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Opening extract from
**The Brilliant World of
Tom Gates**

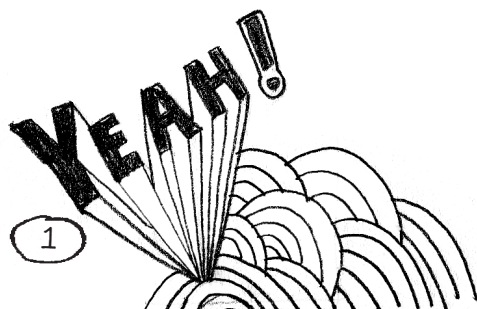
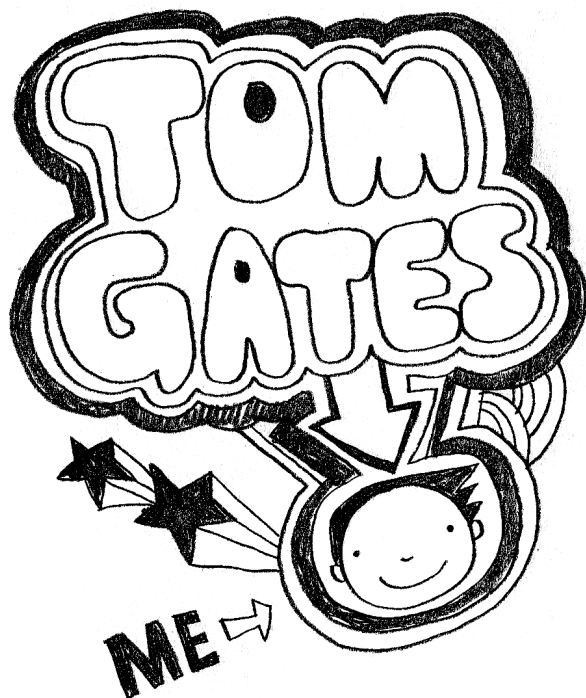
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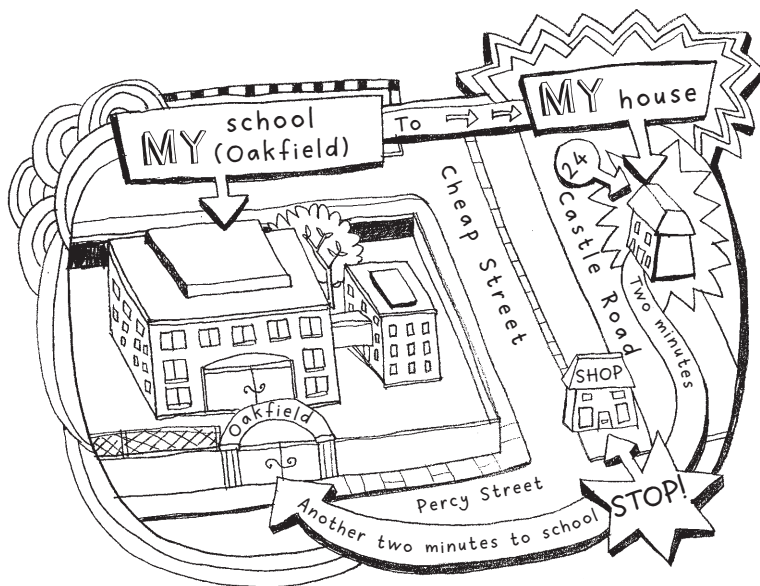
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Even though I only live four minutes away from my school, I'm often late.



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.

CREEP!



Save precious time by:



Not brushing hair

Not brushing teeth (for very long)



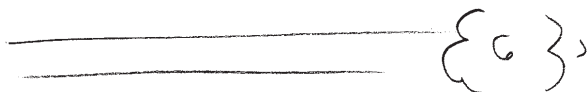
Not kissing Mum goodbye



(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.)

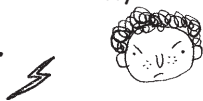
Then it gets worse...

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."**

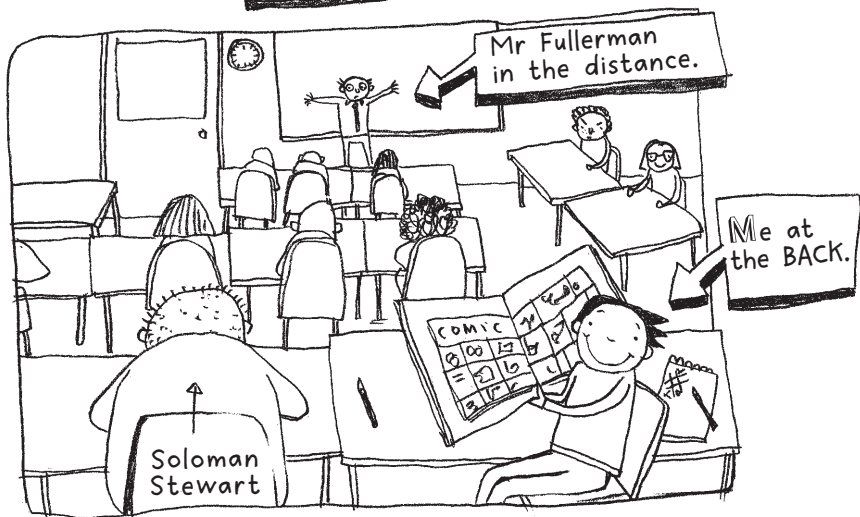
(Which is not good news.)

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.

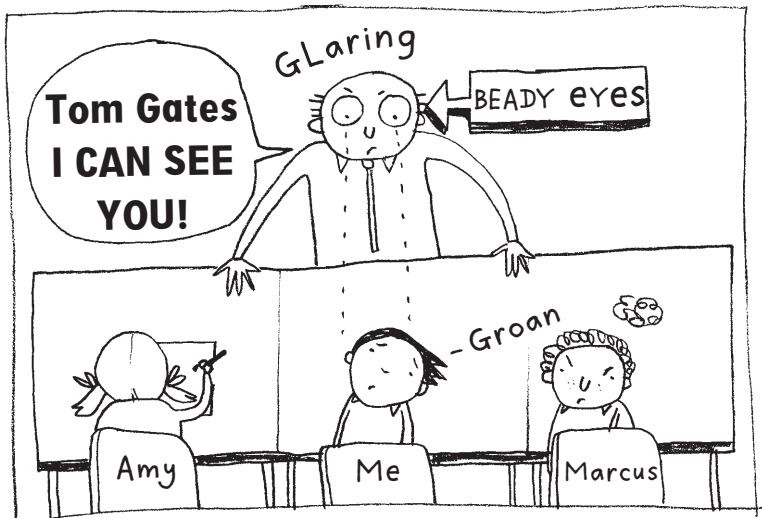


This is a DISASTER. How am I going to draw my pictures and read my comics? Sitting at the back of the class I could avoid the teacher's glares.  I am SO close to Mr Fullerman now I can see up his nose. 

Before



NOW



Front of the class

And if that's not bad enough, **M**arcus
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.

(This cheers me up.)

Marcus
gets squished by a

BIG
Monster



11



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.

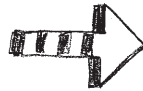
(Usually I would take this opportunity to draw a few cool pictures, or take out my comic for a quick read.  But I'm SO close to Mr Fullerman and his beady eyes,  that I have to wait until he finishes and walks to the back of the class before I can get doodling in my book.)

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:

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



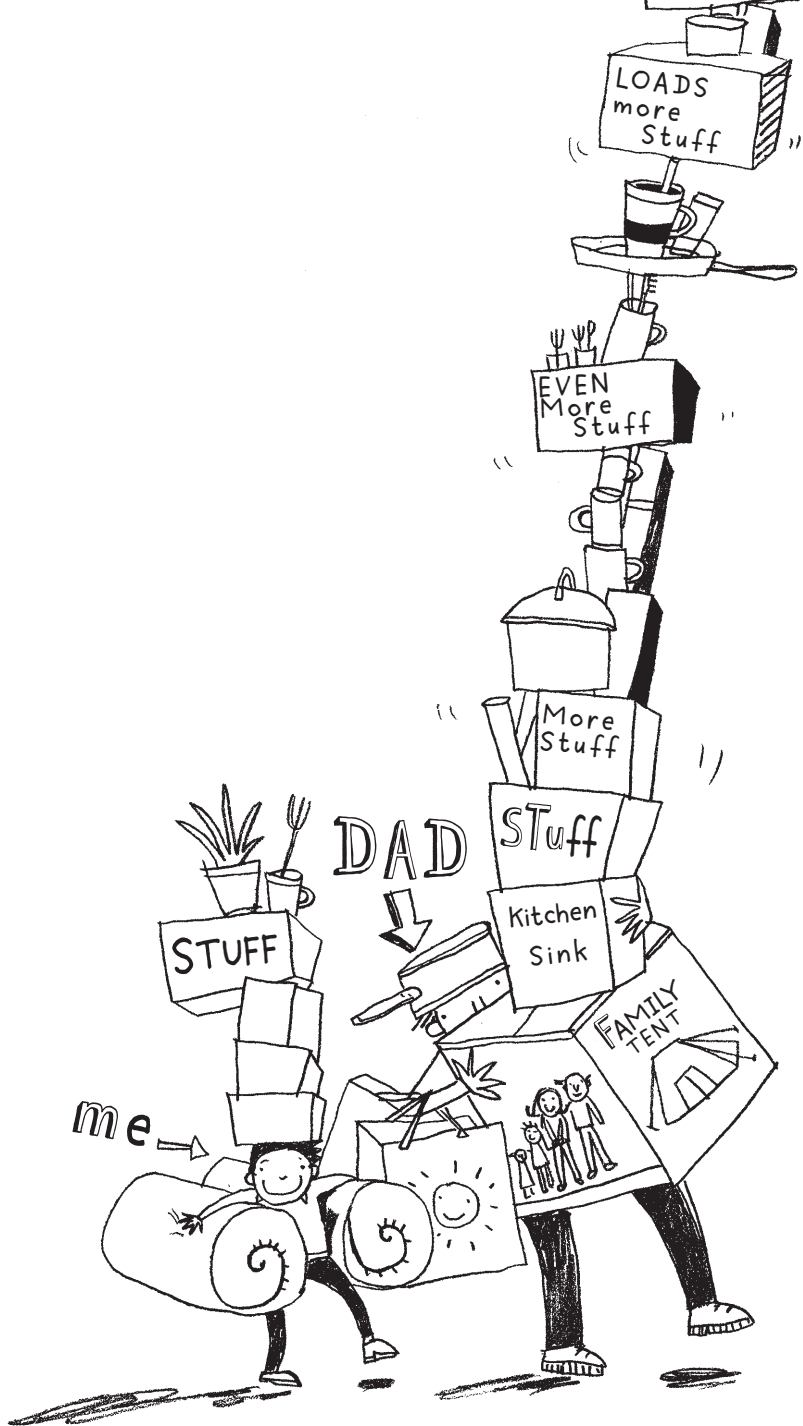
1. Tent
2. Sleeping bags
3. Cooking stuff
4. Fishing rods
5. ~~TV~~
6. ~~Computer~~

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.

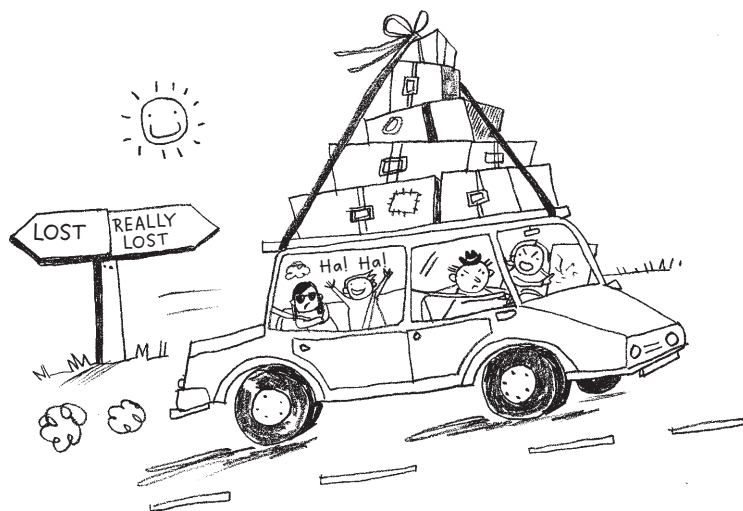
"Not the same as sleeping under the stars and waking up in the fresh air!" said the man in the shop as he took Dad's money.





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.



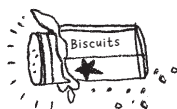
It was only when the car got a flat tyre  that they stopped arguing. They phoned the Car Rescue Service, who eventually turned up.

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 rumbling. Then I realized it sounded like thunder ...

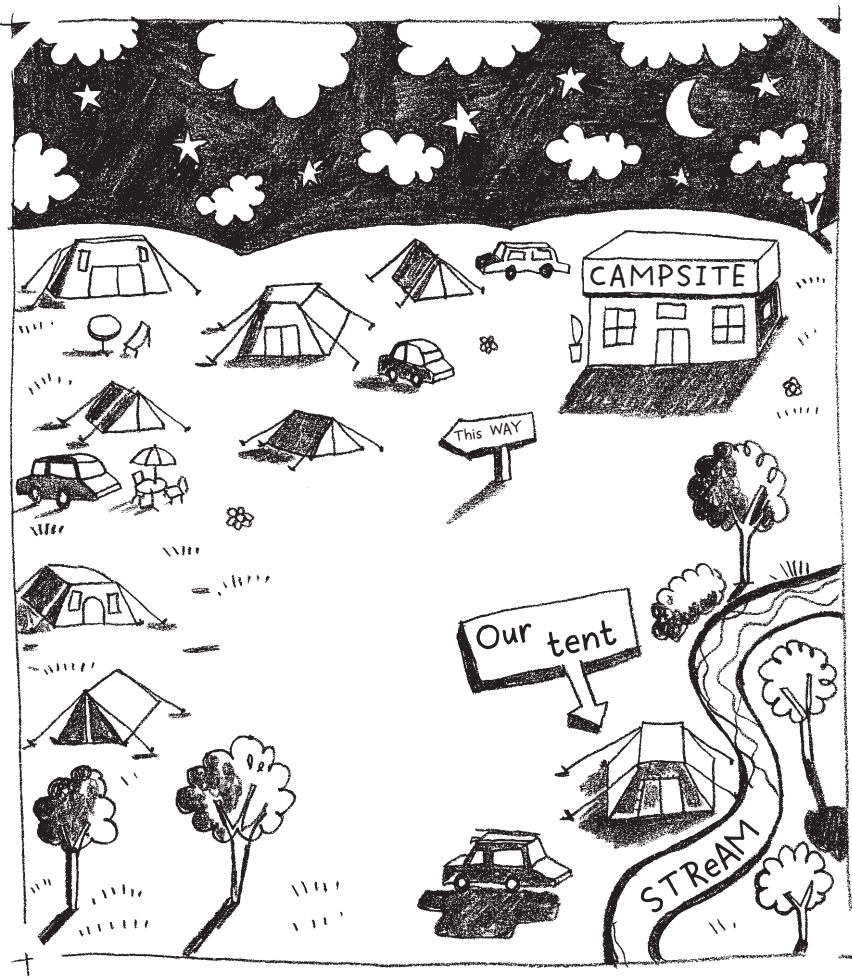
because it was thunder. Which was getting closer. There was lightning, too, and really heavy rain that was right above our tent. The storm was **HUGE** and it didn't take long for the tent to blow away.



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.





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.

Ha! It felt REALLY **BAD** but Delia didn't
Ha! look too concerned.
Freak!

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 out from our house. Mum and Dad were

FURIOUS



BLASTING



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.

Yeah!



You're grounded!

What were you thinking?

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