

YEAR 4

READING



Contents

Legs' race page 2

Visiting Antarctica page 6



Legs' Race

"Run ... Legs ... run," chanted Uncle Udi.

"She runs like a cheetah," said her uncle proudly to the people standing nearby.

Legs was running through Zoo Park, training for the big race.

Her name was really Lepandi but everybody called her Legs. Except her mother.

Legs loved to run.

The race started next Saturday in Zoo Park. You ran out of the park gate. Then you had to run up the hill, round the church, past the whitewashed fort, through the school grounds, past the stone castle, down the steep road and back into the park. One kilometre from start to finish.

Last year Legs had finished in tenth place. This time she wanted to be in the first five.

All week Legs had dreamt about running the race. On Wednesday night in a dream she was struggling through the Namib Desert, sand up to her hips. The next night she was running a three-legged race with her uncle who kept on tripping her up. She woke in the hot room, wondering what the dreams meant.

Uncle Udi was a large man, short of breath. Legs liked him but did not want him as a running partner. She was sure about that.

"He's not only large, he's lazy," said Legs' mother.

The afternoon before the race there was a thunderstorm. The heat broke as thunder cracked the earth like a whip. Rain bounced off the hard ground outside Legs' home and fell on the roof.

Everybody welcomed the rain. Uncle Udi moved into the middle of the street, his shirt blowing in the wind.

"It's a sign ... a sign that you will win tomorrow!" he shouted.

"Just listen to the rain on the roof. It's applauding your victory."

"I don't have to win. I just want to come in the first five," Legs told her uncle.

That night the electrical power failed and the phones in that part of town stopped ringing. The storm had damaged the cables.





They ate supper by candlelight. Legs sat with her mother, her brother, Rudi, and Uncle Udi, who lived with them. He had moved in a week ago, to be near the hospital for treatment. Uncle Udi's heart was giving him problems. It beat like a tired alarm clock.

Legs pushed her food round on her plate.

"Don't you like the spaghetti, Lepandi?" asked her mother.

"I'm not very hungry ..." said Legs.

"You need energy for the race," urged Uncle Udi.

"What time is your race, Lepandi?" Legs' mother asked.

"It starts at seven o'clock in the morning."

"And I shall be there to see you start," said Uncle, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

That night Legs went to bed early and fell into a deep sleep. She woke in the dark. Someone was shaking her.

"Lepandi, wake up." It was her mother.

"Huh, did I oversleep?"

"No, my girl. It's your Uncle."

"What's the matter, Mama?"

"He's had an attack of some kind. I think it's his heart. We need an ambulance."

"Why don't you phone for one?" Legs yawned.

"I tried but the lines are still down. I can't send your brother, he's too small. You'll have to go."

Legs looked at the old alarm clock ticking away the time.

Nearly five thirty. She scrambled into her running vest and shorts and tied the laces of her tackies.

Legs ran out into the coming dawn and set off down the road at a steady pace. She slipped into her cheetah stride.

Legs had got as far as the corner café when a sudden thought came to her.

"Today's the race!"

Her heart and her stomach circled each other in a dance of sadness.



It would take her another twenty minutes to get to the hospital.

By then it would be six o'clock.

Then find help.

Then get a lift with the ambulance driver.

She might be in time for the start.

If she ran all the way.

"The distance I'm running is just as long as the race itself," she thought. Her heart drummed four beats to a stride.

Then another thought struck Legs.

"Uncle Udi won't be there to see me run." She felt sad.

She saw the lights of the hospital at the end of the road and she increased her pace.

Legs ran through the door that read EMERGENCY and spoke to the nurse there.

"It's my uncle ... please come ... his heart ..."

"Name and address."

The nurse pushed a form at her.

Legs could hear a giant clock beating time in her head. She scrawled out the details. Then the nurse read it slowly, yawned and reached for the intercom.

Ten minutes later Legs was sitting in the ambulance.

At home Legs stayed long enough to see Uncle Udi into the ambulance ... then she set out, running towards the start of her race.

She ran and ran. She was so tired ... and now she still had to run another kilometre.

Five to seven.

"I hope they'll still let me register," cried Legs to herself.

She swung through the lower park gate. Was she too late?

People were milling around. She recognized Spider, her friend, who was also running.

Legs ran right up to him. "Can I run?" she cried.

"Where were you?" asked Spider.

"I was with ...my uncle ..." She was too upset to get her words out.



"Never mind, Legs. The race has been postponed."

"Postponed! Why, Spider?"

"Last night's rain has caused problems. A burst pipe flooded the top end of the park. We run next week. Same time. Same place."

Legs heaved a sigh of relief.

She trained extra hard all week.

Legs was there in good time the next Saturday. As she stood with Spider at the start, an ambulance drew up. The ambulance driver lifted Uncle Udi out of the back. His frame filled the wheel chair.

"I've discharged myself from hospital to watch you," he said.
And Legs laughed with joy.

Legs heard the announcer's voice over the loudspeaker. "All runners must report to the Starter." The runners lined up. The Starter's pistol fired.

"Run, Cheetah ... run," Uncle Udi cheered.

Legs ran her race. Round the stone church, then the fort, circling the castle, down the steep road and back into the park.

The crowd began to cheer. Spider was two paces ahead of Legs.
And as she passed the statue at the end of the race, Legs was in second place.

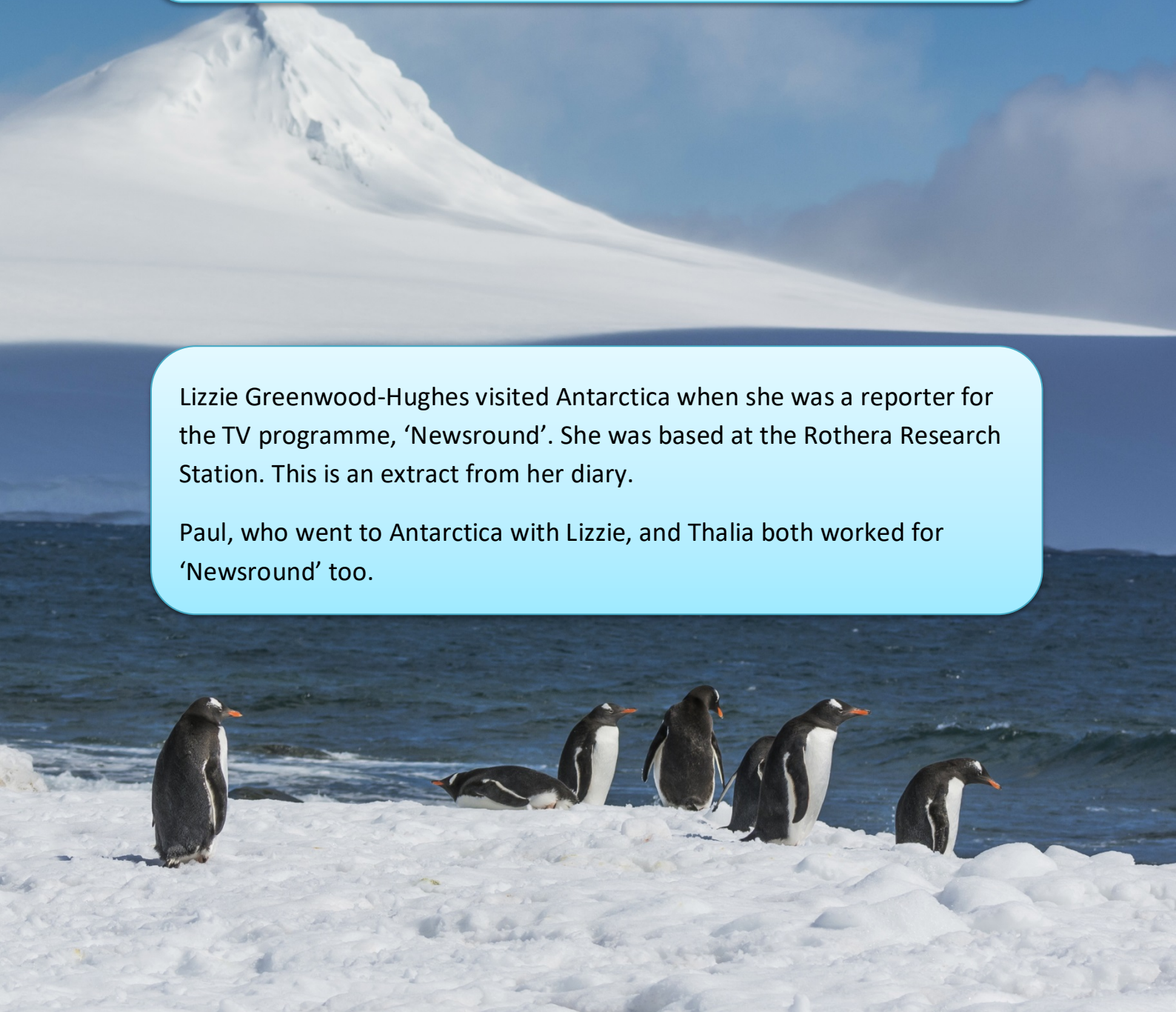


Visiting Antarctica

Antarctica is the large area of land at the South Pole, most of which is covered in ice. Nobody lives there but there are research stations where scientists carry out experiments.

Lizzie Greenwood-Hughes visited Antarctica when she was a reporter for the TV programme, 'Newsround'. She was based at the Rothera Research Station. This is an extract from her diary.

Paul, who went to Antarctica with Lizzie, and Thalia both worked for 'Newsround' too.



**Day 8: Sunday 7th December**

The ship's here! The *James Clark Ross* gently floated into the wharf at about 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon. It's what everyone's been waiting for. All the stuff that has run out, broken down or just been lost can now be replaced.

Some people have been waiting months for equipment, and one just wanted to get his hands on the new supply of ketchup. Apparently, they ran out about 6 months ago.

Earlier, I spoke to Thalia live on the phone for one of the weekend 'Newsround' bulletins. It was really nice to talk to her – I'm amazed at how easy it is to contact the UK from here. I told Thalia, the only thing I really miss is fresh milk for my tea.

The photo at the top of this page is one I took of an Adelie penguin. The penguins are great and they don't seem to mind if you get up close. The seals are funny too. They lie about on the ice all day, snoring.

Now that the ship's in, I'll have a room mate, so I spent time tidying up this morning. Let's hope I don't start talking in my sleep!

Day 13: Friday 12th December

Everyone reckons we brought the beautiful weather with us when we arrived in Antarctica. Since we stepped off the little red plane 10 days ago, the sun has been beating down on Rothera.

The weather is generally good news for everyone. The pilots can happily fly their planes to far-flung research sites, the divers can take out their boats on the millpond-like sea, and Paul and I can get a great tan while we film the amazing landscape.

Every day a radio operator gets in touch with all the people who are working away from Rothera. There are scientists dotted all over the place, miles from anywhere, so it's important the people here know that everyone's safe. Radios are the main way for people to keep in touch if they're off base. Often people accidentally use radio phrases even when they're talking face to face. When I was interviewing a scientist called Mairi, she finished one of her sentences with 'over', which really made me giggle.

Lizzie, in the Antarctic, 'over and out'.

Day 15: Sunday 14th December

Yesterday afternoon I did one of the best things I have ever done. I took a ride in a boat to Lagoon Island. It might not sound very special but for me, sitting on the edge of that little boat hanging on for survival as we hurtled over the Antarctic waves doing 23 knots (very fast) was an amazing experience.

At one particularly wavy point I thought I might not be able to hang on any longer. My arms were aching and my legs were burning as we kept crashing down onto another dip in the sea's waves – bang, thump, giggle (I kept laughing).

Lagoon Island was pretty cool. That was the reason we'd made the fantastic boat journey in the first place. It's a beautiful little island with a hut which some of the guys go to when they want to escape living with 90 other people. It's a lovely hut with two bunk beds, a sink, and table and chairs.

Apart from Lagoon Island being home to the great hut and lots of birds, there are plenty of elephant seals there too. They don't seem to do very much and they're also quite smelly, so we didn't stay long.

Last night was BBQ and karaoke night at the base. The penguins must have been holding their wings over their ears!

"Legs' Race" from *Legs, Bones and Eyes: A Children's Trilogy* by Dorian Haarhoff.
Published by New Namibia Books.

"Visiting Antarctica" is adapted from *Lizzie's diaries from Antarctica*

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/world/newsid_3289000/3289089.stm).

"Ship in the Antarctic" (CC BY 2.0) via flickr

Icebergs Image ID: fish8451, NOAA's Fisheries Collection; Antarctica, Seal Island 1990 Dr. Roger Hewitt, NOAA NMFS SWFSC Antarctic Marine Living Resources (AMLR) Program CC BY 2.0

"Adelle Penguin" by Christopher Michel (CC BY 2.0) via flickr

"Small Iceberg. Antarctica", near Lucas I., Davis Station area. 1981 November.
Dr. Robert Ricker, NOAA/NOS/ORR. (CC BY 2.0)

"Boat in the Antarctic" Mike Beauregard(CC BY 2.0) via flickr.