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opening extract from

Stanley, Flat Again!

written by

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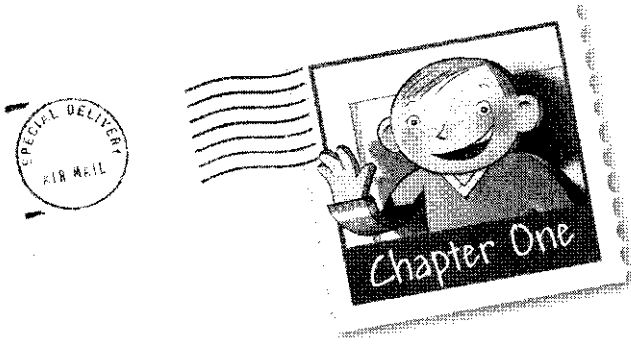
Scott Nash

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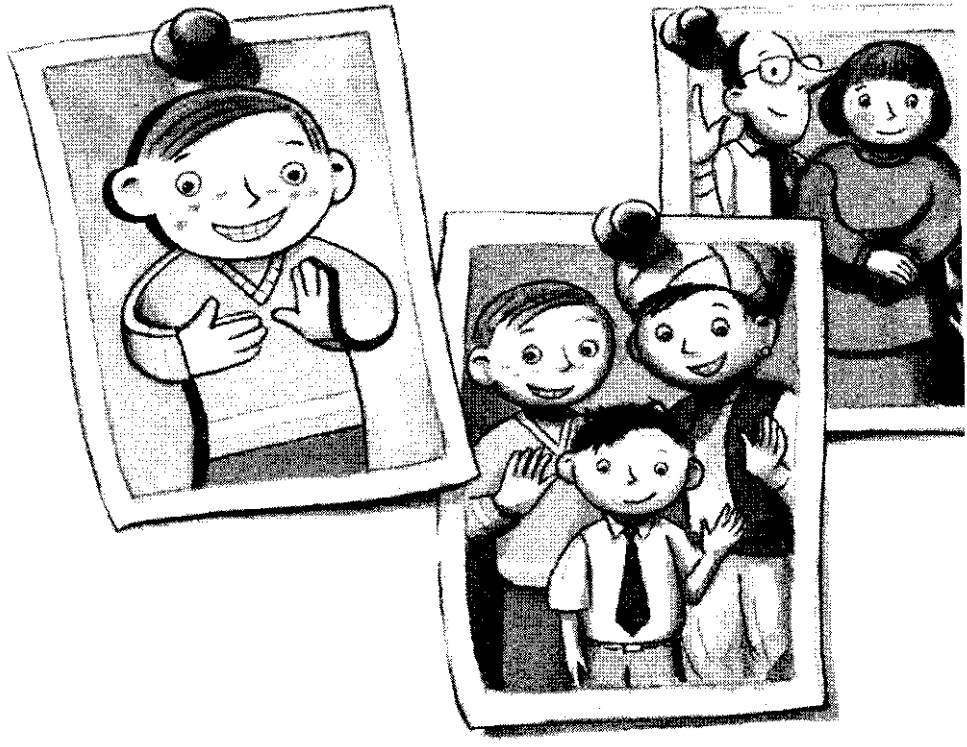


A Morning Surprise

Mrs Lambchop was making breakfast. Mr Lambchop, at the kitchen table, helped by reading bits from the morning paper.

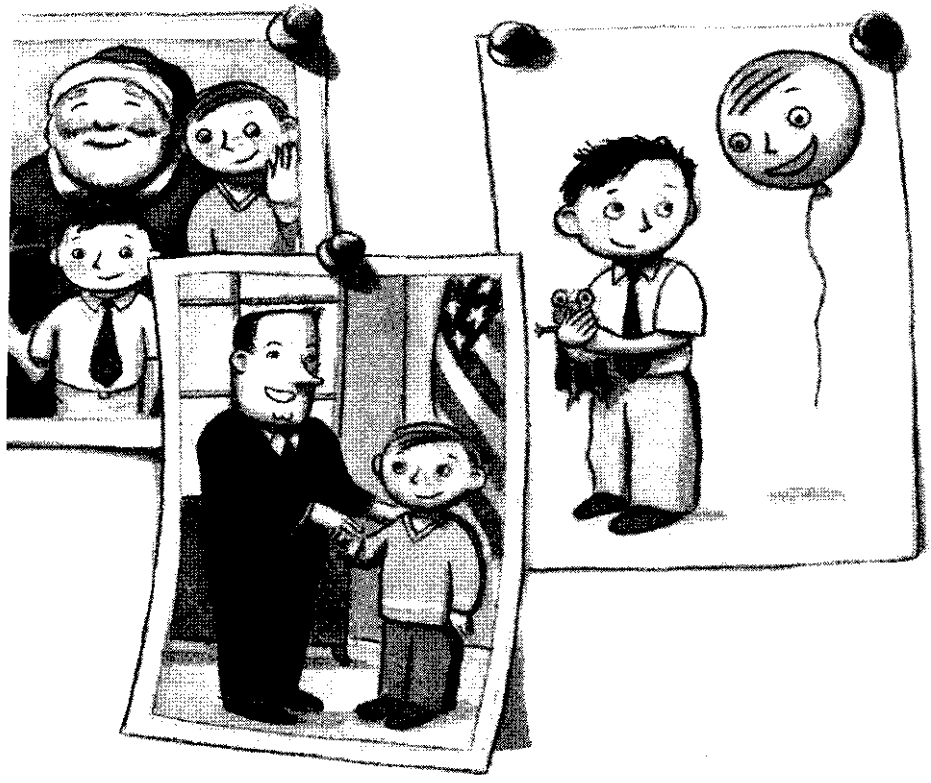
'Here's an odd one, Harriet,' he said. 'There's a chicken in Sweden that rides a bike.'

'So do I, George,' said Mrs Lambchop, not really listening.



'Listen to this. "Merker Building now empty. To be collapsed next week." Imagine! Eight floors!'

'Poor thing!' Mrs Lambchop set out plates. 'My, isn't this a lovely sunny morning!' She raised her voice. 'Boys! Breakfast is ready!'



Her glance fell upon a row of photographs on the wall above the sink. There was a smiling Stanley, only half an inch thick, his big bulletin board having fallen from the bedroom wall to rest upon him overnight. Next came reminders of the many family adventures that had come

after Stanley's younger brother, Arthur, had cleverly blown him round again with a bicycle pump. There were the brothers with Prince Haraz, the young genie who had granted wishes for them all after being accidentally summoned by Stanley from a lamp. There was the entire family with Santa Claus and his daughter, Sarah, taken during a Christmas visit to the North Pole. There was the family again in Washington DC, in the office of the President of the United States, who had asked them to undertake a secret mission into outer space. The last picture showed Arthur standing beside a balloon on which Mrs Lambchop had painted a picture of Stanley's face. The balloon, its

string in fact held by Stanley, had been a valuable guide to his presence, since he was invisible at the time. 'Boys!' she called again. 'Breakfast!'

In their bedroom, Stanley and Arthur had finished dressing.

While Stanley filled his backpack, Arthur bounced a tennis ball. 'Let's go,' he said. 'Here! Catch!'

Stanley had just reached for a book on the shelf by his bed. The ball struck his back as he turned, and he banged his shoulder on a corner of the shelf.

'Ouch!'

'Sorry,' Arthur said. 'But let's go, okay? You know how long – STANLEY!'

'Why are you shouting?' Stanley adjusted



his pack. 'C'mon! I'm so hungry –' He paused. 'Oh, boy! Arthur, do you see?'

'I do, actually.' Arthur swallowed hard. 'You're, you know . . . flat.'

The brothers stared at each other.

'The pump?' Stanley said. 'It might work again.'

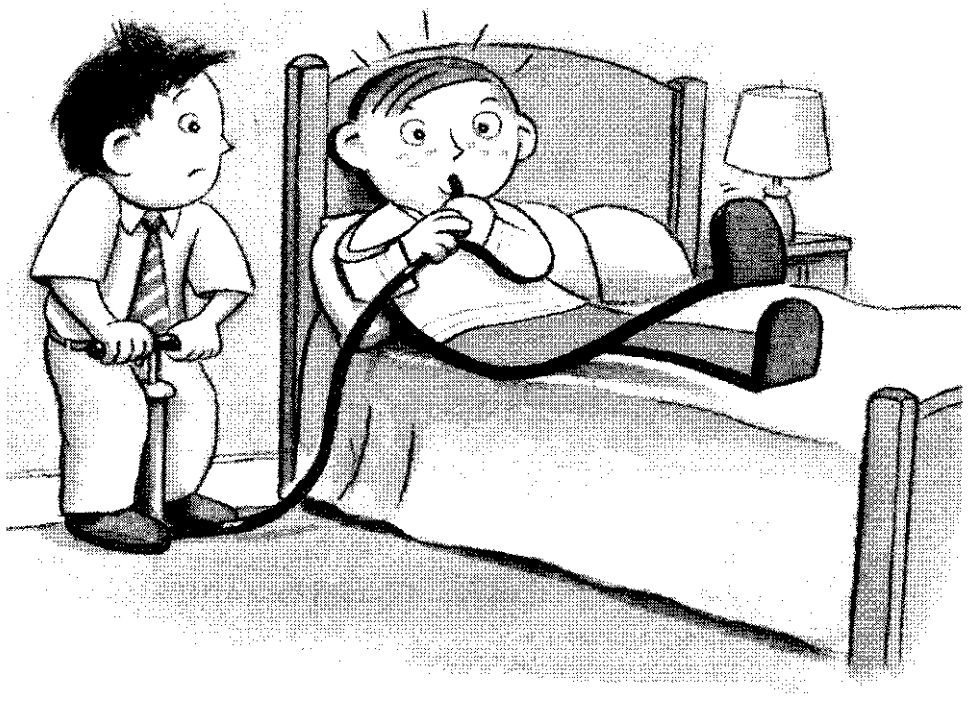
Arthur fetched the bicycle pump from their toy chest and Stanley lay on the bed with the hose end in his mouth.

Arthur gave a long, steady, pump.

Stanley made a face. 'That hurts!'

Arthur pumped again, and Stanley snatched the hose from his mouth. 'Owww! That really hurts! It wasn't like that before. We'd better stop.'

'Now what?' Arthur said. 'We can't just



hide in here forever, you know.'

Mrs Lambchop's call came again. 'Boys! Please come!'

'Do me a favour,' Stanley said. 'You tell them. Sort of get them ready, okay?'

'Okay,' said Arthur, and went to tell.

Arthur stood in the kitchen doorway.

'Hey, guess what?' he said.

'Hay is for horses, dear,' said Mrs Lambchop. 'Good morning! Breakfast is ready.'

'School, Arthur,' Mr Lambchop said from behind his newspaper. 'Where's Stanley?'

'Guess what?' Arthur said again.

Mrs Lambchop sighed. 'Oh, all right! I can't guess. Tell.'

'Stanley's flat again,' said Arthur.

Mr Lambchop put down his paper.

Mrs Lambchop closed her eyes. 'Flat again? Is that what you said?'

'Yes,' said Arthur.

'It's true.' Stanley stood now beside Arthur in the doorway. 'Just look.'

'Good grief!' said Mr Lambchop. 'I can't

believe that bulletin board –'

'It didn't fall on me this time,' Stanley said. 'I just got flat. Arthur tried to pump me up, like before, but it hurt too much.'

'Oh, Stanley!' Mrs Lambchop ran to kiss him. 'How do you feel now?'

'Fine, actually,' Stanley said. 'Just surprised. Can I go to school?'

Mrs Lambchop thought for a moment. 'Very well. Eat your breakfast. After school we'll hear what Dr Dan has to say.'