



## The Ghosts on the Hill

by Bill Nagelkerke (Christchurch author)

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*The sound of the putōrino.*

*She knows that the fairies play those flutes. They are coming for her. Why else would she hear the music they make?*

*Elsie has become frozen by fear. She can't move now, even if she wants to.*

*What will the patupaiarehe do to her? Where will they take her? It's not likely to be to a friendly place, warmed by Tamatea's magic fire. More likely, it will be to an even colder place of rock and ice and water.*

*The music of the pipe is really close now. Elsie wraps her arms around herself. The fog forms into long tentacles that stretch out to embrace her. Vague shapes only, yet surely they are the clutching hands of the patupaiarehe ...*

*Elsie screams and now she begins to run, no longer thinking or even caring about the hillside dangers that surround her.*

*But there is no escape. The patupaiarehe have her in their clutches.*

*You won't be able to avoid the hills forever,' says Mr James.*

*'I know,' says Elsie. 'One day I'll have to go over the Bridle Path again.'*

The year is 1884. The place is Lyttelton, a small and bustling harbour town. Elsie is waiting for the fish to bite. She has her reasons for coming down to the waterfront so often, the main one being the memory of the lost boys. She was one of the last to see them alive, and now she is haunted by what happened to them. When the opportunity comes for Elsie to follow in their footsteps over the Bridle Path, and put their ghosts to rest, she doesn't hesitate. 'I'll be careful,' she says. But no one knows that the weather is about to change for the worse.

For readers 8–13 years.

A former children's librarian, **Bill Nagelkerke** has written short stories, poems, plays and books for all ages, as well as translating other people's books from Dutch into English. His novel *Old bones* (2006) was a Storylines Notable Book and *Sitting on the fence* (2007) was a finalist in the New Zealand Post Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. In 2013 he was awarded the Storylines Margaret Mahy Medal for a distinguished contribution to New Zealand children's literature and literacy.



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