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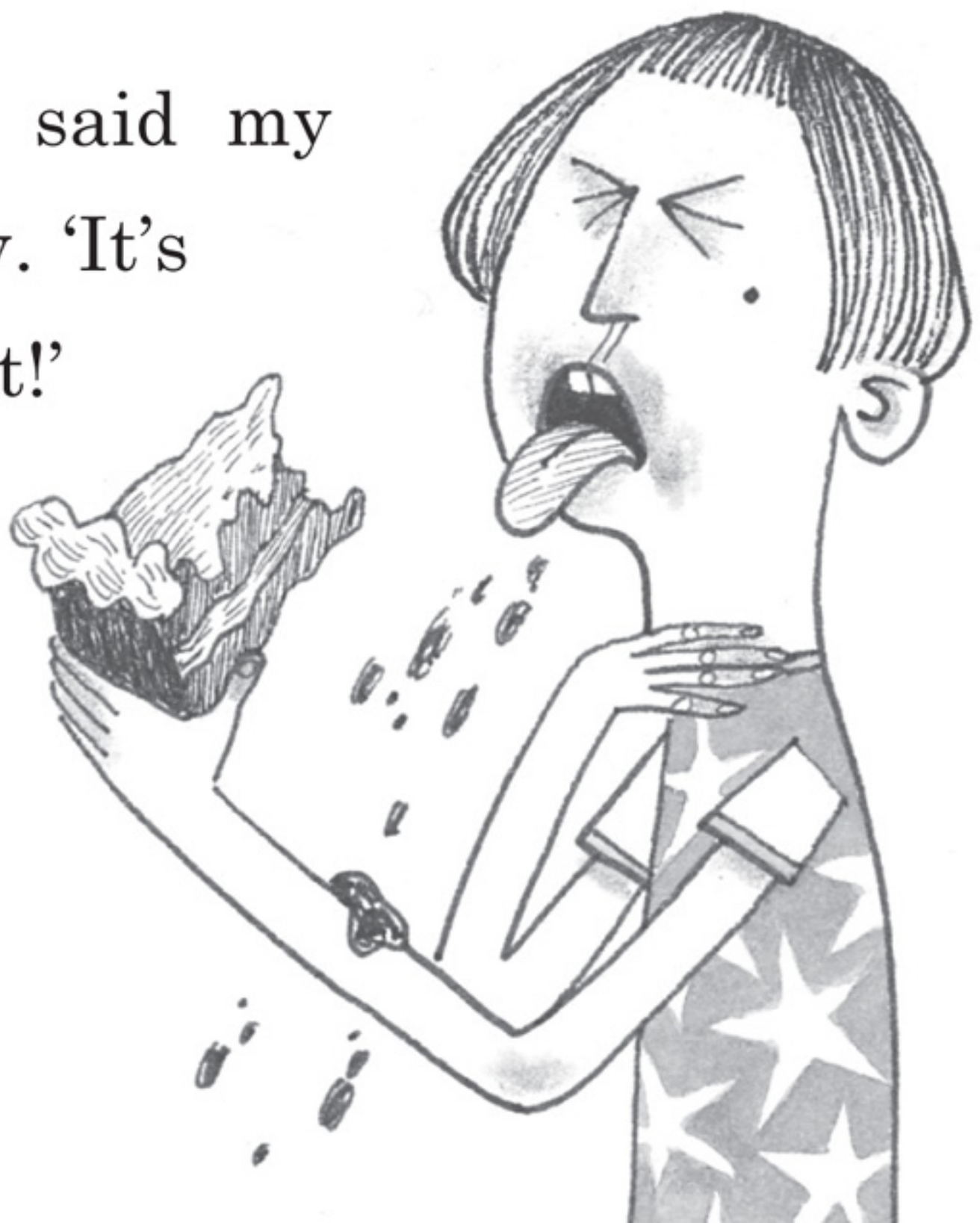
For Joshua
JC

In memory
of Mickeylove
DR

Chapter 1

Have you ever had something go wrong? You were expecting one thing and then something happened and you ended up getting something else completely different? Well I have, and it can be most upsetting. My mother once made a chocolate cake for tea. I took a bite and spat it out. It tasted horrible!

'Don't be so silly,' said my mother, rather crossly. 'It's a lovely cake. Eat it!' But I couldn't bring myself to. So then she tasted it herself

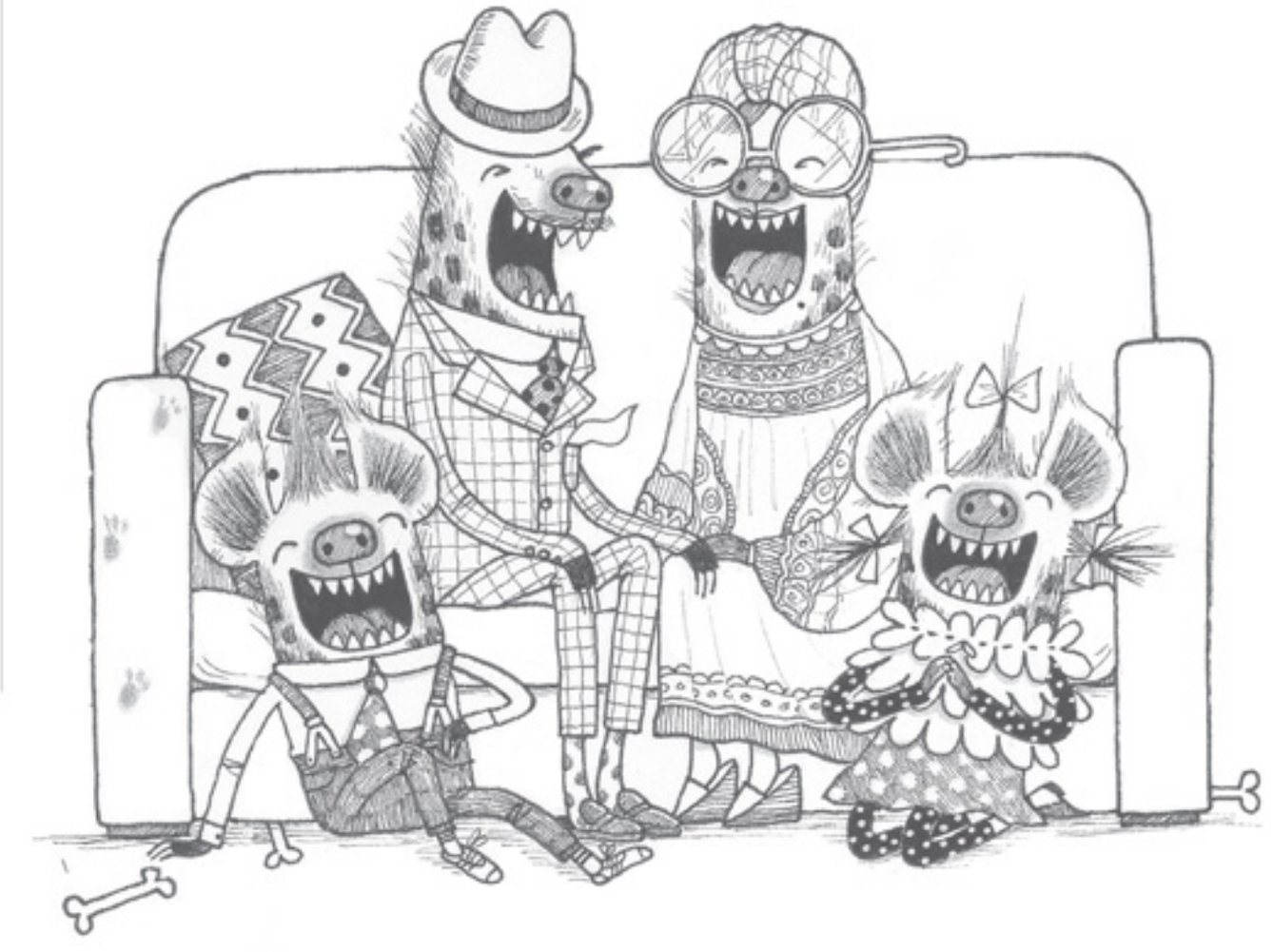


and she couldn't eat it either. 'Something has gone wrong,' she said, pulling a face and gulping down some water to take the awful taste away. Then she looked in the cupboard where she kept the ingredients. Do you know what she'd done? The cocoa powder was in a jar next to the gravy granules and she'd mistakenly picked up the wrong jar. She'd made a gravy cake!

We've been laughing about that mix-up ever since. So you see, sometimes something funny happens by mistake. And sometimes what you think is going to be fun turns out to be the least fun thing ever. Confusing, isn't it? Well that is what this book is about. When things go wrong. Or to be more precise, when things went wrong for the Bolds.

Life was as busy and eventful as ever in the Bolds' household.

The Bolds, as you probably know, are a family of hyenas living disguised as human beings in a pleasant tree-lined street called Fairfield Road in Teddington. They wear clothes and hats to cover their hyena features and none



of their human neighbours have guessed their secret, although they *have* noticed that the Bolds seem to laugh an awful lot. Being hyenas, they can't help themselves. They also like to rub their bottoms on tree trunks and bushes to mark their territory, but obviously they can't do that if anyone is watching.

Fred and Amelia Bold are the parents. Fred works at the Christmas cracker factory, writing the silly jokes, and Amelia makes and sells unusual hats at Teddington market. Their children, twins – Bobby and Betty – are lively and funny and sometimes a bit naughty. They go to the local school and are best friends with a girl called Minnie.



Minnie found out about the Bolds' secret a while ago but has promised to tell no one.



Next door lives Nigel McNumpty who, as it turns out, is a grizzly bear. He was grumpy and lonely until the Bolds moved in, but now he's practically one of the family. He has become best friends with Uncle Tony, an elderly hyena who the Bolds rescued from a local safari park along with Miranda, a sweet little marmoset monkey.



So that's everyone. Except it isn't quite. You see, the Bolds have gained a bit of a reputation for helping other members

of the animal world who want to live like humans too. They take in all manner of waifs and strays, teach them how to walk and talk like humans, wear clothes, use a knife and fork and even how to use the toilet. You'd be surprised how many animals there are living amongst us that we fail to notice aren't humans at all. Bus drivers, teachers, athletes, shop assistants . . . prime ministers, even. Only yesterday I had a new sofa delivered by two burly 'men' wearing overalls. They huffed and puffed and snorted a lot, I noticed. It was only when I spotted their rather moist noses and saw a wisp of steamy sweat rising up in the air from their backs, that I put two and two together. Yes, buffaloes. Brothers, I suspect. I didn't say anything. Buffaloes can be a bit bad-tempered, and I didn't want them to start pawing the ground and charging about. (Not with my new carpet and collection of priceless porcelain dolls I've collected on my travels over the years.) But you see, I knew. And I knew because I have heard about the Bolds.



It wouldn't occur to most people to even think that animals were living in our midst, doing all manner of jobs and, it ought to be said, making an invaluable contribution to society. Only those clever people out there who have read the Bolds books will know to look. Won't we? Have a look around you now. Or if you're on your own, look out of the window. Or if it's

dark, turn on the TV. There's one particular newsreader who has all the characteristics of a turtle. Actually, no, don't do that. Reading is much better for you than watching TV. And there's nothing much on these days, is there? But next time you're out and about, see how many 'people' you can spot who you suspect are animals in disguise. Your teacher perhaps? The bus driver? Or maybe the lady who works in the sweet shop?

Probably best not to tell them you've twigged, though. Just give them a knowing look and tap the side of your nose.

But let's get on. Where was I? Ah yes, the Bolds' household. That's all the permanent residents accounted for. But, as I've explained, the Bolds sometimes teach and help animals to make the transition to the human way of life. So when this story begins, there were a



few other guests at 41 Fairfield Road whom I really ought to tell you about. The current crop of live-in students at the Bolds' were a wild boar called Craig, who had trotted all the way to Teddington from a field in Newbury (Craig's ambition was to start his own brewery selling delicious homemade truffle-flavoured alcohol-free beer); Miss Paulina the otter, who didn't have a career in mind, but thought she might have a vocation as a nun. And a very noisy, rather argumentative goose called Snappy who would one day make a very good traffic warden.

Let's get going. Our story begins with a series of mysterious disappearances. Things start to go missing, and what this leads to is a whole heap of trouble for the Bolds.

One summer's day, before lunchtime, Bobby Bold decided to make himself a cheese sandwich. He buttered two thick slices of bread, piled some cheese and pickle on one, slapped the other slice on top, cut it in half and put it on a plate.

'What else?' he thought. 'Ah, a nice tomato would be tasty.' He turned round to get one from a bowl on the other kitchen counter, rinsed it under the tap and turned back to his sandwich. But would you believe it? The sandwich had gone. Vanished. Just a few crumbs left. He blinked at the empty plate, looked to the left and the right in case he'd moved it, looked over to where the tomatoes were,

but there was no sign of the cheese sandwich anywhere. Bobby scratched his head and frowned. Had he eaten it and forgotten? His stomach rumbled loudly, so he knew that wasn't it. He looked around again, even opening the fridge and peering inside, just in case he'd put it there.



Some people might have got cross at this point, but Bobby hardly ever got cross. He wasn't the type. In fact he smiled.

'Someone is playing a game with me!' he said to himself. 'Very funny!' He folded his