

FROM THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Matt Haig



Evie and the ANIMALS

Illustrated by Emily Gravett



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CANONGATE



After lunch, Evie wanted to be on her own. So she decided to go to the school library. She *loved* the school library because it had a very large collection of books about nature and wildlife and animals. She remembered she had a book to take back. And the book was the *Encyclopaedia of Endangered Species*.

She had read it from cover to cover in two days and had got cross when she'd found out about all the different types of tiger that were already extinct, and that all the other types were only just hanging on. She had got crosser when she had read about leatherback sea turtles – the largest type of sea turtle – nearly being extinct, because they had been around for 110 million years, since the dinosaurs. As modern human beings had only been in existence for

200,000 years – which was nowhere near even *one* million years – it seemed a bit cheeky of us – *rude*, even – to be endangering all these other animals who had got here first and had been doing perfectly okay without us. Well, that’s what Evie thought.

So there she was, on her own, holding the encyclopaedia and walking through the school corridors towards the library, when she passed Kahlo.

Kahlo was the new school rabbit. She was named after the famous Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, for some strange reason. She lived in a hutch just outside the school secretary’s office.

The only time she had heard Kahlo think something was yesterday when she had been with Leonora. The rabbit had been at her water bottle and Evie had heard her say, ‘Oh no.’ But because she’d been with Leonora Evie hadn’t stopped to check if Kahlo was okay.

But now, Evie heard a thought again.

A voice, a whisper, a whine, a *something*.

Evie turned.

‘There’s another one,’ thought Kahlo to herself. ‘Walking straight past. Not a care in the world.’

Evie stopped.

‘Oh, this is no good. They’ll die without me.’

Evie stared intensely at the rabbit. She found that, rather than closing her eyes, if she stared intensely at a creature, it was more likely to hear her thoughts.

‘Kahlo, what is the matter?’ she asked silently, as a couple of boys in the year below walked past, nudging each other and giggling about why Evie was standing staring at a rabbit.

The rabbit didn’t notice the question, so Evie thought it again. She even whispered it to herself to make sure the thought was precise and clear in her mind.

‘Kahlo. What. Is. The. Matter?’

Kahlo looked up and made eye contact with Evie. She had a sweet but sad face, with ears that pressed against the roof of the hutch.

‘You understand what’s in my head?’ thought-asked the rabbit.

‘Yes.’

‘I’ve never seen a human do that. Other animals, all the time . . . But a human? That must be rare.’

Evie knew that was the case. A cat had once told her that it was because humans were too arrogant – which was a bit rich, coming from a cat.

The rabbit pressed her grey-brown face against the wires of the hutch and pleaded with her dark, shining, desperate eyes.

‘I am not meant to be here. I belong in the woods. I was taken from the Forest of Holes. I belong in the warren. I belong with my colony.’

‘The Forest of Holes?’

‘Yes. It’s very near. I was stolen by Brenda.’

‘Brenda? Who on earth is Brenda?’

‘Brenda. Brenda Baxter.’

Evie smiled. ‘Mrs Baxter’s a Brenda? Amazing. Brenda Baxter.’ But then she realised what Kahlo had just said. ‘Mrs Baxter, the head teacher stole you from the wild?’

‘Yup.’

‘That’s terrible! She wouldn’t do something like that!’

‘Well, it’s true. Rabbits don’t lie. I was kidnapped. She took me. And I need to go back. I’ve got all my family. I’ve still got my mum. Do you know what it’s like to be away from your mum?’

Evie felt a deep, familiar sadness. ‘More than anything,’ she said.

‘Please. She’s only two hundred hops away. Hopping! How I miss hopping! But I can

hardly do a hop in here without bashing my head. You've got to help me. You're the only one who can hear me.'

Evie felt worried all of a sudden. She looked around. No one was there. 'How do you want me to help you?'

'You have to get me out of here.'





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