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Opening extract from

# Gnomes Gnomes Gnomes!

Written by

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Illustrated by

**Vicki Gausden**

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For Angus

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# Chapter 1
# Oh, Sam! Please! Not *Again*!

I blame Mrs Pratt.

Mrs Pratt's our art teacher. We do art once a week. Sometimes we get out the paints and slosh them about a bit. Sometimes we make things out of stuff like glue and paper and the insides of loo rolls, like babies do. (Mrs Pratt liked the flying pig I made. And the crocodile, even if she did think it was a lady in a boat.)

But sometimes we get to use clay.

I love clay. I love to rip great lumps of it out of the big clay bin. I love to bash it. (I pretend it's that bully Chopper's face.) I love slapping water on it to make it softer. (Chopper's face again.) I love sticking my fingers deep into it to make holes.

I even love the funny way it smells.

Most times when we do clay in art class, I make gnomes. You know – the sort you see in gift shops and garden centres. I make all sorts – happy gnomes, grumpy gnomes, sad gnomes. Old gnomes with fishing rods in their hands. Young gnomes about to toss a ball into the air. Baby gnomes crying.

Then Mrs Pratt comes round. "Oh, Sam! Please! Not *again*!" she says. "Not *more* gnomes. Can't you try something else? Just for once. Just for me. *Please*?"

But I love making gnomes. I love rolling the clay to make the toadstool stem so fat and



sturdy that it won't fall over. I love patting down the toadstool top till it's as smooth as a bald man's head.

Then I make the gnome himself. I start with short sausages that I'll shape into legs later. I make the solid little body, and poke the end of my pencil into the clay to make a row of buttons down his jacket. I roll the top lump of clay into a sort of head shape. I borrow my mate Arif's comb to carve in strands of hair.



Then I make the pointy hat to plonk on top. I shape it like an ice cream cone, then turn it over and shove it down hard on the gnome's head. I spend the rest of the lesson getting the arms and legs right. (Gnome fingers aren't too hard, but gnome boots can be tricky.)

And then the buzzer goes for the end of class. I take the gnome up to Mrs Pratt so she can put it on the shelf of stuff she's going to put in the kiln. That's a huge oven for baking clay.

"Oh, not another gnome!" Mrs Pratt says again. "How long have you been in this school, Sam? Because I must have put *hundreds* of these things into the kiln for you. What do you *do* with them when you take them home?"

