

A Quilt for Kiri

by Don Long

pictures by Judith Kunzlé



*Ready
to Read*

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tīvaevae (tee-vy-vy): the name for a quilt
in Cook Islands Māori

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Kiri's grandma lived in another country,
far across the sea. She always sent presents
at Christmas and on Kiri's birthday.

In her letters, she often wrote the words
of old songs. She wanted to teach these songs
to Kiri, but she died before she could come
for a visit.



Kiri's dad wanted to go to the funeral, but it was too far away. Kiri had never seen him cry like that before. Kiri and her mum hugged him.



A few months later, a parcel came. It was wrapped in crinkly brown paper and tied up with a long piece of string. There were lots of stamps with lovely flowers on them. The parcel was for Kiri.

Inside the parcel there was a tīvaevae – a quilt that had belonged to her grandma. It was old and torn.

Kiri helped her mum to mend the quilt.

“Look at these stitches,” Mum said.
“They are so tiny.”

Kiri traced the pattern with her finger.
“It goes in and out and up and down – just like the words of a song.”



Kiri helped her mum to wash the quilt.

“Be careful,” said Mum. “It’s very old.”

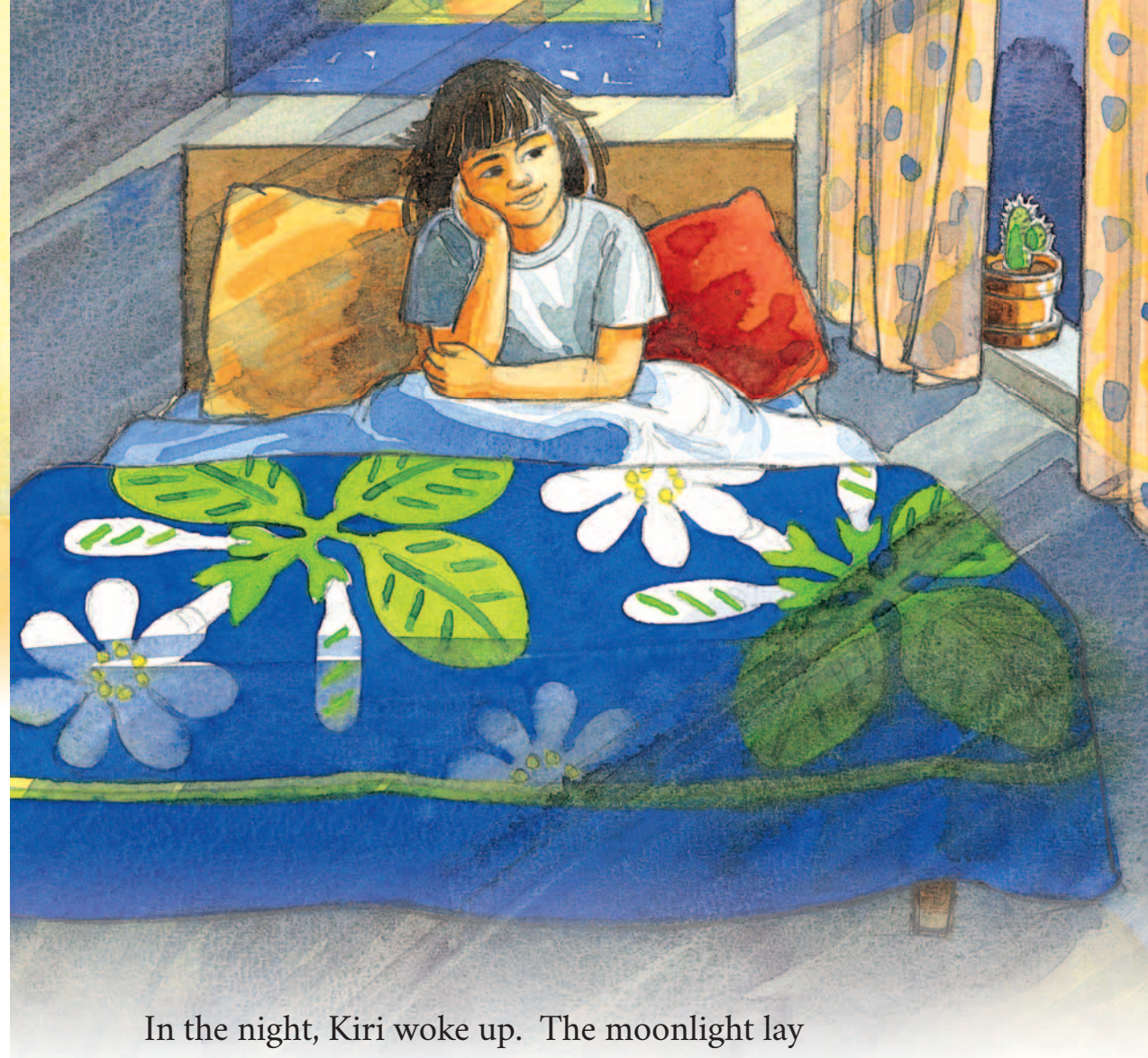
They hung the quilt out on the washing line. It looked like a big, wet rainbow hanging with their clothes.





That night, Kiri's dad didn't read her a story.
He talked to her about her grandma instead.

"This old tivaevae used to be on your grandma's bed,"
he told her. "See this pattern –
that's a flower that grew in her garden."



In the night, Kiri woke up. The moonlight lay
spread across her bed. She remembered a song
her dad used to sing. She tried to remember the words,
and wondered if her grandma had ever sung them.
She thought about her grandma until she fell asleep again.

“Was that you singing last night?” Kiri’s dad asked at breakfast. “I haven’t heard that song for years. I used to sing it to you when you were little. Your grandma liked to sing it while she did her sewing.”

“I couldn’t remember all the words,” Kiri told him.



“Maybe Dad will sing it with you when he puts you to bed tonight,” her mum said. “Better hurry up now. It’s nearly time for school.” And she gave Kiri a big hug.







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