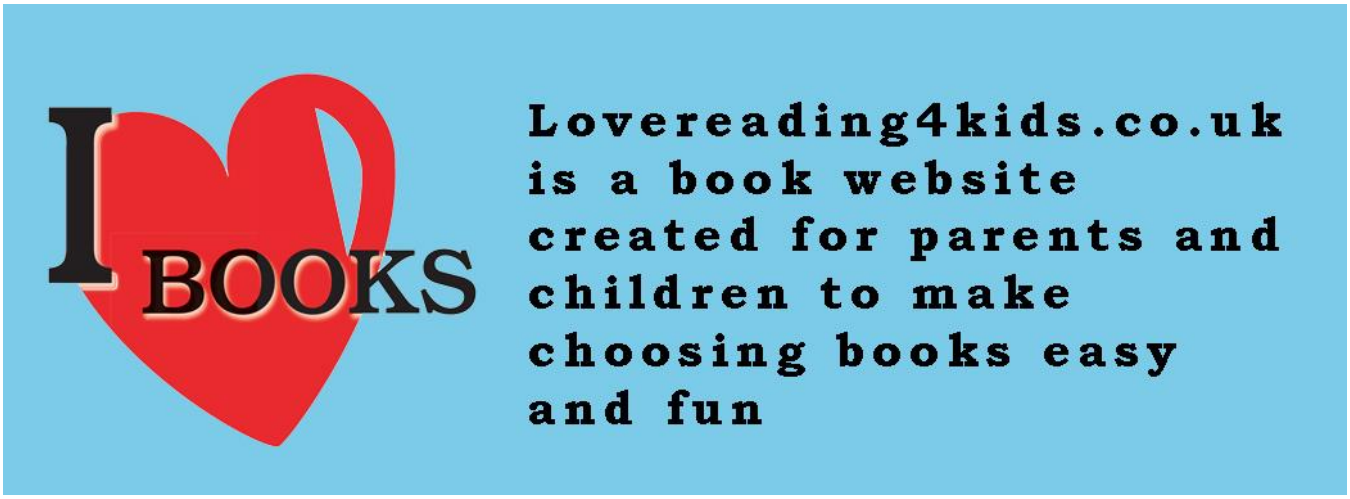

Opening extract from

Timmy Failure: The Cat Stole My Pants

Written & Illustrated by

Stephan Pastis

Published by

Walker Books Ltd

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A Prologue That Time-wise Would Take Place Somewhere Between Chapters 39 and 40 But Which Is Being Presented to You Now Instead Because It's Quite Dramatic and Compelling

A six-toed cat stole my pants.

On an island called Key West in Florida.

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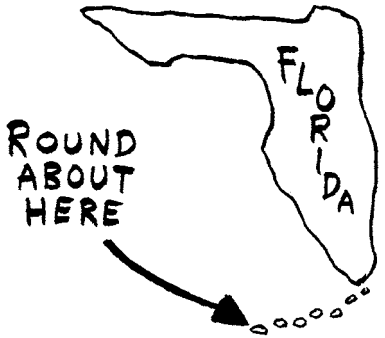
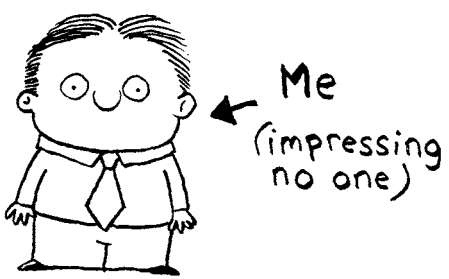


It happened when we were touring the house of a famous author.

Who I know nothing about.

Other than that he is dead.

So when my mother made me dress up for the tour, I knew it wasn't to impress *him*.



I also didn't know that the interior of the dead guy's house would have no air-conditioning. Causing me to sweat so profusely as to be medically unsafe.

Which is probably what killed the author.

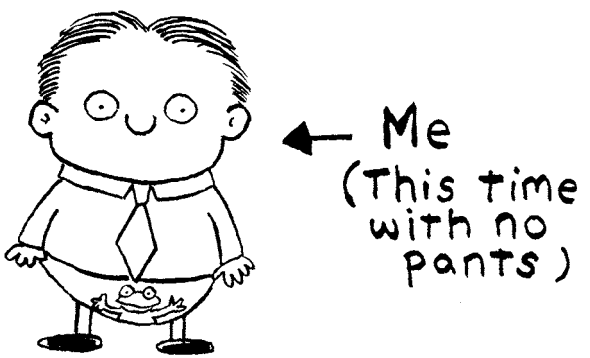
But I am the detective Timmy Failure.

And I am harder to kill than an author.

So when the heat of the house becomes overwhelming, I leave my mother with the tour group and walk back outside.

Where I do what any sane person would do.

And remove my pants.



But my cool pants-less respite is cut short by the sound of my mother's voice calling to me from the upstairs windows of the house.

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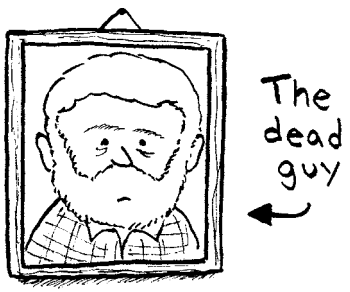
"Timmy? Where are you? *Timmy?*"

So I grudgingly return inside and stand amidst the tour group.

"What do you think you're doing?" she whispers, pulling me to the back of the group.

"Saving my life," I answer. "So I don't end up like the dead guy."

I point toward the author's picture on the wall.



"Timmy, you are standing in a public place in your underwear."

"It's my Mr. Froggie underwear. So people will think it's a fancy bathing suit. And besides, why do I have to dress up anyway? Everyone else here is in shorts."

Before she can say anything else, we are interrupted by the old man who is our tour guide.

"Folks, next we're gonna go see the room where Mr. Hemingway wrote."

"I don't know who that is," I reply as I shuffle past him in my underwear.

"Ernest Hemingway. You're standing in his house," he says, then pauses. "You're standing *in your underwear* in his house. Son, could you please put on some pants?"

"I am so sorry," says my overly apologetic mother as she rushes me out of the upstairs bedroom we are in and onto the wraparound verandah.

"Timmy, where did you leave them?"

"Who knows? Maybe next to the fountain outside. The one the cats were drinking out of."

"You stay here," she tells me. "Don't move."

So I stand outside on the verandah beneath a large ceiling fan and stare at the pudgy tourists below.

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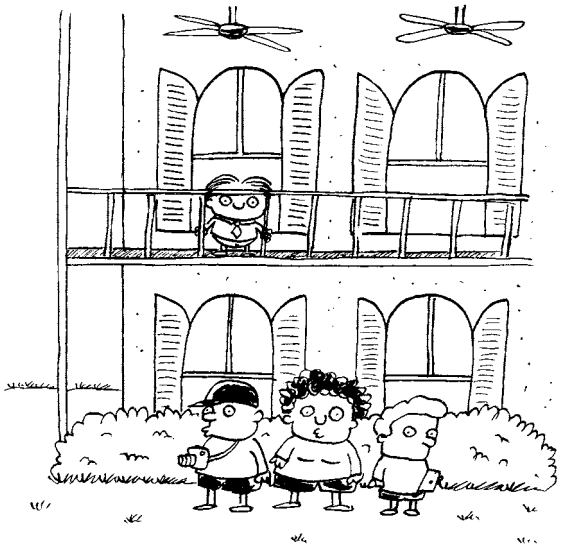
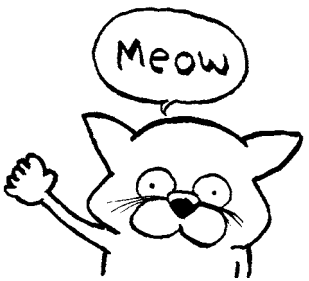


And that's when I see him.

The cat with six toes.



"Polydactyl," says the tour guide, peering out of the double doors that lead onto the verandah. "That means he has more than the usual number of toes. Like the kind of cat that Papa owned."

"They're like giant mittens," I reply. "And who the heck is Papa?"

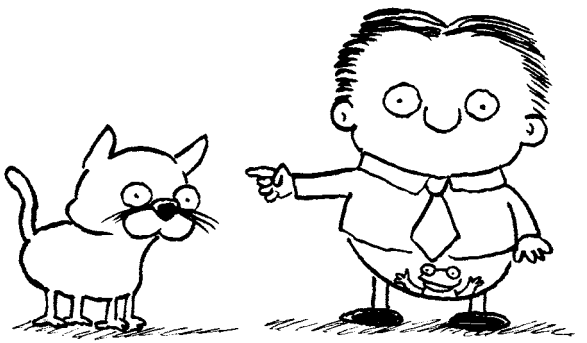
"Ernest 'Papa' Hemingway," he says. "Or 'the dead guy,' as you call him."

And as he says it, I hear my mother's footsteps rushing back toward us on the verandah. "Your pants are not on the fountain, Timmy. They're not *anywhere*."

"Of course they're not," I reply. "Because they've been stolen."

"Stolen?" she says. "Who would steal pants?"

"Him," I say.



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"The cat," she says.

"Yes," I answer. "With giant mittens for paws. Could walk off with half the furniture in this house if he wanted to."

"Timmy, that little cat does not steal pants."

"He's never stolen *my* pants," the tour guide interjects. "And I've been here fifteen years."

The tour guide smiles at my mother. She does not smile back. He slinks back inside the bedroom and rejoins the departing tour group.

"Timmy, I want you to focus. Where did you see them last?"

"I told you already. By the fountain."

"Yeah, well, *as I told you* already, they're not there."

"So talk to Mr. Mittens over there," I answer, pointing again at the cat. "It's a genetic mutation. We learned about it in science. God or Charlie Darwinian or somebody gave that little cat a thumb so he can grab things. And unfortunately for us, he has chosen to use that skill for evil ends. Namely, the theft of my pants."

Mr. Mittens meows.

"Cats do not wear pants," my mother answers in that unique motherly tone that is half whisper and half scream.

"Correct," I answer. "Which is why he probably sold them on the kitty black market."

She opens her mouth to once again lecture me but is stopped short by a man's voice.

This one from beneath the verandah.

"Are you guys gonna come down here or just stay up there talking all day?"

So my mother peers over the railing.

"Tell that nosy tour guide to mind his own business," I say to her.

My mother looks back at me, and suddenly, the anger is drained from her face, replaced by something else.

It is as though she has seen the error of her ways, perhaps owing to a glimpse of Mr. Mittens absconding with my pants.

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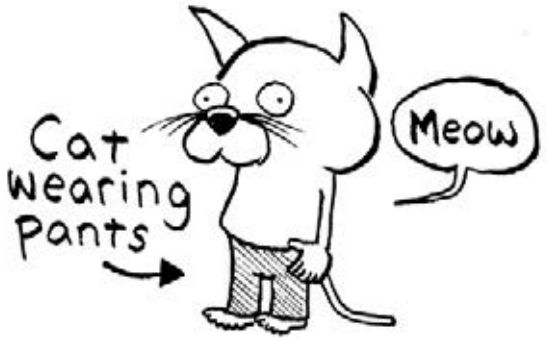
"It's not the tour guide," she says.

"Is it a cat wearing pants?" I answer.



She shakes her head and reaches out her hand to take mine, pulling me toward the railing.

Where I peer down at the man. Who I don't recognize.

"Papa," she says.

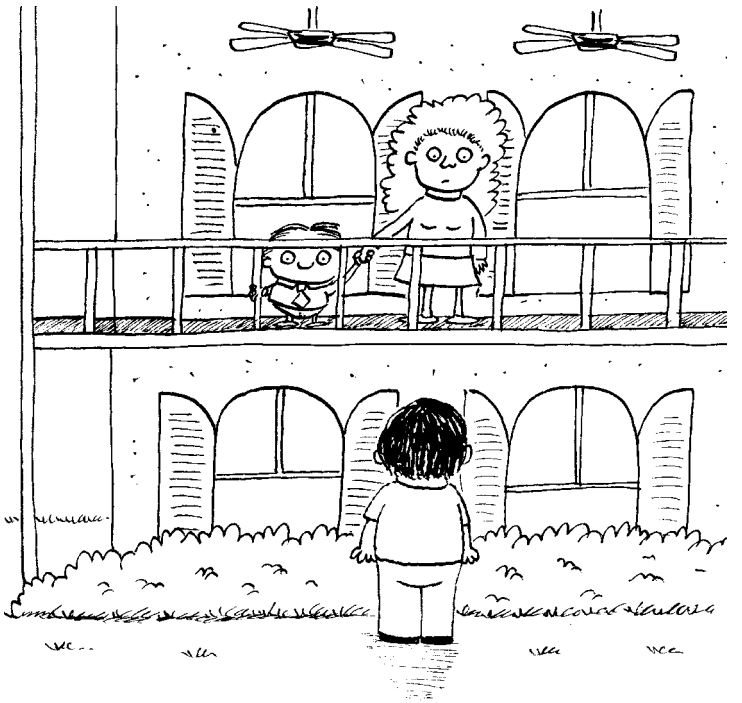
I stare back inside at the picture of the white-bearded man on the wall, and then back toward the younger man beneath the verandah.

And they look nothing alike.

"Not the writer," she says, reading my thoughts.

Pausing briefly to squeeze my hand.

"It's your father."



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CHAPTER 1

Give Me Your Timmy, Your Poor, Your Huddled Masses

Many years ago, a zillion desperate people—all seeking a better life—escaped from a country called Cuba to a place called Key West, Florida. Many years later, one desperate boy—also seeking a better life—escaped from Key West, Florida, to Cuba.

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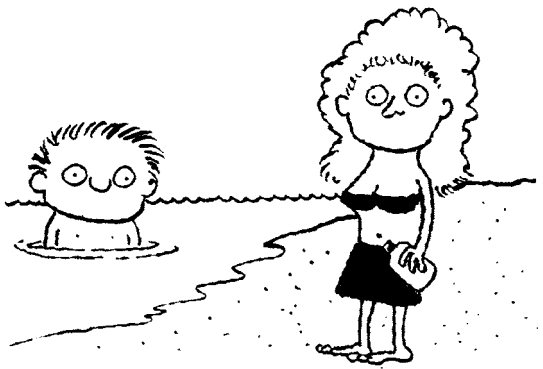
"Timmy, get back here so I can put lotion on you," says my mother.

"I'm almost to Cuba," I answer.

"You're two feet from the shore," she says. "In Florida."



"Google says that Cuba is only ninety miles away. I can swim that in an hour. And if I don't like it, I'll swim right back."

"Timmy," she says, yanking me out of the water by my arm and slathering sunscreen across my face, "I want you to come back to where we are on the beach, and I want you to play with Emilio. The poor kid's just standing up there waving at you."

"But look at him, Mother. Wearing his little ducky thing. It's embarrassing."

"It's not embarrassing, Timmy. Stop making life difficult."

"Well, I didn't want to come to stupid Key West in the first place."

"What did you want us to do? Leave you at home? Leave you for a week with some babysitter we barely know?"

"Yes," I answer.

"No," she snaps back. "Dave and I would have just worried about you. That would have ruined our entire honeymoon."

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Honeymoon.

A word that the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines suchly:

HONEYMOON, *noun*

1) a pleasant period of time at the start of something, such as a relationship

2) a trip or vacation taken by a newly married couple

Which reminds me.

The first thing I'm going to do when I get off this remote island is write to Mr. Merriam or Mr. Webster or Mr. Merriam-Webster and tell them all to update their stupid dictionary.

Because:

1) This trip is a far cry from pleasant; and

2) My mother is not married.

Well, *she* would say she is married. But there is no proof.

Because somebody named me fainted during the ceremony.

And so I witnessed none of the unpleasantness.

Which brings me to the whole Emilio thing.

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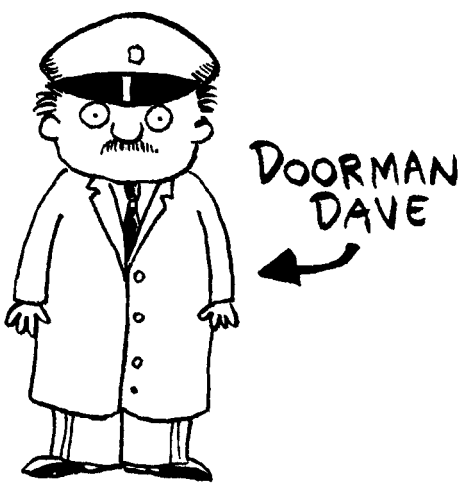
Emilio is the nephew of my mother's so-called "husband," Doorman Dave.

Doorman Dave was once our doorman.



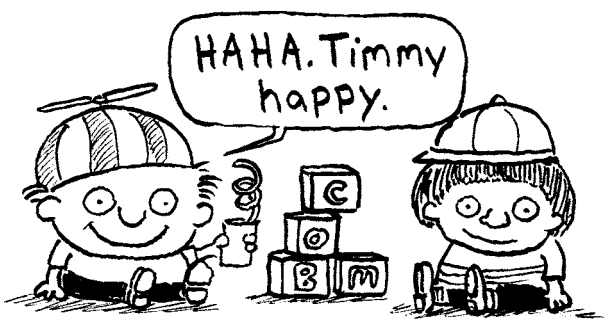
But then my mother decided to marry him. So now Doorman Dave is So-Called Husband Dave.

And Emilio is here because—well, I'll just let my mother explain that one:

"We thought it'd be nice for you to have a playmate."

A playmate.

As though I'm a toddler sipping milk through a swirly straw while stacking my alphabet blocks.



And my mother's comment is made doubly offensive by the fact that I *already have* a companion.

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My former business partner, Total.
Who is a polar bear.
And a fast swimmer.
And is by now already in Cuba.

CHAPTER 2
X Marks the Tot

"I am the founder, president, and CEO of Failure, Inc., the best detective agency in the town, probably the country, perhaps the world," I tell Emilio. "Write that part down."

Emilio writes it down.

"How many detective agencies *are* there in the world?" he asks.

"What does that matter?" I answer.

"Well, how do you know if you're the greatest if you don't know how many there are?"