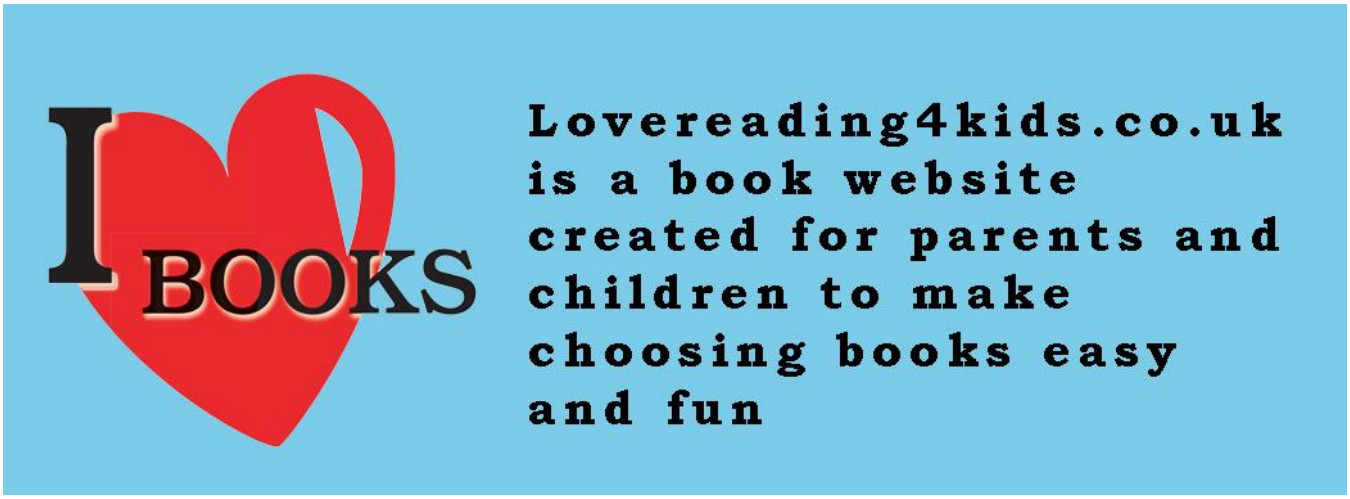


Opening extract from

Daisy and the Trouble with Chocolate

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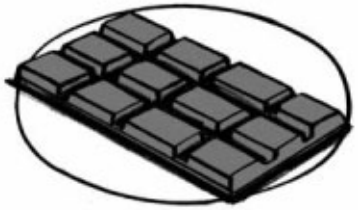


To Simmo, Marie,
Laura & James



CHAPTER 1

The **trouble with chocolate** is chocolate! If chocolate wasn't so chocolaty, I would never have got into so much trouble over Easter.



I mean, why do people even do chocolate Easter eggs at Easter? Before Easter comes along I am quite happy eating strawberry Dip Dab lollies and Crunchy Cream biscuits.

Neither of those has got even the teensiest bit of chocolate in them at all. They don't even say "chocolate" on the wrapper.

If you ask me, the more people *make* chocolate, the more children will want to *eat* chocolate. Especially at Easter, and double especially if they let children into the place where chocolate is actually made. The places where chocolate is made should be absolutely closed to children if you ask me. But they're not. They are wide open, especially if your mum has a special Easter voucher to go to Chocolate Land. And triple especially if your neighbour knows someone who actually works there. WHICH ISN'T MY FAULT!

CHAPTER 2

I wasn't even thinking about chocolate when my school broke up for the Easter holidays. All I was thinking about was Pickle and Pops. Pickle and Pops are our class hamsters. They've been living in our classroom since half term.

When Mrs Peters told us we were getting real live hamsters to live in our classroom, I nearly fell off my chair I was so excited!

As soon as she brought them in to show us, I asked if they could



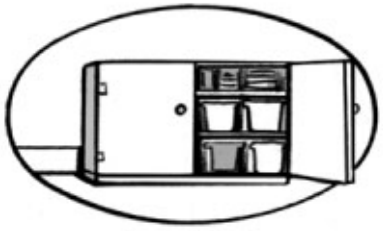
live in my desk. But she said no. Mrs Peters said that school desks were really no places for hamsters – which isn't true because my desk is full of places that hamsters would really like, especially inside my pencil case. (Once I'd emptied out my pencils and pens.)

Mrs Peters said that pencil cases were made for pencils and pens to live in, not hamsters, and that if I rolled my exercise books into

tunnels, I would spend an extra hour after school flattening the pages out again.

So the hamsters have to live on top of the stationery cupboard instead.

The **trouble with stationery cupboards** is the one in our class is right at the back of the room.



Which means if I want to see what Pickle and Pops are doing, I need to turn my head all the way round. And even then it's not that easy to see



inside their cage, because Dottie and Lottie Taylor's heads are always in the way.

Dottie and Lottie Taylor are the luckiest children in our class because their desk is closest to the hamster cage. They still have to turn their heads round to see them, though.

The **trouble with turning your head round in class** is Mrs Peters doesn't like it. Especially if she is teaching you lessons at the same time.



During lessons, Mrs Peters says everyone has to face the whiteboard, not the hamsters, which is silly really because hamsters are far more interesting than lessons.

When I asked if the hamster cage could go by the whiteboard, Mrs Peters said no – plus, if I said one more word about hamsters or cages, then I could go by the whiteboard myself. So I don't really turn my head round in class any more. Unless Jack Beechwhistle is pinging rubber bands at me. Or it's my turn to be Hamster Guardian of the Day.

Every day during term time, we take it in turns to be Hamster Guardian of the Day. Hamster Guardian of the Day day is the day I look forward to most because it means you are totally in charge of Pickle and Pops from the moment the school bell rings in the morning to the moment you have to go home.



It's so brilliant! The moment Mrs Peters has finished calling the register you get to feed them! Plus, if your turn comes on a Friday, you get to clean out their cage too!

The **trouble with feeding hamsters** is you can't just give them any old food – you have to give them exactly the right things. Otherwise they'll turn into guinea pigs.



Every day Pickle and Pops need fresh water in their water bottle, plus

a tablespoon of normal hamster food each, plus a piece of fruit (Pickle likes apple, Pops prefers blueberries). Or if there isn't any fruit, you can give them something like carrot, cauliflower or green beans. But don't cook them – they prefer them raw.

The **trouble with cleaning out Pickle and Pops's cage** is you have to wait till lunch-time break to do it because cleaning takes loads more time than feeding, especially the way I do it.



If I had to choose between feeding Pickle and Pops and cleaning them out, I'd choose cleaning them out because then I get to count how many poos they've done in a week.



Hamster poos are really cute and really tiny (about the size of a fairy poo, I reckon). Plus hamsters do loads! The most hamster poos I've counted in one week is 707. The second most is 697. Barry Morely has

done the sums for me and says that, on average, Pickle and Pops do over fifty poos a day. EACH! How amazing is that? Imagine going to the loo fifty times a day. Imagine how many loo rolls you would need! And how many lessons you would miss . . .

Hamsters don't use loo rolls, by the way. They just do their business on the floor, in the sawdust. They even poo in their bed!

I'd never poo in my bed. Not unless I'd eaten a half-sucked strawberry Dip Dab I'd picked up off the road that was covered in germs. But that's a different story.

When Mrs Peters asked me if I would like to be Hamster Guardian of the Easter Holiday, I couldn't believe my ears. Me, Daisy Butters, the first ever person in our class to get to look after Pickle and Pops at home!!!!

I don't think Pickle and Pops could believe their ears either because when I looked at their cage, BOTH of them were wide awake. (I don't know if you know, but hamsters do loads of sleeping during the day, so they MUST have been really pleased to hear that they would be going home with me.)



I think Mrs Peters chose me because I am always volunteering to do extra hamster work during break time and after school. Plus she knows I don't have an actual pet of my own at home.

When I told Gabby, I thought she might be a bit jealous, but Gabby has a pet cat called Satan at home.

The **trouble with pet cats called Satan** is they eat hamsters, or at least they would if they got a chance,



so there is no way she would want to look after Pickle and Pops at home.

I did, though! All I had to do was persuade my mum.