

FINN'S

EPIC

FAILS

PHIL EARLE

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FAILSVILLE

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EMAILED IT!

ILLUSTRATED
BY AL MURPHY

PHIL EARLE

SIMON & SCHUSTER

London New York Amsterdam/Antwerp Sydney/Melbourne Toronto New Delhi

About the Author

Phil Earle is the best-selling writer of thirty books . . .

but believe me, he also knows how to **FAIL BIG-TIME**.

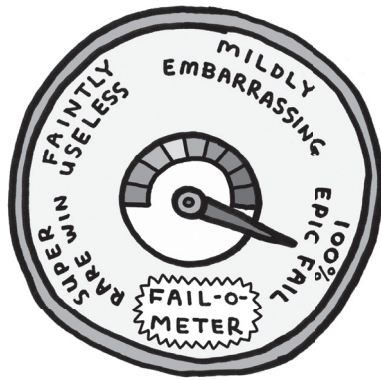
Aged six, he was forced to be a page boy at a wedding, wearing a **HIDEOUS RED VELVET** suit and bow tie. He had mumps too, which left his outfit **THREE** sizes too big and his trousers at constant risk of falling to his ankles.

He also missed part of a family holiday to Wales, when he unwisely decided to let his big brother implant a golf club in the middle of his forehead. **ERROR!!**

Phil lives on the side of a **VERY** steep hill in Yorkshire with his wife, **FIVE** kids and two dogs . . . one of which bears **HUGE** similarities to an unruly hound in this very book . . .

*For the magical trinity of Denwood,
Hodges and Hough, who sound like a bunch
of dodgy lawyers . . . but are definitely not.*

CHAPTER ONE



The single greatest FAIL of my life (one of MILLIONS, believe me) started with a slow handclap from the side of the swimming pool. It didn't *just* come from my classmates, who sat there, shivering, but from Mr Riley, AKA **Rocky**, Head of PE/torturer-in-chief.

'Finley Hope', he bellowed, so loudly that the water rippled around me in fear, 'this is your last chance. Come back up again without that brick and I'll fail not just you, but every member of this class. And when you have to do the test again, I'll have you do it down the local sewage plant. There's a lovely pool there with every one of your



names written all over it.'

As motivational speeches went, it wasn't *quite* what I'd hoped for, but with thirty-one pairs of eyes boring holes into me, I took a deep breath and dived, the weight of Dad's appalling pyjamas pulling me towards the bottom like an anchor.

If I hadn't been under so much pressure, I would've still been raging about why I was wearing pyjamas in the first place. I mean, who in the history of the universe has ever got out of bed and fallen straight into a swimming pool? Especially one as rank as this one. Half a dozen **manky plasters** had floated by me, and I swear blind I accidentally swallowed an entire toenail last time I dived for the stupid brick. Even the pyjamas I had on were ridiculous, as there was NO WAY I was wearing my own in front of everyone.



**ME, FINN
THE FAIL!**

Like 99.9% of all my clothes, my 'jamas are handed down from my evil (more on that later) big brother, **JONAH**. And because I'm smaller than he is, I have to wear his 'jamas from when he was nine, WHICH ARE COVERED IN cute dinosaurs.

'I can't wear those,' I'd moaned to Dad.

'You'll have to,' chipped in Jonah (helpfully).

'I'd rather wear Maisie's,' even though this was an impossibility. **MAISIE** is my little, sinister, sis, and is five. Still, her unicorn nightie is cooler than Jonah's pterodactyl abominations.

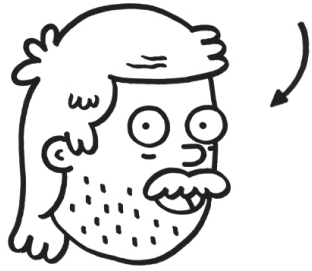
'I don't see what else we can do,' Dad said. 'I can't buy new ones just for you to sink in them.'

Firstly, this didn't feel massively supportive, and secondly, **DID HE WANT ME BULLIED FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS??!**

The answer, given that I was now sinking in **HIS** nightwear, was a clear and emphatic **YES**. Lord, they were horrible, all burgundy and brown swirls in a material so dense that once wet, they felt like lead. The only wardrobe they belonged in was a deep-sea diver's.

He'd only worn them once, when he had to go into hospital. I've no idea what the operation was for as whenever I asked, he turned **ALL** the shades of red **IMAGINABLE**, so it must have been something **NASTY** and frankly I don't even want to think about it.

**DAD,
AKA LYCRA DAD**





Anyway, with the material finally pulling me to the depths of **Davy Jones's locker**, I managed, FINALLY, to rescue the brick and somehow thrashed my way back to the surface, where I was greeted by the most sarcastic cheers.

Rocky looked far from happy that I'd actually saved the brick, as per his demands. Just tapped his watch before sneering, 'You've **two minutes** to inflate your pyjamas. Take any longer and the bus will go without you, along with your uniform and towel.'

Rumour has it Rocky was a member of the SAS before retiring (with a pseudonym) to life as a teacher and is capable of chopping a tree down with a snap of his fingers and killing a man with a slightly narky look. He taught Dad too, and he said in the old days, Rocky used to hang naughty kids off the coat hooks and leave them there **ALL weekend** till they saw the error of their ways.

I WISH he'd do that to Jonah. Every weekend. And weeknights if at all poss.



You've probably worked out by now that I'm not the world's *greatest* swimmer. I mean, I'm not TERRIBLE, but as Dad's pyjamas had twenty-five anchors sown into them, I'd struggled a bit more than all the others, all right? Everyone else was sat on the side, shivering, as Rocky wouldn't let them get

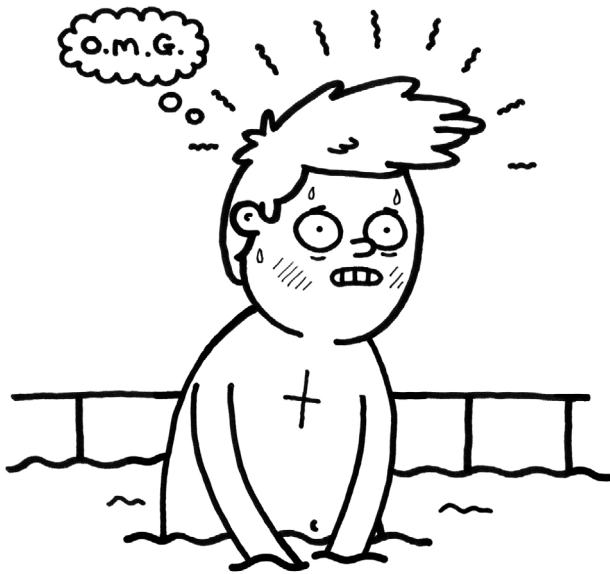
changed till I was out. They didn't look too happy about it, but **NEITHER WAS I**. Would you be with all those eyes shooting you venom-tipped daggers?

So, I did my best. In fact, I did better than that. I smashed it. Or thought I did. Pulled off the pyjama top, tied knots in the arms and waist before inflating it at the neck – the PERFECT float.

'Same again with the bottoms,' yelled Rocky.

I swear he was enjoying watching me struggle. Probably because I'm Jonah's little brother, who makes everything look **ANNOYINGLY EASY**. So I tried extra hard, pulling off the bottoms super-quick, before knotting and inflating them too. By now I was EXHAUSTED, plus the pool suddenly felt really cold, especially around my waist, so without thinking, I threw the inflated bottoms onto the side of the pool, before doing an untidy breaststroke towards the steps.

At first, I thought everyone was laughing at my swimming, but when I started pulling myself up the steps, I realized that had NOTHING to do with it. The reason they were laughing, the reason it suddenly felt colder around my waist, was that when I hastily removed the pyjama bottoms, **MY SWIMMING SHORTS WENT WITH THEM**, and were now semi-inflated and lying on the side of the pool,



leaving me exposed in every way possible.

'Finley Hope!' Rocky bellowed, unaware. 'Out the pool now.'

'Not a chance,' I wanted to roar, but of course I didn't say that. I just threw myself back down the ladder to hide everything and hopefully find a secret drain to flush me clean into the North Sea.

Rocky's shouting went on. And on. His face got redder and redder. I couldn't hear what he was shouting but could probably guess. I was too busy panicking and **dying of embarrassment** while trying to think of ways to escape without showing a single soul everything that I needed to keep private.

To make it worse, everyone poolside had worked out what had happened, and SOMEONE (I do not know

who) had taken my pyjama bottoms (and swim shorts obviously) and hidden them. All I could do was tread water and hope that the pool was dirty enough for no one to be able to see what was going on beneath the surface.

By this point, Rocky looked on the edge of sanity. He wore the kind of expression that I'd imagine he wore on secret missions in the SAS, but before he could toss a grenade to blow me out of the water, salvation came in the form of my great pal – **Google**.

Google, as her nickname suggests, is the smartest kid, not in our class, year, school or town, she is the smartest person in the **world**. EVER. And yes, she is my best mate, and **yes** she is a girl, and no there has not been a day in my life when I haven't been grateful since I met her at nursery school and she unjammed my finger after I'd gone hunting for an especially deeply buried bogey. Ever since, she has dug me out of holes so deep that I was perilously close to the earth's core. (I didn't know the earth had a core of course. Google told me.)

Knowing she wouldn't be able to retrieve my pyjama bottoms from the pranksters, she did the next best thing and threw me hers, in all their multi-coloured-polka-dot glory. It might have been better if they hadn't smacked me in the face as they

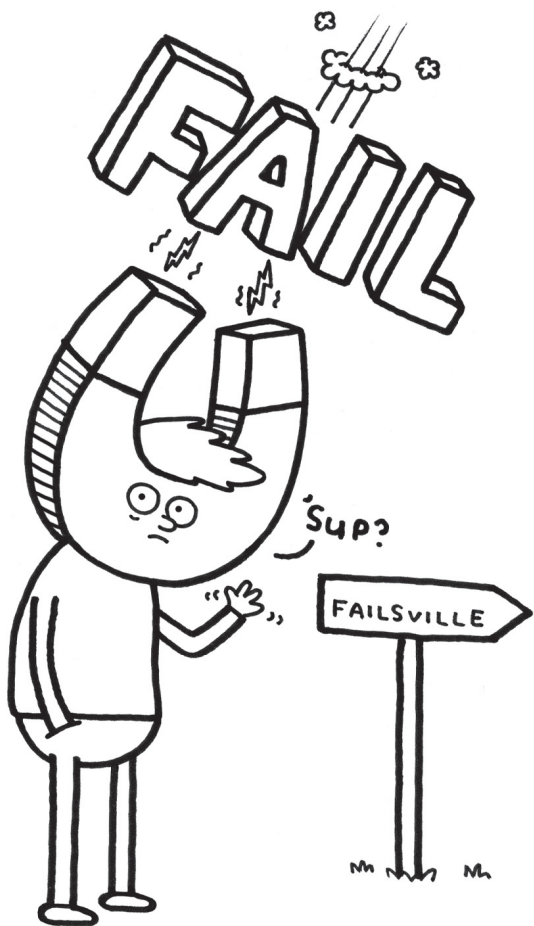
landed, but by then, I was past caring.

What followed was an awkward dance, as I untied the knots (not easy while treading water) and tried to slide the bottoms up my legs without **A. sinking** and **B. exposing myself** to everyone in the entire leisure centre. I swear even squash and badminton players had heard what was happening and stopped their game to watch.

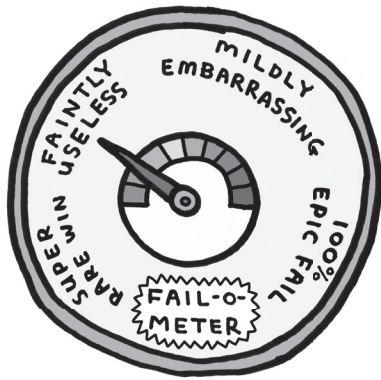
Some three and a half minutes later, I left the pool to the most sarcastic standing ovation ever and the world's longest detention. According to Rocky, I'm going to be seeing him every day after school until the end of year ten. Deep joy.

I'm not going to tell you what abuse I took on the bus back to school. Some of it I can't remember as the trauma seems to have scrambled it. That's partly why I've written it down, though I can't say it's making me feel any better. Maybe I'll feel better in time. When I'm thirty-eight, and old like Dad. Maybe.

In the meantime, I'm terrified I'll continue to be Finn Hope, son, brother, friend, and . . . **THE WORLD'S BIGGEST FAIL MAGNET.**



CHAPTER TWO



I know you probably think I'm making it up, or exaggerating, but I promise you, stuff like this happens to me ALL THE TIME. It's like I'm cursed, like the **entire world** is waiting for me to fall on my face again and again, so they can video it and slap it all over the internet.

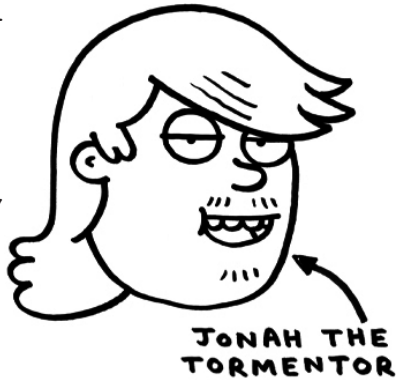
It seems to be getting worse now I'm not protected by that beautiful bubble we call junior school.

I need help, guidance. I need someone out there, **ANYONE**, to explain to me how I'm meant to SURVIVE year seven when:

- my family are the BIGGEST, most UNSTABLE atomic bomb,
- my teachers are UNIVERSALLY cast from the scariest movie in Hollywood,
- year seven has put me under the biggest microscope known to man.

I don't even want much, you know?

I'm not greedy. I don't want to be the most popular, the best-looking, the sharpest-shooter or even the biggest brain. According to someone close to me (AKA my **TORMENTOR**/brother Jonah) I already **LIVE** with that person (the bighead).



All I wanted was to get through life unscathed. Anonymity? I'd take it. Better than than be known for ALL the **WRONG** reasons.

But the problem is, *it doesn't work like that for me*. The **SECOND** I open my eyes . . . **WHAM**, I am **UP TO MY NECK** in **FAILS**. It doesn't look or feel pretty, and as for the smell?

Well, you wouldn't bottle it and give it to someone for Christmas, believe me.

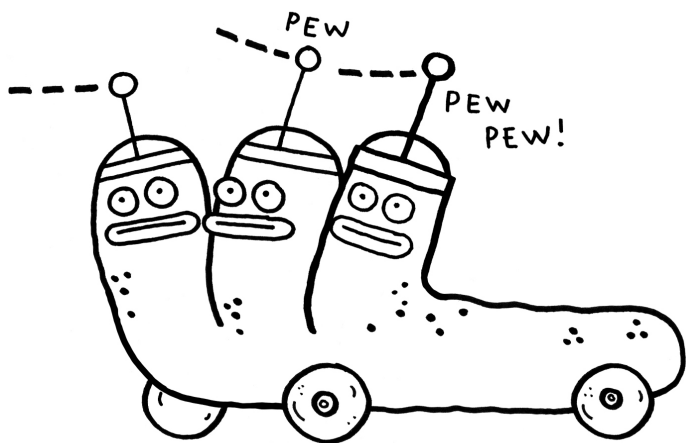
So things need to change. The scales need rebalancing, because if I'm going to survive year seven I'm going to need more 'Finn's Wins' and **WAY LESS** 'Finn's Fails'. (See? **SEE?** I am witty, and sharp. I can do this. **PLEASE**, let me do this.)

So I'm starting here, with this . . . whatever it is. **IT IS NOT** a diary by the way. **No** chance. I'm

not that kid. There will be no *dear diary*, no deepest darkest secrets and definitely no *what does it all mean?*s.

If you want to read a secret diary, go find the key for your brother or sister's bedside drawer. That's where their diary will be hidden. Not that it'll be worth reading. It'll just make your head collapse with boredom and your ears bleed.

I'm writing this down so that my head doesn't explode, and also for mankind, so that in future centuries, when the earth is ruled by genetically enhanced mutant slugs on wheels with built-in laser antennas, they will be able to look back (if they're able to read) and see not **just** how mortifying my existence was, but how I WOULD NOT LET IT DEFEAT ME.



So, it starts, here and now. Every bit recorded so I can bask in my progress. On these pages you will see me transform from **ZERO** to **Hero** . . . small steps though. Tiny, microscopic ones, as after all, the odds are stacked against me. Let me explain.

Everything about senior school and being in year seven is designed for **MAXIMUM** humiliation and despair. I swear down it will be a miracle, A **MIRACLE** if I survive.

The uniform for starters equals **PAIN**.

- **BLAZER** - **fourteen** sizes too big (so there's room to grow into it if I suddenly become the Hulk).
- **SHIRT** - meant to be cotton but actually made from some kind of unbendable cardboard, especially the collar, which rubs the skin clean off every time you rotate your neck more than 13.666 degrees.
- **TIE** - instrument of medieval torture. Also, will I **EVER** learn how to tie it without Dad's help?!
- **TROUSERS** - made out of the world's scratchiest sack material.
- **SHOES** - designed to give you eighteen blisters per heel, per day.
- **RUCKSACK** - heavier than the prospect of **FIVE** more years at school. But only just.

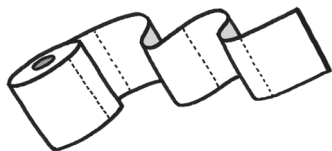


Once you're dressed like this and limping, unable to bend your limbs because of the world's most HEINOUS clothes and WEIGHTIEST bag, then they throw you (and three hundred other unsuspecting souls) into a building that looks more like a **prison** than a school, with guards instead of teachers, and textbooks so old that the authors originally drew the pictures on **cave walls** using the blood of a woolly mammoth.

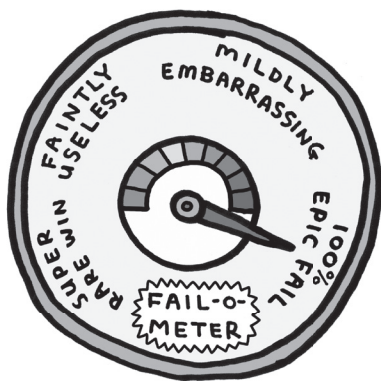
Then of course, they take you swimming, where you end up naked and humiliated and shouted at by the world's most dangerous teacher/super-soldier.

Despite all that, DESPITE the EPICNESS of the fail, I WILL NOT let them defeat me. Tomorrow, at dawn, or 7.32 when my alarm goes off, I shall rise. And it will be a fresh start, a new future.

NOTHING will go wrong.



CHAPTER THREE



I woke up and there were no school trousers in my room.
Or boxers.

It was the falsest of false dawns, and let's face it.
I should've seen it coming.

I am, you see, the filling in a sibling sandwich.

Now, I **love** a sarnie, and obviously, the filling is the best part. The important bit. It can be smart, and sassy. It can be spicy, or unexpected. It's the bit you order specifically at the counter. You want ham salad? I can be that. Tuna sweetcorn? Fine. I can be chicken and chorizo, haloumi and humous, I can even be chickpea and beetroot if you want (though I'd rather not be).

I'm the fun bit, the *good* bit, the memorable bit, the bit that keeps the world spinning. Or I would be if it wasn't for Jonah and Maisie. For they are the really thick bread.

Two hunks of dense stodge that squash me in the middle, threatening to damage and destroy me. They are my big brother and little sister and **they** are a Curse.

Here's the lowdown:

Jonah

Age – 14

Role – nemesis

Likes – himself, the gym, mirrors. Mirrors in the gym

Dislikes – me. My best friends

Positives – will leave home for uni in four years (**PLEASE** let him leave home for uni in four years)

Negatives – Four years is actually a whopping **1460** days. Or is it 1461 because of leap years? Or 1459 because of leap years? I don't know, one of the two. The subject of Jonah leaving home excites and stresses me out so much I want to SCREAM. Either way, it is **TOO FAR IN THE FUTURE.**

Ambitions – to grow even bigger muscles. To have everyone at school and in the wider universe bow down at his feet. To torture me (with and without use of said muscles)



What makes this list worse, and let's face it, it's already BAD enough, is that, for some bizarre reason that escapes logic (even Google can't work it out), JONAH is the most popular kid at school. Practically a **god**. Or a demi-god at the very least. Teachers love him. Kids love him. Especially the girls.

'The lads want to be me, the girls want to be WITH me.' That's what he tells me anyway. He'll probably get it tattooed on his bum on his eighteenth birthday. I wouldn't put it past him.

Which brings me on to . . .

Maisie

Age – 5

Role – sworn enemy/wolf in a fluffy unicorn onesie

Likes – unicorns

Dislikes – unicorn hunters.

Me (it's possible she may believe me to actually *be* a unicorn hunter)

Positives – She isn't Jonah.

Negatives – She's as bad as Jonah. Smart, sassy and totally unfiltered. AND it's **4,748** days until she leaves



home for uni (IF unicorn studies is on the curriculum and depending on how leap years *actually* work). Thinking about it, if I'm still living at home by then, then maybe I deserve ALL the fails coming my way!!!

Ambitions – to own a unicorn, ride a unicorn, be a unicorn. I could go on . . .

I know, I know, you've read that and are thinking, 'It can't be that bad, Finn, nobody is THAT bad.'

But you're **wrong**.

They **are** this bad and **more**. They were put on this earth for one reason and one reason alone. To make my life a misery, a fresh hell every single day. It's like being surrounded by **evil**. A son of Satan on one side and the wicked witch of the west's twisted apprentice on the other.

Because Jonah is older than me (only by two years and with considerably fewer social skills), everything he does is celebrated by our parents, but only because he's the first to do it. I swear the first time he tied his shoelaces on his own Mum and Dad announced it in the local newspaper. I wouldn't mind, but he must've been **eleven** by the time he mastered it.

Me? I was tying reef knots and sheepshanks by the time I started school, and nobody even raised an eyebrow.

What makes it even worse is that I'm supposed, as the second kid, to learn from all of Jonah's mistakes (of which there are, to date, seven million) AS WELL as set a good 'big brother example' to little Maisie. The same Maisie who sometimes wees in my trainers and regularly turns my best clothes into new and frankly terrifying unicorn outfits.

It **SUCKS**, frankly. All of it.

The mysterious disappearance of my clothes today, however, had nothing to do with Maisie (for once).

This had the stink of Jonah all over it, and I'm telling you, **IT REEKED**.

I know exactly what happened. Some FOOL at school ran up to him laughing,

'You'll never guess what happened to your Finn at swimming . . .'

The whole **HILARIOUS** tale will have been exaggerated a million per cent (which I KNOW is a mathematical impossibility), by which point, Jonah

would've laughed so hard he'd want to cook up his **own** way of making HELL EVEN HOTTER for me. And how could he do that? By **hiding** anything I wear south of my waist.



AND WOULD HE REALLY BE SO CRUEL?

Yes.

Yes, he would. He'd ignite my entire closet on a **bonfire** in front of me if he thought he could get away with it. He probably **would** get away with it too. Dad would probably pat him on the back for mastering how matches work.

So when I found my clothes missing, I went straight to Jonah, which wasn't a long journey as he lives on the bunk above mine.

'Where are they?' I demanded.

He did not put down his comic, nor did he remove his headphones, nor did he even register that I **existed**.

'I said, where are they? My clothes.'

I didn't say it any louder or angrier, but miraculously he managed to hear me.

'You're wearing them,' he said, voice dripping with sarcasm. 'That thing over your pitiful excuse for a torso is a T-shirt.' He said it slowly, like I was from the other side of the world, 'and that, around your waist, is a **T-O-W-E-L**.'

'I know that,' I huffed. 'I'm wearing it because YOU'VE hidden everything else.'

'Not true,' he replied, loving every second. 'I can see socks over there. And a hoodie. And a cap.'



'Brilliant,' I said. 'Brilliant. Can't wear socks over my . . . lower half, can I?'

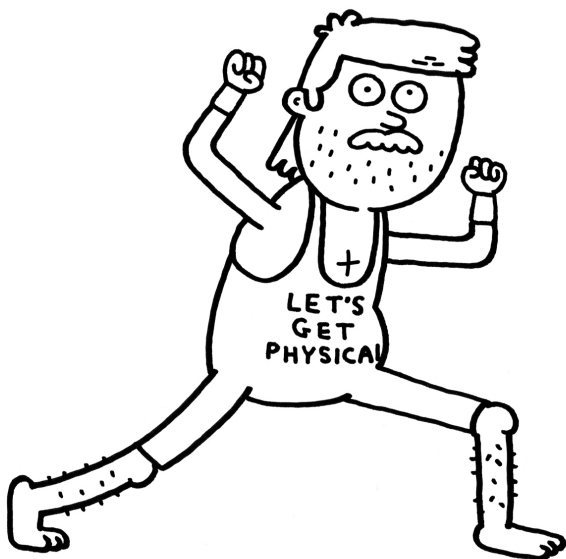
'From what I heard that shouldn't be a problem. From what I heard you LIKE walking round *au naturel*.'

This was where I made my mistake. I should have risen above it, been the bigger and **BETTER** man. I also should've been a wimp and fetched Dad. But I didn't, I tried to fight fire with fire. And that was my mistake.

As Jonah is, regrettably, **RIPPED**. Should be as well, the amount of time he spends down the gym (in front of the **HUGE** mirrors they have on every wall).

I hate his muscles (if it's possible to genuinely hate them), though it could just be jealousy. I could do a thousand press-ups a day and you would **still** be able to fit a thousand of me in Jonah's bulked-up shadow. His arms look like a python that's just swallowed a hippo whole, whereas mine are more like a couple of shoelaces with a double knot tied halfway down them.

Nature, you see, is cruel. Gran says I'm still 'growing into my body', which basically means I'm a weakling who could get blown over by a sneeze, and that's why, nineteen seconds later, Jonah had me pinned to the floor, while he filmed it on his phone.



It was a savage and humiliating act, and I had no doubt Jonah would show it round school later. Luckily, my saviour arrived, in the shape of Dad, head to foot as always in his awful cycling Lycra.

Finally, I thought. Comeuppance for the son of Satan and revenge for me. But oh no, as always, Dad threw in a curve ball, finding a way of turning Jonah's assault into a wonderful milestone in him becoming a man:

'Oh well done, Jonah,' he said, distracted (Dad is ALWAYS distracted). 'You worked out the movie mode on your phone. Told you it couldn't be *that* difficult.'

And then he left. HE LEFT. Just turned round and walked out, without noticing or commenting on my

struggle, or the fact that my face was turning blue courtesy of Jonah's rotting, verruca-infested **FOOT** on my **neck**.

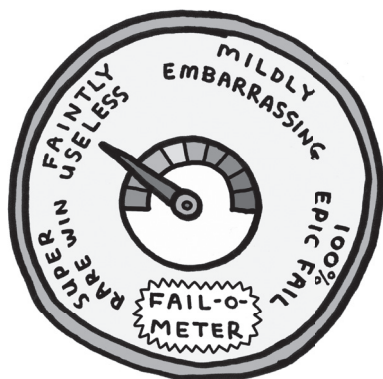
If ever there was a moment that summed up my home life, that was it.

Thirty minutes later, I was limping into school wearing last week's unwashed trousers that I spilt Bolognese on and, to top off the indignity, A PAIR OF DAD'S Y-FRONTS.



Okay, no one could actually see them and they **were** washed (at least I REALLY hope they were), but still, there are levels you shouldn't have to stoop to in life . . . and wearing your pa's grundies is one of them.

CHAPTER FOUR



Don't be thinking I'm looking for sympathy all the time by the way. Woe is definitely NOT ME.

All right, my family may be . . . unusual, and secondary school is definitely a pain in the everythings, but what I do have is best mates: two of them, who are **brilliant**. They're . . . different, they're not school sports gods like Jonah, those kids who are worshipped in the hallways for what they can do with a footie, despite being **GOONS** in every other way off the pitch. In fact, my mates can be annoying, and loud and too smart for their own good. They're a bit . . . odd sometimes. But they're *mine*, they're the best mates I've got, and it's been that way since reception.

For as long as I can remember, the three of us have walked to school together, only difference is now there are no scooters to ride on (I sort of miss

that), or parents trying to talk to us about what a WONDERFUL day we're about to have learning things we'll never need to know, ever again. If anyone, anywhere, in the world can explain the point of knowing about conjunctive adverbs, then I will pin the biggest medal ever on their swotty, boring chest.

High school doesn't have much going for it, but leaving your parents at your front door, **quickly**, before they try and give you a goodbye kiss, is a RESULT.

Anyway, back to Google and Laszlo, my best friends, the founding (and only) members (with me) of Our Group.

Google

Age – 11

Role – the brains. How it fits in her head when it's SO BIG I will never know, though she will, of course, know the answer . . .

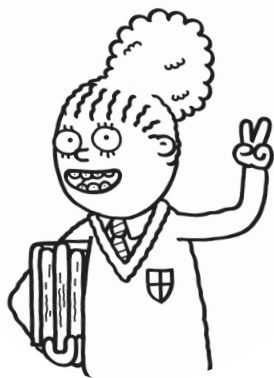
Likes – facts

Dislikes – fantasy

Positives – She's not just clever, she's *smart* (there is a difference). Also, she can be FUNNY!

Negatives – can make you look a sandwich short of a picnic due to the above-mentioned MASSIVE brain

Ambitions – to run the world, but to do it kindly . . .



Laszlo

Age – 11

Role – mr lover lover/class joker

Likes – girls/pranks/girls

Dislikes – lads who he thinks
are a threat to his reputation

Positives – super funny

Negatives – perhaps a
little generous with his
affections . . .

Ambitions – to have
(successfully) chatted up every
girl in school/town/country/
world (sheesh, that sounds
tiring)



Today, it's Laszlo I met first, though as always, he was too distracted to see me. He'd just caught sight of something that has his ENTIRE focus.

'All right?' I asked.

'I'm in love,' he said. *Quelle surprise* (that's French btw).

'Course you are,' I sighed. 'With Cameron?'

Cameron was in year eight and probably didn't even know Laszlo existed.

He looked very confused. 'Who?'

'Cameron,' I said, very slowly, mouthing it.

'C-A-M-E-R-O-N. Yesterday's love of your life.'

He waved the suggestion away with a PFFFT.

'I need a girl with **depth**. Who'll appreciate me. Who'll see me for who I really am. Someone who will see me as **SENSITIVE** and in it for the **long haul**.'

'Right,' I said, though I didn't really have a clue what he was on about. 'So who is it today?'

'Her,' he said, pointing at a girl who I thought was in year ten. 'She's . . . everything. Have you seen her eyes?'

'I have,' I said. 'Both of them.' I looked at her, discreetly though. She looked . . . nice, though I wasn't sure what I was actually looking *for*. Girls apart from Google are a MYSTERY. 'What's her name?'

'How should I know?' he said, like it was the daftest question he'd ever heard. 'What does that matter?'

'I thought she was everything?'

'She is. She will be. Soon as I know a bit about her . . .' There was a pause, which made me panic. And I was right to.

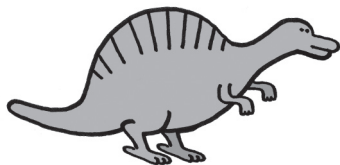


'Go on then,' he said.

'Go on what?'

'Go ask her.'

'Ask her what?'



'What her name is, you numbnut! Where she lives. What her favourite colour is. Find out her five favourite films and **MAKE SURE** you point me out. But in a **really** casual way.'

'You having a laugh?'

'Do I look like I'm laughing, Finn?'

He didn't. He looked constipated, but that's what love does to Laszlo.

'There is **no way** I am walking up to a year ten girl, who I have never met, and even asking her for the time, never mind grilling her with your lame love questionnaire.'

He looked devastated . . . or tried to. He wasn't fooling me.

'And there I was, thinking we were brothers. Blood practically, yet you can't even do this **TINY** thing for me.'

I wasn't having it. 'This happens weekly, Lasz, daily in fact, no **HOURLY**. Why do you have to love someone different every five minutes? Why do you have to love anyone at all?'

He tried to look all high and mighty and



serious. 'What can I say? It's the Italian in me, I guess.'

'You,' I sighed, 'are not Italian.'

'My dad . . .'

'Your dad used to deliver

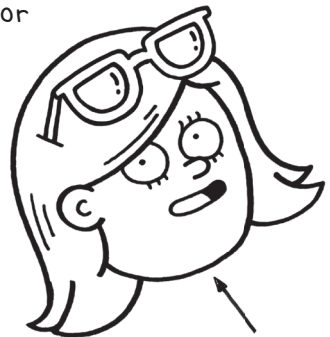
pizzas. It's not the same thing.'

'It's in my blood.' He made a gesture with his hands like those Italian chefs on the telly. It didn't make him look more Italian. Laszlo is always like this. Has been for ever. I remember him coming to my fifth birthday party with two presents: one for me and a MUCH BIGGER one for the Mothership (AKA my mum). He followed her around for the next two hours, telling her how lovely she was.

I'm not kidding. The boy is **SHAMELESS.**

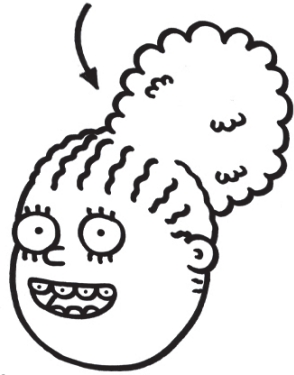
Anyway, I ignored his pleas about this new girl, which made him sulk and call me a lot of things that I don't think he really knew the meaning of (I definitely didn't). I knew if I blanked him long enough, then Google would save the day, again.

Google was stood by the chip shop as always,



MOTHERSHIP

GOOGLE



but she didn't really look like she was waiting for us. She barely glanced from her book as she fell in alongside us, turning a page as she asked Laszlo the same question she asked every morning.

'Who is it now then?'

'Eh?' Laszlo asked. I just sighed. He knew EXACTLY what she was asking.

'Which poor, unfortunate, unsuspecting member of the female species is going to be subjected to your advances today?'

'Hilarious,' Laszlo replied. 'But it's none of your business, G. Luckily, my FRIEND Finley here is on hand to *actually help*.'

'WHOA, WHOA, WHOA,' I yelped, my voice all squeaky. 'I am not!'

Google found this hilarious. 'My mate fancies you,' she laughed, in a mock-pathetic voice. 'Laszlo, what world do you live in?'

'The real world,' Lasz bit back. 'You should try it instead of reading books all the time. What do you even do that for? Have you never heard of a phone?'

I laughed a bit. Google did not. Instead she pretended Laszlo didn't exist, which is probably

where I've been going wrong for the last seven years.

'Did you know,' she said, 'that every mouthful of food should be chewed a minimum of twenty-seven times?'

'WOW!' Laszlo replied sarcastically. 'I needn't worry about what to say to that girl now, eh? If I tell her that we'll be engaged by the weekend.'

'By the time you've said it,' I said, 'you'll be in love with someone else.' Which earned me a **grin** from Google.

And that, my friends, was a WIN for FINN . . . the first of many . . . please?

