Clancy and Cassie’s Noisy Discovery

By James Shang



The trees were different here.

Broad leaves shone above Clancy’s head. Long vines looped between branches, and somewhere below, a drop of water fell with a soft plip.

Clancy shuffled along his perch.

North Queensland was a long way from Raffy’s muddy bank.

He wondered whether Raffy had tried his jump today.

Then a tremendous chattering broke through the trees.

Clancy straightened.

Not one voice.

Lots of voices.

He leaned left. He leaned right.

“Who’s making all that noise?”

“Good question!” said someone below.

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A young cassowary stepped between the ferns.

Her shaggy dark feathers brushed the leaves. Her neck glowed blue in a patch of light, with two red wattles hanging beneath it. A brown casque rose above her bright, curious eyes.

She looked up at Clancy and smiled.

“I’m Cassie.”

“Clancy. I’m visiting.”

“I thought you might be. You’ve been looking at that vine for ages.”

“It’s a very long vine.”

“It is,” Cassie agreed. “Have you seen the other end?”

Clancy looked up.

Then farther up.

“No.”

The chattering rose again.

Cassie turned towards it.

“Come on. Let’s see what they’re doing.”

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Cassie strolled beneath the broad leaves, placing her strong feet between the roots.

Clancy flew to a low branch ahead.

“This way?”

Cassie glanced through a curtain of vines.

“We’ll get a better look from the other side.”

She led him around a fallen trunk and through a gap between two ferns.

Clancy landed above her.

Beyond them stood a tall tree.

Strange brown bundles hung among its branches.

One here.

Three there.

Farther up, so many that Clancy stopped counting.

“Cassie,” he whispered. “What’s hanging in that tree?”

Before she could answer, one of the bundles moved.



A little dark head appeared.

Then a bird slipped out and flew away.

Clancy’s beak opened.

“There’s someone inside!”

“Metallic starlings,” said Cassie. “I’ve seen them here before.”

Another bird landed beside a bundle. Sunlight caught a green sheen on its dark feathers.

Clancy watched it disappear inside.

“Nests?”

Cassie nodded.

“All of them?”

They looked up together.

A bird arrived.

Another left.

Two more swept across the gap between the trees.

Clancy gave a small chuckle.

“That’s a very busy address.”

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A starling flashed past with something trailing from its beak.

Clancy leaned forward.

“Did you see that?”

Cassie looked towards the ground.

Another starling had landed nearby. It picked through the fallen leaves, lifted a narrow piece of plant material, dropped it, then chose another.

“That one’s collecting something too,” she said.

Clancy hopped to a branch with a clear view of the nests.

“Tell me when it goes.”

Cassie waited.

The starling gave its piece a tug.

Then up it flew.

“Now!”

“I’ve got it!” said Clancy.

His head turned as the little bird crossed the open space.

It landed at a nest with its treasure still in its beak.

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“They’re building!” Clancy said.

“Or fixing,” Cassie added.

Clancy watched a loose end being pulled into place.

“My friend Arlo builds things. He has eight arms.”

Cassie looked up at the starling.

“That one’s managing with a beak.”

“And feet,” Clancy said.

“And a very good grip.”

A fresh burst of chatter tumbled down through the leaves.

Clancy began to laugh.

Cassie’s eyes warmed.

“What?”

“I thought there was something strange in the tree.”

“There is,” said Cassie. “A whole neighbourhood!”

By James Shang



Clancy hopped closer along his branch.

A starling beside the nearest nest turned towards him.

Cassie paused below.

“Let’s give them a bit more room.”

Clancy looked at the nest, then back at his old perch.

“Good idea.”

He flew back.

From there, he could still see the birds arriving and leaving. Below him, Cassie settled in the shade.

For a while, they watched.

Clancy spotted a nest almost hidden behind a leafy branch.

Cassie noticed another bird choosing something from the ground.

Every time they thought they had seen everything, something else happened.



At last, Cassie rose.

“Would you like to see a little more of the forest?”

Clancy glanced once more at the hanging nests.

“I’ll have plenty to tell Raffy when I get home.”

“Who’s Raffy?”

“A mudskipper. He’s my friend. He likes sliding on mud and showing me his jump.”

Cassie smiled.

“I’d like to hear about him.”

Clancy fluttered down to a lower branch beside the track.

“Where are we going?”

“There’s a creek this way.”

“Is it noisy?”

“Sometimes.”

Clancy tipped his head.

“More noisy than that tree?”

Cassie looked back at the bustling branches.

“Well,” she said, “the creek usually takes turns.”

Clancy’s laugh rang through the leaves.

Cassie set off at a comfortable stroll.

This time, Clancy had someone to show him the way.

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Raffy’s Real Discovery

Metallic starlings nest together in large colonies in northern Queensland. Many nests can share one tree.

What would you notice?

What would you notice first about a busy neighbourhood in a tree? You could point to something in a picture, describe it, draw it or share a movement.

A little extra discovery

Did you spot the blue Ulysses butterfly? Look back through the pictures. Its blue wings might help you find it!

An Oceanese hello

Clancy and his friends use sounds and movements in their imaginary language, Oceanese. How could you welcome a new friend? Try a wave, a small movement or a sound. Give your friend time to answer in their own way. Watching is welcome too.

Care for their home

Watch wildlife from a comfortable distance. Leave nests, plants and butterflies undisturbed.

Nature sources: Birds Queensland, Metallic Starling; Coffs Harbour Butterfly House, Ulysses.

Thank you for reading together

We hope you enjoyed meeting Cassie and sharing this little adventure.

More fun to share

Visit raffysoceanfriends.com for more stories, songs, games and colouring in.



Our ocean. Our planet. Our friends.

Let’s look after them together.