

## Chapter 2 in the life of *The Dunny Wombat* by Jackie French

Milk was boring, and Mum's pouch was far too small. It didn't get any bigger no matter how much the baby wombat pushed and kicked.

Grass was much more tempting than Mum's milk now, and the burrow a more comfortable place to sleep during the day, especially if she slept pillowed on Mum's back, or head, or nose. Her fur had grown longer, too, so the plants outside no longer tickled when she grazed. The world beyond Mum's burrow seemed more and more fascinating...

..... and one smell was the most wonderful of all.

The dunny.

She grazed closer to the dunny every night. The smell seemed fainter than the first time she'd discovered it. There weren't any more of the frightening noises from the tall, two-legged animals too. It seemed that the two legs had vanished. But there was the scent of wombat, faint and underground. She found a place where the wombat scent was strongest, and began to dig, scraping out the dirt with her strong front claws, pushing it further back with her hind paws, feeling the soil fly past her.

This was fun!

Deeper, deeper. The stars swung across the sky as she kept on digging.

Suddenly there was no more dirt, but a burrow, old, with far less scent than the burrow she shared with Mum, and small cave-ins where dirt had trickled from the walls. She cautiously dug a wider entrance and squeezed in, then waddled in one direction until she came to the burrow's end, then back the other way.

Aha! This must be where the old entrance had been. Silt had gathered around a branch that formed the support. Perhaps the silt had washed down in a rain storm, just like Mum's hole needed repairs after heavy rain too. Interesting!

But she was hungry, and dawn was near. She padded back to her hole...

Her hole had gone.

She knew immediately what had happened. The loose dirt had caved in, just like all the small holes she'd been digging for months, for the pleasure of claws in dirt, had caved in almost as soon as she had dug them.

She could dig it out again – but not before daylight, with its deadly, sucking heat. And she was tired, and hungry. Nor would Mum come looking for her. Mum never bothered these days when her offspring wandered off. But at least she had a safe place to sleep today. She could dig her way out tonight.

She padded back to the widest part of the hole, with soft dirt mixed with tussock on the floor, and a scent that said a wombat had slept here, long ago. She settled down and closed her eyes, though kept ears and nose alert for snakes or mice or other intruders.

The burrow stayed peaceful – much more peaceful than sharing a burrow with Mum, who was inclined to wriggle if her nose or face was covered. The small wombat's head dropped into her paws. Finally she lay full length, on her side, snoring softly.

She could smell it was almost night when she awoke. She lay head on her paws again, smelling the world and thinking. She could dig out her hole again, but it would probably collapse once more as soon as she left it. Or she could dig out the old entrance. Once she'd removed the silt the sides and roof were firm.

She stood, scratched, and then began to dig.

She'd been right. There was far less dirt to dig through here, and softer. Dusk was just darkening to full night as her head emerged, and then her body. She began to eat, tearing at the grass, enjoying the scent of starlight, the far off munch that must be Mum, knowing Mum could hear her munch as well. But best of all, here by the new/old hole, she could smell the dunny, sharp and clear.

She kept on eating, but there was no question now. As soon as dawn approached she would go back to the hole. It was her hole now, the best smelling hole in the world, the Dunny Wombat Burrow.

And she was the Dunny Wombat.