

Someone has pooped in the storeroom. Actually pooped. In the middle of the floor. It's lying there in the dark, like a lonely, sleeping baby mole.



That's my teacher, Mr Armstrong. He's standing in the doorway, glaring down at

the little poop like he's going to vaporise it with just the power of his eyes.

Mr Armstrong doesn't look like a normal teacher. He looks like a hairless gorilla who eats puppies for breakfast. Most teachers look a little, you know ... wimpy. Mr Armstrong looks like he bends iron bars just to relax.

That might sound cool to you. It's not. Staring at the poop on the floor, Mr Armstrong is turning the colour of a stressed strawberry. Veins pulse in his neck like slugs trying to get away from his face. Normally this means he's about to yell, 'TWENTY LAPS!', which means we all have to run around the classroom while he puts 'hurdles' in front of us. Take it from someone who's been there, it hurts to crash into a printer and become a human paper jam.



Mr Armstrong looks like a volcano that's about to blow. I am seriously

considering hiding under my desk. He can explode at the littlest things – someone forgets their homework (guilty) or forgets their schoolbag (guilty) or forgets their pants (don't judge me!).

But this is a whole new level. I've never seen a head turn red like that. Then again, I've never seen a poop in the storeroom before either.

l'm Max, by the way.

I go to Redhill Middle School, and I'm in Mr Armstrong's class.

I didn't do the poop.

Mr Armstrong turns and looks at each of us. For someone with such a big head he has tiny nostrils. They're flaring in and out as he huffs around the room like a gorilla with gas.

'I know you don't believe me, but I can tell who is responsible for that ... atrocity ... just by looking into each of your teeny little eyes,' Mr Armstrong says.

He looks at Emily and Layla, Josh and Ryan. He doesn't seem to think Kevin did it, although I'm not so sure.

Kevin does eat a lot of chilli.

Mr Armstrong stops in front of me.

This is probably a good time to tell you that Mr Armstrong doesn't like me very much. I think it's because I'm not very good at sport, and to Mr Armstrong that means there's not much point to me being alive.



'You did the ... in there, the thing in the storeroom. You did that.'

'No, I didn't,' I say. I think it's best to remain calm. After all, I did not do the poop.

'Yes, you did, Max.' He puts his hands on his hips and seems to squeeze in his waist. I like to imagine that if he squeezes a bit harder, his head will explode off his shoulders like a popped pimple.

'Really. I didn't do it, Mr Armstrong.' He doesn't seem convinced so I decide to give him a bit more information. 'I haven't done a poop since Monday.' And suddenly, the whole class is looking at me in disgust. Too much information?

'That's gross, Max,' says the teacher, and he hands me a box of tissues.

'What's this for?' I ask.

'Go get rid of it.'



(So much for remaining calm.)

'Do it now, Max. Or THIRTY LAPS.' I can't believe it. This is so disgusting. I take the tissue box and drag myself over to the storeroom door.

There's the poop, sitting on the floor all innocent-looking, just waiting for me. I look at the poop. I look at the tissues. I look back at the poop.

'What am I supposed to put it in?'

Mr Armstrong smirks. 'I guess you'd better go get your lunch box.' He thinks he's soooo funny.





I'm walking home from the bus stop with Hugo. I'm Hugo's best friend.

Hugo is a bit fat and a bit tall and a bit blind and a bit dumb. I like having him around, and I'm even happy to be his best friend, but I've told him that my best friend position is currently vacant. I'm just waiting for the right person to apply. In the meantime, Hugo is free to fill the role on a temporary basis. He seems happy enough with this.

'Hey, Max,' Hugo says.

I'm still fuming about today's poop incident and trying to think of ways to tie Mr Armstrong to a rocket launcher and shoot him into outer space. Do I know anyone with a rocket launcher I can borrow?

'Max, we're being followed,' Hugo whispers.

Maybe Mr Armstrong could be the first person to go to Mars ... against his will.





l freeze.

I turn around and see that Hugo is right. A few paces back a duck is standing on the footpath, looking at me.

'That's the same duck, isn't it, Max? Your duck?'

I nod. That's the same duck all right.

Sorry, sorry. I just realised you have no idea what I'm talking about. Let me explain.

Most people think all ducks are the same. People think they're harmless little feathered friends. They think they're all adorable and swee – WRONG!

Here are a few things you need to know about *my* little quacker:



'It must have escaped from my backyard. I've never seen it out in the street before,' I say.

'l think it was waiting for you at the corner,' Hugo says.

This is not good.

We look at each other. We look at the duck. We look back at each other.



We make it inside my front door a step ahead of the duck.

The fact that the duck has escaped the backyard and is now stalking me is a rather alarming problem, but it's a problem for another time. Right now we need to work out how to get super-massively-red-face-embarrassing revenge on Mr Armstrong. Hugo and I start a list:

• Put slime in his protein shake.

Make him a rat sandwich.

• Put his favourite sneakers in liquid nitrogen

so they smash when he tries to put them on.

• Squish one of my sister's dirty nappies

into his pencil box.

• Hide three chimpanzees in the back seat

of his car.

'We could put a giant spring under his chair,' I say. 'Then when he sits down at his desk, he'll go shooting straight up and get his head stuck in the ceiling and the fire brigade will have to come and pull him down, but his head will rip off when they get him free and he'll never be able to teach us again, because he won't have a head.'



Hugo looks blank. Brainstorming with Hugo can be a bit one-sided.

In the end, I come up with the best idea ever.

My dad has a worm farm around the side of the house. With real worms in it. Hugo and I spend the rest of the afternoon fishing worms out of the tank and filling a plastic container with them.

Tomorrow, Mr Armstrong is going to find he has a desk drawer full to the brim with hundreds of juicy, wriggly worms.

At that moment, I know I am a genius.





Before we go any further, there's someone else I need to tell you about. A truly evil villain. More scary than the duck and Mr Armstrong combined.

Her name is Abby Purcell.

Abby Purcell ruins everything.

Right now Hugo and I are sitting on the bus, going over our plan. I'm whispering because it's a top-secret plan. I've seen enough movies that I know that if we were real secret agents, we'd be whispering. Or speaking in code, but I don't know any codes so whispering will have to do.

The last thing we need is Abby Purcell interrupting our secret agent business.

Which is, of course, exactly what happens.



'What are you whispering about?' she asks.

'Wouldn't you like to know,' says Hugo. 'Yes ... I would. That's why I asked,'

Abby says. 'ldiots.'

'We can't tell you,' I say. 'It's top secret.'

Abby raises only one eyebrow. All evil villains have one magical eyebrow.



'That. Wasn't. My. Poop.'

This is exactly why Mr Armstrong needs a drawer full of worms. Doesn't he understand how hard it is to be in middle school, let alone if you're known for all eternity as Poop-Boy?



'So, I'm right?' Abby says with a crooked smile.

'lt. Wasn't. My. Poop,' l repeat.

'Sure, sure. So what are you going to do to Mr Armstrong?'

'Max has a box full of worms to put in his desk. Look!' Hugo says, pulling open the top of my backpack before I can stop him. There is the box of beautiful slimy worms for Abby to see.

'Hugo!'

'Wow. You've actually put some effort in,' Abby says, looking impressed.

'lsn't it awesome?' Hugo says, beside himself with excitement. 'When he puts his hand in his drawer to get a pencil, he's going to stick it right in there. See, feel this-' He reaches across to my backpack again.

'Hugo – no!' I yell and slap his hand away like he's trying to steal my cheese balls. 'Now listen, both of you. You can't tell anyone about this, or it won't work. Understand?'



Abby squints. 'What are you going to give me?' she asks.

'Huh?'

'What are you going to give me so that I don't tell Mr Armstrong?' Abby repeats, folding her arms.

Hugo farts a bit. 'You wouldn't!' Abby Purcell ruins EVERYTHING.



It takes us the whole walk from the bus to the classroom to come up with something.

Neither Hugo nor I like having to negotiate with the enemy, but when they blackmail you there's not much choice.

We think of things we can give Abby to buy her silence:



My squished sandwich from yesterday (it's in my bag, under the worms)