

MIKE FORDE

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How to
NOT



go to
SCHOOL

PARSLEY MIMBLEWOOD
SAVES THE WORLD!



*This story is dedicated to the fabulous, funny, whacky,
resilient children of Wensleydale class in
Ingleton Primary School.*

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CHAPTER 1

HOW TO NOT GO TO SCHOOL

Sunday 29th March 2020

I'm very good at not going to school. I've done it every single day of my life.

First, I wake up, get dressed and feed my animals:

- Alfred the Great (our very fat cat)
- Parsley (my imaginary guinea-pig)
- Molly Wobble and Maximillian Ironbelly II (my two real guinea-pigs)
- Einstein and Meatball (the dogs)
- Stick-asaurus the Stick Insect
- Dianne, Pam and Ann (the nanny goats)

Next, I feed... me, I brush my teeth and then...

...I don't go to school.

For some of you, it might be a little more tricky. You've been going to school so long that it's seeped into your bones.

You have times tables tattooed on your brain and your belly rumbles whenever the lunch bell rings.

You'll have to remember to **NOT** put on your school uniform and **NOT** pick up your packed lunch. You need to **NOT** go through the front door, **NOT** walk down the street, **NOT** cross the road with the lolly pop lady and absolutely, definitely **NOT** say good morning to your teacher.

And that's all before school's even started. Then you have to spend all day concentrating on **NOT** listening to what your teacher is saying.

I'm Parsley Miblewood by the way and I've never been to school. Not once. I've never put my hand up to answer a question. I've never run a race on sports day and never eaten a school dinner.

Instead, I learn things at home with my mum and my little brother, Bo. Things like how to milk a grumpy nanny goat and how to extract the healing properties of crystals.

We live in a little ramshackle cottage, at the end of a windy narrow lane in the middle of the Moors (just beyond Wensleydale). It's so far from anywhere that whenever a car drives past we all come running out to say hello.

It's so far that it would take hours to get to school and back and anyway my mum says they don't teach you the important stuff at school like understanding the truth about crystals.

(She **REALLY** likes crystals)

Anyway, now, nobody is going to school. So, today, on Sunday 29th March 2020, I have decided to write a book for all of you. A book to explain exactly

HOW TO NOT GO TO SCHOOL.



CHAPTER 2

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR GROWN-UPS

Monday 30th March 2020

This morning I was woken up by a dripping sound. Our roof has a lot of holes in it because our cottage is really old and tumbledown. And when it rains, we have to gather up all the buckets and bowls and bottles to put underneath the drips.

I don't mind the drip, drip, dripping because it makes our house sound like a deep dank cave but when we're all stuck inside together, everyone starts to go a bit crazy.

By the time I got up, Bo had already knocked over three bottles and spilt a bowl of Cheerios across the floor. I had to hop between the shrinking islands of dry crunchy cereal to avoid my slippers getting covered in soggy Cheerio mush.

Bo was being a very good boy because he was already cleaning up his mess by picking up and eating the dry Cheerios from the floor. I poured myself a bowl, but before I could get the spoon to my mouth, Mum had rushed in shouting things like, "Don't let your brother eat food off the floor!" "Where's my phone charger?" and "Arrrghhhh...now I've got mush on my slippers!"

I tried to explain that she should hop between the dry islands of cereal, but she wasn't having any of it. By then, her phone

was plugged in and one eye was glazed over her screen whilst the other eye was glaring at me! Even though it was Bo's mess!

After a few moments, she tore herself away from her screen and sighed, "I think we've got a serious case of Cabin Fever?"

Cabin Fever is what happens when we all feel cooped up from being trapped together in our little house for too long.



And as soon as someone says, “Cabin Fever”, we all start singing “I got Cabin Fever” from the Muppets’ Treasure Island. We’ve had Cabin Fever so often that I’ve learned all the words and can do all the voices. Unfortunately, Bo hasn’t learned all the words yet. He only knows the “I got Cabin Fever” line and in fact, he thinks it’s, “I got Gaba Geeba”. Mum and I cleared up the cereal but Bo was still singing Gaba Geeba again and again and Mum had gone back to her phone, so I thought I’d go and feed the animals before the Cabin Fever got any worse.

Whilst I was feeding the animals, I made an incredible discovery. Looking after animals is just like looking after grown-ups with Cabin Fever.

Grown-ups are like dogs...

Just like the dogs, grown-ups must be taken for regular walks. Otherwise, they start pacing up and down the house and muttering to themselves.

Grown-ups are like cats...

Our cat, Alfred the Great is on a special “draconian” diet from the vet because he eats too much. And when Mum’s stuck inside, I need to stop her from snacking too... or else she’ll

have eaten all the snacks and there won’t be any left for me.

Grown-ups are like guinea pigs...

Guinea pigs don’t do very much. Even imaginary guinea pigs are a little bit boring, but they do give very good cuddles. I’ve found that a short cuddle is a sure-fire cure for grown-ups who have caught a bad case of Cabin Fever.

Grown-ups are like stick insects...

It’s very easy looking after a stick insect but sometimes I worry that Stick-asaurus might be a little lonely without any other stick insects. There’s at least two of everything else.

Even I’ve got Bo - although he can be very annoying sometimes. But Mum doesn’t have any other grown-ups in our house. Maybe, that’s why she spends all day blabbering on the phone about crystals.

Grown-ups are like goats...

We’ve got a copy of the RSPCA Guidebook for Keeping Goats. (well... we’ve got all the pages apart from 45-52 because Dianne the Goat ate them.) Anyway, the guidebook says that “Goats must not be tethered.” Even though they’re fantastic

at escaping, you shouldn't tie goats up because it can hurt their necks. My mum's phone is always needing charging up so sometimes she sits for hours stuck to the wall staring at pictures of crystals and looking at the news just like a tethered goat.

I decided that my mum needed some looking after so I hid her phone charger at the bottom of Bo's toy box. This ticked off most of her needs because she was exercising by rushing around the house, she wasn't tethered to her phone and she got a hug from Bo when he said sorry for putting her charger in his toy box.

I felt a bit guilty about getting Bo into trouble and also my plan only seemed to make the Cabin Fever worse because by lunch time everyone was grumpy with everyone else.

That's why I've now decided to hold an official family meeting.

Here's the agenda I made for the meeting.

Official Family Meeting

*Attendees: Me, Bo, Mum, Alfred the Great (cat),
Stick-asaurus (stick insect)*

Discussion points:

- *What are the symptoms of Cabin Fever?*
- *How to avoid catching Cabin Fever?*
- *What to do if you suspect you or a member of your household has Cabin Fever?*
- *What should we do if everyone has Cabin Fever?*
- *Any other business?*

CHAPTER 3

WHAT ABOUT FRIENDS?

Monday 30th March 2020

Sometimes I think imaginary friends are better than real friends. They never argue about what game to play and they always know exactly how you're feeling, and they don't have any bad habits like farting (except for FartBot, the imaginary farting robot) or picking their noses. (Apart from Norbert Nose-Full... he's another one of my imaginary friends and he keeps all his things in his nose. In his left nostril, he keeps his violin, his paint brushes and his pet mouse. In his right nostril, he keeps his golf clubs and his pet elephant.)

In total, I have seven imaginary friends:

1. Evil Egbert

He's about the size of an egg and he sits on my shoulder telling me to do shockingly evil things. Once, he told me to trap my little brother under a laundry basket with three heavy dictionaries on top to stop him escaping. Don't worry...

I almost never do what Egbert tells me to.

2. Norbert Nose-Full

Everyone already nose about him!

3. Parsley the Imaginary Guinea-Pig

I invented her before I had any real guinea-pigs. And then it wouldn't have been fair to get rid of her just because I got real ones. Anyway, the real guinea-pigs don't mind that she's imaginary. Also, I named her after myself because I was really young then and didn't have a very good imagination.

4. PomPom the Ninja

He's an imaginary ninja who looks after the imaginary unicorns at the end of my garden. Sometimes the other ninjas make fun of him for liking unicorns so much, but he doesn't mind because unicorns are AWESOME. (They eat fairy dust and poop RAINBOWS)

5. Detective Inspector Dracula

A vampire who is also a detective. Quite a lot of the time it turns out that Detective Dracula was the murderer as well as the detective which makes everything a bit awkward.

6. The Reading Dog

The Reading Dog is one of those big shaggy brown dogs who just loves books. He loves nothing better than to snuggle up and read my book over my shoulder.

7. FartBot

A genius scientist created him with cutting-edge fart extinguishing technology but unfortunately the scientist got distracted and put the nozzle on backwards. So now FartBot just farts a lot. Most of the time, this is kind of nasty but sometimes it's useful to have someone to blame.

Today, I was in the garden with Detective Dracula trying to solve the mystery of the sheep skull on the wall.

How did it get there?

Who killed the sheep?

What happened to the rest of its body?

I had two suspects. First, my brother Bo. He's always digging around in the dirt, unearthing rotting old things and he won't let us throw them away because he calls them his "treasures".

One time, he found a black leathery bird's claw the size of his fist. He carried it around tied to a piece of string for weeks until Mum "accidentally" threw it in the bin.

My other suspect is Detective Dracula himself, but I couldn't work out how an imaginary vampire could lift a real sheep's skull.

I was stumped... and so was Detective Dracula. That's the problem with imaginary friends. When you run out of ideas, so do they.



So, I decided to send for back up. I ran inside and grabbed the enchanted tablet. It looks and works just like a normal tablet except it uses magic instead of electronics. That's how I talk to my best friend Tui (pronounced Two-ee).

There are lots of brilliant things about Tui like that that she can speak Maori and she always has the best ideas for games and her hair is a different colour each week and she always knows how to solve a mystery.

But there's one terrible, horrible, atrocious thing about Tui... she lives in New Zealand. That's on the other side of the world so I can only talk to her by magic/ electronic tablets.

Tui cracked the case immediately. Detective Dracula must have used his evil vampire powers to possess Bo and make him put the skull on the wall. Then we played some games together because even though we're best friends, sometimes it's a bit difficult just talking through an enchanted portal. (I don't know what grown-ups blabber on about for hours and hours)

After talking to Tui, I felt happy, but I also felt sad that she lives so far away. When I feel like this, imaginary friends aren't much help because they just feel the same way as me. So, I wrote a postcard full of questions for my Gran.

My Gran is tiny. (Not tiny like Evil Eggbert but she is smaller than me!) Sometimes, I think she's so small that she's not really a grown-up. She's more of a grown-down. Normal grown-ups are so busy worrying about crystals and getting super-glue out of Bo's hair, but my Gran always has time to understand.

Here are some of the questions that I asked her:

- *Did you ever have an imaginary friend?*
- *Who do you miss seeing the most at the moment?*
- *How should I keep in touch with my friends?*
- *What do you think we should do when we get to meet up in real life again?*

CHAPTER 4

HOW TO TEACH YOURSELF TO TEACH YOURSELF BETTER THAN A TEACHER COULD TEACH YOURSELF

Tuesday 31st March 2020

Today I've been thinking about the number 2. That sounds kind of babyish doesn't it? Let me put it another way. Today, I've been investigating the properties of the number commonly referred to as "2".

It all started when I was feeding my animals. Dogs have 2 eyes and 2 ears. Goats have 2 horns. Even Bo has 2 arms and 2 legs and 2 (kind of snotty) nostrils. And that got me thinking about all the 2s that animals have. Birds have 2 wings and 2 feet. Dolphins have 2 flippers. Crabs have 2 claws and Stick-asaurus the Stick Insect has 2 antennae.

But some things don't come in 2s. Dogs have 4 legs. Beetles have 6 legs. Octopuses have 8 tentacles and centipedes have 100 legs. Millipedes have 1000 legs!

Some ladybirds have 6 spots, and some have 8 spots. Bo has 10 fingers and 10 toes.

Then I started looking at the plants in my garden.

The daffodils had 5 petals. One of the daisies I looked at had 35 petals and another one had 42 petals. The dandelions all had different numbers of leaves. I tried counting the branches on the tree, but I got confused about what counts as a branch and what's just part of another branch.

At lunch, I counted 13 seeds in my apple and then I counted the seeds in Bo's apple to make sure. He only had 10 seeds.

Have you noticed the pattern? Animals have even numbers of body parts, but plants can have odd or even.

(The only exception is the number 1. Monkeys only have one tail and you've only got one head... I hope). I decided to do some research on the enchanted tablet. It turns out that almost all animals are "bilaterally symmetrical". That means you could cut them in half down the middle and they'd have the same number of legs/fingers/ tentacles/ snotty nostrils on either side.

But plants are mostly "radially symmetrical" which means you can spin them around and around and they still look pretty much the same. (Imagine spinning a daisy flower around and around.) So, plants could have odd or even numbers of petals/ leaves/ branches/ seeds.



I was very pleased with my discovery, so I went to go and tell Bo, but he wasn't very interested in the number of parts that animals and plants have. When he grows up, he wants to be a "space palaeontologist". He plans to go to the moon and dig up dinosaur bones.

I've tried explaining that there aren't any dinosaur bones on the moon, but Mum says its ok because it keeps him busy learning lots of things about dinosaurs AND lots of things about space.

Yesterday, he told me, "The biggest plant in our solo sister is stupider." Which I thought was quite a mean thing to say until I realised what he meant was... "the biggest planet in our solar system is Jupiter." Today, he was focusing really hard on learning how to spell "pterodactyl" which is pretty ambitious because sometimes he struggles to spell "Bo".

Mum says that if you don't go to school then you need to have a **Motivation**. At school you have teachers prowling around making sure you do your work and hitting you with canes or locking you in the chokey if you don't follow the rules. (Do they still do that? I read Matilda and Danny the Champion of the World and that sort of thing happened all the time at their schools.)

My **Motivation** is curiosity and finding things out. Bo's is dreaming of being a Space Palaeontologist. Mum's **Motivation** is that she loves to master learning how to do things.

One week last winter, she spent every night practising juggling with oranges and now she can juggle any fruit she likes (even pineapples!) Another time, she decided she wanted to learn calligraphy - the really fancy curly writing. So, she spent ages practising and now her writing is so curly that no-one can read it.

Mum was more impressed than Bo by my discovery about symmetry in animals and plants especially because we'd only learned about different types of symmetry a couple of weeks ago. Then she got out the **B-BoM**. That stands for Big Book of Maths. It's an absolutely enormous maths book and we call it **B-BoM** because that's the sound it makes when you drop it on the kitchen table.

I sort of wish I could just spend all my time investigating things but it's kind of useful learning stuff from the **B-BoM**. Like, last week we learned all about different types of symmetry and that was helpful in my animal and plant parts discovery today.

After maths, I did some writing (this book!) and Mum told me to write down some more questions about Motivation and learning things at home. So, here they are:

What's your **Motivation**?

- *Are there any other types of **Motivation**?*
- *Should you only have one **Motivation**, or can you have different ones?*
- *What else do you need to help you learn at home?*

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO FEEL JOYFUL, DISGUSTED, WORRIED, ANGRY, SAD AND HOPEFUL

Wednesday 1st April 2020

In the corner of Bo's room, we have a big wooden toy house. A couple of years ago we went to town to go to the cinema and on the way home we saw this beautiful toy house in a skip and Mum stopped the car and put it on the back seat on top of me and Bo and we took it home.

We sanded it down then painted it green and gold. It's called The Inside Out House because the film we watched was *Inside Out*. We went down to the river and we collected loads of interesting looking stones. Then we painted them with different feelings. I painted a big frowning face on a pointy red stone and called him "Anger" and his big brother is a jagged black rock called "Rage". "Sadness" is a perfect round pebble. "Disgust" is a large brown-grey rock with lots of knobbly bits. "Worry" is a greenish stone that's just the right size to squeeze in your hand. And Bo found a perfect flat round skimming stone and said that we should save it to be "Joy" instead of throwing it in the river.

To start off with, Bo and me just played out stories with the different stones. Although, it would usually end with Bo

shouting "Rage Rock" and smashing all the other stones with "Rage". Then we started to go and fetch "Disgust" whenever Mum suggested something disgusting for tea. (Like Buckwheat and Gherkin Salad or Cold Stilton and Spinach Soup). Now, any time I feel anxious, I fetch "Worry" and squeeze him in the palm of my hand. The problem is, when I stop feeling worried, I just leave him lying around and then Mum stands on him and she has to go and get "Anger" or maybe even "Rage".

This morning, I saw Bo sitting in front of the Inside Out House. He was holding "Worry" in his hand even though it was slightly too big for his hand to squeeze. He said he was worried about Gran. I picked up "Sadness" because she's just as good as "Worry" to hold in your hand. I felt a bit sad that Gran was going to be stuck inside for so long.

Normally, she goes out with all the other tiny old ladies and they do "aqua-aerobics" in the shallow end of the pool and eat huge slices of cake in the leisure centre cafe.

Above the Inside Out House, Mum had painted a big sign in her curly calligraphy writing. It's impossible to read because it's so curly but she told us that it says, "It's ok to feel that way." Mum came in and sat with us for a bit then she told us that she thinks we need a new stone for the house.

She wouldn't tell us what feeling it was or even what the stone should look like, just that we'd know it when we saw it. So, we all put on our wellies and trudged down to the river. Pretty soon Bo had forgotten about looking for the special stone and was just looking for dinosaur fossils. But me and Mum kept looking for ages and ages until my fingers were frozen to icicles and Bo had made an enormous pile of dinosaur fossils. Eventually, I saw the stone we were looking for. It was under the water, lodged beneath a big craggy slab that I had to lever up. The stone was really small - about the size of an acorn. And it glistened. When you held it up to the sky, the light gleamed through it and it sparkled like a crystal. (I knew Mum would love it)

"That's it!" she said beaming.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's Hope."

We took "Hope" home and introduced her to all the other stones and then Mum painted another sign to go above the house. She had to read it out to us because of the curly writing but it said, "Hope is the thing with feathers" which is a poem by Emily Dickinson.

We wrote another postcard for Gran and then I thought all of this would be a good idea to include in my book.

Here are some questions that me and Bo thought of:

- *Are you worried too? (Bo)*
- *Do dragons like soup? (Bo)*
- *Who could you talk to? (Me)*
- *How do your grown-ups feel? (Me)*
- *Do dinosaurs like soup? (Bo)*
- *Is it OK to feel that way? (Mum)*



CHAPTER 6

THE LAST CHAPTER OF MY BOOK

Thursday 2nd April 2020

This is the last chapter of my book. By now you're an expert on not going to school. You could probably do it in your sleep. Pretty soon you'll have forgotten how to go to school.

Now I've finished writing my book, here are some new projects I'm going to try:

- Build a sea wall across the river
- Ask Tui to teach me to speak Maori
- Learn how to juggle pineapples like Mum
- Teach Einstein and Meatball the dogs to perform tricks
- Teach Bo to perform tricks
- Invent an eighth imaginary friend
- Create a stop-motion animation with the feelings in the Inside Out House
- Phone Gran and write a report about all the interesting things that have happened in her life
- Create a friend for Stick-asaurus the Stick Insect
- Investigate the number 10
- Help Bo learn all the words to "I got Cabin Fever"



Thanks for reading!

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