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opening extract from

# Dinkin Dings and the Frightening Things

written by

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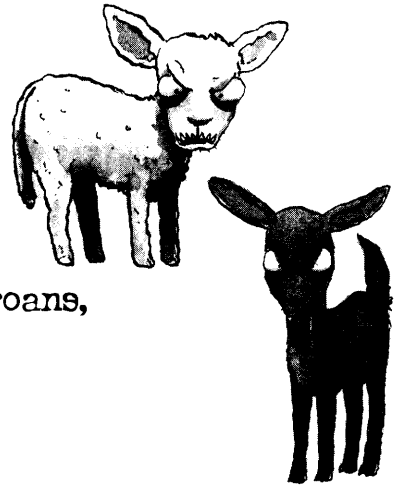
# THE THING ABOUT DINKIN DINGS



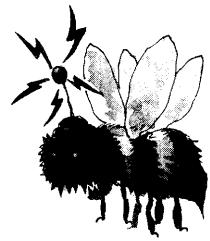
Dinkin Dings was afraid of everything. And not just actual scary things, like being stuck in a lift with a hungry jaguar or jumping out of an aeroplane with a handkerchief for a parachute. No, he was afraid of pretty much absolutely and totally everything. Dinkin could find reasons to be scared of things that weren't scary in the slightest.

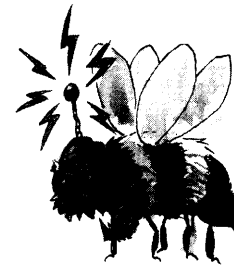
Here are his forty-seven most terrifying things as of 09.19 on the 19th of May:

Fairgrounds,
loud sounds,
busy villages and towns,
computer games,
silly names,
polished wooden picture frames,
road signs,
straight lines,
breakfast, lunch and dinner times,
lamp posts,
cold toast,
cardigans and game-show hosts,
dustbins and their dustbin lids,
sheep and goats (and lambs and kids),
telephones,
microphones,
whispers,
sisters,
moans and groans,
smelly feet,

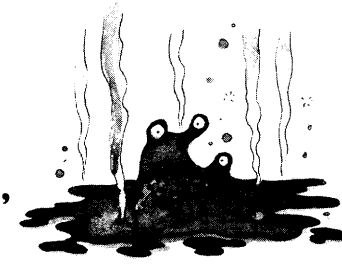


rotten meat,
crosswords that are incomplete,
trees,
peas,
knees,
fleas,





laser-guided killer bees,
carpet stains,
busy trains,
elephants with robot brains,
prison bars,
haunted cars,
every sort of thing from Mars,
doors,
chores,
dinosaurs (especially
ones that live indoors),



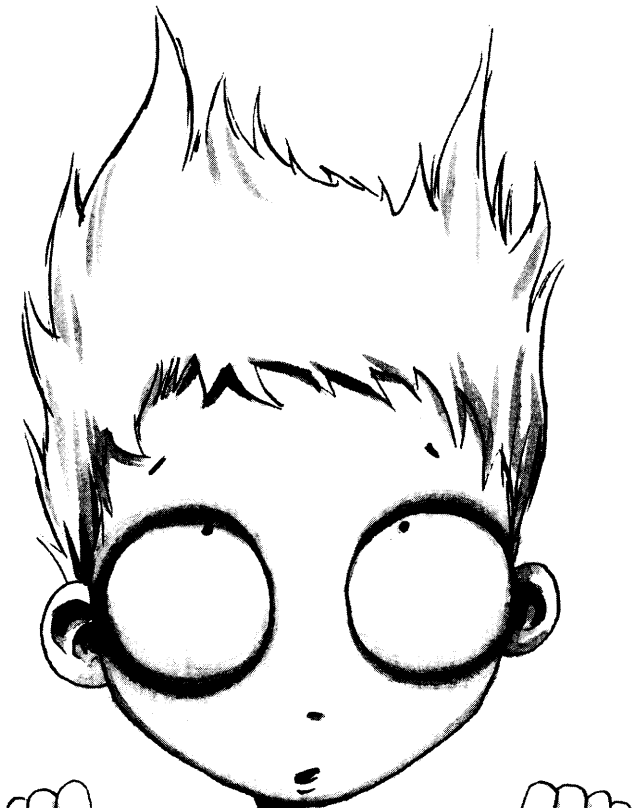
the art of mime,
mutant slime,
and lists of things
that seem to rhyme.



In fact, there were only three things that Dinkin wasn't afraid of.

He wasn't afraid of the Frightening Things.





# SECRET INVISIBLE KILLER SHARKS AND OTHER BATH-TIME PERILS

Risk of drowning: 18%
Risk of shampoo-in-the-eye: 65%
Risk of secret invisible killer sharks: 91.7%

"Dinkin! Time for your bath!" called Dinkin's mother, knocking on his bedroom door. It was four minutes past eight in the evening on the eleventh hottest day of the year.



"I'm not ready yet!" said Dinkin, as Mrs Dings opened the door. There was Dinkin in a pair of red swimming trunks, with water wings on each arm and leg. He was wearing makeshift breathing apparatus made from a plastic bottle, some old hosepipe and an entire roll of packing tape.

"The Bath-Buster 2.0 hasn't even been

tested – what if it malfunctions? I could drown!" he said through his breathing mask.

"I'm sure it'll be fine," said Mrs Dings, hurrying Dinkin into the bathroom.

"Did you check for poisonous jellyfish?" mumbled Dinkin.

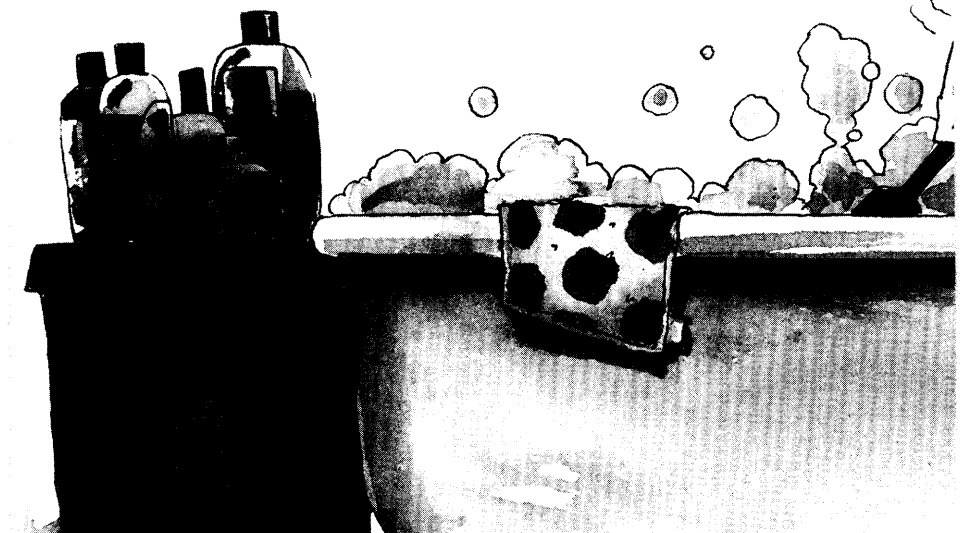
"Yes," said his mum.

"And sharks? Did you check for sharks?"

"Dinkin dear, I think you'd know if there was a shark in your bath."



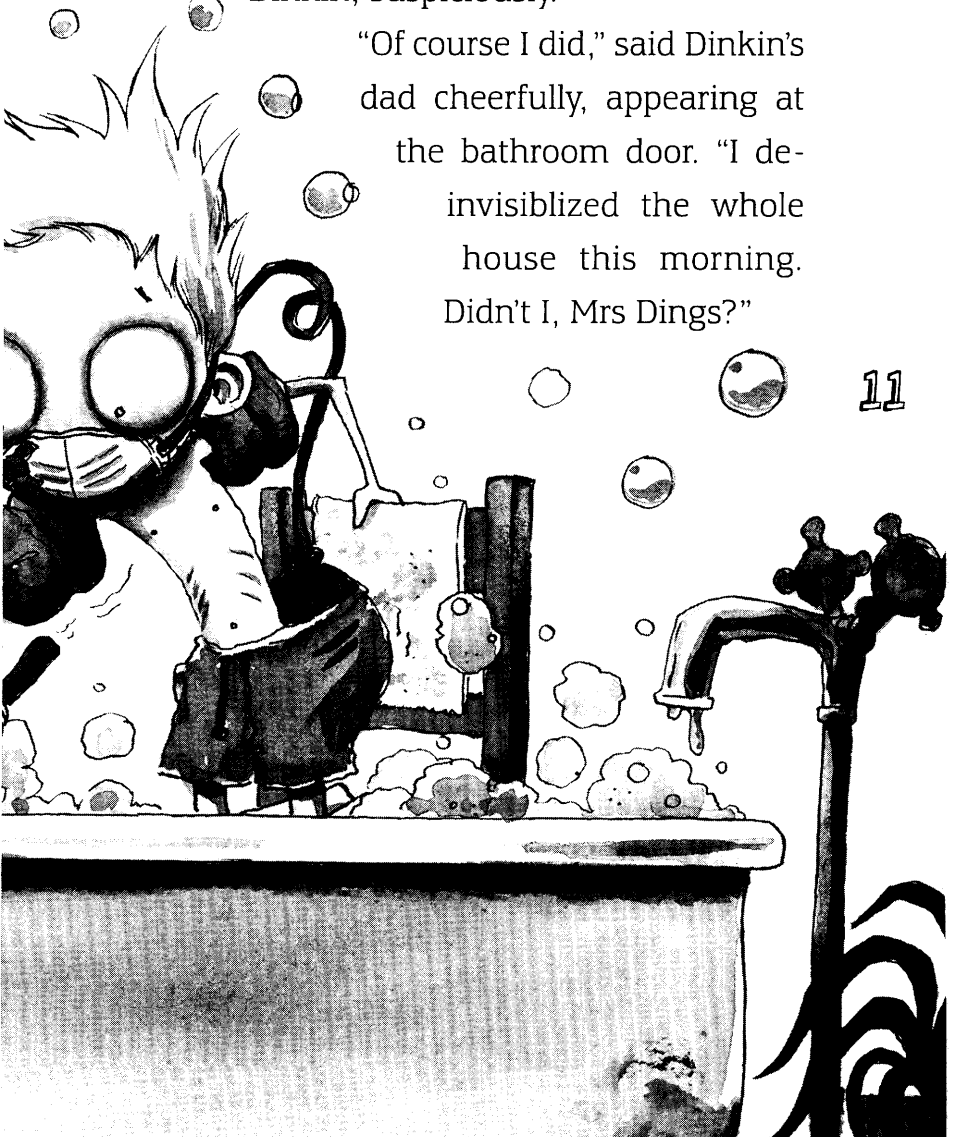
"What if it was an invisible shark? An invisible killer shark that escaped from a secret invisible laboratory that makes secret invisible killer sharks," said Dinkin.



"Oh, I think your father checked for invisible sharks," said his mum.

"Did he use the De-Invisiblizer?" said Dinkin, suspiciously.

"Of course I did," said Dinkin's dad cheerfully, appearing at the bathroom door. "I de-invisiblized the whole house this morning. Didn't I, Mrs Dings?"



"You did, Mr Dings," replied Mrs Dings, crossing her fingers behind her back. She had no idea what a De-Invisiblizer was – she could never keep up with Dinkin's inventions. In the last week alone, he had created:

The Anti-Sub-Atomizer Belt (to protect against spontaneous shrinkage).

The Void-Avoider (for the prevention of sudden other-dimensional entrapment).



The Insect Detector-Inspector-Deflector (for the detection, inspection and deflection of all insects - except weevils, which naturally required the Weevils-Upheaval attachment).

The Anti-Everything Machine (which, due to various explosions, was still in the development stage).

All of Dinkin's inventions seemed to be held together with sticky tape and string,

and made of anything he could get his hands on, from washing-up bottles to hairdryers to bicycle pumps.

"Well, as long as you de-invisiblized *everywhere*," said Dinkin, climbing carefully into the bath, using his not-quite-waterproof Aquat-O-Meter™ to scan for possible bath-related threats.

"Don't be too long," said Mr Dings. "We don't want you turning into a prune."

"*Turning into a prune*?!" squealed Dinkin. There were several things that Dinkin was terrified of turning into, including a fork, a snail and a cloud. But a prune must be the worst thing of all! Dinkin washed himself in exactly twenty-two-and-a-half seconds, then leaped from the bath and dried off.



"Prune indeed!" he said. "Why does no one warn you about these things? Danger is everywhere!"

And it was six seconds later that Dinkin heard The Sound of the End of the World.

# NEW NEIGHBOURS

Chance of rain: 27%
Chance of world ending: 65%

GRRRRAAUUUUUU
MMBFSSCHCHHHHH!

After hearing The Sound of the End of the World, Dinkin fled to his room and locked himself in his Fortress of Ultimate Protection. The fortress may have looked like four cardboard boxes tied together with string, but it was the only place in the world that Dinkin ever got close to feeling safe.



"IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD!"

he screamed.

