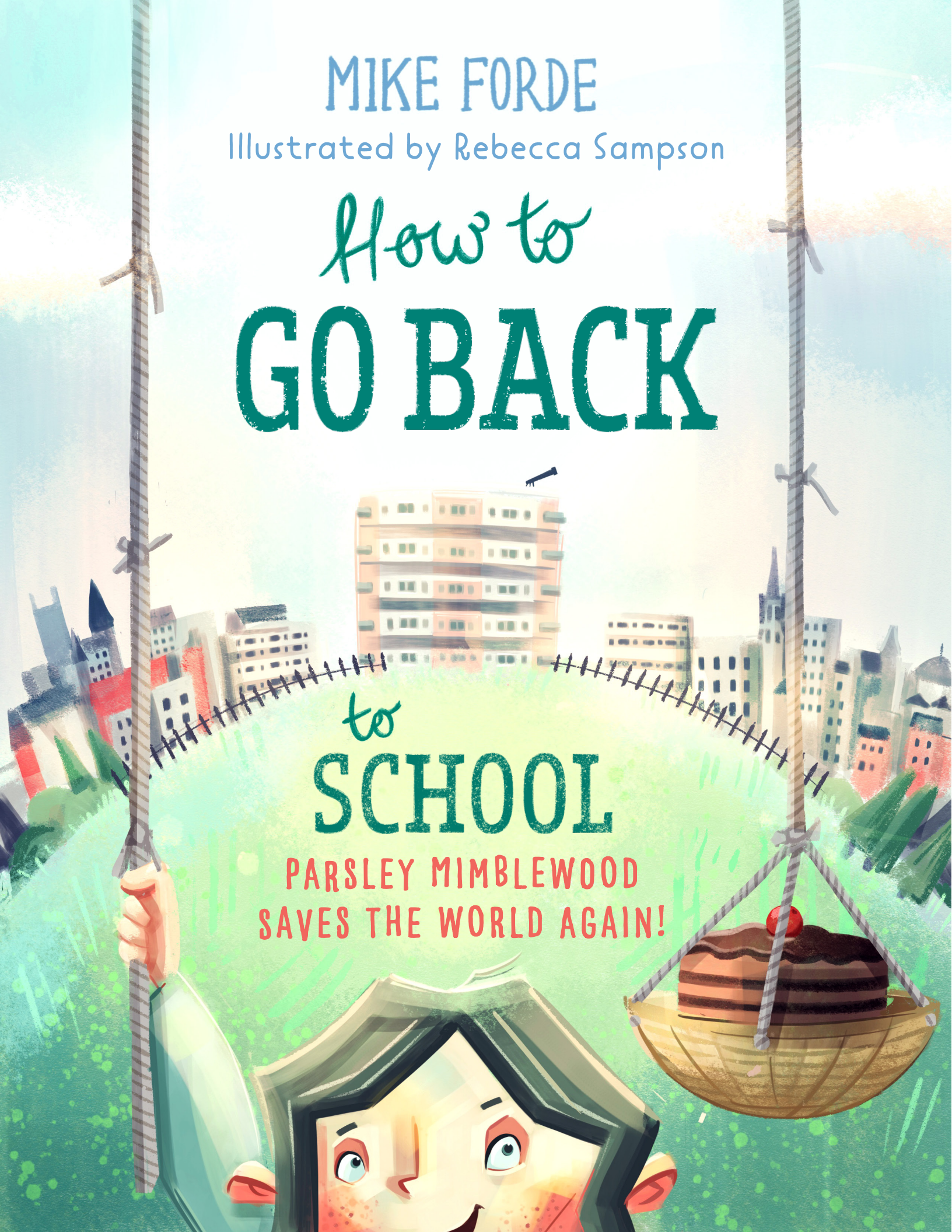
MIKE FORDE

Illustrated by Rebecca Sampson

How to GO BACK to SCHOOL

PARSLEY MIMBLEWOOD SAVES THE WORLD AGAIN!



This story is dedicated to the fabulous, inquisitive, thoughtful children in Wensleydale class and everyone at Ingleton Primary School.

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CHAPTER 1

THE GREAT CRATE

Friday 22nd May 2020

This morning, on our doorstep there was an enormous box. Not a cardboard box like normal deliveries but heavy, splintery real wood. The box was so big that you could easily fit my brother Bo inside. Evil Eggbert (my tiny, evil imaginary friend) suggested that we cram Bo in and cover it in stamps, then post him to the North Pole!

But before I could follow through with Eggbert's evil plan, Mum popped through the door.

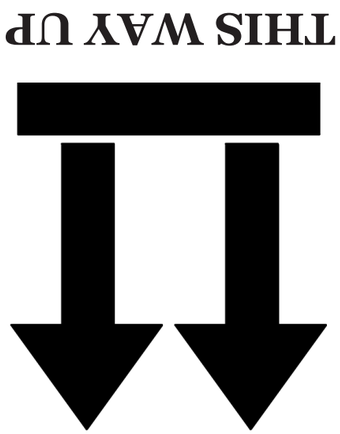
We spent ages trying to get the box open but every side was nailed down. Mum tried levering the top with her biggest crowbar and then just whacked it with a hammer again and again. When Bo started whacking the box with Rage Rock, Mum decided we should retreat inside and "regroup". (Rage Rock is a huge jagged stone that we painted a big angry face on. He helps us deal with anger and sometimes smash things).

Mum got out her phone and started watching videos of people trying to open wooden crates. Meanwhile, me and Bo tried to guess what was inside. I thought it might be a giraffe with its neck all curled up like a spring. Bo thought it was probably an

asteroid with a dinosaur egg inside.

Bo is obsessed with Space-Dinosaurs and no matter how often I tell him that dinosaurs have never and will never live on different planets… he still believes.

I wandered outside to inspect the crate again. Maybe the thing inside wasn't actually good or exciting. Maybe it was something boring and disgusting like a million tins of MUNG beans. Or maybe it was something really bad, like a hungry goat-eating wolf. I was starting to wonder whether it was a good idea to open the box at all when I saw, in tiny writing printed at the back…



It was upside-down!

Once we'd flipped it the right way round, it was very easy to open. Inside, there was a strange collection of objects.

- One shiny, black and white feather.
- A stone that was perfectly smooth and shiny on one side but nobbly and bumpy on the other.
- Dozens of little sparkly marbles.
- An enormous cake covered in bright purple icing and little plastic dinosaurs
- And two tins of MUNG beans.

Unfortunately, everything had been a bit shaken about by the flipping so the stone and the marbles had smashed into the middle of the cake like meteors. Bo thought this was BRILLIANT!

We used Mum's crowbar to lever up the slightly smushed cake and underneath, there was an ancient-looking yellowed old scroll!

Dearest Parsley and Bo,

You are cordially invited to spend the weekend at my humble abode. This box contains a few small gifts to help you on your way.

The cake is to celebrate seeing my two favourite people in the world after such a long time. The marbles are for all the fun we'll have together. The pebble is a new addition for your stone collection. And the feather is for hope.

I've also included a tin of MUNG beans for each of you. This is to remind you that staying with me is going to be very different to normal with some new rules we'll have to follow. Sometimes, it might feel annoying and boring··· just like MUNG beans.

I can't wait to see you both.

Lots of love,

Dad

We were going to see Dad!!! Bo had picked up the plastic dinosaurs and was running around the grass squealing with excitement. I was dancing around the garden with him. We normally see Dad every other weekend but because he works as a nurse in the big city, we now haven't seen him for 2 months!

Mum picked up the cake and brought it inside whilst Bo played with the icing-covered marbles. I took another look in the box and noticed something else. There was a tiny metal latch right at the bottom. I stretched my arm all the way in and reaching with my finger-tips flicked it up.

It was a SECRET COMPARTMENT!

Inside, there was a dark brown leather-bound diary and a tiny scrap of paper that said,

P.S I knew you'd look for secret compartments, Parsley!
I loved your last book and can't wait for the sequel!

I grabbed the diary, the stone and the feather and ran up to my room. I wanted to start writing straight away but just as my pen was about to touch the paper, my brain froze. I didn't know what to write about this time. People are starting to go

back to school and I'm not really an expert in that at all. I've never been to school! I'm probably the last person in the world you should listen to about going BACK to school. You should probably close this book now, put it away and never read it again. You should probably tell all your friends that this book is a complete waste of time.

But then I looked at the stone and realised what feeling it was meant to be. The flat shiny side looked happy and excited but the bumpy side looked worried and nervous. It was a two-faced stone. It was the feeling of butterflies!

That's how I feel about going to see Dad. It's going to be amazing seeing him but it's also going to be really different. With all the changes and new rules that we'll have to follow, I have no idea what to expect and maybe that's how everyone going back to school feels. Is that right?

- *What do you think will be the same or different about going back to school?*
- *What are you looking forward to most?*
- *Do you have any worries about it?*
- *How do you think other people feel about it?*

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO PLAY... TYRANNY-SAURUS REX

Saturday 23d May 2020

Today, we got to see our dad for the first time in 2 months and as soon as we burst through the front door of his flat, he announced, "I declare a game of Tyranny!"

Bo, who had been shaking with excitement, stopped and glared at him until he said, "Sorry Bo. I mean a game of... Tyranny-saurus Rex!"

It's meant to be called Tyranny but Bo insists that it should be called Tyranny-saurus Rex because he thinks that's easier to say!

Anyway, Tyranny-saurus Rex is number 1 in my list of...

Top Ten Best Games Ever

10. Plop-scotch: You have to hop across the stepping stones... without going PLOP in the river!

9. Pie Spy: It's like I-spy but with lots of pies... and I LOVE lots of pies!

8. Tic-Tac-TOE: The same as noughts and crosses (or tic-tac-toe) but you have to hold the pencil with your foot.

7. Guess Poo?: You can use your imagination for this one.

6. Backwards Monopoly: You start with ALL the money and every hotel is already built. Then you go around the board spending your money DEMOLISHING the buildings. Bo's favourite part is flicking away the little green houses but we keep on losing them underneath the sofa.

5. British BullFROGS: It's just like British Bulldogs but you have to hop around like a frog and ribbit at anyone who tries to catch you.

4. Gluedo: You can make as many guesses as you like about the murder but every time you get it wrong, another finger is glued together!

3. Guinea-pig Racing: Parsley II (my imaginary guinea-pig) always wins!

2. Imaginary Friend BATTLE ARENA: It's a bit like Pokemon but you have to choose an imaginary friend and tell them which move to use on the opponent. Because Bo's obsessed with space-dinosaurs, his imaginary friends are all things like Saturn Stegosaurus or Venus Velociraptor. And mum just uses animals because her imagination is awful. (Grown-ups have to hand in their imagination when they get their driver's licence.)

I ALWAYS win at this game because Norbert Noseful (my imaginary friend with an enormous nose) can pull anything out of his nostrils. One time, he even found an atomic bomb in there… but that didn't end up well for anyone.

1. Tyranny-saurus Rex

My dad invented Tyranny-saurus Rex and it's the absolute best. The person who declares the game gets to be the Tyrant. They can make up any rule and everyone else has to follow them or else they'll lose points. The one catch is that all the rules have to help achieve a mission.

One time Bo declared a game of Tyranny-saurus Rex and kept on taking away points every time people breathed. Dad guessed it was a mission to the bottom of the sea but I knew it was a mission to space (OBVIOUSLY!)

Dad immediately started taking away points when we got in the flat! He took away a point when I dumped my bag in my room whilst DI Dracula (my imaginary crime-fighting vampire) snuck under the bed. He took away a point when I went to the balcony where PomPom the Ninja (my unicorn-loving imaginary ninja) keeps his unicorns. And just before I could pick up the biscuit tin (where Evil Eggbert lives at Dad's house), he announced, "10 points to Bo!"

Bo was washing his hands with a huge grin on his face.
How could I have forgotten?

After half an hour at Dad's, me and Bo had each washed our hands 10 times and he had to change the rules so that you could only get hand-washing points once per hour.

The game was even more difficult outside when we went for a walk. Bo was in the lead but pretty soon he didn't want to play anymore. Dad lives on the top floor of a block of flats and Bo got 10 points for remembering to press the buttons in the lift with his elbow but he lost them all for fiddling with the buttons as we went down.

Then he kept on losing points for putting his fingers in his mouth so I told him to imagine that they tasted of space-dinosaur dung. He said that space-dinosaur dung tastes like chocolate but, the next time he was going to put his fingers in his mouth, I saw him stop and decide to plunge them in a big pile of mud instead.

By the time we got back, Bo was on minus 23 points. That's when we ran into Mrs Bones and Mrs Andromeda who live in the flat below Dad's. They're Bo's two favourite people in the world. Mrs Andromeda is a real astronomer and she has a telescope on the balcony that she lets me and Bo use.

She's really short and squishy and gives the best hugs so it was a bit sad that we had to stand back from her.

However, it was OK because that meant we didn't have to hug Mrs Bones. She's really tall and bony and gives the worst hugs in the world.

But Bo really likes her because she's a palaeontologist and she shows him real dinosaur fossils which he's allowed to hold if he's very careful.

He looked like he was about to explode when Mrs Bones pulled a real dinosaur egg out of her pocket to show him but afterwards Dad gave him 43 points for not touching it.

As we went back inside and washed our hands again, I was a bit fed up with the game and counting points all the time. Bo had 20 points and I had 19 so he was happy. But I think the game just makes you angry with the Tyrant and the other players. (Especially when the Tyrant gives the other player exactly enough points to beat you by 1!)

Still, I suppose it helped Bo remember to follow the rules.
All this made me think about the kids going back to school and having to follow lots of strange new rules all day long.
Do you think Tyranny-Saurus Rex would work at school or would everyone just end up getting angry with the Tyrant/ Teacher?

- *Do you know what new rules will you have to follow at school?*
- *Do you think Tyranny-saurus Rex is a good way to help follow the rules or not?*
- *How else could you help people follow the rules?*
- *What do you think you should do if someone else forgets to follow a rule?*

CHAPTER 3

BALCONY CAKE

Sunday 24th May 2020

My dad is bald. He's probably the baldest man I know. He's so bald that he decided to grow a big bushy Mr Twit beard. But as his chin got hairier and hairier, his head just looked balder and balder!

Me and Bo have tried our best to help. Once, we made a wig out of hundreds and hundreds of strings but Dad said he looked like he had spaghetti for hair. Another time, we found a brown woven basket that was just the right size for his head but he refused to go outside wearing it! We even tried colouring him in but the felt tips ran out before we could finish the back of his head.

The other thing you should know about my dad is that he makes the most marvellous, delicious cakes. He makes Rainbow Cakes and Rainy-day Cakes. He makes Chocolate, Vanilla and Ice-cream Cakes. He makes Upside-down Cakes and Side-ways Cakes that you can roll around the plate. Once he even made a Jenga Cake out of lots of little cake bricks which you could pull out of the tower and eat (as long as you didn't knock it over!)

Normally on Sundays, Dad bakes a cake and we go to visit a different person who lives in his building. We go down and sit on their balcony eating big slices of the cake and drinking tea. But since we've been in Lockdown, Dad hasn't been able to go on his balcony visits so he's not baked any cakes!

I was sitting on the balcony thinking about all the cakes that we hadn't shared over the past few months and then I thought about all the cakes around the world that hadn't been shared: wedding cakes and birthday cakes and even school dinner cakes. Bo came out and peered over the edge of the balcony. He was already a bit grumpy about not getting to touch the dinosaur egg yesterday and now he was upset that we weren't having Balcony Cake. He said that maybe we should just eat cake by ourselves without the other people on the other balconies.

That's when I had an AMAZING idea!

I got Bo to tell Dad to start baking straight away whilst I looked for Dad's Hair-String Wig and the Head-Basket. They were right at the back of the cupboard wedged underneath a huge bubbling jar of sourdough starter. He obviously hadn't been using them very much! By the time I had managed to tie together all the hundreds and hundreds of pieces of string, Dad had baked a gigantic chocolate gateau with thick creamy

icing and a single red cherry on top. I wrote a little message and taped it to the front of the basket:

PLEASE ENJOY A SLICE OF BALCONY CAKE!

LOVE FROM PARSLEY, BO AND DAD

XXX

Dad wasn't so sure about whether the string would hold but we put the cake in the Head-Basket and slowly lowered it over the edge of the balcony anyway. For a long time, nothing happened. Maybe Mrs Andromeda and Mrs Bones weren't in? Maybe they didn't want strange cake from above. But then the wind caught the basket and bumped it softly against their window.

Dad was holding the string and he called out,
"We've got a bite!"

After that, we got better at swaying the basket gently so that it tapped against each window in the flats below. Soon we'd delivered cake all the way to the ground floor where old Mr Terrence lives. Everyone calls him The Librarian because all of his walls are covered from floor to ceiling in books. He took

ages to notice the cake but eventually, we felt a little tug on the string.

Dad went to get the three slices that he'd saved for us and said that Bo could pull the basket back up because it was pretty much empty now. Bo began pulling fast and wrapped the string around and around his middle as he went. But after a few tugs, he began to go red and soon he was puffing and panting and the string was slipping through his hands. I had to grab hold of him and help him pull up the string. The strangest thing had happened. The basket was getting heavier and heavier and heavier. By the time it had reached our flat, Dad had to help us haul it up.

Inside the basket, there was an enormous mountain of treats: moon pies and rock cakes, muffins, creamy meringues, fairy cakes, gooey brownies and a huge Victoria Sponge. And underneath it all, there was a pile of books from Mr Terrence. The first was Esio Trot by Roald Dahl!

Me and Dad grinned at each other because we'd read that last year but Bo had never read it so made us explain about the tortoises on the balconies.

Once we'd stuffed ourselves with cake, Dad said that this would be a good story for my book. I wasn't so sure because it's not really about going back to school at all and there aren't

very many schools with towers that you can lower cake down. But I suppose things at school will have to be done completely differently. And maybe there's some kid somewhere that has the perfect idea for playing tag without touching or far-away football.

- *Do you know what new rules will you have to follow at school?*
- *Do you think Tyranny-saurus Rex is a good way to help follow the rules or not?*
- *How else could you help people follow the rules?*
- *What do you think you should do if someone else forgets to follow a rule?*

CHAPTER 4

THE BACK TO SCHOOL BOX

Monday 25th May

Today's our last day at Dad's house and I had to pack up my things. With all the treats and the new books, it was difficult cramming everything in the bag. I had to nibble a few crumbs of cake to help squeeze it all in. Leaving Dad's made me sad but also a tiny bit of me was looking forward to going back to normal in our cottage in the hills.

It's only been a couple of days but following all the rules is a lot more tiring with so many other people around. I guess it'll be really good to go back to school and see your friends again but remembering to follow all of your Tyrant's (I mean teacher's) rules all day long will be difficult. It'd be a bit like your best friend coming over to eat your favourite tea together but instead of pudding, you get a big plate of MUNG beans.

So, because going back to school is going to be really different, I decided to make real wooden boxes full of useful things for all of you, just like the box Dad gave me. But then I remembered that there's thousands of you and only 3 of us (and Bo's really more of a hindrance than a help). So I've decided to give you an imaginary box because that's a lot easier for me and it uses up fewer trees!

Here's what's in my box for you:

- A Cake to celebrate seeing friends again. The best thing about it being imaginary is that it can be any flavour you like. The worst thing about it being imaginary is that it's... imaginary.
- A T-Rex Tooth Necklace to help you remember all the new rules and changes at school.
- A Copy of Esio Trot by Roald Dahl to help you come up with brilliant new ideas for doing things differently.
- A Full Collection of Stones to help with discussing feelings (and smashing things!)
- Another Slightly Smaller Back to School Box which you can give to someone else. (This will also have another even smaller Back to School Box inside and THAT will have another even tinier Back to School Box and THAT will... ...well you get the idea)
- A Feather for hope
- Another Cake because after everything we've been through; we really deserve 2 cakes!