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Opening extract from

The Brilliant World of Tom Gates

Written by

Liz Pichon

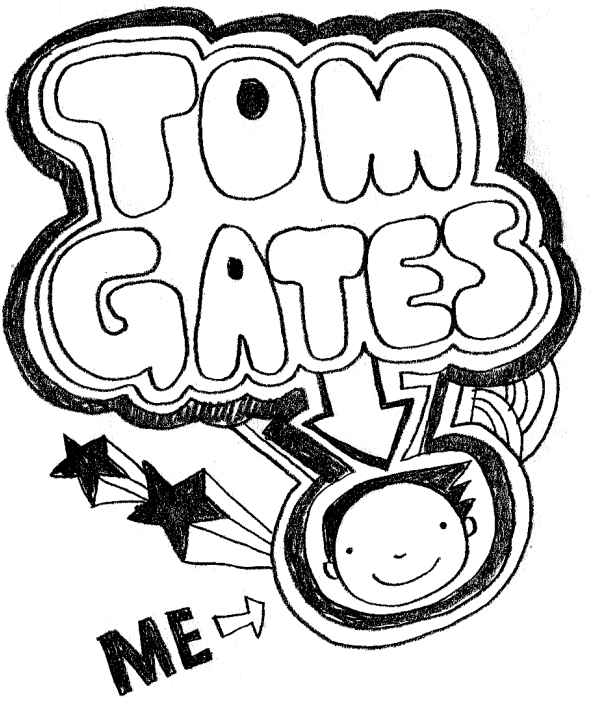
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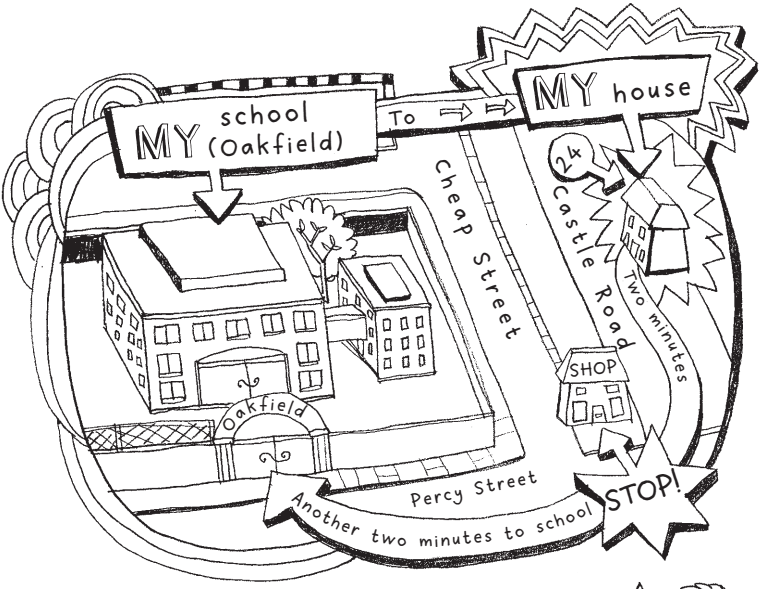
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TOM
GATES
ME


YEAH!
1

Even though I only live four minutes away from my school, I'm often late.



This is usually because me and Derek  (my best mate and next-door neighbour) "chat" a bit (OK, a LOT) on the way. Sometimes it's because we get distracted by delicious fruit chews 

and caramel wafers  at the shop. Occasionally, it's because I've had loads of other very important things to do.

For instance, this is what I did this morning (my first day back at school).

Woke up – listened to music

Played my guitar

Rolled out of bed (slowly)

Looked for socks

Looked for clothes

Played some more guitar

Realized I hadn't done my "holiday reading homework"

PANICKED – thought of good excuse for lack of homework (phew!). Annoyed my sister, Delia. Which I admit did take up a very LARGE chunk of the morning (time well spent though).

Hid Delia's sunglasses.

Took my comic into the bathroom to read (while Delia waited outside – Ha! Ha!). When Mum shouts...

"TOM! You're LATE For SCHOOL!"

Run past Delia (who's still waiting outside the bathroom and quite cross now). Ignore her sisterly love.



Save precious time by:



Not brushing hair

Not brushing teeth (for very long)

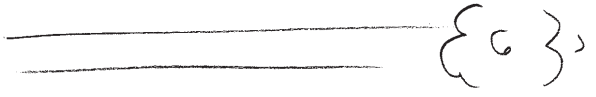


Not kissing Mum goodbye 

(Too old for all that kind of thing.)

Eat the last piece of toast, then grab my packed lunch and my bike. Shout BYE! to anyone who can hear me.

Then bike to school in about two minutes flat.



Which is a New TOM GATES WORLD RECORD... And this is the REALLY good bit... AMY PORTER has just arrived too!

 I am so pleased to see her after the holidays. I smile, in what I think is a nice friendly cheery way. 

Amy is not impressed. She looks at me like I'm weird (I'm not).



(This is a bad start to my day.)

Then it gets worse...

Mr Fullerman (my form teacher) makes the whole class stand outside our room. He says

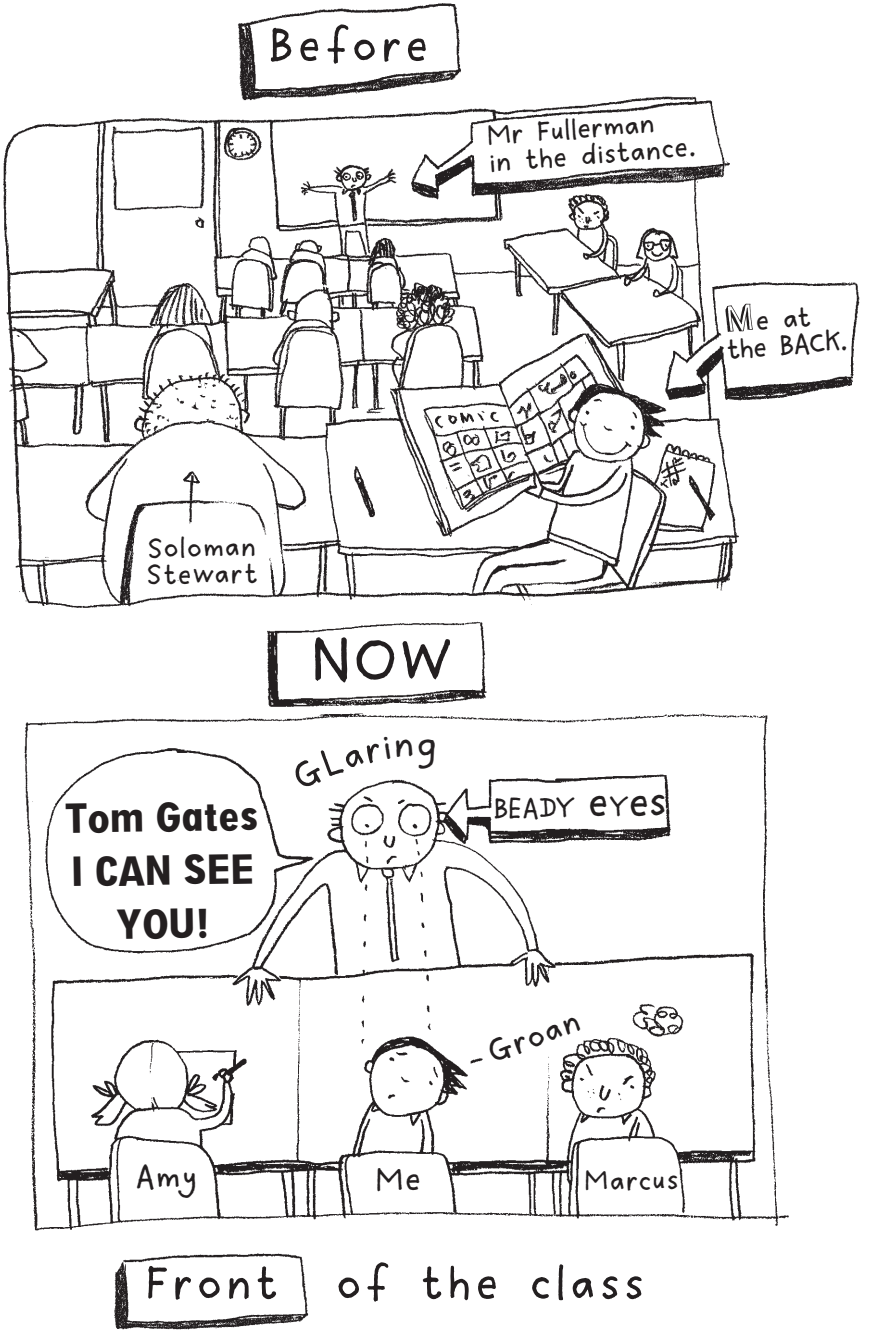
"Welcome BACK, Class 5F. I've got a BIG surprise for you ALL."

(Which is not good news.)

OH NO! He's rearranged ALL the desks! I'm now sitting right at the front of the class. Worse still, Marcus "Moany" Meldrew is next to me.



This is a DISASTER. How am I going to draw my pictures and read my comics? Sitting at the back of the class I could avoid the teacher's glares. I am SO close to Mr Fullerman now I can see up his nose.


Before
Mr Fullerman in the distance.
Me at the BACK.
COMIC
Soloman Stewart
NOW
GLaring
BEADY eyes
Tom Gates I CAN SEE YOU!
Groan
Amy
Me
Marcus
Front of the class

And if that's not bad enough, Marcus Meldrew IS the most annoying boy in the WHOLE school. He is SO nosy and thinks he knows everything.



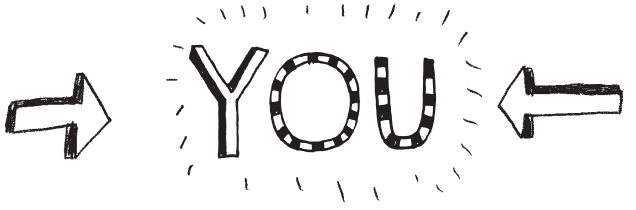
Marcus Meldrew is already annoying me...

He is looking over my shoulder while I'm writing this.

He is still looking... · ·

Still looking...

Yes, MARCUS, I'm writing about



MARCUS MeLdrew

has a face like a mouse.



Marcus Meldrew has a face like a

Moose!

Moosy Marcus...



(He's stopped looking now.)

BUT on the other side of me, the good news is I am now sitting next to AMY PORTER, who is very smart and nice (even though she didn't seem thrilled to see me this morning).

BRILLIANT! At least I can have a sneaky look over her shoulder for a few right answers.

I think she is looking at me now.

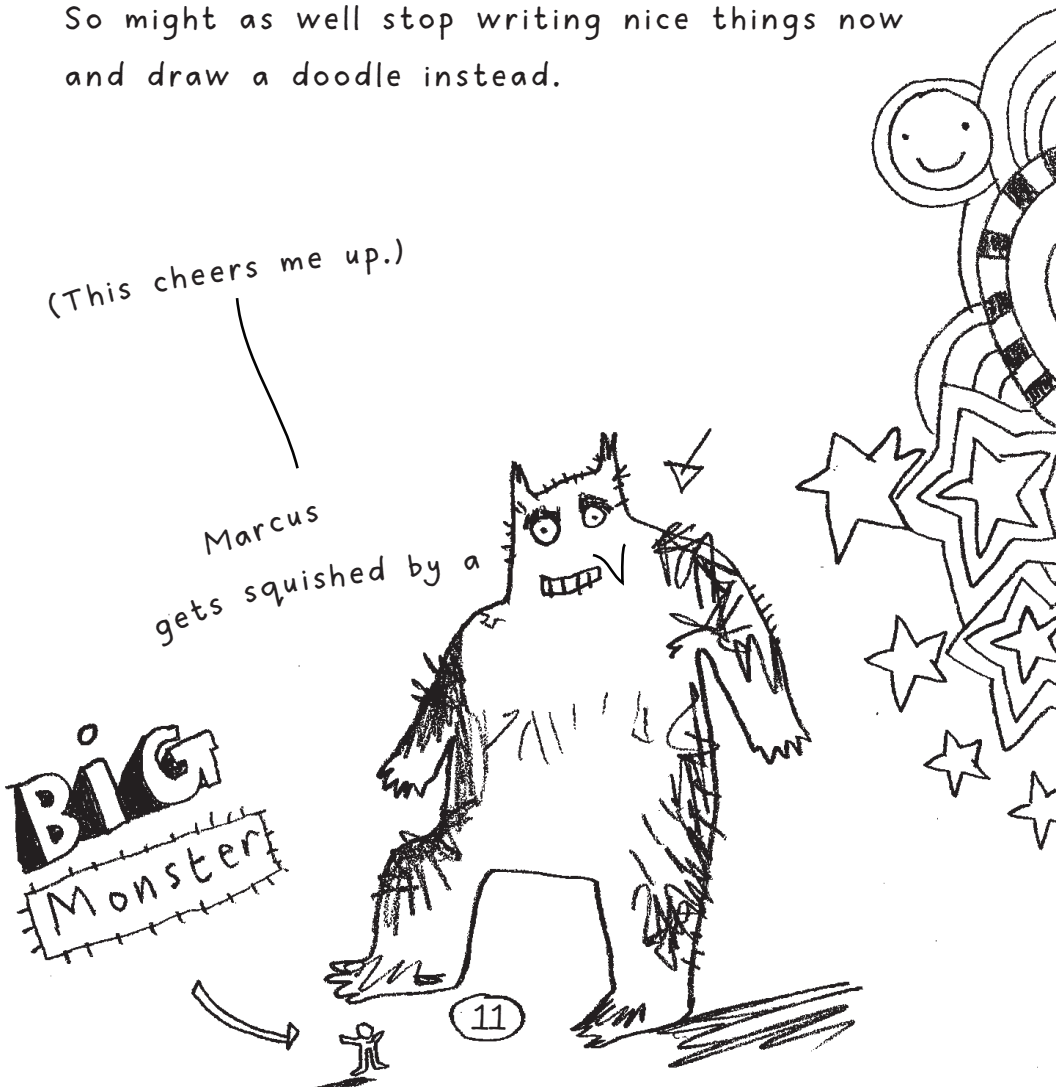
AMY PORTER is very nice.

AMY PORTER is SMART.

She's not looking.

She's ignoring me ... I think.

So might as well stop writing nice things now and draw a doodle instead.



Then Mr Fullerman says...

"As you can see, I've changed a few things around."

(Don't I know it!)

Then he begins to take the register.

(Usually I would take this opportunity to draw a few cool pictures, or take out my comic for a quick read. 

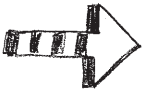
But I'm SO close to Mr Fullerman and his beady eyes, that I have to wait until he finishes and walks to the back of the class before I can get doodling in my book.)

OK, he's gone now. I'm thinking of names to call my band that Derek and I are in. We're not very good YET... but if I can think of a really good name, that will make us seem extra cool.

How about ALIEN TWINS? FOOT FIGHTERS?
I know ... DOGZOMBIES?



Mr Fullerman interrupts my drawing (I've turned the page over fast so he can't see it) and hands out the first piece of work we have to do this term. (Groan.)



Holiday Story Writing

Welcome back, Class 5F.

Today I would like you to write a story about what you did on your summer holidays.

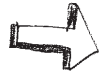
* Did you go away?
* Did you visit your family?
* What was the weather like and where did you stay?

Remember to describe everything in lots of detail.

I am really looking forward to reading all about your holidays!

Mr Fullerman

(My holiday wasn't a great success ... but it does have a very happy ending.)

Here goes 

Camping Sucks

This year Dad said, "Let's go camping, it's cheap." Mum didn't seem that keen, but I've never been camping before, so I was looking forward to it.

Dad and I went to the camping shop to buy a few essential items like:

1. Tent
2. Sleeping bags
3. Cooking stuff
4. Fishing rods
5. ~~TV~~
6. ~~Computer~~

"We won't need much," he said.

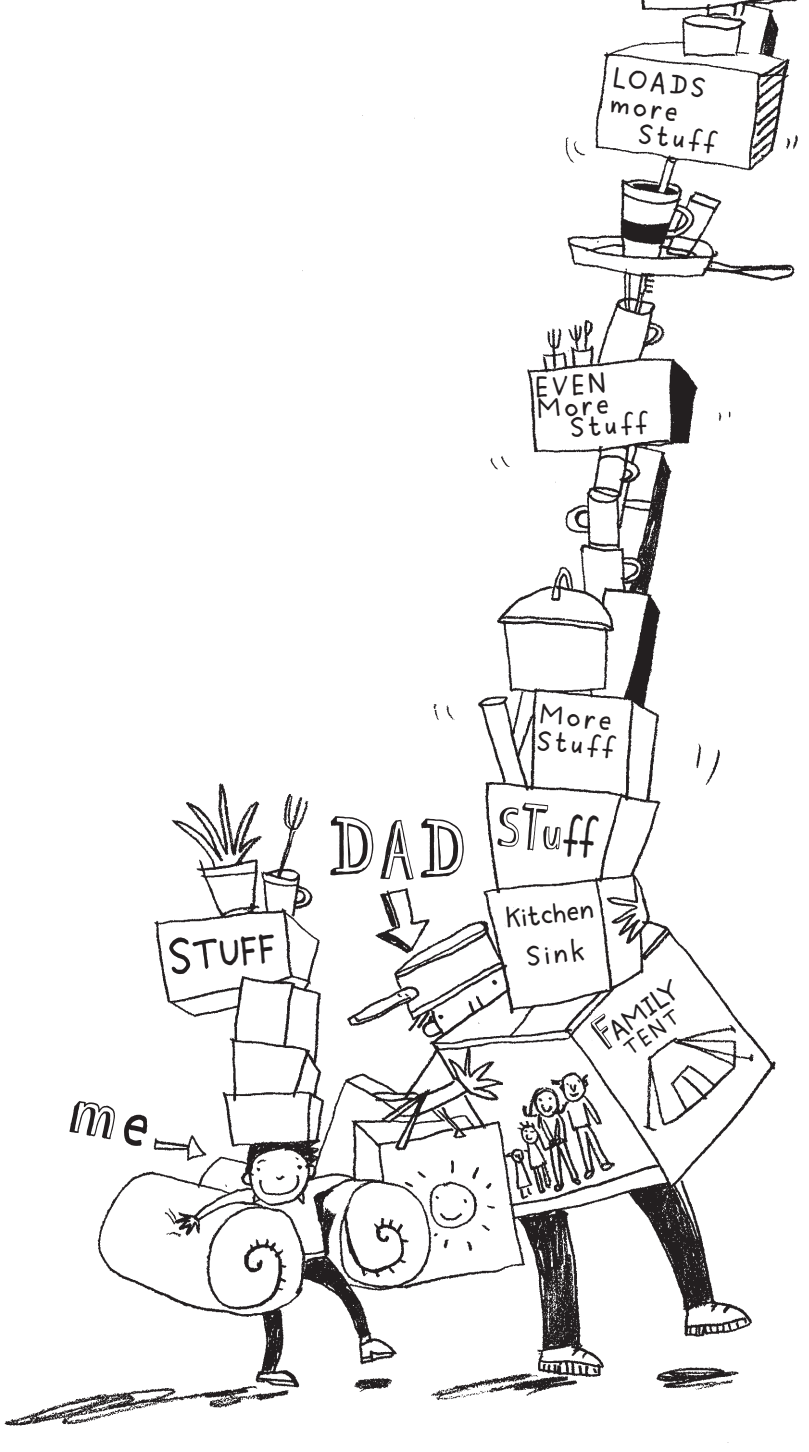


But the camping shop had some cool stuff and Dad got carried away. He spent a LOT of money and made me promise not to tell Mum.

"We could have stayed in a nice hotel, it would have been cheaper," Dad said.

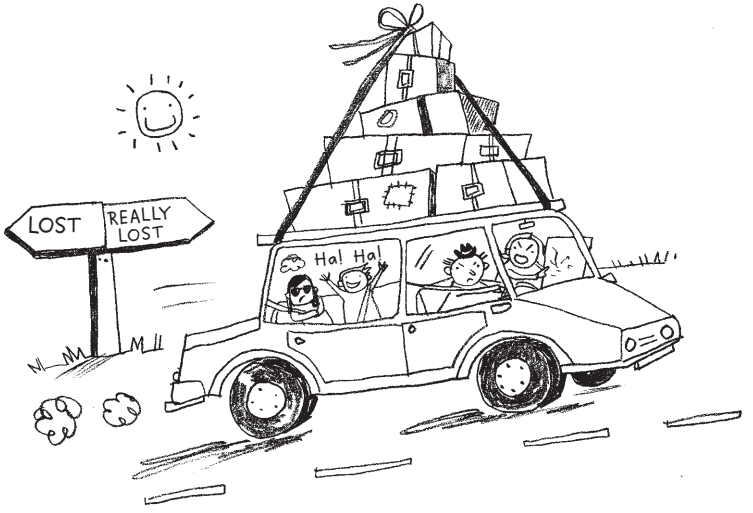
"Not the same as sleeping under the stars and waking up in the fresh air!" said the man in the shop as he took Dad's money.




LOADS more Stuff
EVEN More Stuff
More Stuff
STuff
DAD
Kitchen Sink
STUFF
FAMILY TENT
me

On top of everything Dad bought ... Mum packed a whole lot more. The car was stuffed. My sister, Delia, wasn't happy about coming with us. She's not allowed to stay in the house on her own any more, because she had a WILD party the last time Mum and Dad went away. (I stayed next door with Derek. His parents got woken up and weren't happy either.)

We set off, and for a while the holiday was going well. Then we took a wrong turning and got lost.



Mum blamed Dad for not listening to her properly. Dad blamed Mum for not reading the map the right way. They both blamed each other.



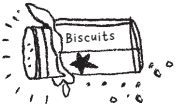
It was only when the car got a flat tyre  that they stopped arguing. They phoned the Car Rescue Service, who eventually turned up.

It took AGES to fix the tyre and we didn't make it to the campsite until it was dark. Delia wasn't happy (Delia's never happy). She said the place looked RANK and she couldn't get a signal for her phone. Ha! ha! ha! I thought it looked OK. So I helped Dad with the tent while Mum unpacked the car. (Delia did nothing.)

The tent was tricky to put up, but we did the best we could.

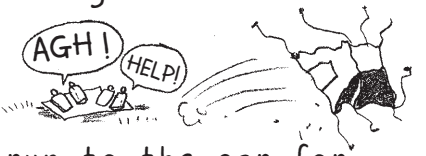


It was a bit late to eat. Dad said, "I'll cook a big breakfast in the morning." But my stomach kept rumbling and I couldn't get to sleep. Then I remembered the secret stash of biscuits in my bag. So I grabbed them and ate them all! Crumbs got everywhere and it was very uncomfortable in my sleeping bag. Even though we had a "family tent" with separate rooms, Delia could hear me shifting around and fidgeting. It was really annoying her. BRILLIANT! So I did it some more. But at the same time I could also hear Mum and Dad ...



SNoring and that was keeping me awake too. The noise was awful. It seemed to be getting louder and LOUDER. It was almost like thunder, deep and rumbly. Then I realized it sounded like thunder ... because it was thunder. Which was getting closer. There was lightning, too, and really heavy rain that was right above our tent. The storm was HUGE and it didn't take long for the tent to blow away.

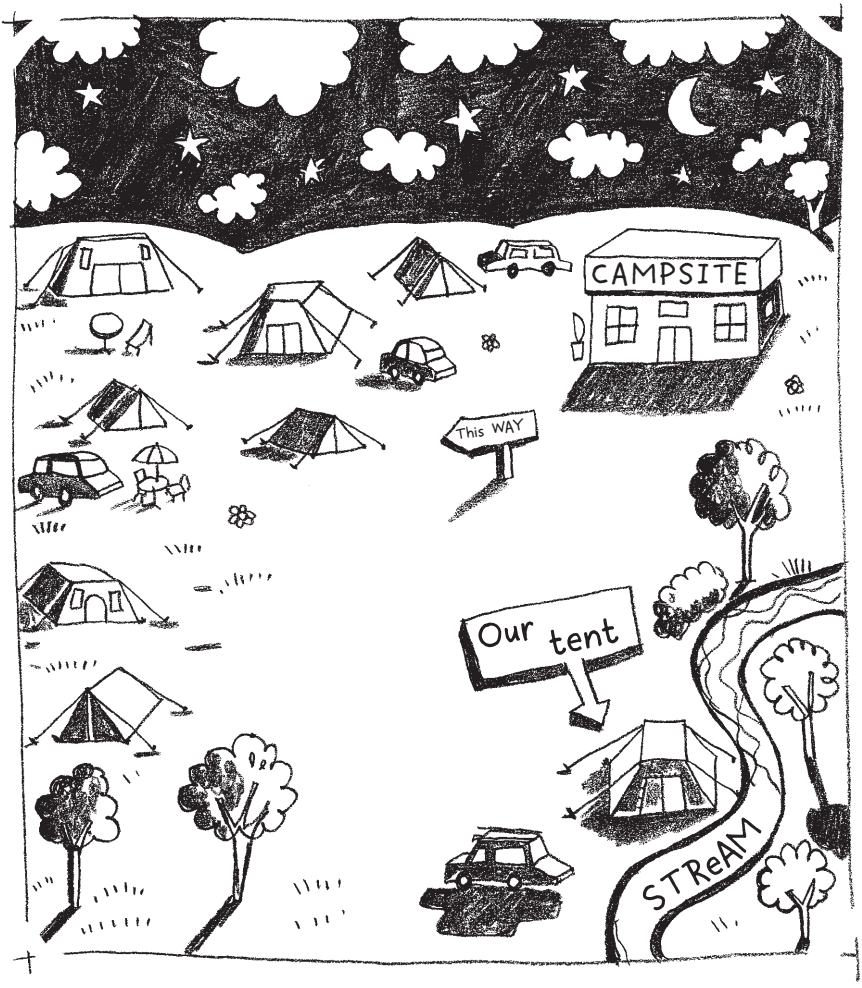




Everyone had to run to the car for cover. The storm lasted all night long and everything we had got wet and muddy. Dad had pitched the tent RIGHT NEXT TO A STREAM! Which flooded and all our stuff got soaked.

Nobody slept at all. It was miserable.





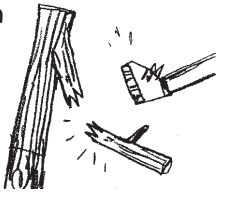
Spot the problem...

In the morning Dad tried to get his money back from the campsite owner (as we slept in the car).

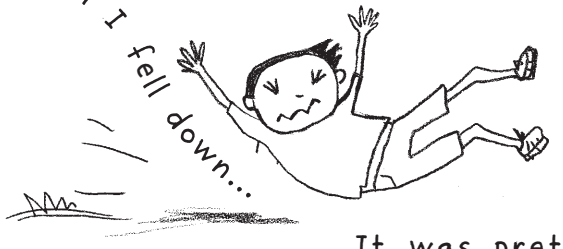


He complained a lot, but it didn't work. Mum collected our soggy belongings, which were all ruined (including the tent). I could hear her muttering things like "Proper holiday next year" and "Greece" under her breath.

Delia was crying (again) because her mobile phone had got wet and wasn't working. That cheered me up. So I decided to try and make the best of the holiday and go exploring. There were lots of interesting-looking trees to climb. I was nearly at the TOP of one, when suddenly a branch SNAPPED under my foot.



I hadn't realized how high up I was until I fell down...



It was pretty impressive, really... Delia heard me YELP as I hit the ground. She came over and just watched me as I rolled around on the ground in pain holding my arm. It felt REALLY BAD but Delia didn't look too concerned.



Eventually she got Mum.

"That's all I need," said Mum as she took me to the first aid tent. They gave me a lolly and put my arm in a bandage (I was very brave).

It looked like our camping holiday was going to be very short. More rain was due so Mum and Dad decided under the circumstances (no tent or dry clothes) we should go home.

I wasn't that upset and Delia was delighted. So we all packed up and left the campsite.



On the way home we stopped off in a nice restaurant, where I managed to eat a huge pizza with my one good arm. My bad arm was really hurting but I didn't complain because it was the first time in ages that everyone looked happy.



Our neighbours Mr and Mrs Fingle and Derek were surprised to see us back so soon. My bad arm was SO painful now that I went to my room to look at it.



Worryingly, it had turned purple and SWOLLEN up like a balloon.

I showed Mum and Dad. They looked shocked. Delia said "You look like a FREAK" (which was kind of her). Mum and Dad got back in the car and drove me to the hospital, leaving Delia at home.



Luckily ... my arm's not serious. I had just sprained it, and the bandage was put on too tight. So they redid it and put it in a very cool sling instead.

(I'll live, apparently.)

It was quite late by the time we got home and there was music BLASTING out from our house. Mum and Dad were FURIOUS



Delia had invited lots of her friends round for a party and BOY was she in trouble.

I forgot all about my sore arm because listening to Delia being told off and grounded by Mum and Dad was probably the BEST PART of my whole entire holiday.



THE END

It sounds like you had a very eventful time, Tom!
Excellent work. I felt like I was there ... but glad I wasn't!



Merits