

According to my dad ...

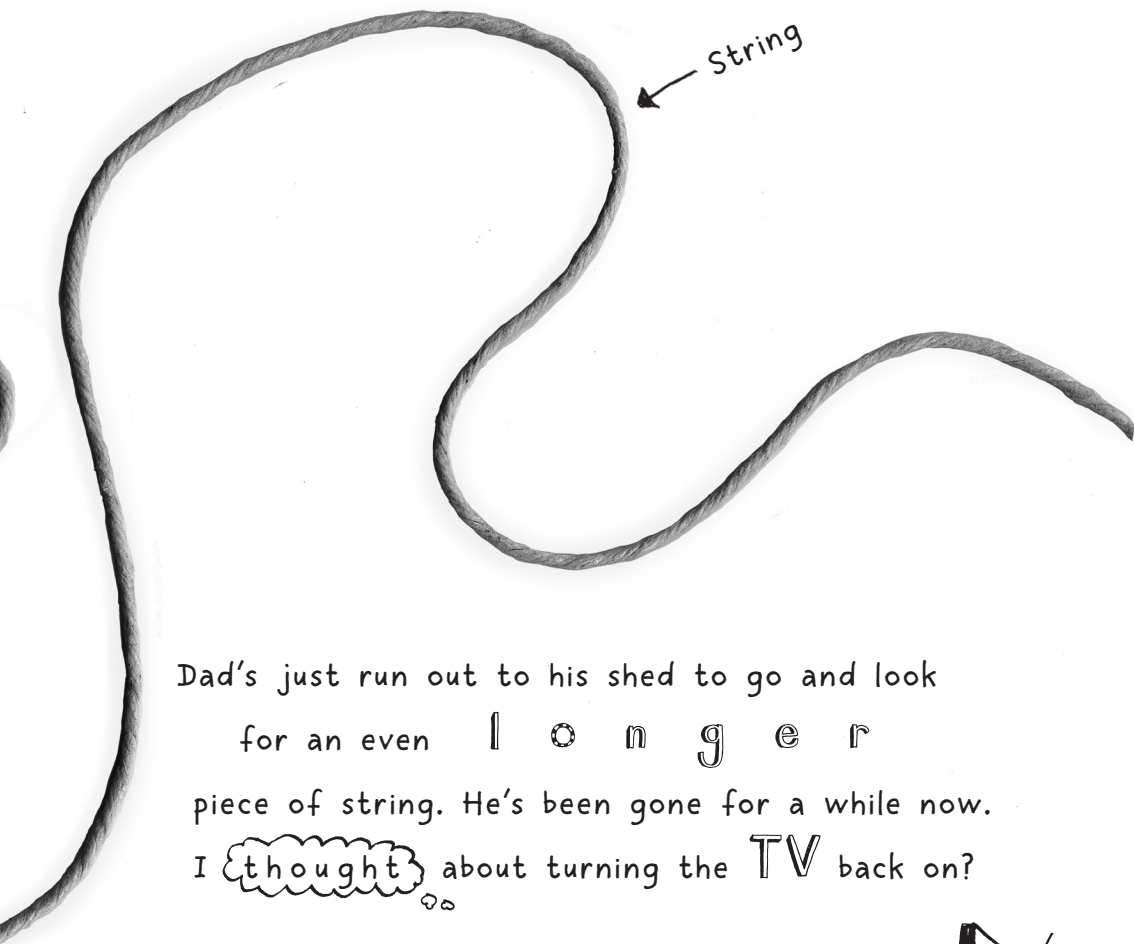
is going to be ... a kite.

THIS bit of string ...

(Really?)

It doesn't look much like a KITE to

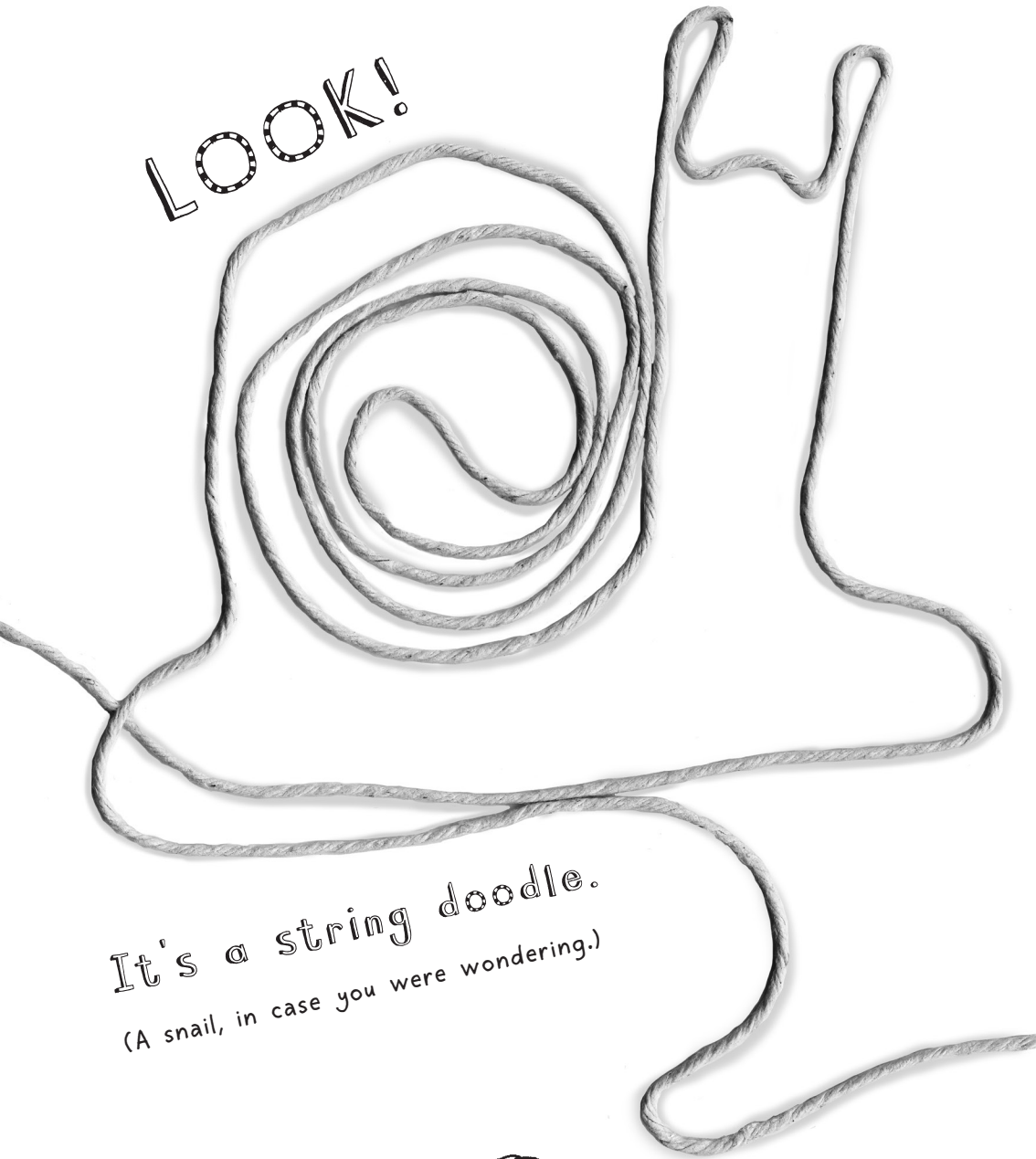
me?



Dad's just run out to his shed to go and look  
for an even l o n g e r  
piece of string. He's been gone for a while now.  
I **thought** about turning the TV back on?

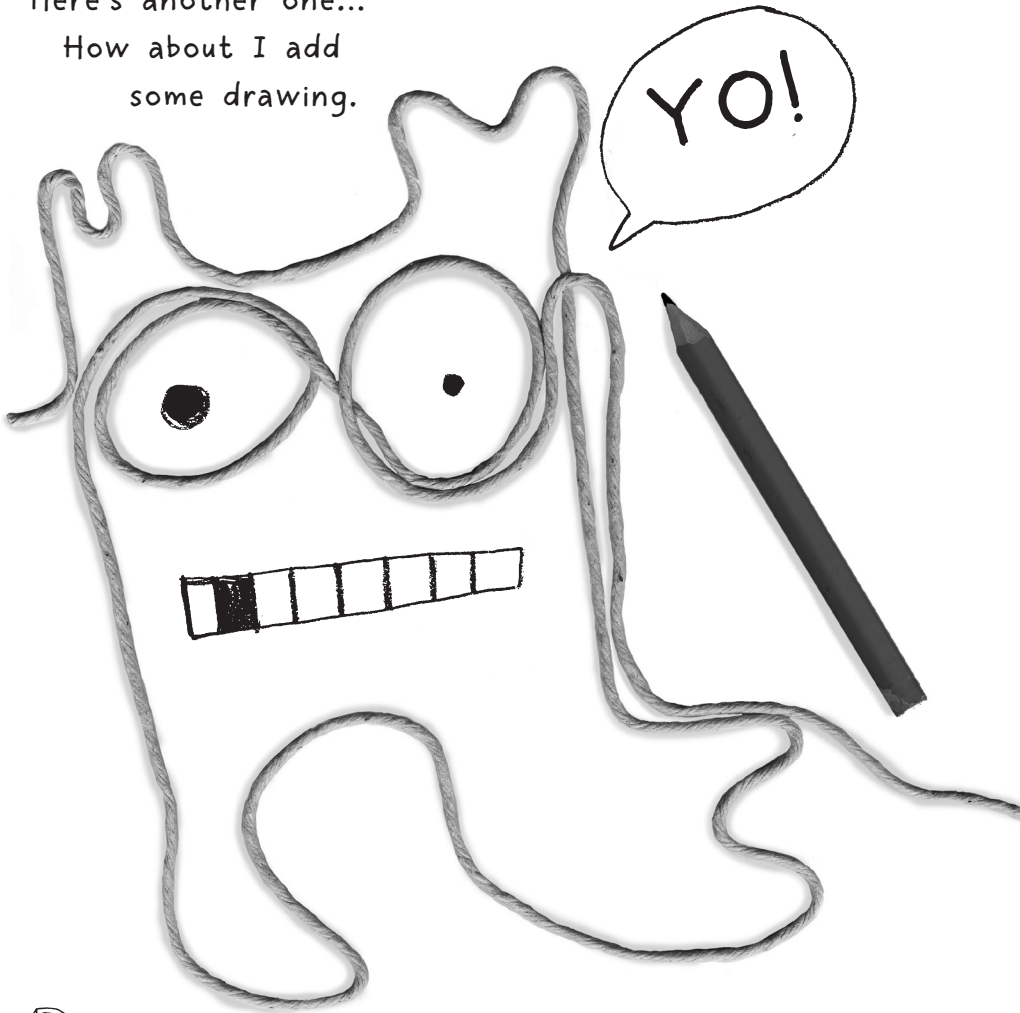
But instead, I did **THIS...**

LOOK!



It's a string doodle.  
(A snail, in case you were wondering.)

Here's another one...  
How about I add  
some drawing.




**Brilliant!** (If I do say so myself.)

Who knew string could be so useful?


(Apart from my Granny Mavis, of course.)

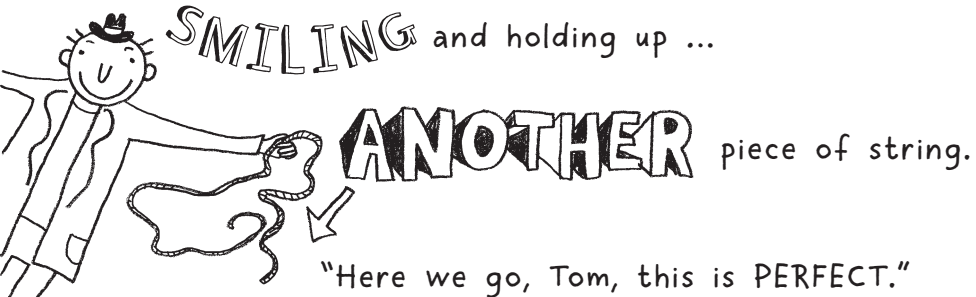


The **NEXT** time I'm in a lesson that gets a bit **dull**  (which happens), I'm going to bring out my **EMERGENCY** piece of

 **STRING** and make a few doodles. That way it'll look like I'm REALLY busy.



When Dad comes back from the shed he's 



"Here we go, Tom, this is PERFECT."  
I'm looking at the string thinking - it's exactly the same as the **OTHER** bit?

"That's great, Dad," I say, trying to sound enthusiastic (and failing).



**NORMALLY** I LOVE making things (like my string doodles). But Dad came and interrupted me when I was **RIGHT** in the middle of watching



the **BEST** cartoon show **EVER**.

He stood in front of the **TV** and started shaking his head in a disapproving kind of way.



"**TOM**, why are you stuck inside watching **TV** when it's **SUCH** a lovely day?"



he wanted to know.



Firstly = it was NOT a lovely day. It was damp and cold.

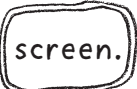
Secondly = I was watching **TV** because

**THE CRAZY FRUIT BUNCH** was on and it's



**HILARIOUS!**



But I didn't say that. I just kept my  EYES fixed on the  screen and shrugged.

There are **SO** many things you could be doing instead of **STARING** at a  screen.  
Come on, **TOM**, turn off the **TV**.



"Aww, Dad! That's not **FAIR**. Can't I just finish watching my cartoon?" I asked him.






"Honestly, Tom, when I was your age, I was **ALWAYS** outside running about in the fresh air. I hardly **EVER** watched , " he told me proudly.

"That's because  hadn't been invented when you were my age, Dad." 

(He is quite old, after all.)



 "Of course **TV** had been invented!



I just liked playing outside. Climbing trees  and making things with twigs ... that kind of thing."

 "What sort of things did you make with **TWIGS?**" I wanted to know.

 I made **LOTS** of things.

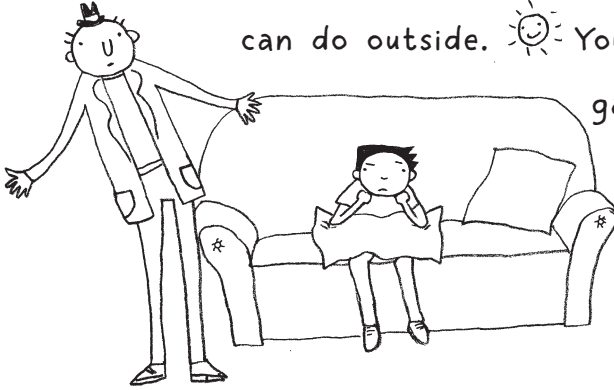
 "Like **WHAT?**" I asked.

"You know, **TWIG** things. Things made out of **TWIGS**. Anyway,  it doesn't matter what I made. The main thing was I was **OUT** in the fresh air having  **FUN**."

 "Playing with twigs doesn't sound like much fun to me," I told Dad. 



"There are **PLENTY** of other things you can do outside. ☀️ You can play in the garden, for a start."



"It's too cold."

"So run around! Or you could ask Derek over?"

(I shook my head because I knew Derek was busy.)

"He's at a friend's house - probably watching **TV**,"

I said, trying to make a point. 😞

(I knew he wasn't - but that didn't matter.)



Derek being  
↙ busy

**HOW** about inviting your **NEW** neighbour June over? I'm sure she'd come round to play if you asked her.



(Well *that* wasn't going to happen.)



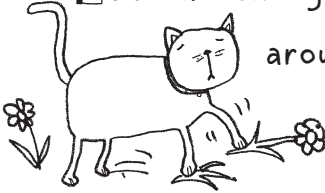
"Dad, it's not like I'm **FOUR** years old, my friends don't come round to play any more - well, not unless we're having a band practice."

(I **DEFINITELY** wasn't going to be asking June over.)

Since she moved in next door, June's not exactly been that friendly to me.



It's bad enough having her **CAT** wandering around **OUR** garden **AND** she's in my class at school too.



This work is too easy



Every time she sees me (which is a lot, because she sits next to **AMY PONTER**, who sits next to me),

June thinks it's **FUNNY** to say,



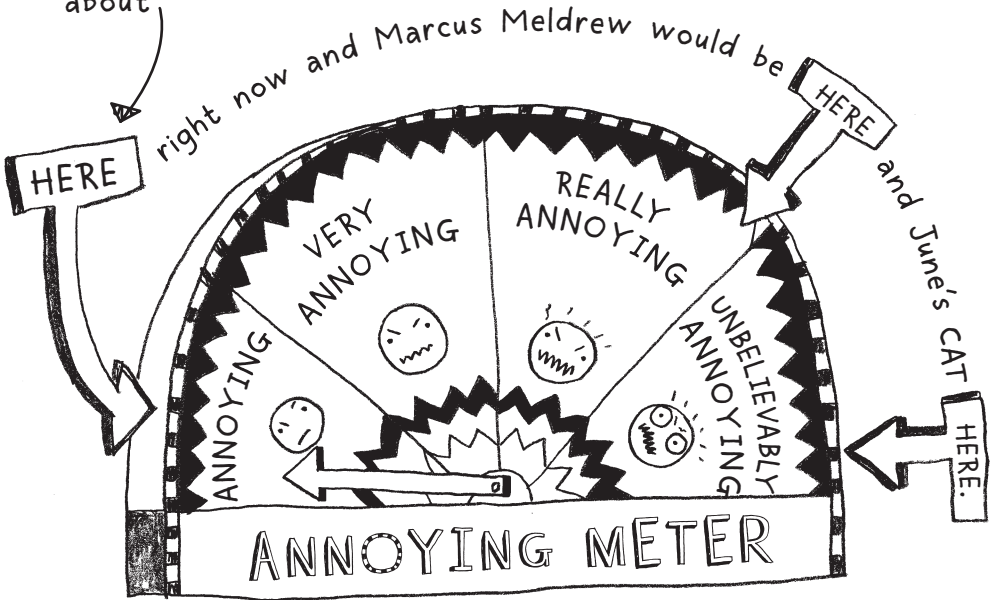
"TOM ... you do realize that are actually a **RUBBISH** band."

**DUDE 3**



Which is **NOT** TRUE and also REALLY ANNOYING.

If I had an ANNOYING METER, June would be about



Sometimes there's not much to choose between them.

When Mum came in to see what Dad and I were chatting about ...


she **JOINED IN!**



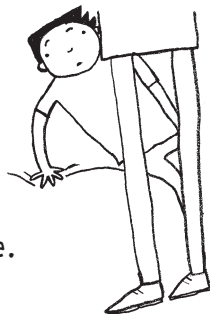
"You're not watching  again, are you, Tom?"



she asked me.

"I'm TRYING to watch ,

her while *leaning* to the side of Dad.



It's not like I watch TELLY all the time.

I just LOVE THE CRAZY  
  
FRUIT BUNCH.

The chances of me being able to watch the rest of  
the cartoon were disappearing *FAST*.

It was impossible to concentrate with BOTH  
Mum and Dad

**GLARING** at me.



So I GAVE UP - and I turned it off myself.



Sulking  
face



"OK - what shall I do **NOW?**"

I asked them.

"Well, there are **LOADS** of other things we  
could do."



"Like **WHAT?**"



"How about ... we go for a walk?" Dad suggested.



"A WALK - where to?" I wanted to know.

"Somewhere **NICE**," he said.



"The **SWEET SHOP'S NICE?**"

I suggested.

"No, **TOM**, I meant somewhere like

the **park.**"






"If we had a **DOG** I'd be **REALLY HAPPY**  
to go out for walks all the time,"


I told Dad.

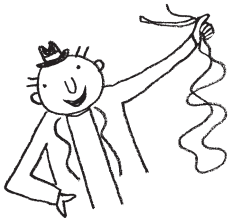



"We can't get a **DOG** because Delia's  **ALLERGIC** to DOGS," Dad reminded me.

So I said quietly,

 I'd rather have a dog  than Delia. 


Dad didn't hear me because he was busy picking up a bit of string  that was on the shelf.



"I **KNOW**, how about I show you how to make a **KITE**?" 

Then we can fly it together **AND** get some fresh air at the same time!"

Before I could say, "**MAYBE?**" or

 "Could we do that later?"

Mum got all **EXCITED** and said,

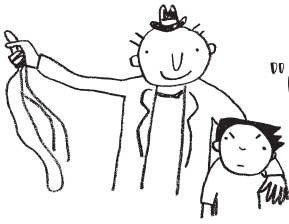
"That's a **BRILLIANT IDEA!**"



(It was an OK idea. I'd still rather watch the rest of

**THE CRAZY FRUIT BUNCH.**) 






"COME on, it will be **FUN**"

Dad said, trying to convince me.

And THAT'S when he disappeared

into his shed  to go and find ANOTHER piece of string.

Mum went to the kitchen and came back with:  
some plastic bags ... a couple of bin liners ...



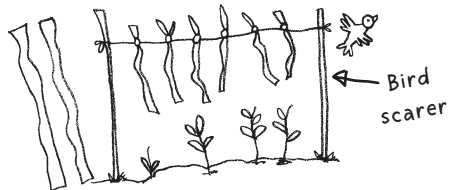
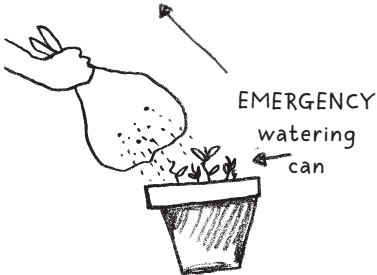
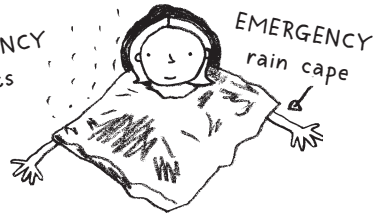
and a roll of sticky tape.


"These might be useful?"

Mum's got a thing about

plastic bags and bin liners, she uses them


for EVERYTHING.



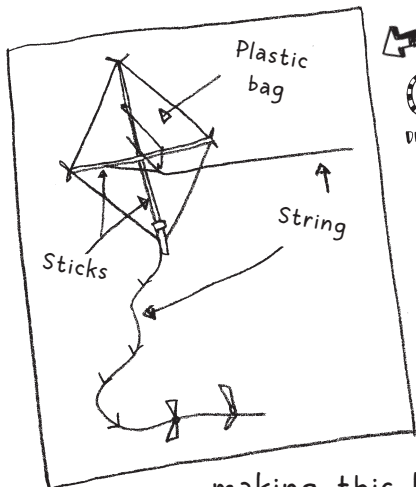
When Dad saw the plastic  bags he said they were

perfect!




"Perfect for what?"  I wondered.

"All we need now are couple of sticks and some scissors," Dad told me. Then he got some paper and drew out how we were going to make the kite.\*



OK, I kind of get it now.

"Let's go to my shed and finish making the kite there," Dad said. 

So we did.

We were supposed to be making this kite together. But every

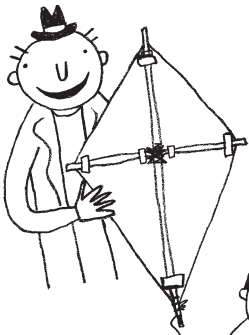
time I tried to help out, Dad would say,

"I'll show you how to do that, Tom," and take over completely.



\* See the end of the book for how to make a KITE.





"LOOK, WE'VE MADE IT!" Dad said.  
(HE'D made it - but I didn't say that.)



"Shall we go and fly it?"

Dad suggested.

"What, NOW?"

"YES now - get your coat on, Tom, and let's go."

(Like I had a choice.)

When we came back into the house, Delia was in the kitchen. Lately she's been going out a lot with her friends, so I haven't seen much of her.

It's been

**GREAT.**



She was looking at her phone (as usual).

Dad said, "Look what we've made, Delia."

(Well - **DAD** made it - but I didn't tell her that.)



Amazing,

Delia said,

not even looking up.



"I bet **you** couldn't make a kite," I said.

"You're right. It's a life skill that's passed me by."

Mum says, "Well done, Tom. See what you can do when you don't watch TV?"



You must be so proud,

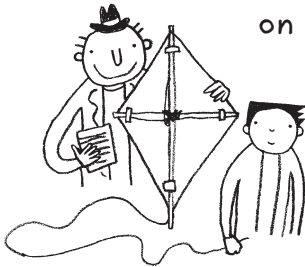
Delia adds, but I'm not sure she really means it.

Dad and I get our coats and set off for the park.

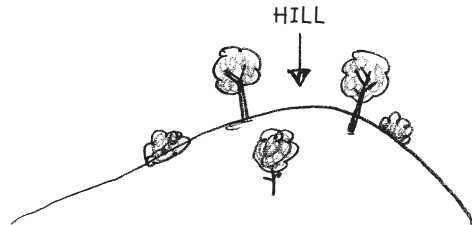
He's holding the kite really carefully so it doesn't get tangled.



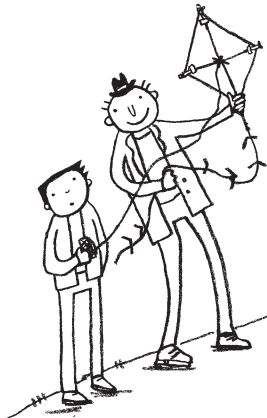
"The **BEST** place to catch the **WIND** is up on the hill," Dad says. "There's a real **KNACK** to launching a **KITE**, Tom."



"Yes, Dad."



When we get to the hill, Dad checks the string is nice and tight. Then he shows me exactly where to run and HOW to LAUNCH the kite up in the air. It all seems easy enough. So we give it a go.



I'm running and running and Dad's FRANTICALLY throwing the kite in the air,

trying to get it to LIFT up.  
He's shouting at me,

"NEARLY there, NEARLY there!

GO ON TOM

GO ON!"

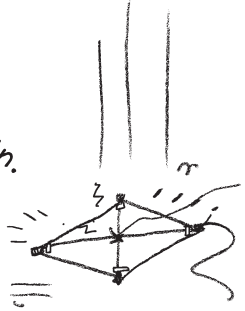


But the kite keeps sinking down like a



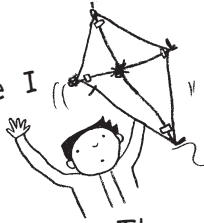
Then it happens again.

And again.



We swap over and Dad tries to run

with the kite while I throw it up.



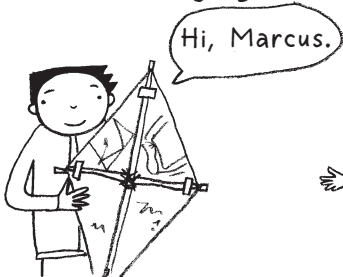
Then I recognize someone who's walking towards me with a very tiny little dog.



It's only **MARCUS MELDREW**.

If there was ONE person I wouldn't want to bump into right now - it would be Marcus. I bet he's going to make comments about my kite. (Groan.)

I can't really ignore him so I'm forced to say hello.



"Hi, Tom, what's that?"

(Here we go.)

