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Opening extract from

The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog Goes for Gold!

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1. I Have NOT Got a Girlfriend!

You'd think Streaker was ill, the way she's been lying on my bed. Every so often she lifts her head a little, looks at me with the saddest eyes ever, lets her head fall back on the duvet, and groans – *HURRRRRRR.* You might even think she was on the brink of death. She would certainly like you to think that she's dying. Maybe I should call an ambulance. On the other hand maybe I should call a film director – Streaker is such an actress.

In actual fact *I'm* the one that's ill. I've got a virus infection. I think every time there's been anything wrong with anyone in my family our doctor has said: 'It's a virus infection.' Are you limping? It's a virus infection. Your head's exploded? It's a virus infection. I reckon I could be a doctor quite easily if that's all you ever have to tell anyone.

Anyhow, I've been in bed for three days and haven't been to school. I've had to miss Sports Day so I've been pretty fed up. Streaker's been in bed with me. Well, she's been *on* the bed. Every so often Mum or Dad comes upstairs to see how I am. Sometimes they take my temperature and Streaker looks very hopeful. She'd like to have her temperature taken too. Maybe she's got a virus infection. In fact I think Streaker quite possibly *is* a virus infection, on four legs.

It's quite nice to have her up here with me, but she weighs a ton! It's difficult to get comfortable when you've got a large dog slumped across you, especially as she slowly moves up your body. First she was on my knees. Then she shuffled up to my hips. Several minutes later she was across my chest and just now I dozed off and only woke up because she was climbing on to my head.
But, boy, am I bored! I play games on my console but can't concentrate. I read for a bit, but can't concentrate. I stare at the ceiling. I wait for someone to visit. Tina hasn't been here for ages. Tina is my best friend. (NOT girlfriend – just

a friend.) She lives round the corner from me and she's got a dog too. He's a huge St Bernard called Mouse. Ha ha. Does the dog think that's funny? I don't know. Can dogs laugh? Interesting question. These are the kind of pointless things that occur to you when you are lying in bed and getting UTTERLY BORED!

So there's no Tina to cheer me up. Instead I listen to Mum downstairs, going nowhere on her cycling machine. Rumble, rumble, rumble. She even managed to crash the other day! How can you crash a gym-cycle?
'I wasn't looking where I was going, Trevor,' she told me.
'Mum, you weren't going anywhere!'
'I think that's what the problem was. I tried to turn a corner that wasn't there and fell off. I think I've hurt my knee.'

Poor Mum! Anyhow, it's probably only a virus infection, says Doctor Trevor.
So Mum's downstairs having cycling accidents and when Dad's around he just watches golf on TV. Golf – The Most Boring Game In The World. I don't know how my dad manages to stay alive, watching that stuff.
Oh look, there's a little white ball rolling along the ground. Will it go in the hole, or not? Do we care? NO WE DON'T! I think golf would be much more interesting if golf courses were fitted with hidden springs all over the place, and if a golfer treads on one it goes BOYYOINNNGGG! and catapults the golfer across the course instead of the golf ball. It would be much more fun if you had to get the golf player in the hole instead of the ball! But no such luck.
Meanwhile I'm upstairs being slowly suffocated by a dog. Streaker! I can't breathe! You are squashing my lungs!

My mum's been very busy recently on her bicycle-that-goes-nowhere. She's been inspired by the International Games, which will be taking place very soon. I reckon my mum believes that someone from the International Selection

Committee might spot her through our front window, pedalling for gold, and ask her to join the International team.
Fat chance! She'll crash at the first bend. Look what happened when the corner wasn't even there!

Anyhow, Mum and Dad are both very excited by the Games and they are getting all worked up about it because in our town we have our very own International athlete. He's called Kriss Okonjo and he is brilliant at running the 3,000-metre steeplechase. By 'brilliant' I mean he can run 3,000 metres faster than Anyone else in the whole of the United Kingdom. So that's pretty fast, isn't it? And maybe, MAYBE, he might win the International steeplechase and then he will be the fastest 3,000-metre runner IN THE WHOLE WORLD. That's pretty cool, if you ask me.

And this is even cooler – we're going to the Games! We've got tickets for the race that Kriss Okonjo is in, and Tina is coming too! It's going to be SO exciting!
Anyhow, like I was saying, I was in bed, faced with two choices. I could either die of boredom or die of being suffocated by Streaker.
Just then there was a terrible din from downstairs. I thought Mum must have ridden her bike straight into the kitchen cupboard.
SPLANGG! SQUINGG!
CLANKETTY-PINGG!
But it wasn't Mum at all. It was Tina arriving on her skateboard and thundering at full speed into our rubbish bin. She made such a noise even Streaker managed to lift her head for a few seconds and then – *HURRRRRRRR!* – big sigh, and she dropped back to the bed.

Then there came the *THUD THUD THUD* of Tina taking the stairs two at a time. *BANGGG!* My bedroom door burst open and Tina exploded into the room, yelling.
'Internationalsandeveryonethewholetownsaysin

paperandcanalltakepartforanimalsandMouse
weightliftingandgoldmedalsandeverythings
brilliantfantasticexcitedMumsays!'
'Could you say that again?' I asked quietly.
So Tina took a deep breath and –
'Internationalsandeveryonethewholetownsays
inpaperandcanalltakepartforanimalsand–'
'SLOW DOWN!' I shouted. 'Tell me s-l-o-wl-y.'
Tina sat on the end of my bed and grinned.
She's got a grin like sunshine. It always cheers me up.
'You know our local newspaper? It says that the town council has decided to celebrate the International Games by holding their own International Games, right here, in our town.'
That seemed very strange to me. 'But, Tina, hang on, surely all the athletes will be at the real International Games,' I pointed out.
Tina rolled her eyes as if I was being blindingly stupid. 'It's not for athletes, you idiot. It's for animals.'

'ANIMALS?' My mind boggled. It had never done so much boggling. It had almost boggled right out of my ears. I was already imagining elephants going for the long jump and whales bouncing off diving boards.

'Yes,' beamed Tina. 'It's going to be an Animal Games for pets from our town. My mum says Mouse can take part. Streaker could too!' She reached out and patted Streaker's head. 'Just think, Trevor, Streaker might get a gold medal. She could become a doggy Kriss Okonjo!'
The doggy Kriss Okonjo lifted her head for a moment and gazed at Tina with melting eyes. Her head slumped back on to the bed and she groaned. '*HURRRRRRRRRRR . . .*'