

MATT GOODFELLOW

THE FINAL YEAR



Illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton

*This is a book about family and love and life.
It is dedicated to my family, who have helped,
supported and nurtured me on my journey.
Love and light to my dad, Bob, Jane, Gaz, Leo,
Clement, Ignatius, and, of course, my children,
Will and Daisy. Big love to you all x – M.G.*

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PART 1

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Ya need to be able to pin
this down

so ya can see it in ya mind as it plays out –
picture where it's happenin.

Imagine it's summer.
A hot one.

Leave the suburban semis to their leaf-dreams
and head for the city,
straight into the streets that surround the centre.

See how things are different?

It's tighter 'ere.
Can ya feel it?

See the take-aways and neon-washed litter?
The disfigured pigeons
huddled under railway bridges and flyovers?
Taxis buses pizza-boxes vape shops?

This is not a place of labradors and lattes
and electric Audis
this is a place of staffies and cider
and exhaust-pipe smoke,

a place of one foot in front of the other brother
cos what else ya gonna do?

See that tall, skinny kid with the ball in his hand
sayin, *see ya later* to his mate?

That's me:

Nathan Wilder

Nate.

10 years old

and a week away from the end of Year 5.



One more thing

The woman over there pushin the buggy,
hair scraped up in a top-knot,
headin to the shop for milk and cider,

a little kid
dressed as Spiderman
trailin behind her,

that's Mum.

The kid is Dylan
my nearly-four-year-old-nuisance-of-a-littlest
brother.

Always up to no good,
straight out any open door.

The bigger kid further back,
kickin stones along the road, ignorin Mum's shouts
to *GET A MOVE ON*,

that's Jaxon or Jax as everyone calls him:
my other brother

8 years old

he's alright.

Nearly forgot

The school ya can see right next to the park

in the middle of the estate,

the one with the fancy new claddin
the council are puttin on top of all the
crumblin bricks and callin it
'regeneration',

the one with the main road right next to it
rattlin the claddin back off
and the corner shop opposite the main gates
where Mum's headin to,

that's Poppy Field Primary.

My school.

These are my streets

these are my people

this is my story.



PART 2
**SOME STUFF YA NEED TO
KNOW: THE FAMILY**

Me (gonna do mine in rhyme)

Tall thin
like to win

on-point hair
long-distance stare

love football laughs
not down with maths

read everythin
make words sing

write don't fight
not a coward though right?

(Just swear I'm scared I'll lose control
of The Beast that sleeps within my soul.)

Mum

is bonkers

says it herself
not in a 'needs lockin up' kind of way
though she has been before

she's just damaged
I s'pose.

Ran away at 15
been runnin ever since,
won't ever say why
or what happened to make her leave,
but it was summat bad.

Had me at 17.

Always tryna fix someone,
people at the door with a broken wing.

Loads a lipstick

goes to Bingo round the corner
most days
laughs a lot loud proper head back snortin.

Cries too,
when she thinks we're asleep.

The story of the three wheres

No. 1: Nick – my dad

The reason I'm tall.

Mum keeps a picture of 'em together
dun't know I know it's in her top drawer.

Looked like Jesus
she says
and I see what she means
long black hair
little beard
graceful.

He was young
too young
like Mum.

Was gonna save her
help her escape the past
right up to the point she got pregnant with me.

Got cross got scared
got gone

went walkabout in the wilderness
never came back.

Could be dead
could be out there
still walkin

depends what ya believe.

I'm past it.

Mum'd deny it
but

she's always been lookin
for Jesus

it's just that now she only sees his face
at the bottom of a bottle
or the back of a Bingo card.

No. 2: Brandon – Jaxon's dad

Big bald bear

body-builder biceps

bouncer

bully

beer

beer

beer

banks balaclavas bullets

behind bars

bye bye baby.

No. 3: The question mark – Dylan's dad

A lottery

many tickets sold

no winner's yet come forward
to claim the prize.