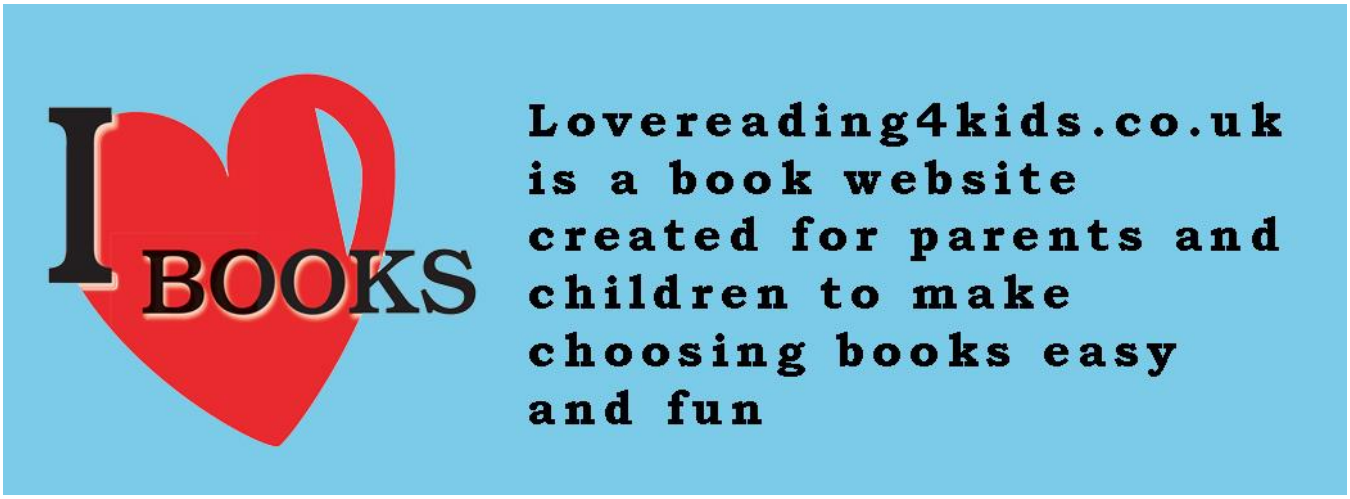


an extract from

The New Adventures of Mr Toad: A Race for Toad Hall

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To Catherine – T.M.
To Matt, Rose, and Olivia with love x and to
Helen Mackenzie Smith for being a super star! – H.S.

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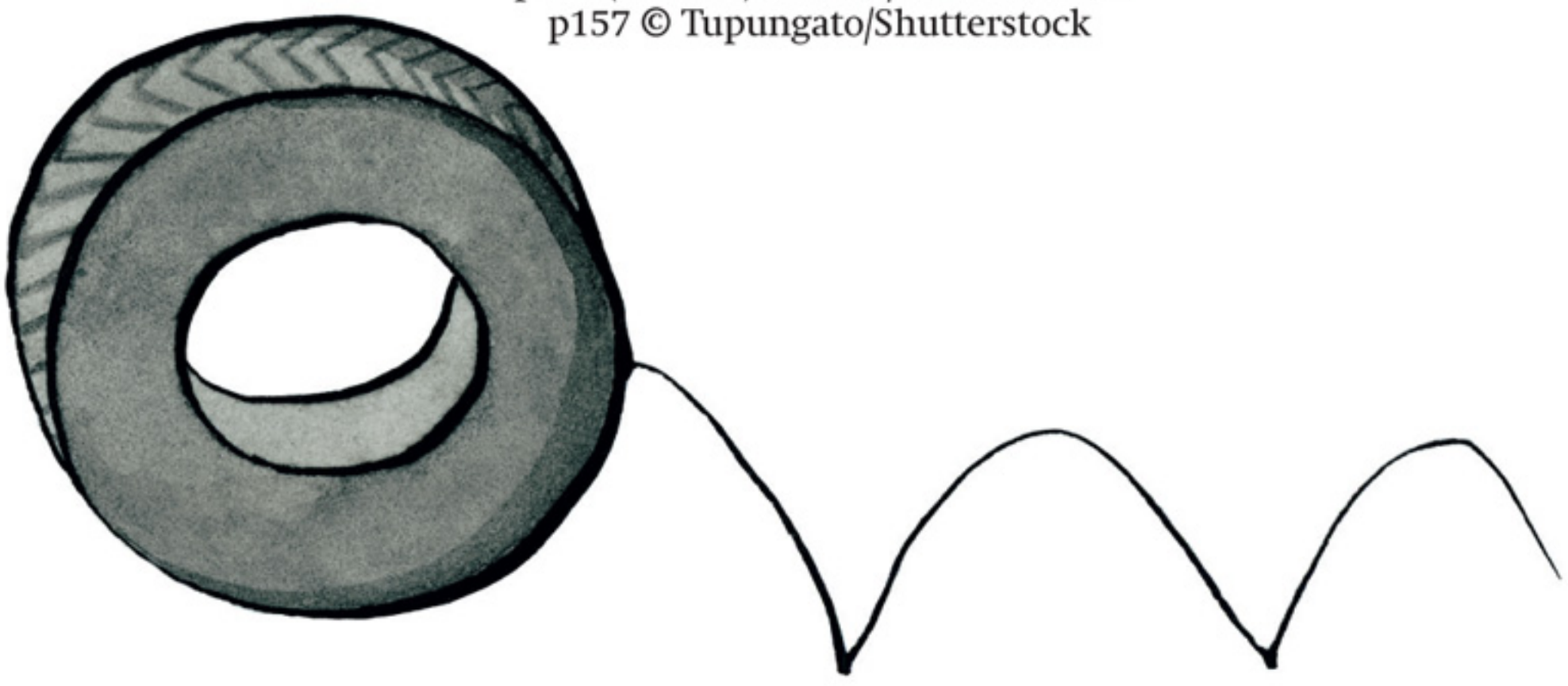
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Chapter 13

A Day at the Races



The loudspeakers crackled. 'And now it's the event you've all been waiting for, the highlight of the day: it's the legendary Four-Fifteen at Pipergate! Ten laps of our track, and the fastest wins. So, ladies and gentlemen, take your places at the stands.'

The crowd's cheer was loud even down by the track.

'This is it,' said Teejay. 'Are you ready, Mr T?'

'Just a moment.' Mr Toad put on his driving helmet and goggles. 'How do I look?'

PIPERGATE 4-15

GO! GO! GO!

WE ♥ STIGG ♥

'Not even slightly silly.'

'Did all these people really come just to see me?'

'Oh, yes,' Teejay lied. 'They heard that the best driver in the universe is here.'

'Well, perhaps not the *whole* universe,' said Mr Toad, humbly. He put on his gloves. 'Righty-ho! Let us give my public what they want.'

'Here they come!' shouted the loudspeakers. The crowd clapped as the drivers walked out, with Mr Toad in the lead.

He raised his arms and shouted, '**Poop-poop!**'

'What's that green thing?' called someone from the crowd.

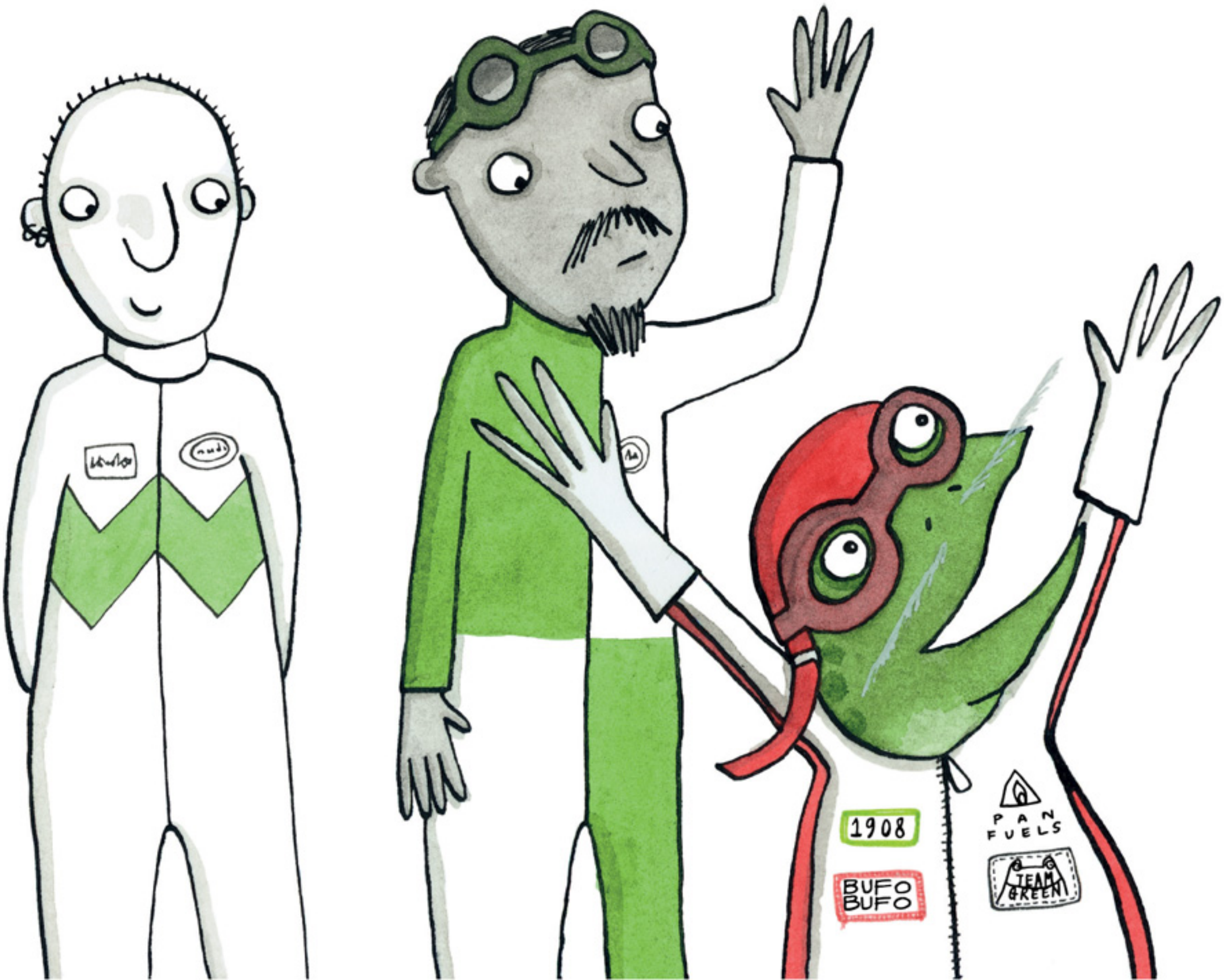


'Dunno,' said another. 'Looks like a frog in a funny hat.'

'Is it a frog or a toad?'

'Either way it'll be a ribbetting race.'

Teejay winced, hoping Mr Toad had not heard. But he was busy posing. The last driver to walk out got the biggest cheer. He wore white overalls. His crash-helmet was white, with blue glass that hid his face. He went straight towards his sports car.



A Race For Toad Hall



'Who's that chap?' said Mr Toad.

'That's Stiggy,' said Teejay. 'He's the stoat you have to beat.'

'Why's he wearing that silly costume?'

Teejay glanced at Mr Toad's helmet and goggles. 'Come on, let's find your car.'



Ms Badger's car was at the starting line in the middle of the others. They were all rusty and bashed-up. All except for Stiggy's, which was sleek and fast-looking.

'Drivers to your cars! Drivers to your cars!' cried the announcer. 'The Four-Fifteen will start in two minutes.'

Mr Toad climbed in. He started to sing.

'He sits in his car, the boldest of Toads,
In a race with the weasels
to win back his home.
The day is upon us when Toady must shine,
The weasels are stinkers,
Toad Hall will be mine!'

He grinned at Teejay. 'What do you think?'

'Very nice,' said Teejay. 'But I'd better go. Good luck!'

She shut his door and ran up into the crowd. She pushed through the people until she found Mo and Ratty, right at the front.

'How's Mr Toad?' said Mo.

'He's singing, so I think he's ready.' She

leaned over the railing. 'Ooh, you've got a really good view.'

'Yeah,' said Ratty, 'we can watch him lose his house from here.'

'Don't worry,' said Mo. 'He'll be fine.'

'But what about Stiggy?' said Teejay. 'His car looks really fast. He'll be finished before Mr Toad even starts.'

'Oh, I do hope so,' said a voice. Teejay spun to face the Chief Weasel, with Mr Ripton at his shoulder. 'We had that car built specially. It was rather expensive, but it does go very, very fast. Do you think that Mr Toad can beat us, Mr Ripton?'

Mr Ripton shook his head.

'No. Neither do I,' smirked the Chief Weasel. 'But do try to enjoy the race, children. I know *I* will. **Hurk hurk**.'

'What a nasty person,' said Teejay as the weasels walked off.

'But he's right,' said Ratty. 'Mr Toad can't win.'

Mo just shook his head, and smiled.