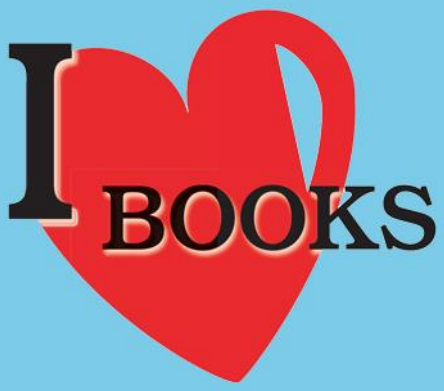


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Opening extract from

The Sticky Witch

Written by

Hilary McKay

Illustrated by

Mike Phillips

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THE
STICKY
WITCH

HILARY McKAY

THE STICKY WITCH



With illustrations by

Mike Phillips

Barrington Stoke

For Helena Cochrane,
with love from Bella and Hilary McKay

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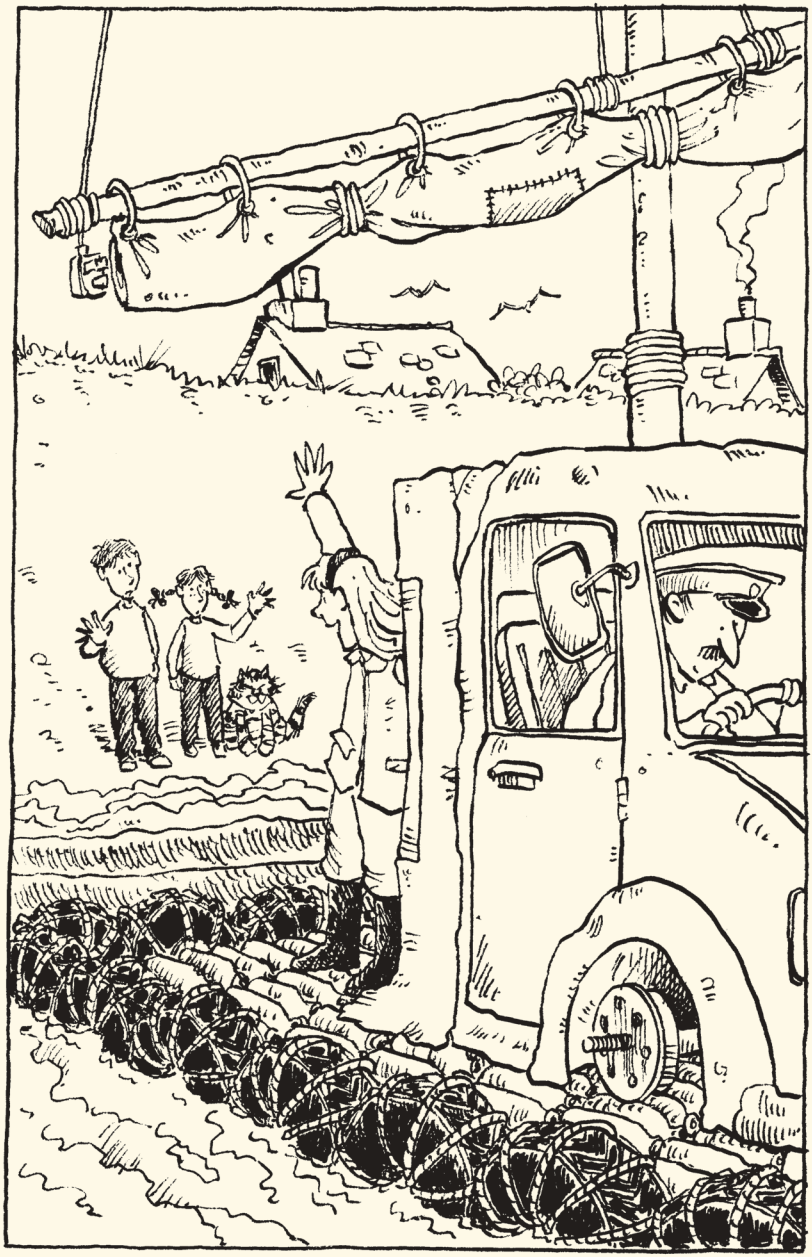
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Chapter 1
The Raft

Tom, Ellie and Whiskers the Cat stood at the edge of the sea.

Tom made up his mind to be brave.

Ellie made up her mind not to fuss.

Whiskers made up her mind to stay safe on dry land for ever and ever. She didn't like the look of the mad, tatty raft that was rocking to and fro out on the choppy green water.

Tom and Ellie's mum and dad had made the raft out of junk. The sort of junk that gets washed up on a beach. Plastic bottles and old tyres and parts of a van that had fallen off a cliff.

Tom and Ellie's parents were off to sail around the world in their raft of rubbish. "The raft will show everyone the rubbish that's been thrown into the sea. We're helping to save the planet," they said. "Also it will be great fun."

Tom and Ellie didn't think it would be great fun. But they thought it would be better to sail round the world on a home-made raft than stay behind with terrible Aunt Tab. Only no one gave them a choice.

"Children have to go to school," their parents said. "It's the law."

'School's OK,' Tom and Ellie thought. 'We don't mind school. It's Aunt Tab we mind.'

But Tom and Ellie had made up their minds to be brave and not fuss. So they waved at their mum and dad out on the sea and tried to look happy.

"Goodbye!" their parents shouted as they sailed away. "See you soon! Three years will go in a flash! Clean your teeth every morning! Do your homework every night! And write as often as you can!"

And then they were gone.

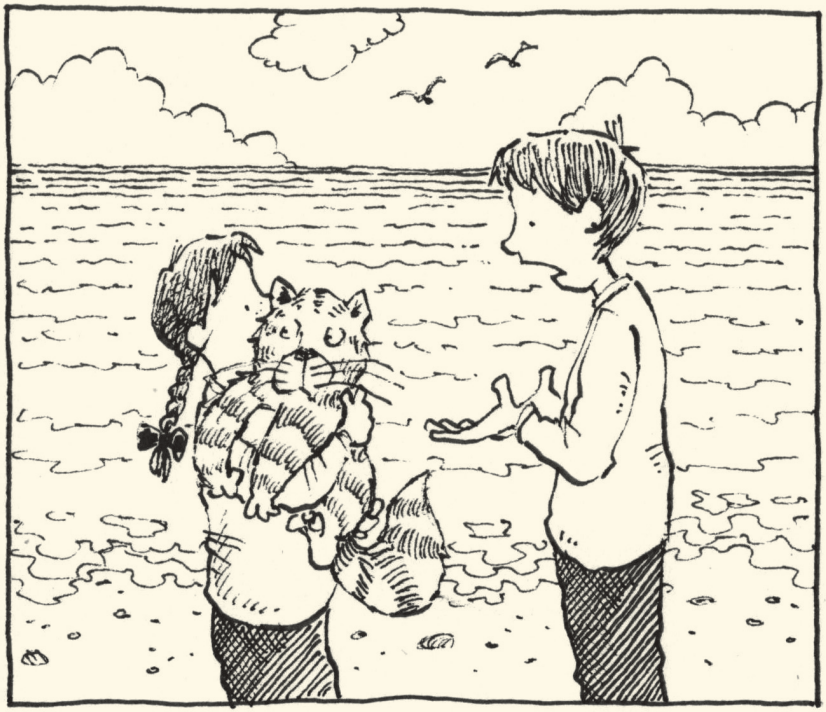
Tom and Ellie stopped waving and smiling, and stared out to sea.

As far as they could see there was nothing but sky and sun and wild green water.

"Sunk," Ellie said.

"No," said Tom.

"What then?" Ellie asked.



"Just gone, between one wave and another."

Ellie picked up Whiskers and hid her face in her soft, gold fur.

Neither of them said anything after that, but at last they grew tired and they turned back to the village. As they walked, Ellie thought how useful it would be to have wings, or a life-boat, or normal parents. And Tom

thought that three years was a very long time indeed.

No cheerful thoughts came to either of them until they reached the village shop.

It had a rack of postcards outside.

"They said 'write'!" Tom said. "'As often as you can!' Help me choose a postcard! Come on! Here's some cat ones. Do any of them look like Whiskers? What about this?"

"Too orange," Ellie said.

Tom picked out another card. "This then?"

"The cat in that picture doesn't have white paws," said Ellie. "Perhaps this one?" She picked up a postcard of a golden tabby cat with stripes like a tiger and snow white paws.

"Wrong colour eyes," said Tom. "Not green enough. Never mind. It'll do. Come on, let's buy it."

On the card they wrote –

Dear Parents, if you have not sunk.

The news is that we hope very much that you haven't sunk.

With love from Ellie and Tom and Whiskers the Cat.

and they wrote this address:

The Raft on its Way Round the World
If it has not sunk
The Sea

Then they put the card into an empty lemonade bottle, ran back to the beach and threw it out to sea. This all made Tom and Ellie feel much better.

But then they went home to Aunt Tab's, and that made them feel much worse.

