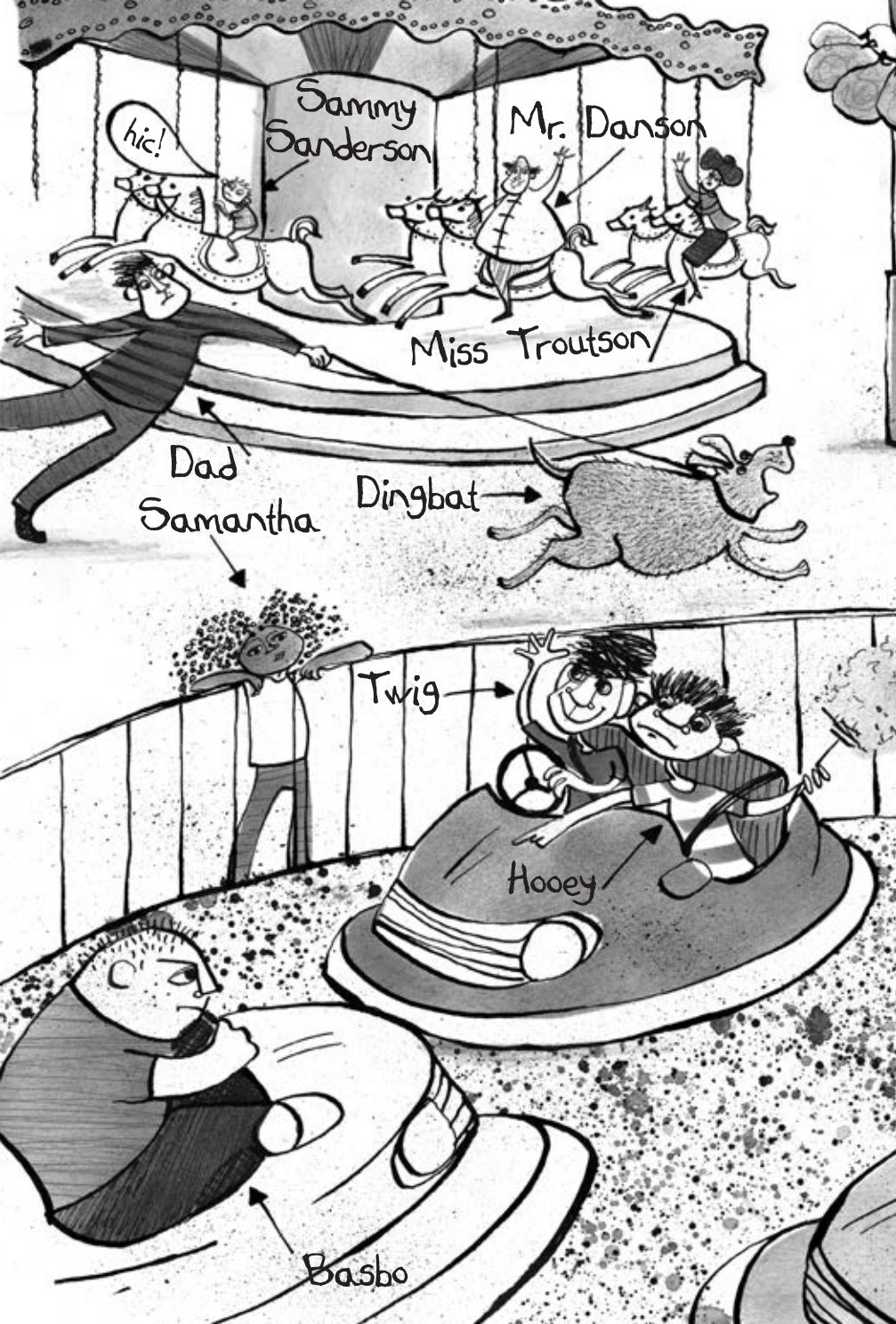


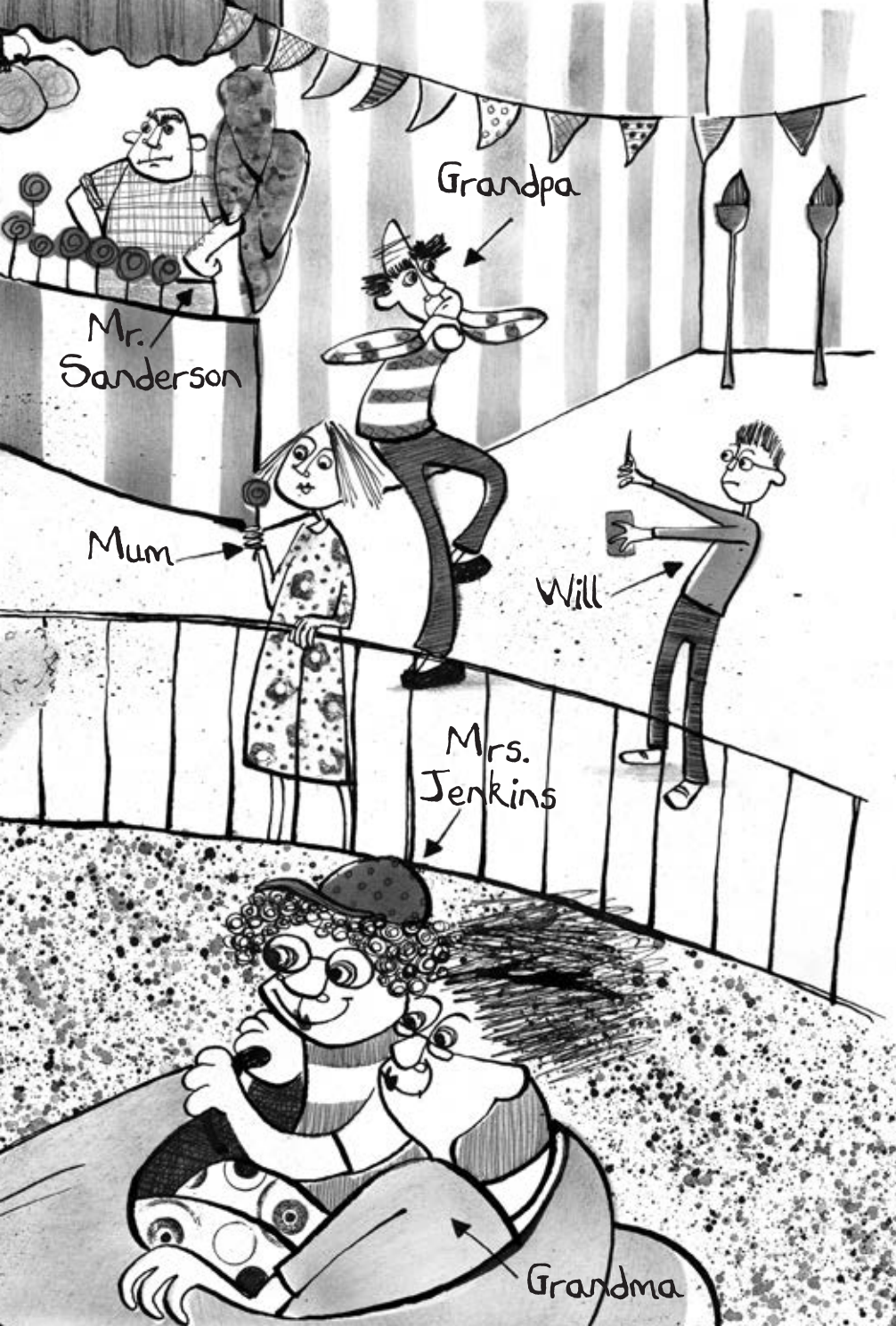
HOOEY HIGGINS and the Tremendous Trousers



STEVE VOAKE

illustrated by **EMMA DODSON**





Grandpa

Mr.
Sanderson

Mum

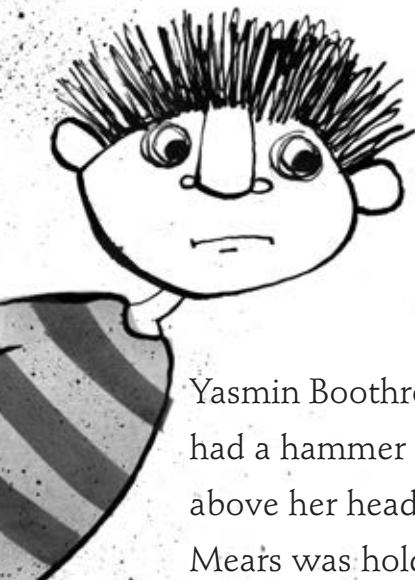
Will

Mrs.
Jenkins

Grandma



"HEALTH AND SAFETY, HEALTH AND SAFETY!" shouted Miss Troutson, clapping her hands and peering over the top of her glasses. "What did I say about Health and Safety?"



Hooey Higgins stopped what he was doing and looked around. The whole class had stopped at the same time, and it was like a freeze-frame from a horror movie:

Yasmin Boothroyd had a hammer raised above her head, Ricky Mears was holding a piece of wood with a nail in it in front of his face,



and Twig appeared to be trying to saw his legs in half.

Meanwhile, on the far side of the classroom, Robbie Blunt had his hands in the air and Basbo Wilkins was squinting at him over the top of a stapler.



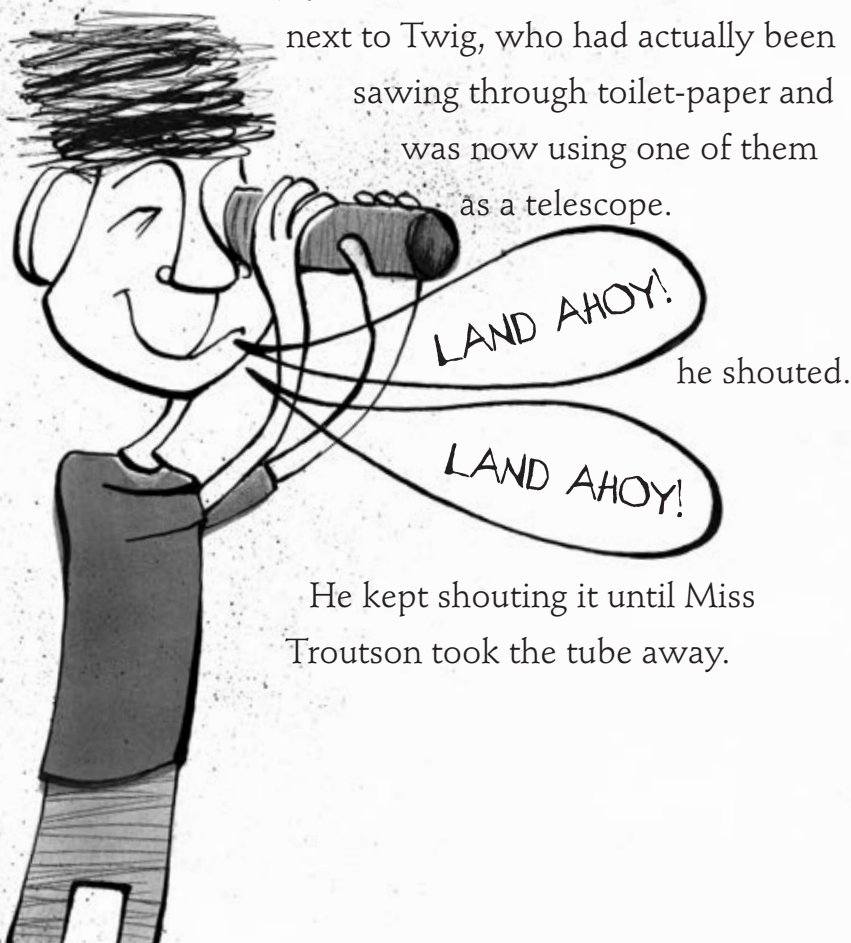
"I want everyone to stop what they're doing and come over to the carpet

IMMEDIATELY.



Hooey was quite pleased in a way. He'd started out with high hopes for his model of a Ferris wheel, but the cheese carton kept falling off the end of the pencil and crushing all the little clay customers. Which, he had to admit, wasn't healthy or safe.

Hooey put down his scissors and stood next to Twig, who had actually been sawing through toilet-paper and was now using one of them as a telescope.



He kept shouting it until Miss Troutson took the tube away.

"All right," she said when everyone was settled. "Can anyone tell me what we covered in our introduction to Building and Engineering last week? Yasmin?"

"STAYING SAFE," said Yasmin.

"Very good, Yasmin. So why do you think I stopped everyone just now?"

"Because people weren't being Healthy or Safe," said Twig. "They were being Unhealthy and Dangerous." He looked at Basbo. "With staplers mainly."

"That is correct," said Miss Troutson as Basbo glared back at Twig. "So your homework this weekend is to come up with a design for something that will make the world a safer place."



“Boring,” said Basbo, aiming the stapler at Twig. Twig panicked, jerked his head back, and banged it on the filing cabinet.



“That is *not* the attitude I’m looking for,” said Miss Troutson, holding one hand out for the stapler while patting Twig sympathetically with the other. “But I thought a few of you might feel that

way. Which is why I have spoken to the owner of the fairground and he has agreed to give a prize to the person who presents the best safety design in school assembly on Monday."

"Ooh," said Twig, forgetting his injuries. "Is it cotton candy?"

"Better than that," said Miss Troutson. "The winner will get free tickets to the fair."



* * *

Outside, the day was heavy with heat and sunshine. Little kids monkeyed around by the hedges, Basbo demonstrated wrestling moves on Ricky Mears, and Samantha Curbitt ran circles around the Watson twins before flicking the ball up and scoring her third hat trick.



“She’s an angel,” said Twig, smiling dreamily. “An angel sent from heaven.”

“You shouldn’t talk about Basbo like that,” said Hooey.
“He might hear you.”





They watched as
Basbo flipped Ricky
Mears over his head
and dumped
him in the
shrubbery.

"I think
he actually
wants to
kill me," said
Twig. "Did you
see his face when
he aimed the
stapler at me?"

"He always looks like that," said Hooey.
"Probably just concentrating."

"Yeah, on stapling my head to the wall."

"Never mind that," said Hooey. "Just think
about those free tickets. They've got our
name on them, Twiggy-boy."

“Maybe we could design something for the hedge-monkeys,” said Twig, watching the little kids make their dens in the hedges at the edge of the field. “Something to keep them safe.”

“But hedges aren’t dangerous, Twig,” said Hooey.

“They are if you put the right dog in there,” said Twig. “There’s one on our street that’ll go for anything. He’s a complete nutmeg.”

“Twig, you’re grasping at straws,” said Hooey. “Maybe we should just try to get some ideas at the fair tonight.”

“OK,” said Twig. “I haven’t got any money, though. I spent it all on toilet paper.”

“*Toilet* paper?”

“Yeah. I needed the rolls for my model of the water chute.”

“So what happened to the paper?”

“I wrapped it around some bananas and

put it back.
I thought it
could be like
a surprise treat
for people when
they finish the
roll. You know:



"That's a bit weird, Twig," said Hooey. "But quite healthy, I suppose. It could help people with their five servings of fruit and veggies a day."

"That could be our design!" said Twig.
"**BANANA T. P. ROLLS!** We could write to the prime minister and everything."

Hooey imagined the look on the prime minister's face when he went to the john and found a banana wrapped in toilet paper.
"Maybe we'll come back to that one," he said.

At that moment, Hooey's brother Will arrived, carrying his lunch box in one hand and a notebook in the other. On the front of the notebook he had written: **My Decimal Calculations by Will Higgins.**

"Ooh, look!" cried Twig, pointing at the cover. "It's **Danny the Decimal Point!**"

"It's chocolate actually," said Will, scratching it off with his thumbnail. "And who is **Danny the Decimal Point?**"

"They are in my math group," said Twig. "**Danny the Decimal Point and Sammy Subtraction. They live together in Math Mansion with Molly Multiplication and Davina Division.**"

"I think Will's doing more complicated stuff than that," said Hooey. "Show him, Will."

"OK, listen to this," said Will, flicking through the pages. "I worked out that the

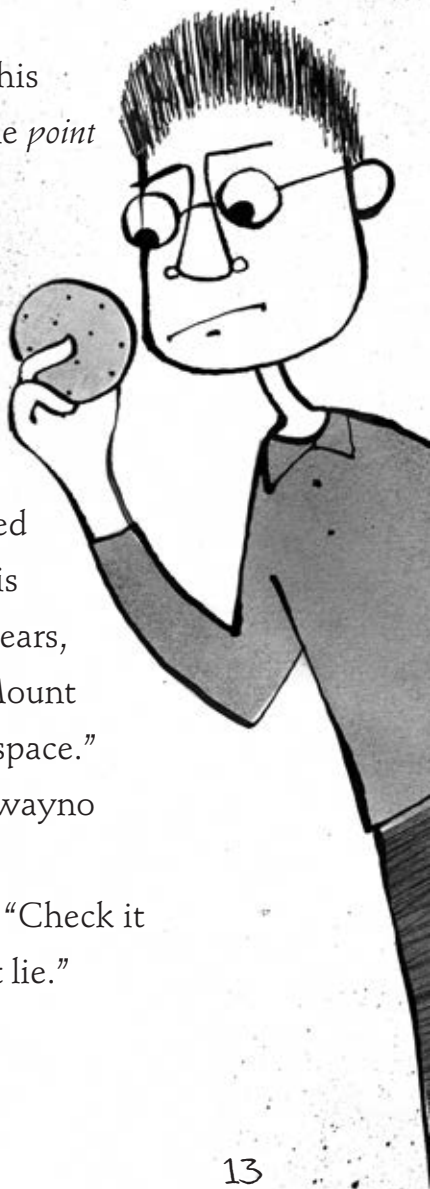
average number of cookies eaten by people in this school is 1.97 a day."

Twig pressed his hands to his cheeks with excitement. "One *point* nine seven!" he said. "Wow."

"Wait," said Will. "There's more." He opened his lunch box and produced a cookie from beneath his tuna-fish sandwiches. "I worked out that if you stacked up all the cookies eaten at this school for the next seventy years, the pile would stretch past Mount Everest and all the way into space."

"No *way*!" said Twig. "No wayno wayno *way*!"

Will held up his notebook. "Check it out, Twig. The pictures don't lie."



Hooey peered over Twig's shoulder and saw that Will had drawn a diagram showing lots of kids lying on their backs, with packets

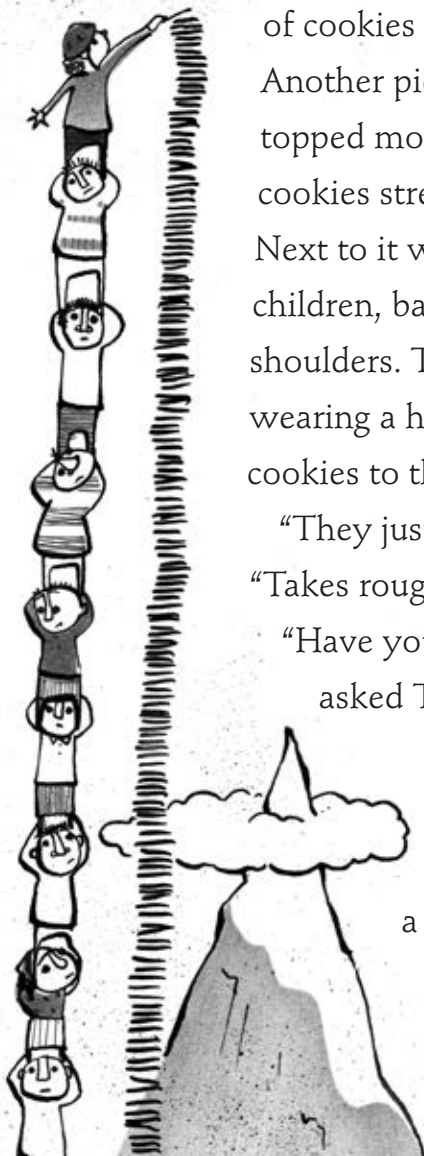
of cookies strewn all around them. Another picture showed a snow-topped mountain with a pile of cookies stretching past it into space. Next to it was a huge tower of children, balancing on one another's shoulders. The boy at the top was wearing a helmet and adding more cookies to the pile.

"They just hand 'em up," said Will. "Takes roughly 9.7 hours per cookie."

"Have you got any *actual* photos?" asked Twig hopefully.

"Not yet," said Will.

"But it's only a matter of time, Twig. It's only a matter of time."



Hooey cleared his throat. "Umm, Will, leaving the cookies to one side for a moment, can you help us with our project? We need to design something safe."

"Safe?" Will frowned. "What kind of safe?"

"The kind of safe that will win us free tickets to the fair. Miss Troutson's giving them away to the winners of the best safety design. Also, Twig needs some money and we think Basbo wants to kill him."

Twig went slightly pale at the mention of this last bit, but Will just nodded and took a fresh pencil from his pocket.

"What are you thinking, Will?" asked Hooey.

Will licked the end of his pencil and opened his notebook.

"I'm thinking trousers," he said.



Hooey Higgins and the Tremendous Trousers

Steve Voake

Illustrated by Emma Dodson

"An appealing streetwise caper." – The Telegraph (U.K.)

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