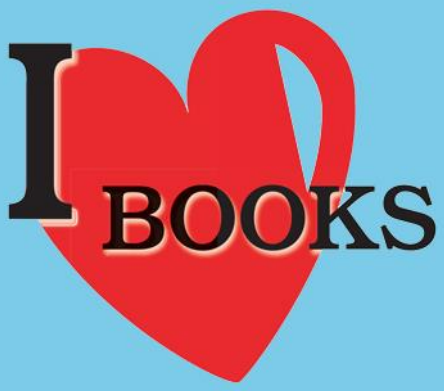


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Opening extract from

The Bolds on Holiday

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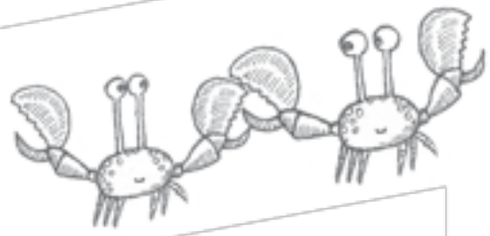
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For my
husband Ian

JC



For my
husband Chris

DR

Chapter 1

Have you ever noticed that some people's lives are more exciting than others'? Things seem to happen to some people.



They'll be walking along the street, maybe going to post a letter, minding their own business and then something occurs . . . Maybe they witness a bank robbery or they bump into someone famous from the telly or their trousers fall down. For these people life is action-packed, every day wherever

they are, while for you and me – well, we go out, post our letter, come home – and that will be that. Nothing wildly exciting happens at all!

The Bolds are the sort of people to whom things just seem to happen. Quite big, exciting things, through no fault of their own. They don't go looking for adventures, adventures just seem to find them. Maybe this is because they are unusual people . . .

Well, let's not beat about the bush, the Bolds aren't actually people at all. They are, as you may have heard, a family of hyenas living disguised as humans. They have to keep their tails and their animal ways hidden, but they've got rather good at that and, so far, no one has rumbled them.

Now, like all hyenas, the Bolds spend most



of their time laughing, and to cover this fact Mr Bold has got himself a job writing the jokes for Christmas crackers. Consequently he tells jokes quite often. *Too* often, some might say. But he loves his job and it pays the bills and he is very happy.



Mr Bold's wife Amelia is the sort of mother we all dream of: funny, caring, kind and hairy – well, maybe not the hairy bit. She's very creative and imaginative and she makes wonderful, rather unusual hats, which she sells at Teddington market. Hats are very important to the Bolds –

almost as important as jokes – because they're part of their disguise and allow them to live undiscovered in the world amongst humans.

Mr and Mrs Bold live in an ordinary semi-detached house in Teddington with their twins, Bobby and Betty, and another elderly hyena called Uncle Tony, whom they rescued from a safari park. Oh, and let's not forget Miranda, a marmoset monkey,

who came with Uncle Tony
from the safari park.



They all live at Number 41 Fairfield Road, and their next-door neighbour is Mr Nigel McNumpty (a grizzly bear, as it happens) and they get along very well. So well, in fact, they are all planning to go on a two-week camping holiday together this summer. By the seaside.

The twins are very excited as they've never seen the sea before. Knowing the Bolds as we do, though, it is unlikely to be a nice, restful holiday, is it? Something is bound to happen . . .

Now, the only human who knows about the Bolds' and Mr McNumpty's real identities is the twins' best friend, Minnie. She was understandably shocked when she first heard, but has promised to keep the secret safe and

never tell a soul. And so far she has proved true to her word. She spends a lot of time at the Bolds' house, because it is a lot more fun than her own, and her parents have even agreed that she can go on the camping holiday with the Bolds. Everyone is very excited.



But before the holidays can begin, school must finish – and on the last day of term Bobby and Betty are having their school Sports Day.

I'm sure it's the same at your school too. At the twins' school they call it a Fun Sports Day but I'm not sure everyone finds Sports Day fun. (I certainly never did and I didn't have a tail hidden in my shorts. I wasn't the sporty type. But enough about me.) Anyway, Betty and Bobby's Sports Day was on a beautiful sunny July afternoon, and Mr and Mrs Bold, Uncle Tony, Miranda and Mr McNumpty came along with all the other parents and relatives to watch and cheer.

Mr Bold parked the little blue Honda in the car park and the excited party made their way onto the playing field carrying a picnic rug and a deckchair for Uncle Tony. A crowd of spectators had already gathered and a few eager parents had been there since early in the morning to get a good spot. (Some people really can get over-competitive on a Sports Day.)

Mrs Bold was wearing a nice floral summer frock and one of her self-made hats: this one was specially designed for the occasion, and featured bunting, water bottles, fruit and several pairs of plimsolls jauntily bobbing up and down on springs. It was a little top-heavy and she needed to hold onto it to stop it toppling over to one side. Uncle Tony was pushing Miranda in her little doll's pushchair and Mr McNumpty was striding along looking very gentlemanly in a pale blue suit and white fedora hat.



Mr Bold could hardly contain his excitement about the proceedings. 'Come on, you BOLDS!' he shouted. 'We are the champ-i-ons!'



'Hush, dear,' said Mrs Bold. 'It's a fun sports day, remember? It's not the winning that matters, it's the taking part. Mrs Millin – the twins' class teacher – says they're all winners at this school.'

'Well, I know, Amelia,' he replied. 'But we both know that's not true. Look at that boy over there,' he said, pointing to a little chap who was busy picking his nose and wiping it on his shirt. 'He's definitely not a winner, and we both know that the twins could easily win every event if only . . .'

'Lower your voice,' hissed Mrs Bold, guessing what he might be about to say.

'If only they didn't have to run on just two legs,' whispered Fred. 'A hyena could outrun a human any day of the week if we were back in Africa using all four legs.'

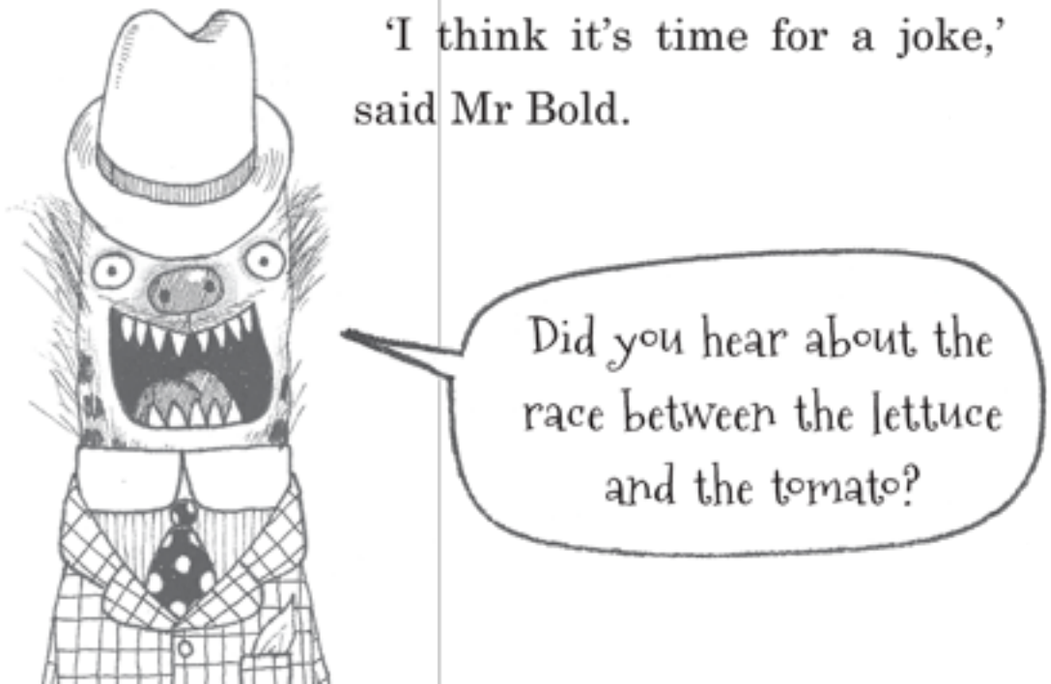
'I know,' giggled Mrs Bold. 'What fun that would be!'

'As it is we rather struggle waddling about on our hind trotters. Poor Bobby really wasn't looking forward to today. He's sure he'll come last and it's very frustrating for him. That boy in his class, Kyle, has teased him about how slow he is. I'd like to tear a strip off him, I really would. I can feel myself starting to growl just looking at him. Grrrr . . . Grrrr!'

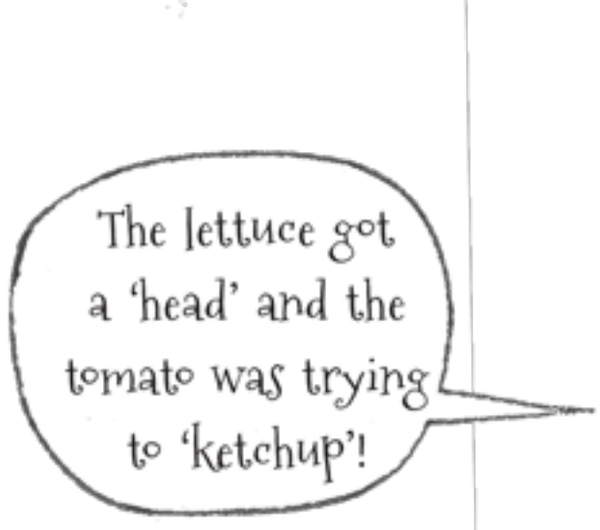


'Now, now, stay calm, old chap,' said Mr McNumpty firmly. 'Coming last is a small price to pay for the life we lead. A lot more civilised than out in the wild, remember. We're happy living as humans and we want it to stay that way.'

'Quite so,' said Mrs Bold, licking her lips and waving to Millie's father, who was setting out a picnic of lovely-looking ham and cold sausages he'd no doubt brought from his butcher's shop in Teddington High Street. 'I just hope Bobby's remembered to tuck his tail into his shorts properly.'



'I think it's time for a joke,' said Mr Bold.



Just then Mrs Millin approached the Bolds, smiling brightly and holding a clipboard.

'Good afternoon everyone, how lovely to see you. What a, er, clever hat, Mrs Bold. One of your own, I imagine?'

'Yes, Mrs Millin,' said Amelia, giving an unnecessary curtsey.

'Splendid! How creative you are.'