COOKIE

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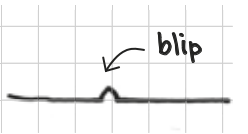
CHAPTER 1

Ugh!

Ugh, typical! Something just had to go wrong didn't it? And everything had been going so well since the beginning of term and the whole 'Jake thing'.

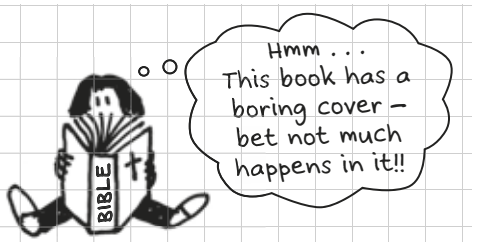


I mean, not getting on with Jake almost seems like a blip now!



It's weird to think how much I hated Jake at the beginning of the school year. Crazy weird! It's like *that* Jake was a different person from *this* Jake.

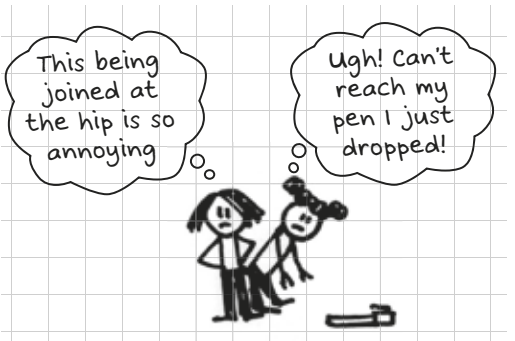
It's so easy to judge a book by its cover . . .



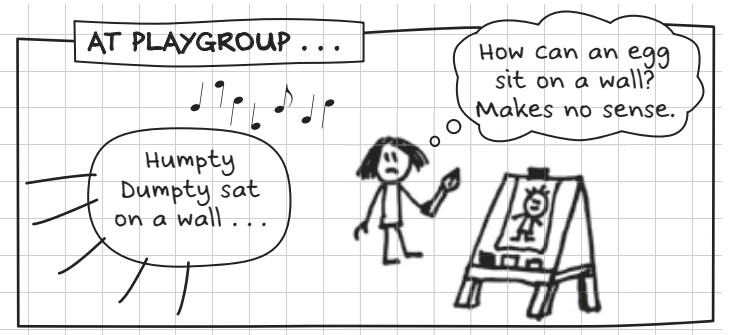
Now that I've got to know him properly he's GREAT and nothing like I thought back in those early days.

HIS DEEDS	MY THOUGHTS	
	THEN	NOW
Giving me some of his Dairy Milk 	Ugh! He's trying to show how generous and kind he is	He's generous and kind and shares his Dairy Milk
Bringing homework round when I'm ill off school 	Ugh! He's sucking up to my parents to show how studious he is	He's worried I'll get behind at school
Teaching me long words like DEFENESTRATE (to throw out of the window) 	He's trying to outsmart me by saying long, cool words	He's helping me expand my vocabulary by saying long, cool words

Me, Jake and Keziah are like a little gang now. Hard to believe, because I've never been in a gang before and also cos I never thought anyone could come between me and Keziah. We've practically been joined at the hip for the last two years.



Before Keziah, I'd always been a bit of a loner. Mum says I was even like that at playgroup. All the other kids loved taking part in group activities, whereas I'd always be doing my own thing at the back of the class.

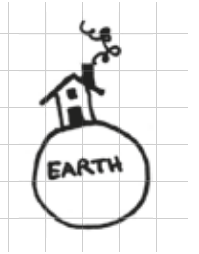


These days, at school, that's harder to do considering I sit right near the front.

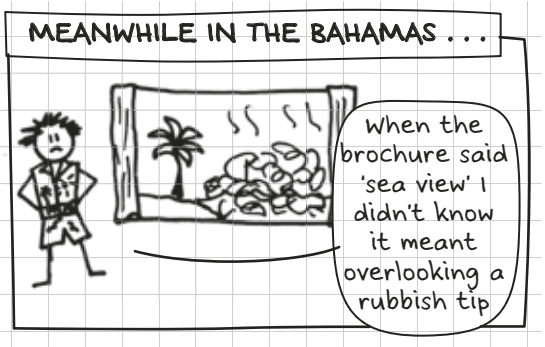


School is actually quite good at the moment. The head teacher, Mrs De Souza, is into science in a big way, so she's got everyone interested in climate

change and saving the planet, which personally I'm all for because it's where I live.



I watched this documentary the other day and it showed how harmful plastics can be. Get this, right – every day approximately eight million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into the sea. Eight million!!!

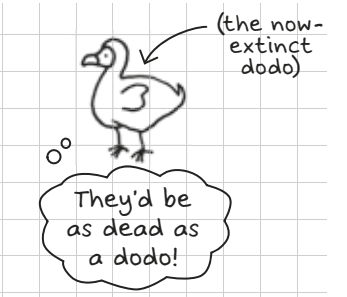


That's more plastic in the sea than there are people living in the whole of Scotland! Unbelievable!!!

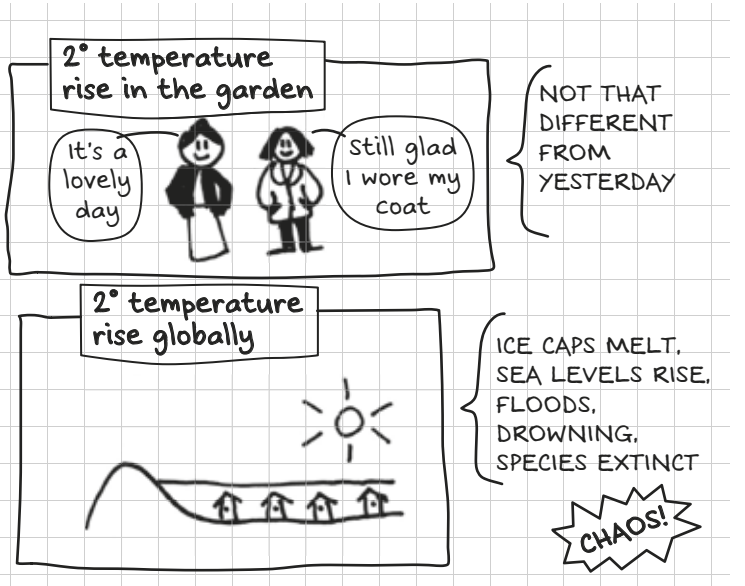
So since then I've been making the entire family ditch single-use plastic, start recycling and generally be more environmentally friendly.



Keziah and Jake are both down with the whole eco-friendly thing too. Can you believe that a one-and-a-half degree rise in average temperature will have an irreversible effect on our planet?! Loads of different species would be wiped out!



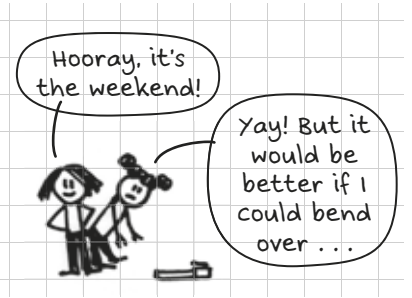
And it would be no good for us humans either. The sea levels would rise, land would be lost and millions of people would be made homeless. How crazy! All because of one and half degrees. It sounds like nothing!



We try to be eco-friendly in everything we do now.



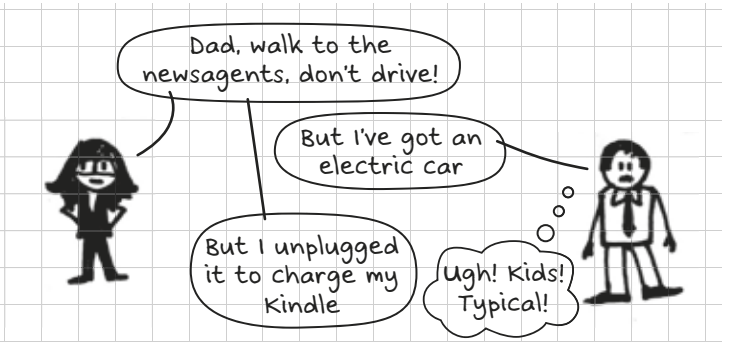
Keziah even cycled over to mine today. Since she got her new bike, her dads let her ride over on her own at weekends, which is SO good – it's like being an independent grown-up! We can practically spend all of Saturday and Sunday together. Bliss!



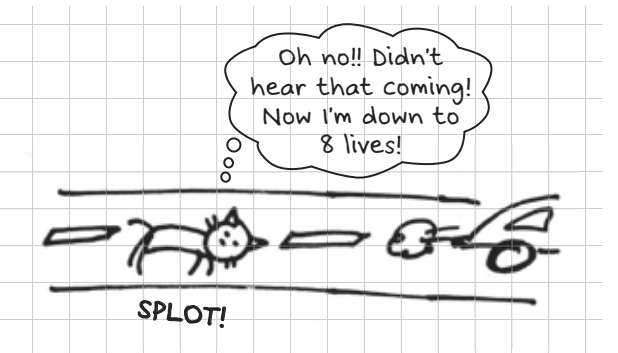
Thank goodness bikes don't have carbon emissions like cars do.



Roubi (my middle sister) has a friend whose dad owns an electric car, which is *also* really good as it doesn't use any petrol. You plug it in to charge as though it's a mobile phone or a tablet. How funny is that?!



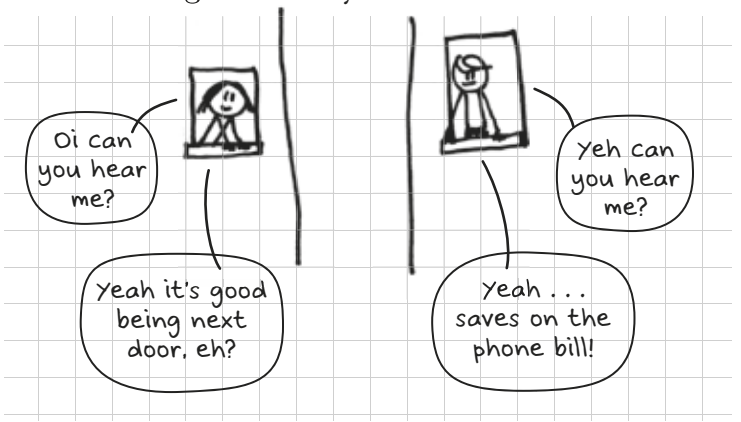
Roubi says it glides along without making any noise and often people don't hear it coming! In the future, all cars will be electric. They'll have to start making fake revving sounds or something or there'll be a lot of squashed cats on the road!



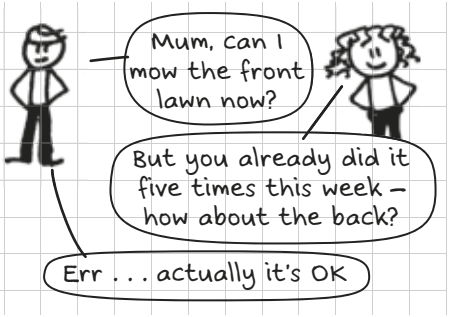
Anyhow, me and Keziah are sitting in the garden discussing what I should do for my upcoming birthday when who should jump over the fence but Bluey, the cat I share with Jake. She's probably getting out of the way of next door's lawnmower.



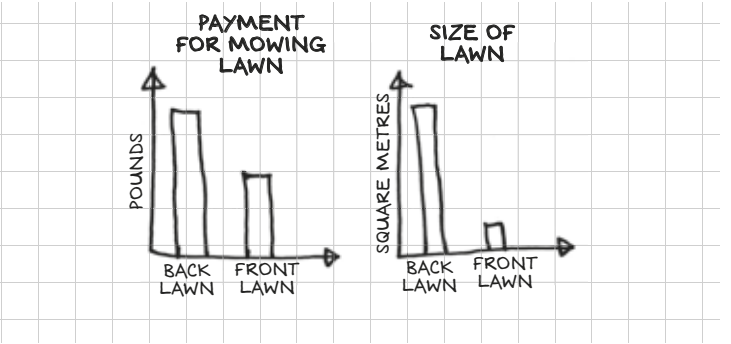
As well as sitting beside me at school, Jake is my next-door-neighbour, which, although I hated it at first, I've come to realise is actually quite a good thing. It's handy for missed handouts, having someone to chat to on the walk home from school, checking homework and so on. It's also nice to have a friend living so close by.



We can hear Jake cutting the grass next door. His parents pay him to do it, and at quite a good rate too. He gets ten pounds for the back lawn and five pounds for the front, which is WAY smaller.



If you were going on price per area he gets a much better deal on the front lawn as it's a tenth of the size!



My parents don't pay me to do anything. I'm just expected to do it all for free. Slave labour if you ask me!



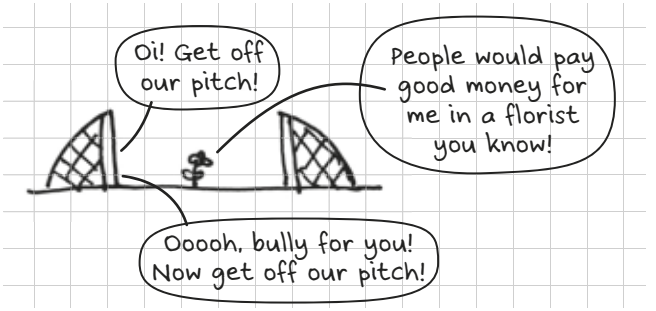
After Jake is finished, the three of us end up sitting in his back garden making friendship chains with all the freshly cut buttercups and daisies.



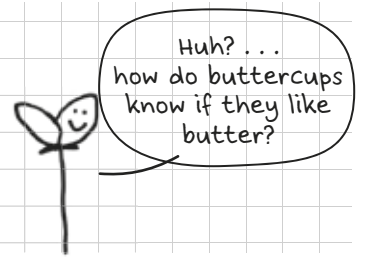
'Did you know daisies and buttercups are actually weeds?' Keziah pipes up.

'My gran reckons a weed is just a plant in the wrong place,' says Jake. 'It's only a weed if you don't want it where it is.'

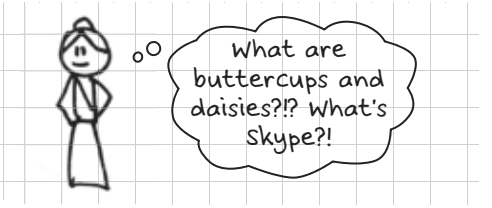
I've never thought of it like that! But I suppose if a rare orchid grew in the middle of a football pitch then it kind of would be a weed – you certainly wouldn't want it there disrupting the game!



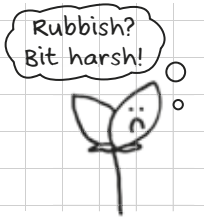
'My gran says you can tell if people like butter by holding a buttercup under their chin and seeing if it shines yellow,' adds Keziah.



She tries it out on us, confirming we all like butter. I couldn't really add anything to the 'what our grannies say about buttercups and weeds' conversation as my Nani lives in Bangladesh and I'm not sure that buttercups and daisies even grow there. Plus, she doesn't speak any English or even have Skype.



My mum gets long letters from her every now and then but I have no idea of her views on what is and isn't a weed. Although I could always add my own views to this conversation . . .

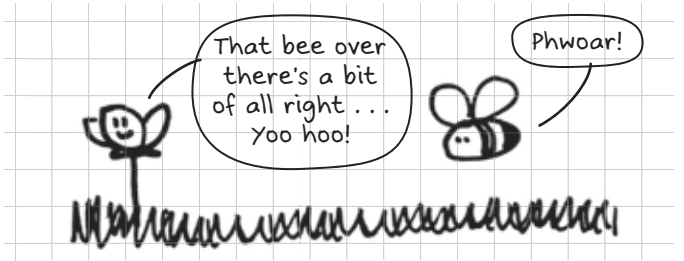


'The buttercup test is rubbish!' I declare. They stare at me so I have to back it up.

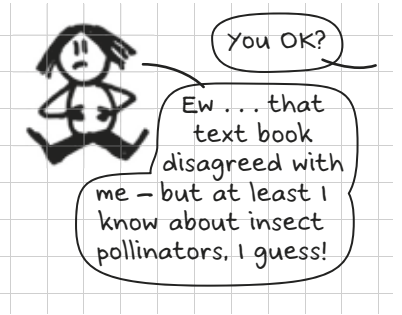
'It makes it seem like *everyone* loves butter, but surely not everyone in the whole world can!' I continue. 'What about people with a dairy intolerance?'



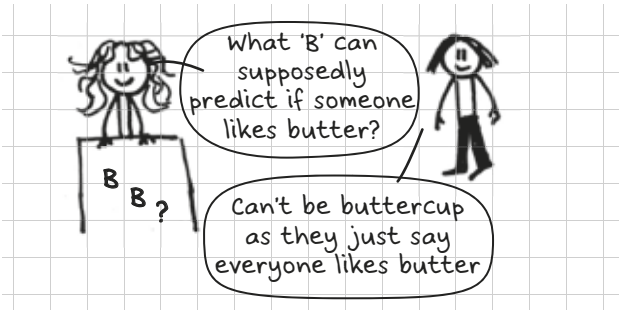
'Buttercups are so shiny because they're trying to attract insects to pollinate them from a huge distance,' I explain to Jake and Keziah.



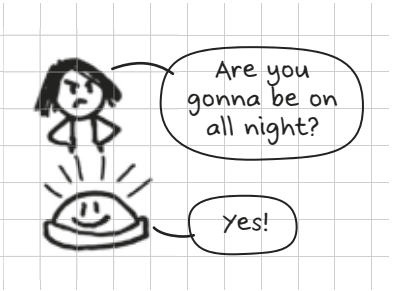
After I say it, I instantly realise how square I sound – it's like I just swallowed a textbook!



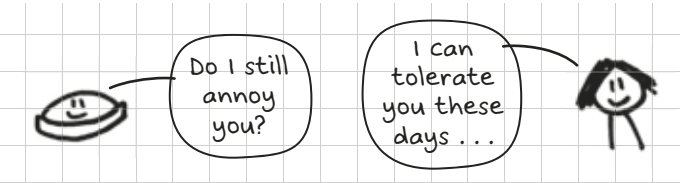
Luckily it seems to impress Jake, who remarks, 'With knowledge like that you should go on popular TV quiz show *Brainbusters*!' We all laugh.



It's starting to get dark outside and Keziah suggests we go in. Keziah has been scared of the dark ever since I can remember. She still sleeps with a night light on whereas I need pitch-black darkness. The first time I stayed over at her house, I couldn't sleep at all because of her annoying night light.



I can remember watching her Winnie the Pooh alarm clock and counting down the hours till morning. I've got used to sleeping at hers since then.



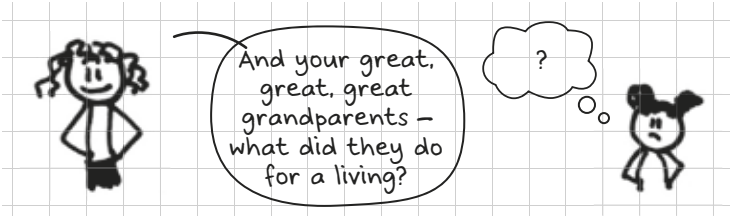
'Nah, let's stay out longer,' says Jake. 'You've got to conquer your fears face-on.'

'Bet, you wouldn't think that if *you* were scared of something,' I say.

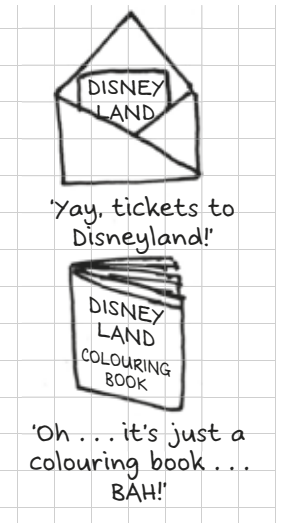
'Nothing scares me,' he replies defiantly.

'Everyone's scared of something,' says Keziah. '*Now please* can we go inside?'

After some protesting by Jake that his room is too messy for visitors and that the beautiful outdoors should be appreciated at night, he finally relents. We sneak past his mum, who is watching the news, and head up to his bedroom. Jake's mum hasn't met Keziah before so if she'd seen us, we'd never have gotten away – she'd have had her chatting for AGES.



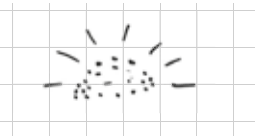
As we head upstairs, I notice a load of half-packed suitcases in Jake's parents' bedroom. Keziah asks him if they are going away and Jake tells us that his dad is taking his little brother on a trip to Disneyland as a treat for his birthday. Jake's family are SO cool. We NEVER do stuff like that in our family. I can't imagine getting a trip to Disneyland as a birthday present. That would be off the scale!



Jake's bedroom is so much fun to hang out in. It's really cosy with dark walls plastered with posters over every square centimetre, and a soft, thickly carpeted floor. There are loads of gadgets and gizmos too including a brand-new Aliana Tiny karaoke machine. Jake is currently obsessed with Aliana Tiny – he has *all* her music and can do *all* the dance moves from *all* her videos.



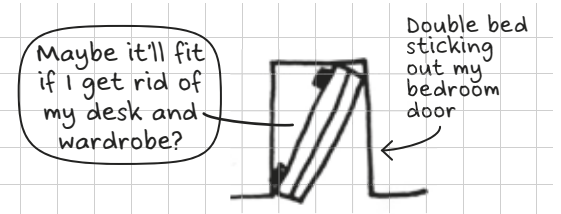
Jake is a really good dancer but me and Keziah are both rubbish. Unlike most kids our age, we're not really into Aliana Tiny. She's playing Wembley Stadium soon and all the tickets sold out in the FIRST HOUR! They're pretty much like gold dust.



Knowing Jake's parents, they've probably already got him a pair as a surprise.

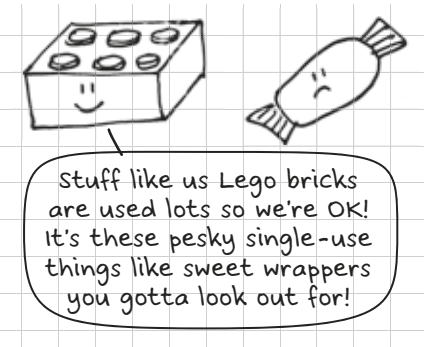


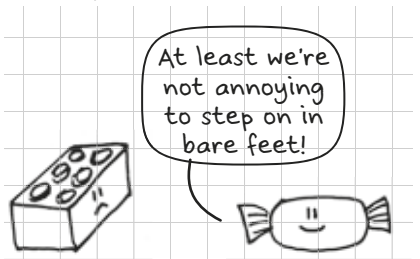
We plonk ourselves down on Jake's bed. Jake has a DOUBLE bed, which is pure luxury. He reckons it's because he has to give up his room if relatives come to stay but that's probably only once a year so he really *is* getting a good deal. No one else in our class has their OWN double bed. Not even Suzie Ashby. A double bed wouldn't even *fit* in my room!



Keziah looks around. 'Wow! You have so much stuff,' she says. 'All this plastic can't be good for the environment!'

'But it's not single use, like a carrier bag or drinking straw,' Jake protests. 'None of this is going in the bin any time soon.'

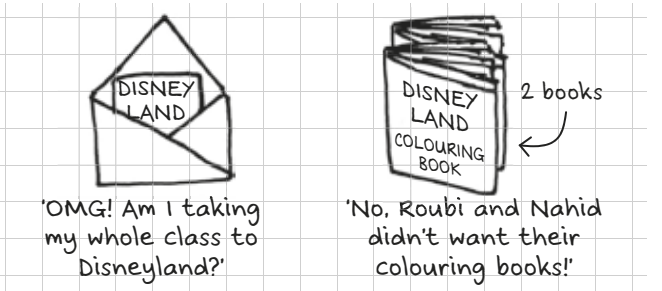




'True,' smiles Keziah. 'I've never seen so much stuff though. Your room is like Aladdin's cave!'

'Just birthday presents and bits and pieces that have built up over the years,' he replies.

That reminds me that I have to decide what I'm doing for *my* birthday. I never usually do anything but this one's the big 1-0. I'll be an entire decade old! One tenth of a century! Double figures! We all get thinking of a good way to celebrate.



'When is it exactly?' asks Jake.

'Two Saturdays' time,' I say.

'Isn't that's when Suzie Ashby's birthday party is?' Jake replies. 'Apparently she's inviting everyone in the class. I heard her telling Alison Denbigh. She reckons she's even getting a party planner.'

Keziah bursts out laughing. 'What? That's a bit grand, isn't it!? Where's she holding it? The Ritz?!'

Ugh. Suzie Ashby is having a party with the whole class at the Ritz – on MY birthday. How can I compete with that? I'll have to think of something and fast . . .