” calls Gogo.

Molo in danger

Early the next morning Elvis the bulldozer driver finds Molo lying under his machine. Vusi thinks he is dead but when he strokes Molo's nose, the goat opens his eyes and snorts. There is foam around his mouth and his legs kick.

“Eish, that goat's finished,” Elvis says. He climbs up into the bulldozer and starts the engine.

Vusi has a plan. He knows that somewhere in town there is a doctor who can cure sick animals. “Help me put Molo in my trolley, Elvis,” he pleads.

“Vusi, forget it. That goat is going to die.”

But Elvis gets down off his bulldozer, picks up Molo and puts him in the trolley. Molo wriggles weakly and then lies still. His muddy hooves and his horns stick out through the trolley bars.



Vusi begins his long journey. The trolley wheels are small and get stuck in the tangled rubbish of the dump. Molo is a big goat and very heavy. Some of the other children help Vusi to wrestle the trolley to the freeway. There he begins to run! The freeway slopes downhill. At last Vusi reaches the town. There are people ahead of him, and traffic, and shops. He has to fight to get the trolley up and down kerbs. People stare and laugh.

Suddenly the bad city boys are standing in the road. They will not let him pass. They mock him.

“Here comes kiewiet! Hey, is that your brother in the pram? Shall we push him into the traffic?”

Vusi feels a great red rage glow through him. “GET OUT OF MY WAY!” he screams. His voice is huge. He is no longer shy little Vusi. The bad boys see how his eyes shine and they fall back in silence. Vusi pushes the trolley so fast it seems it may rattle to pieces.

A long way down this road there is a big white house with a notice-board in the garden. Vusi cannot read the name on the board. “Is this the place of the animal doctor?” he asks a passer-by.

The woman nods and points. “The blue door.”



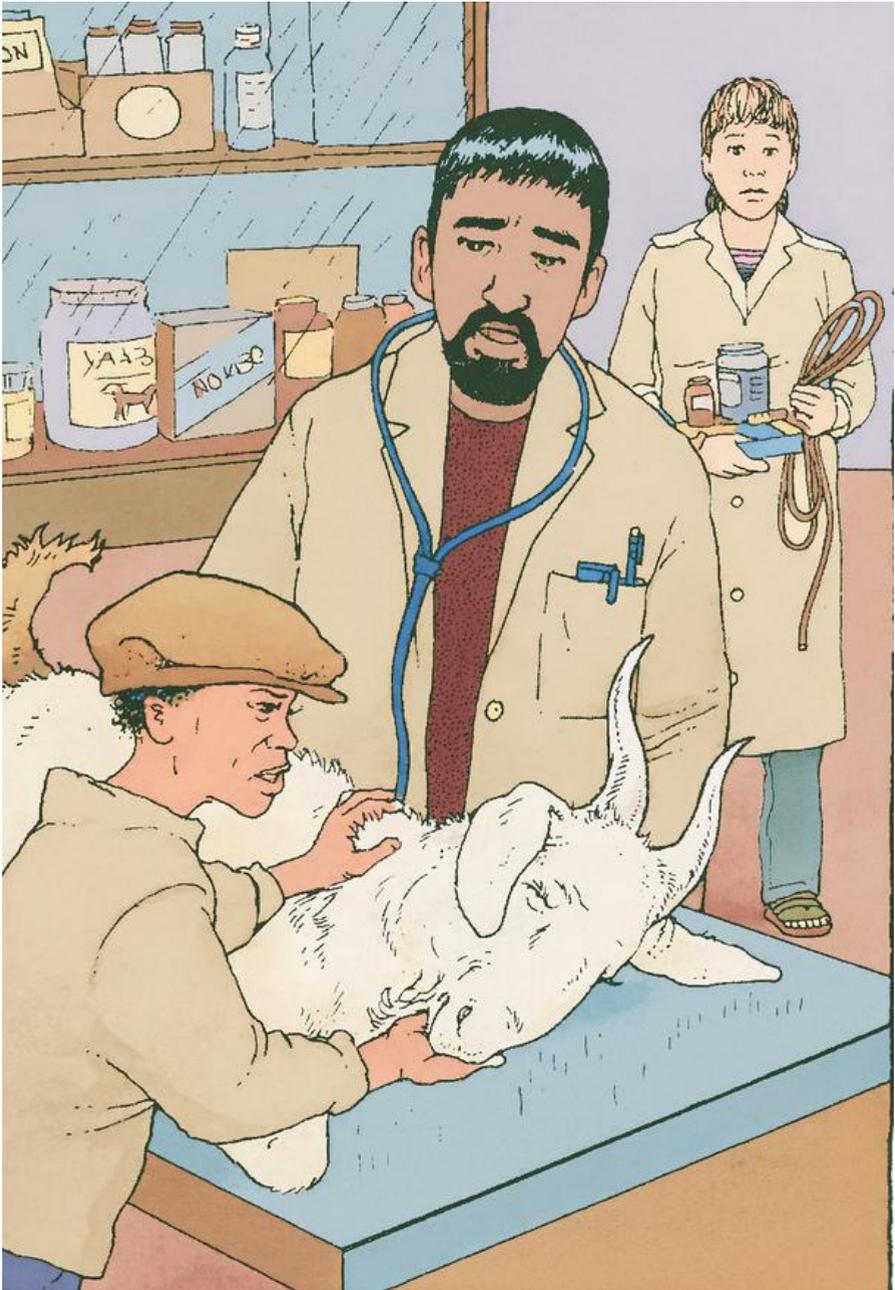
A long, anxious wait

Inside the Veterinary Clinic kind Doctor Naidoo looks at Molo and shakes his head. “This goat has eaten something very poisonous. We don't know what the poison is. We shall try to save him, but don't expect too much.”

Vusi is exhausted. He sits down on the doorstep and puts his face in his hands. All day people bring their animals to be treated. There are cats in baskets, little dogs, big dogs, a parrot on someone's shoulder, even a snake in a cotton bag. Nobody else brings a goat. Some of the people wear smart clothes, and their animals are groomed and shiny, and they wear bright collars with little glass jewels in them. These people stare at Vusi and step around him as though he is dirty.

It is dark when Doctor Naidoo comes out to look for Vusi. He has put on a dark jacket over his white coat. He looks tired. “Your goat must stay in our hospital. He has a chance.” He looks at Vusi and frowns. “Where do you live?”

Vusi tells him about the dump and Gogo Mieta and the other children, and about their shelter made out of poles and wire and pieces of plastic.



“I think I know someone who can help you,” says Doctor Naidoo.

The person Doctor Naidoo wants Vusi to meet is a social worker called Sister Anna. She is kind and gentle and takes Vusi and his trolley home with her for the night.

Vusi has a bath in clean hot water, with soap bubbles, and a bouncy sponge. He washes his hair with silver-coloured shampoo and dries himself with a great big woolly orange towel.

This is a huge adventure! He smells wonderful.

Now he puts on some clothes that Sister Anna gives him to keep for ever. Vusi loves his second-hand jeans and a purple tracksuit top that is only a little too big.

“Now for supper,” says Sister Anna. She fries eggs and tomatoes, and makes huge sandwiches with cheese and some crunchy green leaves. Vusi picks up his knife and fork. He is so hungry he wants to cram all the food into his mouth at once. But he remembers that Gogo Mieta always insists on good manners.



Suddenly he remembers Molo Goat lying in the hospital and he can't eat anything. He covers his face with his hands and cries, "Molo is going to die!"

"Shh," says Sister Anna. She hugs him. "We will see him tomorrow. Clever Doctor Naidoo will do his best."

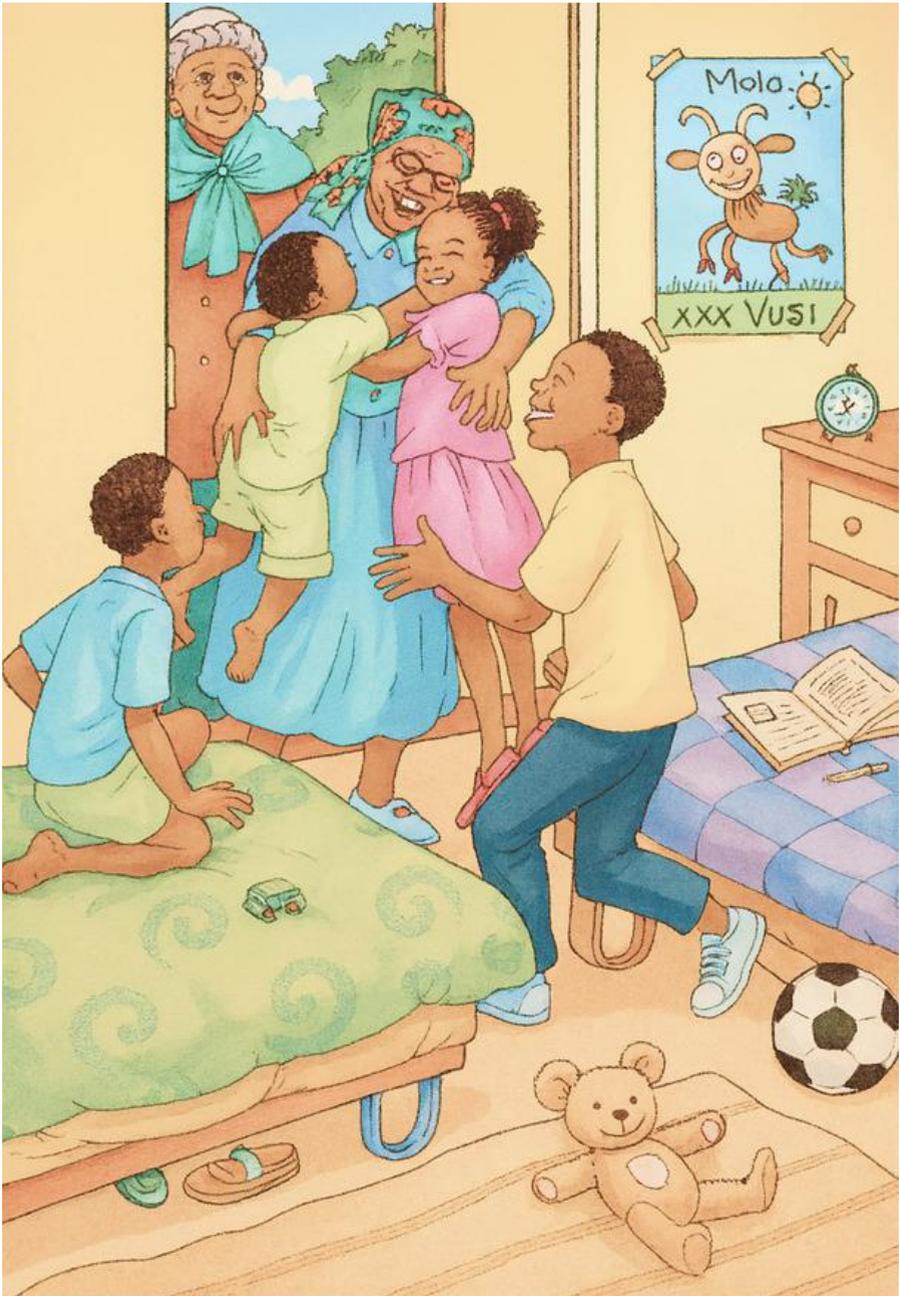
"The dump is no good without Molo," sobs Vusi.

Wonderful new beginnings

Molo stays in the hospital for a week, and then he walks shakily onto the grass outside. Other good things happen too.

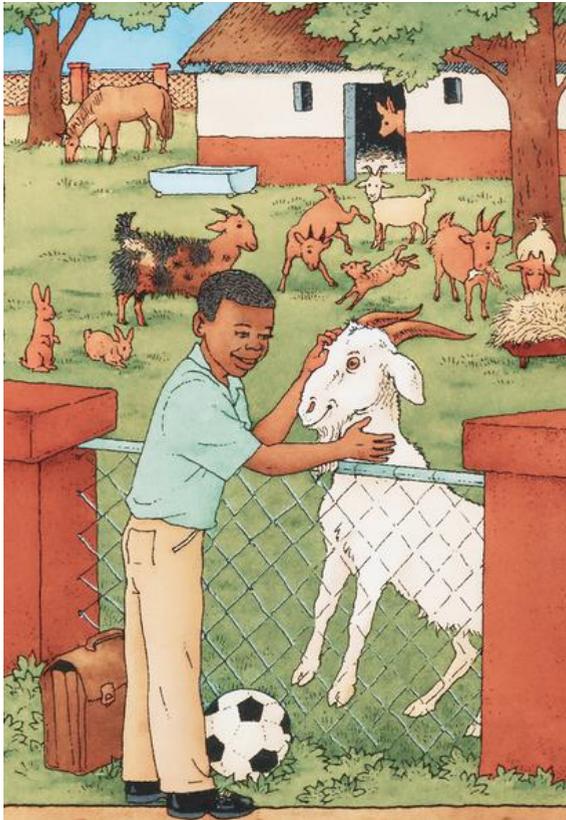
Sister Anna goes to see Gogo and the children at the dump so that she can find a proper place for them to stay. Vusi goes to school where his teacher says he will soon catch up with the other children. In his spare time, Vusi still collects the bottles and cans from the dump for pocket money.

Gogo shares a house with three other grannies, and the children have two big rooms for themselves. Most afternoons after school and soccer, Vusi goes to visit Molo who now lives in a grassy field at the animal welfare society with five other goats.



Molo puts his head over the fence so that Vusi can scratch him. “Are you happy, Molo Goat? Now that you have lovely food and five wives and no-one is hunting you for their cooking-pot?”

Molo just shakes his beard and twinkles at Vusi with his yellow eyes. It seems that he is saying, “No more rubbish for us, Vusi.” Then he prances away across the grass, tail held high, his white coat shining.



ACTIVITY

Vusi, the recycling expert...



ACTIVITY

Molo : Comprehension Test



This book promotes the development of compassion,
respect and justice for all life, through literacy.



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