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Opening extract from

My Hamster is a Genius

Written by

Dave Lowe

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STINKY and JINKS

My Hamster Is A GENIUS



DAVE LOWE
ILLUSTRATED BY MARK CHAMBERS



My Hamster Is A GENIUS

BY DAVE LOWE



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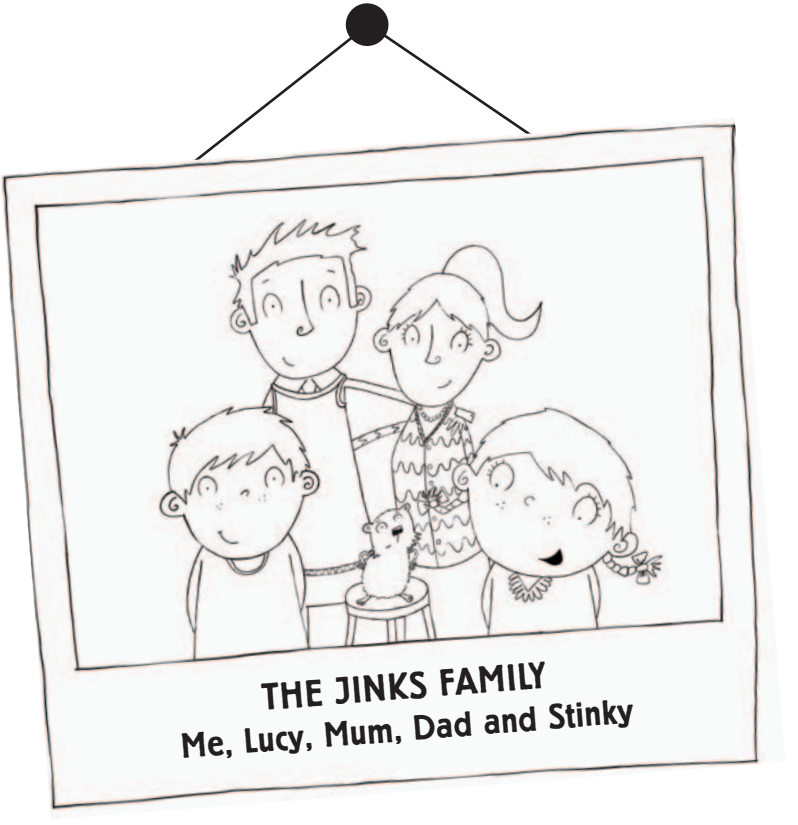
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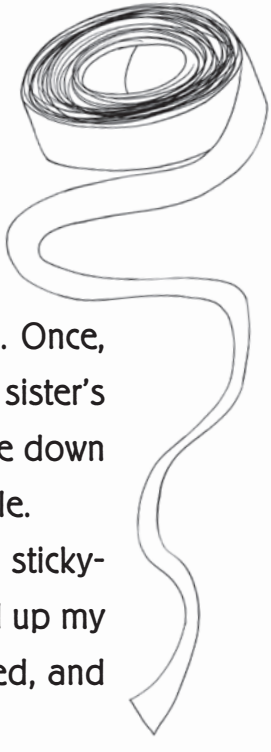


BY DAVE LOWE


THE JINKS FAMILY
Me, Lucy, Mum, Dad and Stinky

To Stacey, Rebecca and Miri –
thanks for all the pencils.
And to Glenn – thanks for the help.

CHAPTER 1



Never sticky-tape your little sister to her bed, even if she asks you to. I did, and my mum went absolutely bananas.

My mum had a long history of unusual punishments. Once, when she caught me giving my sister's Barbie doll a haircut, she sat me down and cut my hair in the same style.

And now, thanks to the sticky-taping incident, my mum locked up my TV and all my games in the shed, and

announced that she was buying me a pet.

"You're nine years old now, Ben," she said, firmly. "That's old enough to be responsible. If you can show me that you can actually take care of something, then you'll get your things back."

I was speechless. But everyone else had an opinion on what pet to get.

My dad wanted a greyhound, so he could win money on it at the track.

Lucy, my recently-sticky-taped little sister, wanted a pony.

My mum wanted something that was small and quiet.

Me, I went straight to my room, made a list and presented it to my mum.



BEN'S POSSIBLE PETS

1. Aardvark



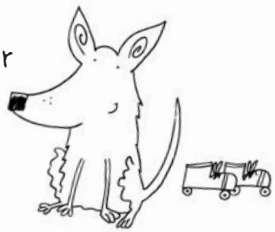
2. Monkey or chimp of some kind (not a baboon)



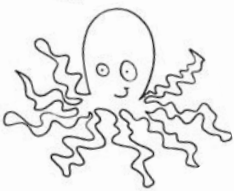
3. Bee



4. Husky dog (and a pair of rollerblades, so I don't have to walk to school any more)



5. Medium-sized octopus (and medium-sized swimming pool)



6. Hairy-nosed wombat



My mum folded the list and slipped it into her jeans pocket.

Then she went to the pet shop and came back with a hamster.

Later, the four of us were having dinner around the kitchen table. The newest family member was in its cage by the sink, watching us stuff our faces. It was small, brown and furry, and it looked pretty unexciting.

"What about calling her 'Chloe'?" said





Lucy. (Chloe was the name of that day's best friend. My sister changed best friends like most people change their socks.)

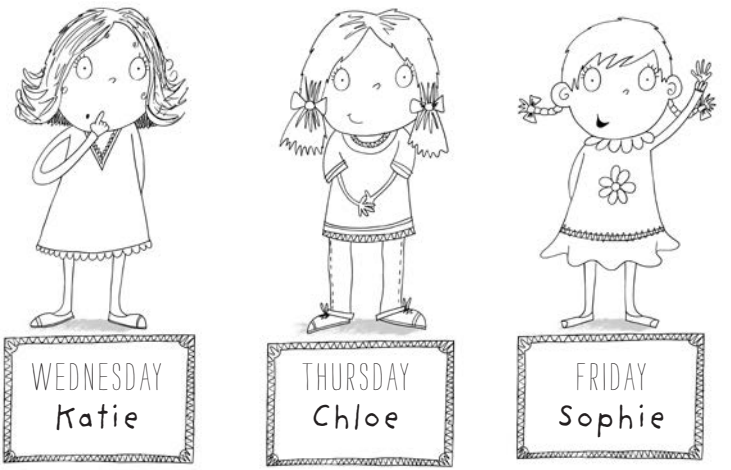
"We can't call the hamster 'Chloe'," my mum said, "because it's a boy."

"How do you know?" my dad asked.

"How do you think?"

My dad picked the hamster out of its cage and squinted at it, holding it upside down in his palm and blowing gently on its belly fluff.

"It must be very small," he said, chuckling



and putting it back. "His ding-a-ling."

My mum sighed.

"I'm not sure that's acceptable table-talk, Derek," she said, then added: "What about 'Rover'? *That's* a male name."

"It's also a dog's name, Mum," I told her.

"Plus," my dad said, grinning and waggling his fork towards the hamster, "he's stuck in that cage with only a little wheel to run around on. He'll hardly be doing much *roving*, will he?" Then he had an idea: "What about calling him 'Red Rum', like the racehorse?"

We all groaned. Everything was horses with my dad, or greyhounds, or anything else he could lose money on.



I clanked down my cutlery.

Everyone stared at me. Even the hamster.

"If he's *my* pet," I said, "and *I* have to look after him—"

"You certainly do," my mum interrupted.

"Then can't I call him whatever I want?"

"Not fair," Lucy complained. "It's a *punishment* pet, remember?"

My mum looked at my dad, who shrugged, and then she thought about it some more.

"So, Ben," she said. "What are you going to call him?"

I said the stupidest name I could possibly think of:



JASPER STINKYBOTTOM!

Lucy giggled.

My dad rolled his eyes.

My mum frowned, shook her head for what seemed a really, really long time, and then let out a long sigh.



But, as it turned out, there was someone who hated the name even more than my mum.

