CHOCOLATE MILK, X-RAY SPECS AND ME

BETHANY WALKER
Illustrated by JACK NOEL

SCHOLASTIC

CLASSIFIEDS

To Robin, Elsie and Lonnie. With all my love.

FOR SALE



★★★★★★

COMPANY SEEKS SPROUT LOVER

Have you considered being a sprout farmer? If you love to work in the field and enjoy travel, this could be the job you seek! Just solve this clue to apply:

EQDCCXHRFQDZS

Mr and Mrs Spicer
The International Federation of Sprout Farmers
11353
Outer Castonga

March 30

Dear Mum and Dad,

Have you arrived in OUTER CASTONGA yet? I hope your journey went well. I'm still GUTTED that I couldn't come with you - are you ABSOLUTELY sure I can't join you?

It sucks that you've had to go away so soon after we've moved here. And who cares about farming SPROUTS? I mean, what's the worst that could happen: no sprouts? I wish you were still cabbage-farming in Norfolk - at least then we were all together.

And why did you have to go away during the Easter holidays? There's NO ONE around to play with. You remember Ajay Coppertee? Like us, he's only just moved here and we started school at the same time? Well, Ajay is the one friend I've made since we moved here and he's on holiday with his dad, so the only person I've got to hang out with is Grandad. It's really boring.

I've been working hard on my Easter project. It was so nice of Lamont Riley to tell me about it. Lamont normally barely speaks to me. I can't believe I missed Mr Norbert's announcement to the class about the Easter project when I went off to the loo. Lamont *went out of his way* to tell me all about the project. So nice of him! A 5,000 word essay on the history of pencils seems like a strange project to set - and it doesn't link with anything we've been learning at school - but at least it's something to do!



At EVERY meal, Grandad is feeding me sprouts. YUCK! Just because we get them free! I know you said, *"A day without sprouts is a day without sunshine,"* but I'd be quite happy with a gazillion days of rain if it meant I didn't have to eat sprouts!

Better go. It's time for my chocolate milk. But Grandad always stirs the powder in. It's soooooo much better how you do it - shaken, not stirred.

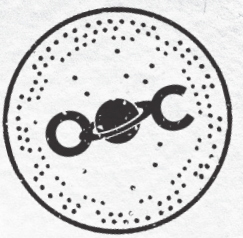
Love

Freddy



P.S. I tried to find **OUTER CASTONGA** on our globe but couldn't see it. It must be a very small country.

Freddy Spicer
61 Bond Lane
Fleming
Flemingshire
BR0 CL1



April 4

Dearest Freddykins,

We have arrived safe and well in **Outer Castonga**. What rotten luck that you are severely allergic to Castongan Pine Spores! The ~~completely real~~ doctor you saw was quite adamant that it was too risky for you to come with us. We can't have our little Freddybobs getting sick! Conditions here are ~~dangerous~~ tough so it is probably a good job that you have stayed home with Grandad.

Our ~~mission~~ task to introduce new sprout farming techniques to **the farmers of Outer Castonga** should be simple enough and we'll be back before you know it.

In the meantime:

- Make sure Grandad looks after you
- Stay out of the study and away from our special gardening equipment in the shed

- Eat your sprouts. They are nature's gobstoppers.

Sending you big hugs and kisses.

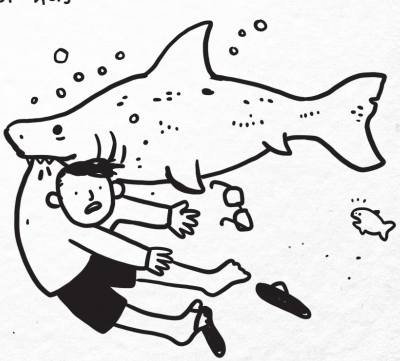
Lots of love,
Mummy and Daddy

Mr and Mrs Spicer
The International Federation of Sprout Farmers
11353
Outer Castonga

April 6

Dear Mum and Dad,

School has now started back after the Easter hols but the WORST thing has happened... Ajay has suddenly left!! After just one term! How come the ONE friend I'd made at Fleming School has already moved away? It's rubbish. There's a rumour that Ajay's dad, Mr Coppertoe, was last seen being carried away by a shark while holidaying on a super-yacht but no one really believes that.



I'm dead upset - I loved playing hide-and-seek with Ajay. And Mr Coppertoe had all this fancy computer equipment that he allowed Ajay and me to play on. There were so many strange devices - our favourite game was pretending Ajay's dad was an enemy spy. I know we'd only been at school together for a term but Ajay was my best friend and it's soooooooo pants that I'm starting my second term without him. ~~I was looking forward to not being the friendless new boy for a change but I'm right back at square one.~~

Now I have to start all over again and make new friends. There's one boy who seems OK in my class, called Lamont Riley. Lamont is the smallest boy in the year but he's really loud to make up for it. And he has the most *amazing* eyebrows - like two slugs dancing on his forehead! He's the one who told me about the

Easter project - but I think Lamont must have made a mistake coz when I handed my project in, Mr Norbert said there was no Easter project. But Mr Norbert gave me a smiley face for effort AND I now know that the oldest known pencil is from the Seventeenth Century, so it wasn't a total waste of time.

Lamont plays for the football team so I thought I'd give that a go. I "tried out" for the team but all that running made me feel like I was going to explode - it's those blummin SPROUTS! I was just about to score but as I took aim, I knew I was about to PARP, so I stopped to let the feeling pass AND THEN Maya Peterson stole my shot and got a team place instead. SO UNFAIR! I bet *she* doesn't have to eat sprouts every day.

How is OUTER CASTONGA? I wish I was

with you. Should I be worried about my allergy to Castongan Pine Spores here? I told Mr Norbert about it so it could go on my school medical record but he just said, "That's not a thing." Teachers don't always know everything, do they?

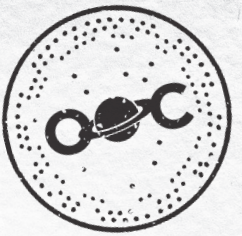
Hurry up and come back.

Love

Freddy

P.S. Have you ever tried eating mashed sprouts? THEY ARE DISGUSTING!!!!!!!!!

Freddy Spicer
61 Bond Lane
Fleming
Flemingshire
BR0 CL1



April 10

Dearest Freddykins,

What a shame about your friend, Ajay – and poor Mr Coppertoe! Don't be too disheartened, though, and do keep trying to make new friends. Lamont sounds nice. How clever of you to think about joining a club! Sport has never really been our little Freddy-Weddy-Woo's thing. What about something else, like knitting? Or origami? Or model railway building?

We feel terrible leaving you, but trying to make friends is the best thing you can be doing. And don't forget Grandad will be feeling lonely too as he doesn't know many people there either. You can always spend time with that lovely ~~agen~~ woman over the road, Desiree Delicata. She's very caring and will be glad to help you out if you need anything.

Sorry this letter is brief. We're loving receiving your letters. I know it's a pain that we can't email but ~~we just cannot rely on the security of the internet~~ there is no internet provision in Outer Castonga.

Got to go – urgent ~~International Esp~~ sprout matters to attend to.

Lots of Love,

Mummy and Daddy

Mr and Mrs Spicer
The International Federation of Sprout Farmers
11353
Outer Castonga

April 13



Dear Mum and Dad.

Thanks for your ~~short~~ letter. But can you just call me Freddy? Enough with the Freddykins and Freddy-Weddy-Woo. I am nearly ten, not four!! And it can have serious consequences. I wasn't thinking and called Lamont "Lamonty-Wonty-Woo" yesterday and he completely laughed in my face. And then he told EVERYONE in class VERY LOUDLY. How am I supposed to make friends with him or *anyone* now?

I've asked around about different clubs. Lamont told

me there was a club in the hall every Monday where you can make long stands and big weights, which sounded interesting so I went to check it out. I was standing around waiting for AGES but no one turned up. ~~It got really lonely.~~ I think Lamont must have got the day wrong.

I do have a new after-school activity, though. Mr Norbert has said I need extra help with maths. So every Tuesday, I'll be doing MAGICAL MONSTER MATHS for two hours. SO LAME! There's nothing magical or monstery about it. The one good thing is that Lamont is also in the group and we're going to sit together.

It's funny you wrote about Desiree Delicata in your last letter - she suddenly popped round yesterday with



a freshly baked cake, which was DELICIOUS! She said she'd check in on us from time to time to make sure we're OK. Isn't that nice? Why does she always wear really flowery dresses, though? She looks like a flower shop has thrown up on her!

Hurry up and get your job done.

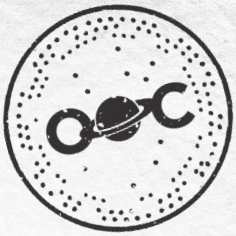
Love

Freddy - (NOT Freddykins, not Freddy-Weddy-Woo and not even Freddly-Beddly-Bob)

P.S. I can't find Captain Cuddles. You know I struggle to sleep without him. Did you move him?

P.P.S. The Fred-Meister is acceptable.

Freddy Spicer
61 Bond Lane
Fleming
Flemingshire
BR0 CL1



April 15

Dearest Freddykins,

Our important **sprout** work is going well in Outer Castonga but we are missing you so very much.

We're so glad you're getting help with maths. Numbers are so important. You were always much better at writing, though, and we enjoy your letters very much. Is there any club you could do with writing? Maybe don't ask Lamont about more clubs – it sounds like he enjoys pulling your leg!! We love how trusting you are, but don't let people take advantage of you!

It's nice that Desiree is looking out for you. Don't hesitate to call on her, day or night. And yes, her flowery dresses are quite something, aren't they?

We promise we'll be back before your birthday in June.

Be thinking what you might like to do.

Love and hugs from

Mummy and Daddy

Mr and Mrs Spicer
The International Federation of Sprout Farmers
11353
Outer Castonga

April 18

Dear Mum and Dad,

A ~~really awful embarrassing horrid~~ thing happened this week. There's a boy in my year called Jordan Fishwick. He is REALLY tough - you don't want to mess with him. He always has his hair slimed down over his eyes so you never know whether he's actually looking at you. Jordan's obsessed with making online videos of him pushing people over - he gets LOADS of views! Well, this week Jordan tried to push me over, but instead he just pushed lots of sprout wind out of me. He looked so disgusted I thought he was going to squash me like a





maggot - but no! He just shouted, "Aw, that's disgusting, Freddy-Farty-Pants," and now the video is online. #FreddyFartyPants is the most popular video uploaded in the history of the school. So more kids at Fleming School know who I am but it's not helping me make friends.

I blame SPROUTS - I wouldn't be windy and stinky if you did something else. Why don't you farm something tasty like oranges or chocolate? Or can you forget farming all together? I know! You could go work for Ma Teeny's Chocolate Milk Company! Then you could demonstrate to the whole world how to shake up the chocolate milk to get the mixture just right. Wouldn't it be awesome if you got free chocolate milk as a perk of your job, rather than FREE SPROUTS?? I'd be able to bathe in chocolate milk! Even with Grandad

feeding me them at EVERY meal. there's FAR TOO MANY sprouts for just me and him to get through.

Our house is starting to smell like a sprout farm. And so am I. ~~I wouldn't want to be friends with #freddyfartypants either.~~

Can you ask your work to send us fewer sprouts each week? Or even NO sprouts? Maybe when you ask your work to let you come home FOR MY BIRTHDAY!!!!

Which reminds me ... I've decided what I want to do for my birthday...

Wait for it... The



LASER GAME!!!!!
Ta-da!

It's a GENIUS idea because it will be an AMAZING way to make friends. EVERYONE talks about it but NO ONE has been - it's the "Number One Hottest Ticket in Town!!!" It would be SO COOL if I could invite people there for my birthday. I'd be the most popular kid in school! (Or they might at least forget about the online video). Freddy-Farty-Pants? *Freddy-Smarty-Pants.* more like. Please say you'll do this - my future happiness depends on it!

Did you know we were getting a new next-door neighbour? An old woman has just moved in. I've only seen her from a distance but she has bright red lips and very dark eyes. Grandad said she looks very "glamorous". She was wearing a very tight dress with a snake pattern on it - it looked like a snake had just swallowed a woman whole and was still digesting her. Is that glamorous?

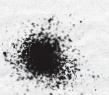
I will look into writing clubs at school - it's a good idea ~~but I've been so embarrassed by the online video that I've been hiding for most of this week~~. It would be nice to have something else to focus on. Lamont told me that there is an amazing "underwater chess" club in the sports hall, which transforms into a swimming pool on Wednesdays. I got ready and went along but it turns out it was just a regular chess club, which I ended up joining in my swimming trunks. It was really chilly! I think you were right about Lamont "pulling my leg". I have to stop believing what he tells me!



Love

Freddy

P.S. I was hoping Ajay Coppertoe might have written to me. I don't even know where he's moved to and I miss him.



National
Institute for
Criminal
Enterprises

To: **Dr Alpha Bett, Director**

From: **Operative A**

Date: April 19

Re: Mission "Missile Code Retrieval"

Dr Bett -

Are you sure the intelligence is correct?

You have requested 24hr surveillance on what appears to be a **perfectly normal family:** very ordinary boy and his grandad left behind in family home while the parents are working away. Only unusual issue to report is an unnatural obsession with sprouts.
Do you wish the operation to continue? I don't understand what I am doing here.

Why do you need my considerable skills?

Why am I stuck here in **nowheresville**?

Please confirm

Operative A (Lead Operative)