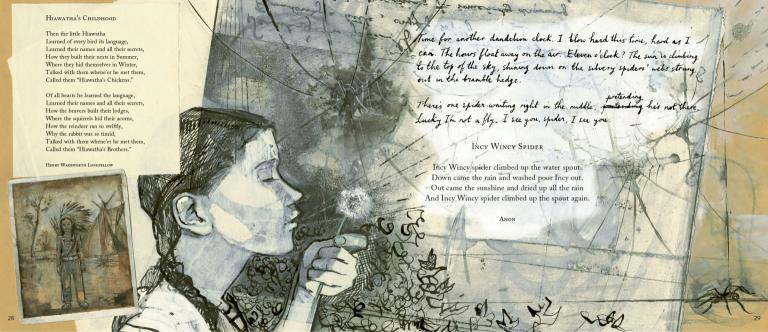




And sure enough, here he is, floating down out of nowhere! He's like a white ghost, a friendly ghost miless you're a mouse or a vole that is. He's smaller than I remember. He hardly moves his wrigs, just ghides, dives once, lifts up, and then he's gone again. I hope he caught something. He might have babies to feed which reminds me, my tummy's rumbling. I wonder if there's a bun waiting for me at the farm?



Farmer says I can take Captain out if I like, so long as I groom him and pick out his howes before I go. Captain's coat is full of dust, so he takes a lot of grooming. He treads on my toe and suishes one in the face with his tail. Thanks a lot, Captain. But his not being nasty, just letting me know that he wants to go out, that he's fed up with being groomed.

As soon as I fut the saddle on him he's happy, and as I swing myself up and we walk out of the farmyard, his happier still. Past the duck fond; five ducks, ten duck lings, two greese, one gosling and the moorhen. That's good, same as before. Looks like the fox has stayed away.

Twelve's coming along with us too, so excited his tail's whirting round like a propeller.



Captain likes to stop for a drink in the river. So I slide off him, and go stone-skimming while he has a good slurp. Skimming's not easy today, because the river's running too fast, there are too many ripples. My record is fifteen but three hops is all I can manage now. After a while I give up and just sit there under the shade of the willows. This is the place I do my best dreaming, my best thinking.

The little dippers there, diving into the over from his stone, then he pops out again, shaking his beathers dry,

A Kingfisher! A kingfisher flashes by and he's gone, almost before I even saw him, his colours so bright that they stay in my head long after he's







