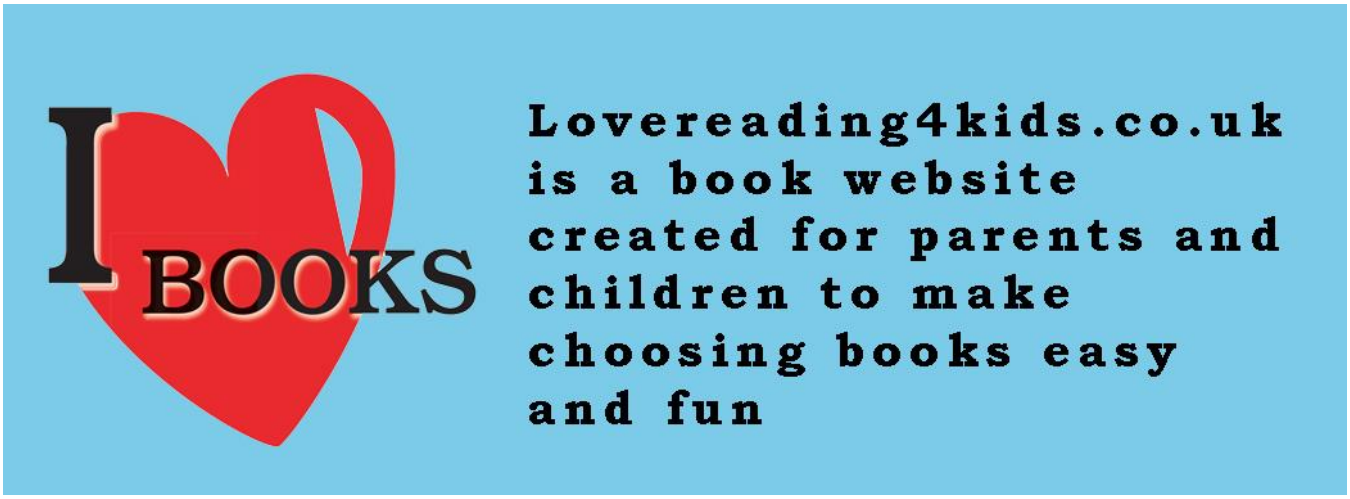


Opening extract from

Lyttle Lies: The Pudding Problem

Written & Illustrated by

Joe Berger

Published by

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THE PUDDING PROBLEM



For Charlotte and our girls,
with huge love JB x x x

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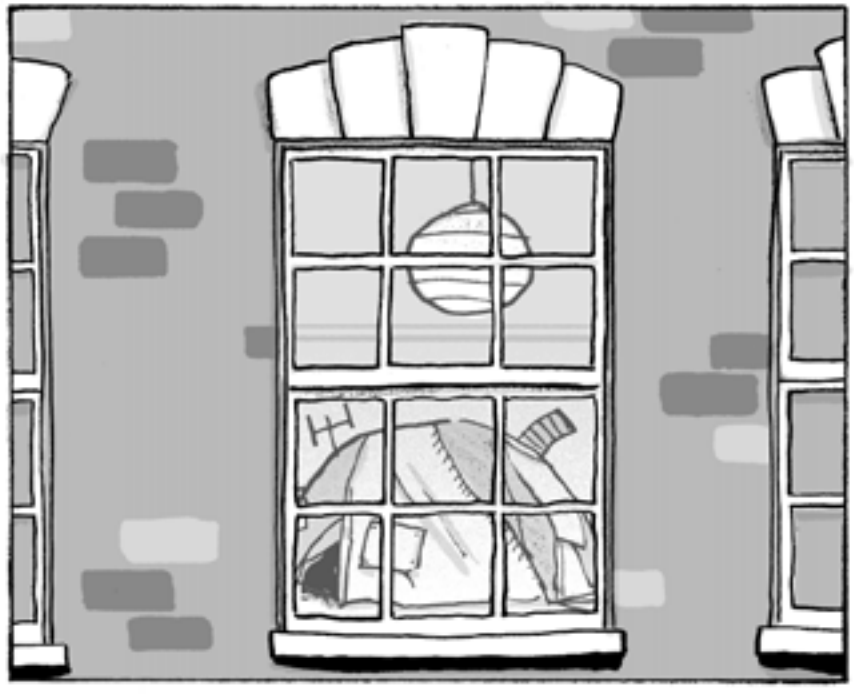


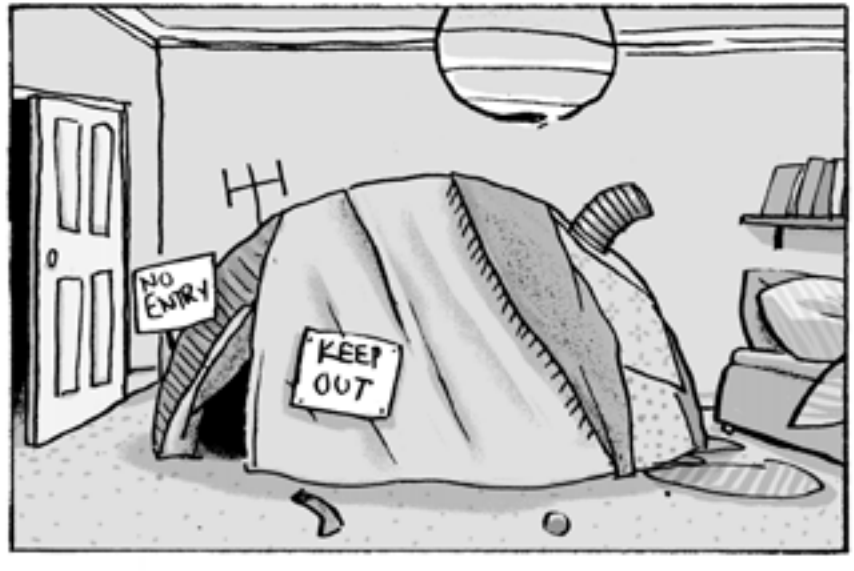
THE PUDDING PROBLEM

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NO ENTRY
KEEP OUT

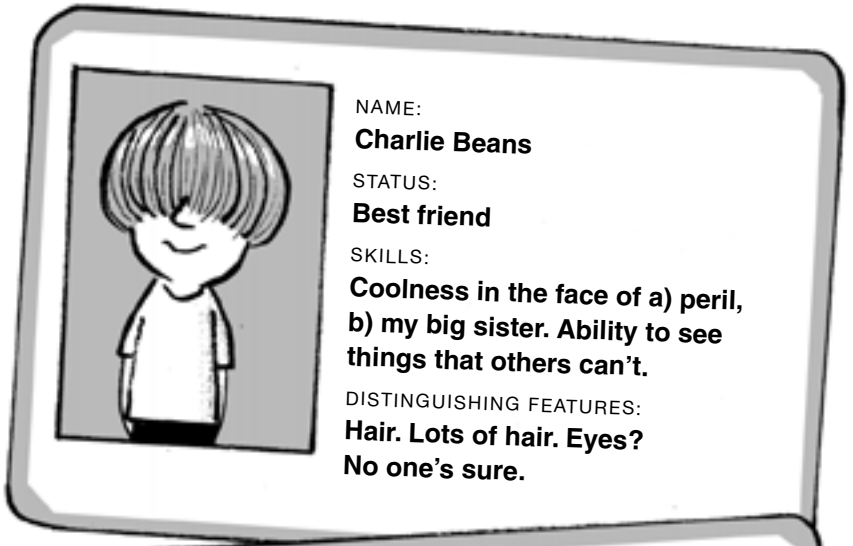
FRIDAY 4 P.M., THE DEN

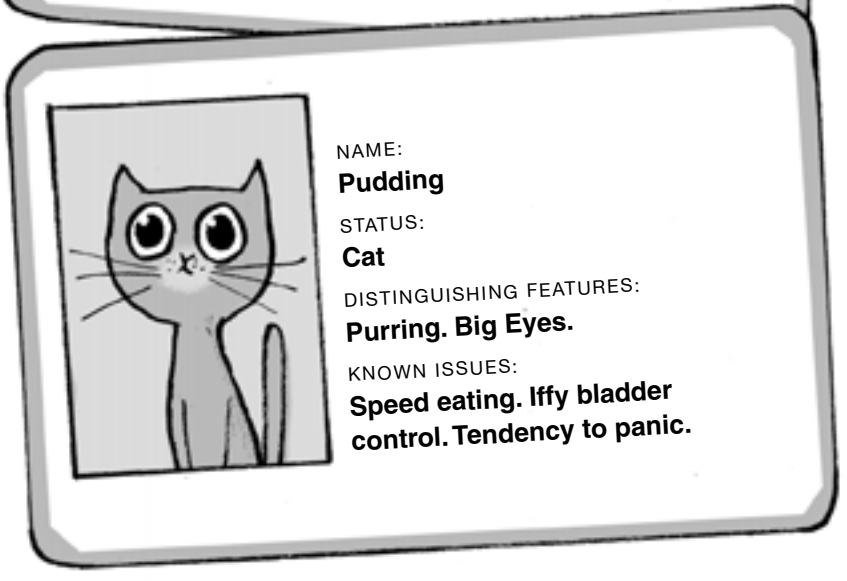
The Den.



Designed to blend in with the natural surroundings of my bedroom. It may not look like much from the outside, but appearances can be deceptive. Inside it's custom-engineered for maximum quietness, relaxation and alone-time.

Only authorized personnel are allowed within its hallowed walls – those issued with a personal ID card.





The Den is the perfect place to escape the many stresses and strains imposed on the modern nine-year-old. I'm not talking about the more extreme problems that occasionally crop up. Like the time aliens attacked our town and abducted practically everyone . . .

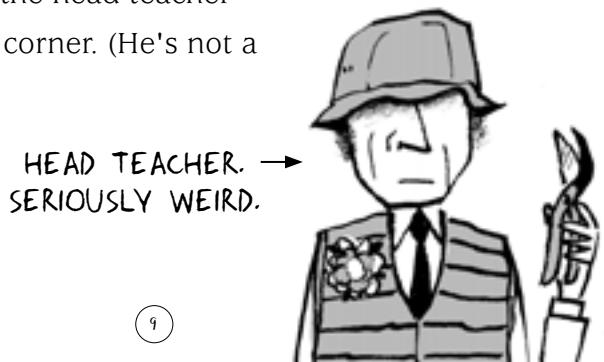


. . . until I discovered the invaders were allergic to cucumbers and single-handedly saved the day with a cardboard tube and a jar of out-of-date gherkins.

Or the time a sinkhole opened up in the middle of assembly, right under the Year Twos . . .



. . . and I had to be lowered down on a rope to rescue them all because the head teacher was crying in the corner. (He's not a fan of sinkholes.)



No, the kinds of stresses I'm talking about are your typical, everyday, run-of-the-mill-type concerns:



Big sisters who are ***sooo*** superior and annoyingly good at everything that it makes you look kind of rubbish in comparison.



Mums who think maths homework is the sole purpose of being a child. . .



Dads who think constant jazz-guitar noodling is the perfect accompaniment to maths homework...



... And, of course, the many false accusations of terrible crimes. I'm sure you get the same stuff...

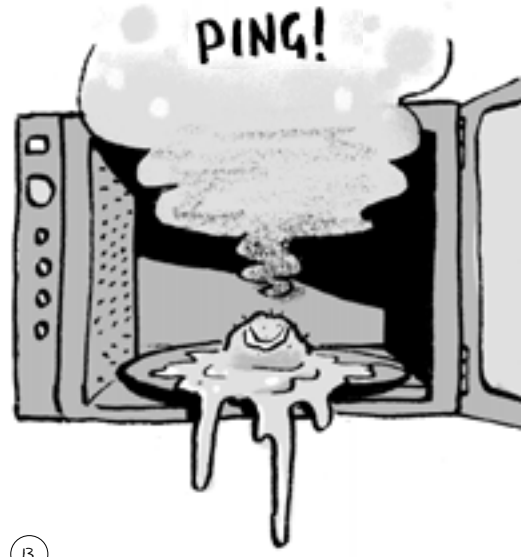
The house nearly burned down – AGAIN! It must be SAM!





There are carrots actually *growing* in the apple tree! SAM!

A melted tennis ball full of cheese has been found in the microwave – the Kitchen Police are appealing for witnesses and would like to speak to (guess who?) SAM!



Okay, it's possible you don't get this as much as me.
You see, I have this **'REPUTATION'** thing.
And a reputation is always a bad thing.
It's like having a sign around your neck that says:



You can have a reputation for all sorts of things, but mine is for one thing in particular: I have been known to tell the odd porky-pie.

It has been suggested that the truth rarely troubles my lips.

On occasion, I may have said something that turned out to have a less than firm basis in fact.

To put it another way, the sign around my neck says . . .



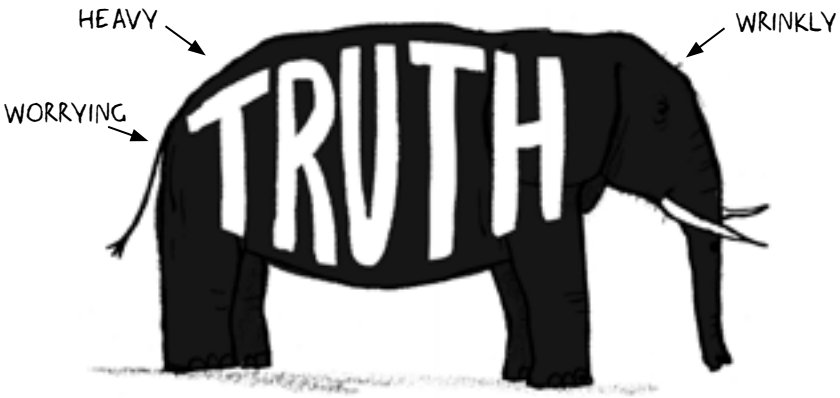
And the one on my forehead . . .



In fact, if you look very closely, you'll start to see little signs all around me. . .



You see, the TRUTH of the matter is . . . well, the truth is complicated. Complicated like . . . an elephant.



Imagine you're pootling along on your motorized skateboard,



or Segway,



or hoverboard.



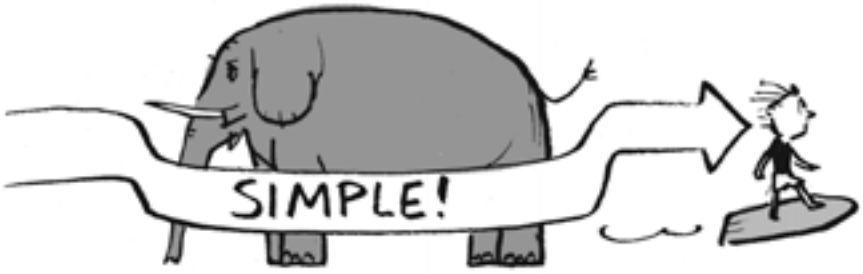
There you are, pootling along happily, when all of a sudden there's this huge ELEPHANT in the middle of the road.



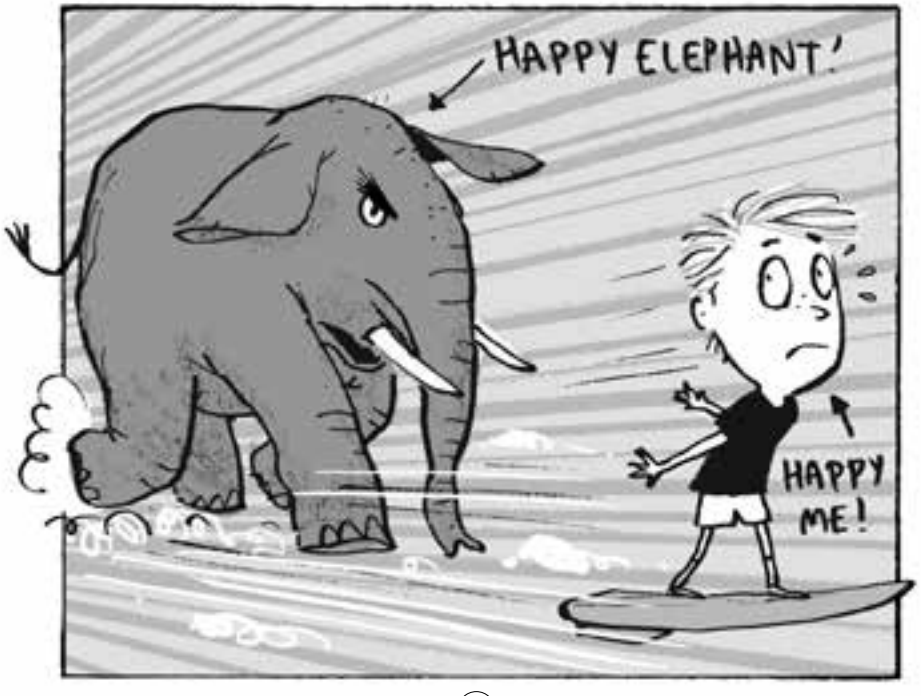
It's looking at you in a funny way. You start to feel nervous – it's just too big to deal with.



You can't go under it, or over it (even on a hoverboard), but you can skirt round it. Simple!



You get to go about your business and the elephant (or, the truth) gets to stay there being all complicated. Everybody's happy!

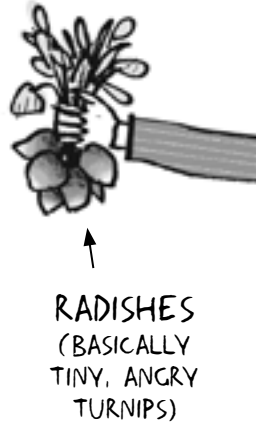


In any case, it's not like I'm the only person around here whose record with the facts is not one-hundred-percent spotless.



Grandpa lives with us, although most of the time he's down on his allotment, growing stuff – like radishes.

He does the most amazing magic tricks. And magic is basically lying, isn't it? It's saying things happened when they didn't, and saying things didn't happen when they did.



So, when Grandpa turns a box of matches into a glass of orange juice,





or a whole deck of cards into rose petals,

or takes the watch off Dad's wrist while he's playing the guitar . . .



. . . does he get told off and sent to sit on the 'thinking chair'?

No, he doesn't – he gets oohs and aahs and everyone thinks he's amazing.

Including me.

And, at the other end of the lying-spectrum, there's. . . Ugh, gives me the shivers even saying his name.

FEENY



Pete **'three strikes'** Feeny. He's the class bully and actually one of the worst people in the world.

(Don't tell him I said that.)

And he's the biggest liar there is. In front of Miss Magpie, he's always helpful and polite and volunteers for everything in class.



And, as soon as her back is turned, the REAL Feeny comes out.



When he's got it in for you, his eyes go dead, like a shark's.

I can't actually bring myself to look at them.



