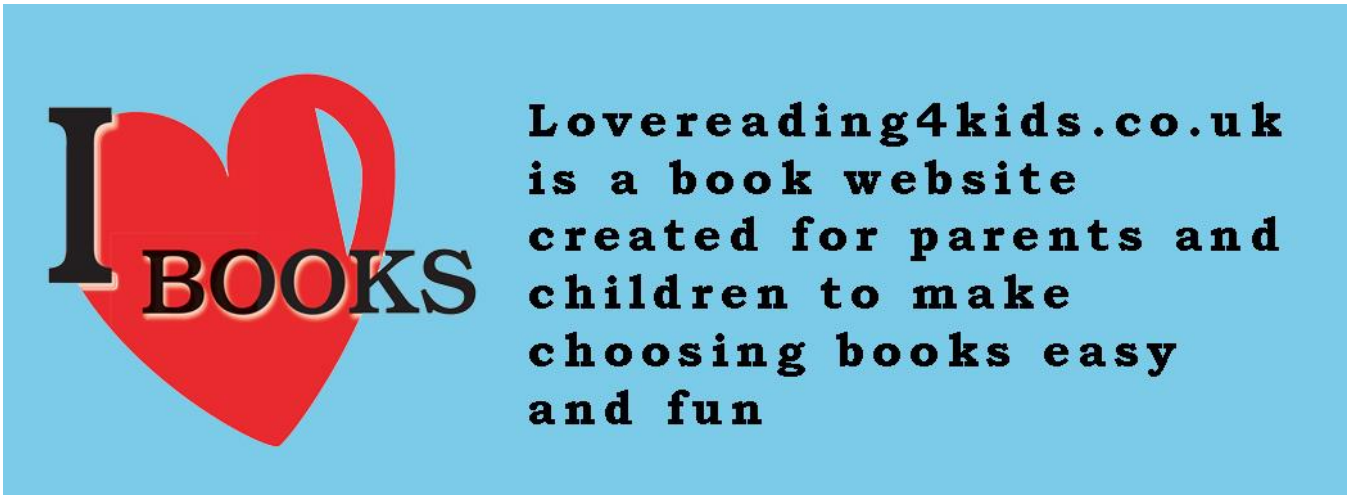


Opening extract from

What Not to Do If You Turn Invisible

Written by

Ross Welford

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Part One

Just before I fell asleep, I could see myself. I was visible, and I knew who I was.

That was before.

I'm not sure what actually wakes me: the brightness of the sunbed's UV tubes, or Lady nudging her food bowl by the door between the hallway and the garage.

The purplish lights are so bright that even when I screw my eyes up they are still blinding me.

Have I been asleep?

Why didn't the timer go off?

How long have I been here?

Crowding out those questions, though, is one main thing and that is how thirsty I am. My tongue's not even sticking to my mouth, but scratching around inside it. I summon up enough spit to at least get everything working.

I have lifted up the lid of the sunbed and swung my legs over the side. There's a little pool of sweat – perspiration, Gram would say – left where I've been lying. I'm still blinded by the lights and I'm blinking hard but – and this is strange – blinking doesn't seem to make anything go dark, although there are spots and flashes going off behind my eyes.

With one hand, I grope for the switch on the side of the sunbed, and off go the lights.

That's better, but only a bit. I still feel awful. I have a stinging headache and I sit for a while.

I should have tested the timer first. As I watch it, the

old digital clock on the garage wall flips from 11.04 to 11.05 a.m.

Oh. My. God.

I've been under those lights for, like, an hour and a half. Hello, sunburn! Pale skin, red hair (well, auburn), galloping acne and severe sunburn: what a combination.

I stare ahead, letting my eyes become accustomed to the dusty gloom of the garage. There's the old rolled-up hallway carpet, my kiddie bike that somehow we haven't chucked away yet, some cardboard boxes of clothes for the church, and raindrops spattering the single narrow window in the door that leads to the back garden.

Probably twenty, even thirty seconds have gone by since I woke up.

Then my phone rings. I look down at it lying on the garage floor and see that it is Elliot flamin' Boyd – which is not his full name, obviously. I'm not often in the mood to talk to him, so I reach down to switch my phone to silent and let it go to voicemail.

It is a moment that will stay with me for ever.

A moment so strange and terrifying that it's quite hard to describe, but I'll give it my best shot.

You see, at first, I don't notice that I have become completely invisible.

And then I do.