

Helping you choose books for children



opening extract from

# **You're a Bad Man, Mr Gum!**

written by

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## Chapter 1

# The Garden of Mr Gum

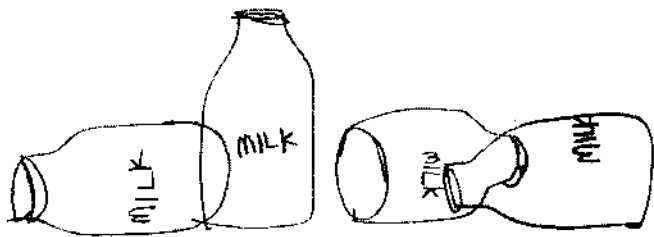
**M**r Gum was a fierce old man with a red beard and two bloodshot eyes that stared out at you like an octopus curled up in a bad cave. He was a complete horror who hated children, animals, fun and corn on the cob. What he liked was snoozing in bed all day, being lonely and scowling at things.

He slept and scowled and picked his nose and ate it. Most of the townsfolk of Lamonic Bibber avoided him and the children were terrified of him. Their mothers would say, 'Go to bed when I tell you to or Mr Gum will come and shout at your toys and leave slime on your books!' That usually did the trick.

Mr Gum lived in a great big house in the middle of town. Actually it wasn't that great, because he had turned it into a disgusting pigsty.

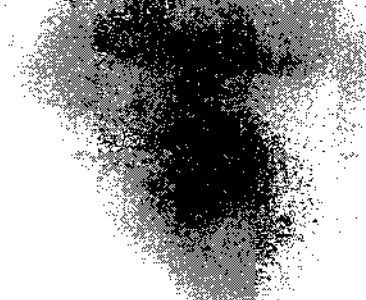
The rooms were filled with junk and pizza boxes. Empty milk bottles lay around like wounded soldiers in a war against milk, and there were old newspapers from years and years ago with headlines like

**VIKINGS INVADE BRITAIN**  
and  
**WORLD'S FIRST NEWSPAPER INVENTED**  
**TODAY.**



Insects lived in the kitchen cupboards, not just small insects but great big ones with faces and names and jobs.

Mr Gum's bedroom was absolutely grimsters. The wardrobe contained so much mould and old cheese that there was hardly any room for his moth-eaten clothes, and the bed was never made. (I don't mean that the duvet was never put back on the bed, I mean the bed had never even been MADE. Mr Gum hadn't gone to the bother of



assembling it. He had just chucked all the bits of wood on the floor and dumped a mattress on top.) There was broken glass in the windows and the ancient carpet was the colour of unhappiness and smelt like a toilet. Anyway, I could be here all day going on about Mr Gum's house but I think you've got the idea. Mr Gum was an absolute lazer who couldn't be bothered with niceness and tidying and brushing his teeth, or anyone else's teeth for that matter.

# BUT

(and as you can see, it's a big but) he was always extremely careful to keep his garden tidy. In fact, Mr Gum kept his garden so tidy that it was the *prettiest, greeniest, floweriest, gardeniest* garden in the whole of Lamonic Bibber. Here's how amazing it was:

*Think of a number  
between one and ten.*

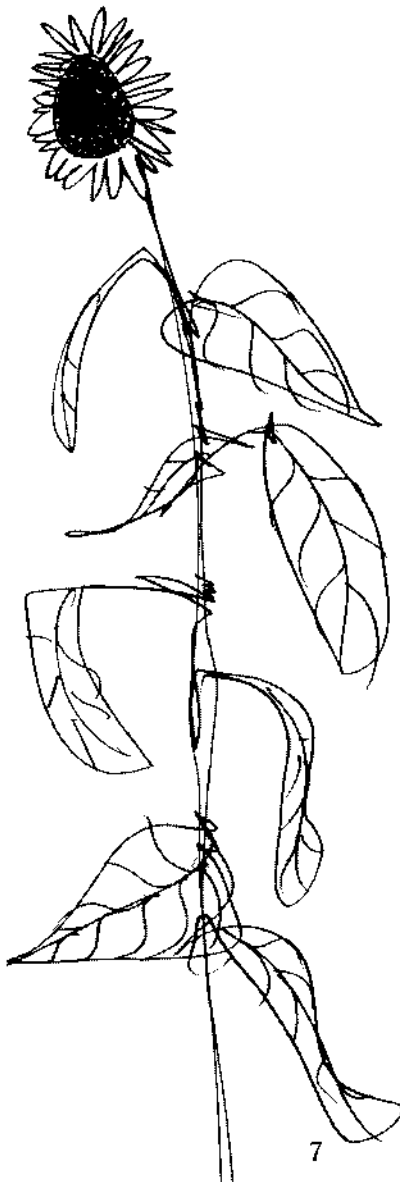
*Multiply that  
number by five.*

*Add on three  
hundred and fifty.*

*Take away eleven.*

*Throw all those  
numbers away.*

*Now think of an  
amazing garden.*





Whatever number you started with, you should now be thinking of an amazing garden. And that's how amazing Mr Gum's garden was. In spring it was bursting with crocuses and daffodils. In summer there were roses, sunflowers, and those little blue ones, what are they called again? You know, those blue ones, they look a bit like dinosaurs – anyway, there were tons of them. In autumn the leaves from the big oak tree covered the lawn, turning it gold like a gigantic leafy robot. In winter, it was winter.