

Francis

by Tayler Fletcher, Year 8C

Author David Eggers tapped the last line of his novel onto his computer, 'I did knock first.' He sat back, cracked his knuckles and smiled. This is a good one, he thought. A real best-seller. Proper movie material.

He snapped his laptop shut, turned off his desk light and headed for the kitchen. It had been so long since he'd had something to eat or drink that it was now pitch-black outside. He filled up the kettle and turned it on. Putting a teabag in a mug, he watched as steam built across the window.

Then he heard something strange.

It was a like a knock. Clap, clap. He wiped the steam off the window and stared into the darkness. Was there something out there? Was something trying to get in? He had seen a family of possums exploring his patio the other week. Were they back? He dismissed the thought though.

He picked up his cup of tea and headed for the bathroom. Hours of sitting at his desk had given him a stiff back. He turned the hot tap to full, adding bath salts and bubbles, watching steam fill the room, while bubbles filled the bath. As he began to undress, he heard the knock again. But this time it was a loud and crisp plop, plop, plop. It sounded like someone knocking on the bottom of the bath.

Impossible, he thought. He got down to his knees and peered under the claw-foot tub. There was nothing under there but some dust and dark shadows. Then a thought crossed his mind. Was Francis alive? Had she come to get him? Surely not, he thought.

He was about to get in the bath when he heard the familiar sound of his phone chirping. Chirp, chirp, chirp. He threw on his bathrobe and headed back to the kitchen, phone still chirping. He picked up the phone and said,

"Hello, this is David Eggers speaking," but no-one responds. There's not even the sound of someone breathing.

He repeats, "Hello, is anyone there?" Still silence.

Now he's scared. He hangs up the phone. Francis crosses his mind again. "I'll call my publisher and get him to cancel the book." The phone answered almost straight away, and the sound of a girl's soft voice fills the line.

"Row, row, row your boat," she sings. A shiver goes down his spine as he hangs up the phone.

"What do you want?" he screams in terror.

BAM. BAM. BAM. The sound echoes around the house. It comes from the front door.

He opens it slightly and peers around the corners. When he doesn't see anything, he opens the door more, hinges squeaking. Then he spots it out of the corner of his eye. Lying on his front step is Francis' missing oar and tied to the paddle is a note written by a muddy finger that says,

"I did knock first.

Love, Francis."