



# Arohānui



by Feana Tu'akoi  
illustrations by Ken Samonte

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Mawadda and Aroha were best friends. Their houses were right next door to each other, so they always went to kindergarten together. They liked to play together, read together, and eat together. They liked to do *everything* together. “We *love* to be together. We don’t need anyone else,” they said.



Mawadda and Aroha liked to build towers.

“Let’s build this tower up to the roof!” shouted Aroha. She stretched as high as she could and put a block on the very top.

That was when ‘Ofa came along.

“I’ll help,” he said. “I’m taller than you, so I can build higher. Look!” He smiled, stood on tip-toes, and reached up to the top of the tower.



It was true. 'Ofa was very tall. He could reach much higher than Mawadda or Aroha. But Mawadda and Aroha liked to play together.

Aroha shook her head and dragged a big foam block close to the tower. "It's OK," she told 'Ofa. "If we stand on this, we'll be taller!"

She climbed up and put another block on top. "See?" she said. "Easy!"

'Ofa picked up a block and tried to climb up beside Aroha. "Sorry," she said. "There's no more room."

Aroha smiled at Mawadda. "Now we can build our tower *past* the roof!" she said.



Mawadda and Aroha liked to play on the swings.

"Let's see who can swing higher," said Aroha.

She leaned back and pushed out her legs.

*Lean and push. Lean and push!*

Soon, Mawadda and Aroha were sailing through the air.

"This feels like flying!" giggled Mawadda. She leaned right back and pushed her legs out even further.

Aroha laughed. "My feet are touching the sky!" she cried.



That was when 'Ofa came along. He grinned and climbed onto the swing beside them.

"I'll make my feet touch the sky, too," he said.

*Lean and push. Lean and push!*

'Ofa swung higher and higher.

"Look!" he called. "My feet are nearly touching the sun!"



Mawadda and Aroha looked. 'Ofa was really good at swinging. It would be fun to try to swing higher than him. But Mawadda and Aroha liked to play together.

Aroha slowed down and jumped off.

"I've had enough swinging," she told Mawadda.

"Let's go and play inside."

Mawadda got off, too. She linked arms with Aroha.

"We can play families," she said.





Mawadda and Aroha liked to play families.

“You be the mum, and I’ll be the auntie,” said Aroha.

“I’ll make rēwana bread, and you can look after the baby.”

That was when ‘Ofa came along.

“I’ll be the baby,” he said. He crawled over to Mawadda and held out his arms. Then he screwed up his eyes and opened his mouth wide. “Mum–maaaa!” he cried.



The girls laughed. ‘Ofa made a good baby, and he’d be fun to play with. But Mawadda and Aroha liked to play together.

“You’re too big to be a baby,” Mawadda told him. Then she picked up a doll and took it over to the cot.

“I’m going to make rēwana bread,” said Aroha. And she walked away, too.







‘Ofa looked at them. Then he blinked and rubbed his eyes.

“Why are you two so mean?” he said.

Mawadda and Aroha gasped. “We’re not mean!” they said.

“Yes, you are,” ‘Ofa replied. “You never let me play with you. You make me feel sad,” he said.

Mawadda and Aroha looked at their feet.  
“We don’t want you to feel sad,” Aroha mumbled.  
“But we’re the two Loves.”

“I don’t understand? Why are you the two Loves?”  
asked ‘Ofa.

“Well,” said Mawadda. “Mawadda means love in Arabic ...”

“And Aroha means love in te reo Māori,” said Aroha.

“So, we’re the two Loves!” finished Mawadda. “We always  
play together.” Aroha and Mawadda smiled and held hands.





'Ofa smiled. Then he grinned. Then he laughed.

Aroha frowned. "What's so funny?" she asked.

"In Tonga, 'Ofa means love, too!" he said.

"So we're the *three* Loves!"

That made Mawadda and Aroha laugh as well.

"Why didn't you say so?" said Mawadda.

"Of course you can play with us. You can be part of our whānau. We're the three Loves!"

"The three Loves," smiled Aroha,

"and we can play together."

'Ofa was so happy he went to give Aroha a high-five.





Then he stopped.

“But if we don’t play with the other kids, they might feel sad.” He stared at Mawadda and Aroha. “Our names all mean love, and love is being kind and caring to *everyone*.”

Mawadda thought about that. “Ofa’s right,” she told Aroha. “We should let everyone play families with us.”

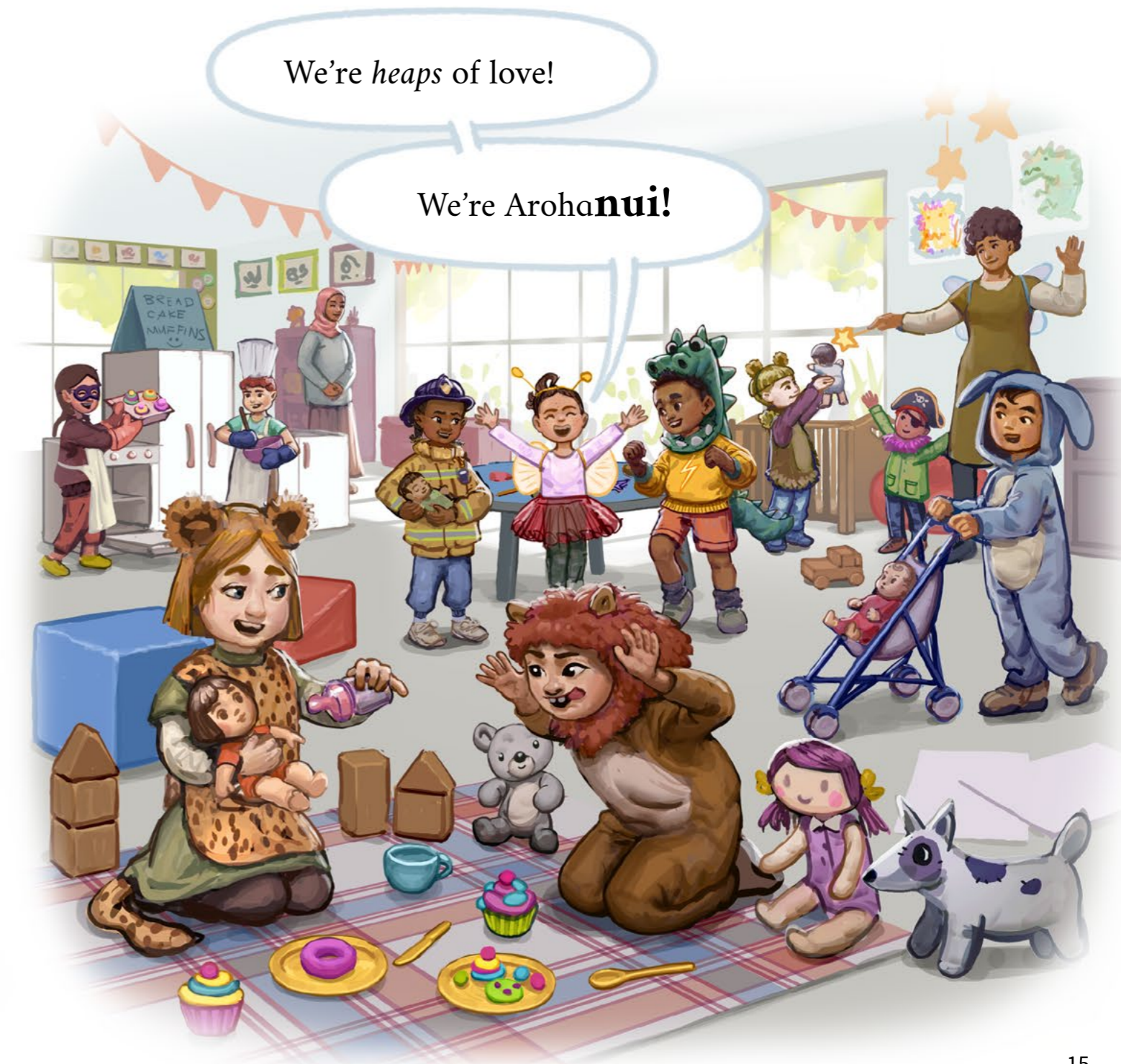
“A whānau is always fun when you have lots of brothers and sisters and cousins to play with,” agreed Aroha.

‘Ofa smiled. “We need grandparents too,” he said. “Otherwise, who’ll help out with the baby and tell all the family stories?”

Soon, everyone was playing. There were brothers, sisters, cousins, mums, dads, aunties, uncles, and grandparents. They even had friends and neighbours!

‘Ofa grinned at Mawadda and Aroha. “Now, we’re all one big family!” he said.

Aroha flung her arms out wide to include everyone.







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