

Chapter 1

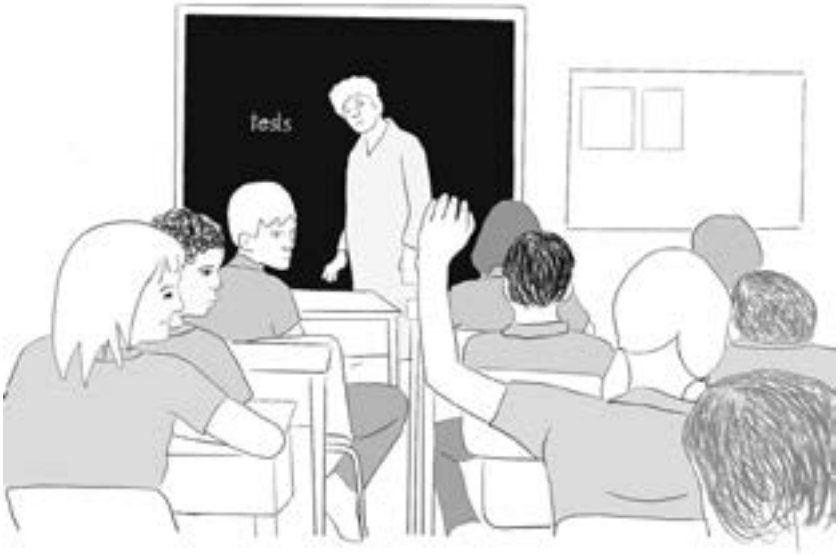
‘Sit up properly,’ snapped the teacher in the baggy blue dress. ‘I will not have slumping and slouching in my room.’

‘It’s not your room,’ we all wanted to say, but we couldn’t. You are not allowed to say things like that to a teacher.

‘Today,’ the teacher went on, ‘we will do tests. It seems that you have not had any tests so far, this year. That is a scandal. In fact, I cannot see what you have been doing at all this year.’

Liv stuck up her hand. She is very brave with that sort of thing.

‘Yes?’ said the teacher. ‘What do you want?’



‘Where is Mister Short?’ she asked.

‘Our teacher. Where is he?’

‘I am your teacher now. My name is Miss Herry, and I will be teaching you for the next six weeks. At least. It might be longer.’

‘But where is Mister Short?’

‘He is in hospital.’

'In hospital?'

'Why?' asked Jack.

'Is he sick?' cried Jess.

Miss Herry sighed. 'If you must know, it seems he was cavorting about on the roof of this room and he fell off and broke his leg. I am told that he was rigging up some sort of sail. A sail on a roof? What would be the use of that? I can't think why a teacher would be so foolish.'

We were stunned.

'Will he be all right?' I asked.

Miss Herry eyed me with her beady eyes. 'What is your name?' she snapped.

'Ben,' I said, shrinking down a bit.

'Ben, how could I possibly know if Mister Short's leg will be all right. I am not a doctor and it is not my problem. I refuse to discuss it any more. All of you,

get out your test books.'

'We don't have test books,' said Liv.

'No test books? How shocking. Well, get out your spelling books and we will start off with my tricky hundred spelling test.'

I could see Jess go pale.