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Opening extract from

There's a Monster in the Garden
The Best of David Harmer

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ME

A bundle of quick-fire lightning explodes
Down the road as I run for school.

Arms and legs whizz and whir
Through iron gates, volcanoes of laughter
Erupting noisily with the bell.

A dinosaur is chewing lumps
Of meaty words and chunky numbers,
Maps and magnets, a diet of dates.

On the yard bloodthirsty Vikings
Win at football then drag their longships
Up soft beaches of art and singing.

Until a boffin with seven brains
Bursts into the computer room
To launch his fleet of rockets.

A slippery snail struggles up
A long-haul hill of homework.
Inky blots like squirmy worms
Wriggle on the paper.

The clock stops, batteries fail,
The moon shuts down through a long dark night.
I fall asleep and dream
Of pirates sailing the stormy seas.

Toast! Tea! Juice! Breakfast!
Fuel me up, it's another day.
Open the door for this blur of a boy
Barging his way to school.



PASS IT ON, IT'S REALLY TRUE!

Our headmaster, Mr Pugh
Kissed our teacher, sweet Miss Drew
Hannah had a perfect view
From outside the Y6 loo
Clare and Rachel saw it too
They told me, now I've told you.
Pass it on, it's really true.

Our bossy cook, Mrs Smew
Puts frogs and spiders in the stew
Mixes treacle tart with glue
And lizard's doo-doos from the zoo
Makes us eat the awful brew
Jack and Billy heard it too.
Pass it on, it's really true.

Did you know that it was James
Wrote on the school wall during games
With a pen he pinched from Sky?
She got told off, which made her cry
And Tim loves Jade and she loves Paul
Paul loves Clare who loves them all.
Pass it on, it's really true.

Kyle put paint in Kieron's shoe
When he was in the dinner queue
Kieron hasn't got a clue
Why his socks have turned bright blue
But thanks to me he soon knew
You see I told him it was you!
Pass it on, it's really true.

Pass it on, pass it on, pass it on,
It's really true!

SOME DAYS

Some days this school
is a huge concrete sandwich
squeezing me out like jam.

It weighs so much
breathing hurts, my legs freeze,
my body is heavy.

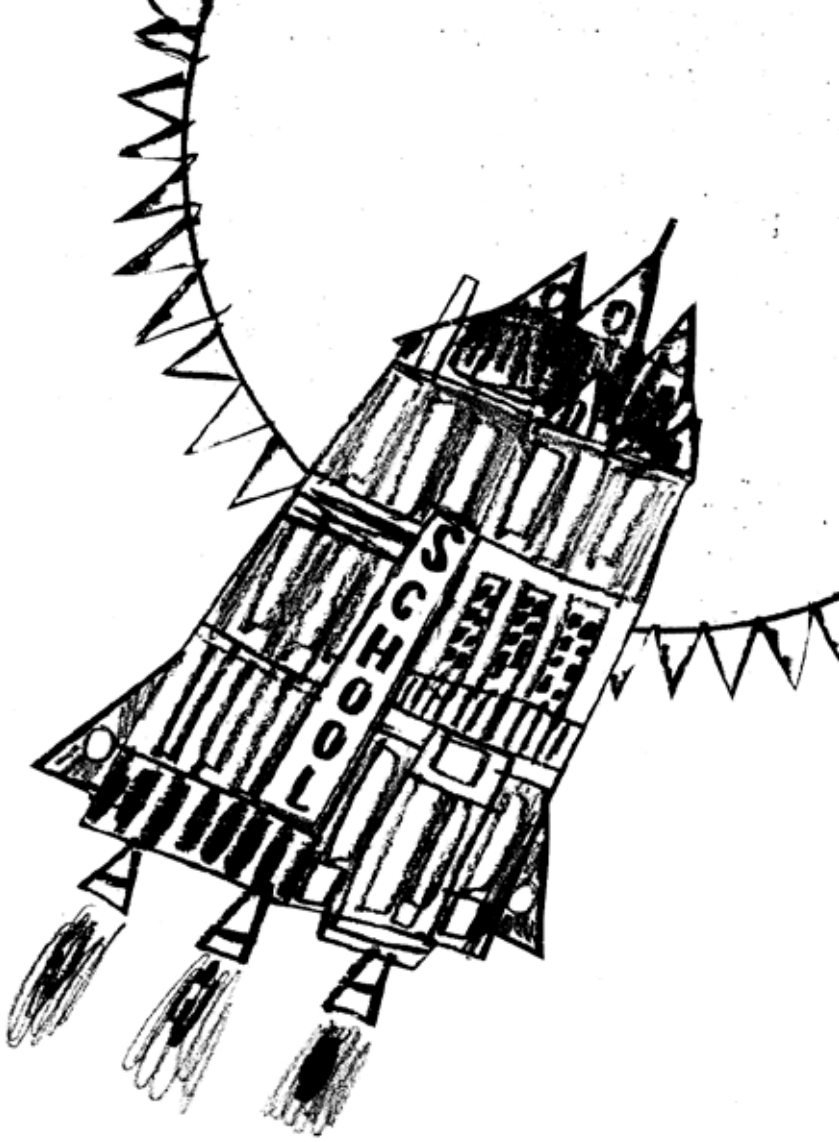
On days like that
I carry whole buildings
high on my back.

Other days
the school is a rocket
thrusting right into the sun.

It's yellow and green
freshly painted,
the cabin windows
gleam with laughter.

On days like that
whole buildings support me,
my ladder is pushing
over their rooftops.

Among the clouds
I'd need a computer
to count all the bubbles
bursting aloud in my head.



HEALTHY EATING

Mondays we have apples
With their healthy crunch
And broccoli and cabbage
For our healthy lunch
It makes me feel so queasy
I get a stomach-ache.
And up there in the staffroom
They're all eating cake!

Playtime on a Tuesday
It's carrots by the score
We chomp them and we chew them
And nearly break our jaw
But you can bet one teacher
Has had a birthday bake.
And up there in the staffroom
They're all eating cake!

I don't drink pop but water
For my thirst to slake
And eating greasy food's
A dietary mistake
But you need to be a hero
Like Sir Francis Drake
To ignore the staffroom door
Hides an awful fake,
And I know that grown-ups
Make the rules to break
And they need their snacks
To keep themselves awake
But I really saw it
With my mates Jake and Blake,
Up there in the staffroom
They're all eating cake!

Wednesday it is oranges
Thursday tangerines
Friday it's bananas
Or sometimes Clementines
I'd rather have a burger
And a thick milkshake.
And up there in the staffroom
They're all eating cake!

LION

Great rag bag
jumble-headed thing
shakes its mane
in a yawn that turns to anger,
teeth picked out like stalactites
in some vast cave,
bone-grinders, flesh-rippers,
hyena-bringers, jackal-callers,
and huge pawsthe size of death
clamp down on an antelope.
Later, sleeping through the night,
each star a lion
flung with pride across a sky
black as a roaring mouth,
lion dreams of open spaces,
dreams the smell of freedom.

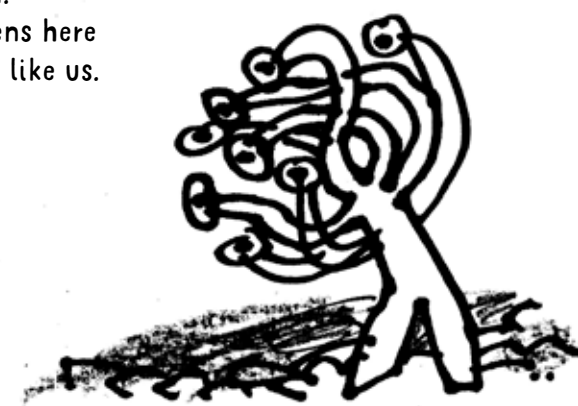


FLIGHT FROM PLANET EARTH

Landing here because we had to,
the fuel gone and the computers broken,
we crashed into a bank of sand,
let the dust die down
then climbed out of our rocket.

We were surrounded by eyes
along the rim of the distant mountains
in the desert at our feet,
it was worse at night
when they glowed like fires
staring at us without blinking.

Time has passed.
We live in the wreck of our spacecraft,
eat what is left of our stores,
drink rainwater,
sometimes we go looking for food.
The creatures always force us back,
make us afraid.
We are the aliens here
and they don't like us.



IT'S BEHIND YOU

I don't want to scare you
But just behind you
Is a.....

No! Don't look!
Just act calmly
As if it wasn't there.

Like I said
Can you hear me if I whisper?
Just behind you
Is a.....

NO! DON'T LOOK!
Just keep on reading
Don't turn round
It isn't worth it.

If you could see
What I can see standing there
You'd understand.

It's probably one
Of the harmless sort
Although with that mouth
Not to mention the teeth
And all that blood
Dripping down its chin
I wouldn't like to say.

DON'T TURN ROUND!
Listen
It's trying to speak
I think it wants to be friends.

Oh, I see it doesn't, never mind
You'd better leave just in case
I expect you'll escape
If you don't look round.
Oh, what a shame!
I thought you'd make it
To the door.
Hard luck
I still think it means no harm
I expect it eats all its friends.





ALL KINDS OF KIDS!



The batty and the chatty
The scatty and the catty
The dippy and the lippy
The gobby and the snobby
The loopy and the droopy
The soppy and the floppy
The feared and revered
The one with a beard!



The ones who run in races
The ones who pull daft faces
The smiley and the wily
The pretty and the gritty
The ones who jump about
The ones who like to shout
The squirmers and the squigglers
The weirdos and the gigglers.

The grotty and the snotty
The nerdy and the wordy
The dreamy and the screamy
The ones who make you weary
The ones who talk like crazy
The ones who are quite lazy
The ones we all adore
The ones who are a bore.









The wary and the scary
The freaky and the geeky
The cheery and the sneery
The stinky and the slinky
The spotty and the dotty
The lumpy and the grumpy
The ones who like to natter
The ones with chat-up patter.

All kinds of kids
Everyone unique
Every one matters
Every day and every week
Got to help each other
Got to pull through
Don't care if you don't like it
It's what you've got to do.





