

“But what about us?”

“Were we born then?”

the children cried.



“Not quite,” said Mrs Gaskitt.

“We had the house to ourselves.”

“Yes.” Mr Gaskitt smiled.

“It was delightful.”

(Gloria punched him.)

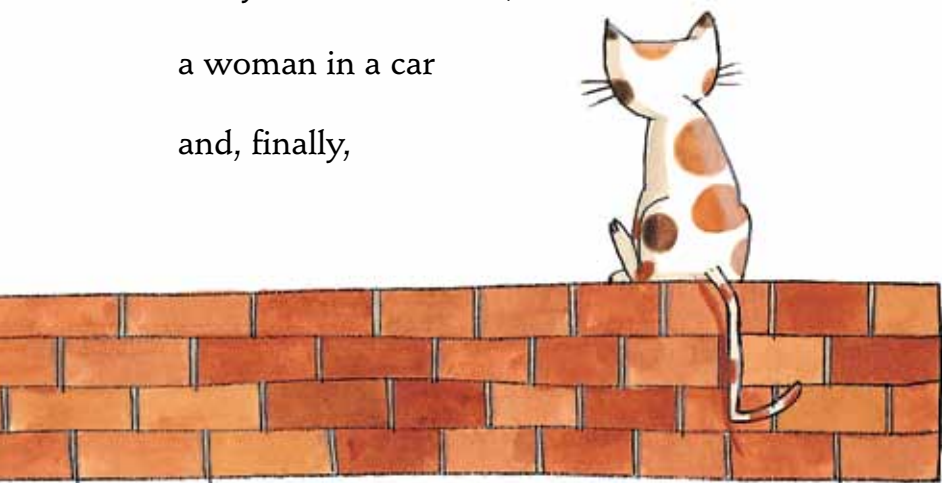
“I mean boring.”

(And Gus hit him
with a pillow.)

Boring!
Boring!
Boring!



Meanwhile, Horace was outside
sitting on the garden wall
watching the world go by.
He saw a boy on a bike,
a boy on a skateboard,
a woman in a car
and, finally,



on the other side of the road,
a man absolutely *whizzing* along
with a really old pram.

And the strange thing was,
which Horace noticed,
the strange thing was, the pram ...



was barking.

Chapter Two

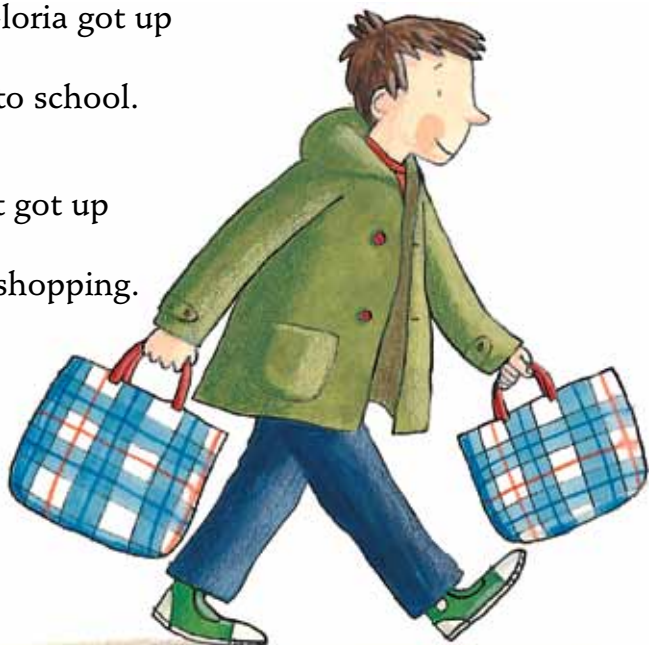
Fried Egg and Pineapple

The next morning
everybody got up.



Gus and Gloria got up
and went to school.

Mr Gaskitt got up
and went shopping.



Mrs Gaskitt got up, got the paper,
got the post,

got a cup of tea

and a *cream doughnut* ...

and went back to bed.



Goodness me!

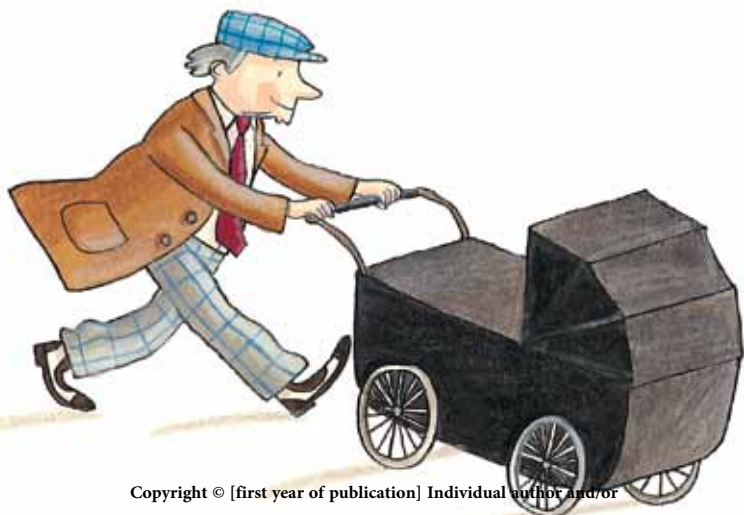


Meanwhile, Horace was out on the wall again
hoping to see and hear that
mysterious pram.

Well, Horace never saw
the pram that time,
but Mr Gaskitt did.



He was in his car at the school crossing
and there it was, the same as before,
with the same man just *whizzing* along.
But not barking, though. Oh, no!
It was more like ... squeaking,
Mr Gaskitt thought.



When Gus and Gloria got to school
they found that something
dreadful had happened.
Randolph – clever, lovable Randolph –
the class rat, had (“Squeak, squeak!”) ...
disappeared.



Oh yes, and Mrs Fritter,
while trying to find him,
had fallen out of a window.



The children, of course,
were terribly upset.

“Poor Randolph!” they cried.

“Poor Randolph!”

“Poor Randolph!”



Oh yes,
and poor
Mrs Fritter.

By this time Mr Gaskitt
was in the supermarket
filling his trolley.



Horace was visiting
a friend who *seemed*
to be out.

Mrs Gaskitt
was also out ...
of bed.

Hooray!



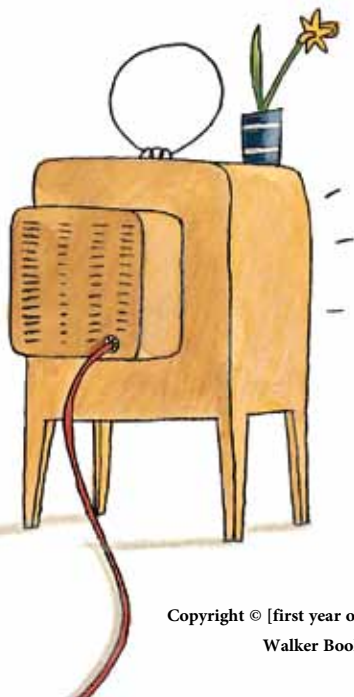
She was downstairs now in the sitting-room
watching TV, with a mug of hot chocolate
and a fried egg and pineapple –



– yes, pineapple
sandwich.



Meanwhile, somewhere
not very far away,
that pram was ...



...still whizzing along.

So, let's follow the
pram, shall we?

Here's a useful map.

It shows where the
pram has been so far
this morning
and where it's going.

Hm ... and here's
a big white van
with a ramp.

Now the pram is
being pushed into
the van.





Ha-ha!

What's going on here?

And look!

There's Horace on a wall again, outside his friend's house.

Horace is a smart cat.

Well, *Horace* thinks he is. He's thinking now that if he sits here for a while, his friend will show up ... or something *interesting* might happen.

It probably will.