WHEN THINGS WENT WILD

Books by Tom Mitchell

HOW TO ROB A BANK

THAT TIME I GOT KIDNAPPED

ESCAPE FROM CAMP BORING

WHEN THINGS WENT WILD

WHEN THINGS WENT WILD

TOM MITCHELL

HarperCollins *Children's Books*

First published in the United Kingdom by
HarperCollins *Children's Books* in 2022
HarperCollins *Children's Books* is a division of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

HarperCollins*Publishers*
1st Floor, Watermarque Building, Ringsend Road
Dublin 4, Ireland

1

Text copyright © Tom Mitchell 2022
Illustrations copyright © Robin Boyden 2022
Cover illustrations copyright © Robin Boyden 2022
Cover design copyright © HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd 2022
All rights reserved

ISBN 978–0–00–840353–9

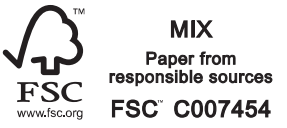
Tom Mitchell and Robin Boyden assert the moral right to be identified as the author and illustrator of the work respectively.

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

Typeset in Plantin by
Palimpsest Book Production Ltd, Falkirk, Stirlingshire

Printed and bound in the UK using 100% renewable electricity
at CPI Group (UK) Ltd

Conditions of Sale
This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form, binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd.



This book is produced from independently certified FSC™ paper to ensure responsible forest management.

For more information visit: www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

To Nicky, my wife

He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.
Mum*

.....

* after Alfred Lord Tennyson

CHAPTER 1

Spring and the sun have sprung. Friends play football; families meet in parks; everybody's happy. But not here. The sky's thick with charcoal-drawn clouds. Drizzle catches against your cheeks.

Welcome to Grantown, Scotland, the exact middle of nowhere. The nearest cinema's hours away. Nobody in their right mind would choose to live in a place like this. Nobody but my parents.

And don't think I'm hating on Scotland. I'm not. I *like* Scotland. It's this house – my house, a house so old it has a weird name: Aonar. An inherited house that belonged to Mum's great-grandmother or someone. A house in the middle of green-and-brown nothingness . . .

On the day my brother Jack found the device, I was

waiting for Wikipedia to load. That's how it started: a slow website.

We'd only been here for a week, but already I understood that the days of instantaneous internet were over. Online gaming? Forget about it. Checking Insta? Only if you've a few hours free. It was like falling back in time, but without any of the fun you see in the time-travel movies. Dad said we'd end up getting proper fast internet from a satellite someday. But Dad says a lot of things – mostly about policing.

The Wikipedia page I waited for was 'Glossary of Scottish slang and jargon'. I was starting at a new school on Monday and didn't want to be caught out by not knowing key terms.

'Just be yourself,' the parents said.

But they were so old they'd forgotten that you're only successful in school by doing the exact *opposite* of this. *And* I was English. *And* I was joining two terms in. It wasn't fair. You couldn't get a more perfect situation for encouraging bullying.

All that effort I'd put into making friends back in Nottingham: wasted. It's not easy. You've got to pretend to be interested in other people. It takes work. It takes time. And I'd been popular. Not captain-of-a-sports-

team popular, but people-saying-hi-to-me-in-corridors popular.

What made things worse was that Jack wasn't even starting school until the following September. Dad, when he wasn't off pretending to be a police officer (sorry – a volunteer community support officer), would be home-schooling him. And anyone who's ever done any remote learning knows exactly what that means: messing around and doing no work. And I *love* messing around and doing no work. They're my twin passions. Well, them and violent sci-fi films.

A knock on my bedroom door.

I put on my glasses to see who dared interrupt my 'me' time. Mum. Wearing a yellow waterproof jacket and smiling.

'Good news,' she said. 'We thought we'd go for a walk!'

'No,' I replied. 'No way. I refuse. We're *always* going for walks. My legs still ache from yesterday. You go. I'm fine. I'm preparing for school. I'm doing research. Really.'

'I'm not asking,' said Mum. 'I'm telling.'

And I opened my mouth to say that I couldn't think of anything worse than going for a walk in the Highlands,

WITH JACK, *again*. But no words emerged because she gave me the look, the look that shrivelled my very soul.

'Get your boots on,' she said. 'Now.'

Rolling off the bed in full grump, little did I know that the walk would CHANGE OUR LIVES.

Dramatic music