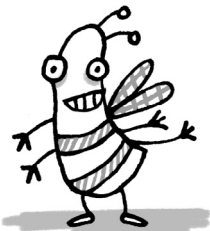




Emily Snape is a well-known children's author and illustrator whose work has appeared in books and magazines and on television around the world.

She lives in London with her three children and insists that none of them would ever attempt to turn each other into a guinea pig.



Fergus the Furball
by Emily Snape
Illustrated by Emily Snape



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FERGUS



THE

FURBALL

Emily Snape

RAVEN



For Rufus, Iris
and Clio x





Chapter 1

OK, first of all, I need to get one thing completely straight.

THIS. WAS. NOT. MY. FAULT.



If I'd genuinely had any idea that my birthday wish was actually going to work, there are about a **million, gazillion** things I would have asked for, instead of this.

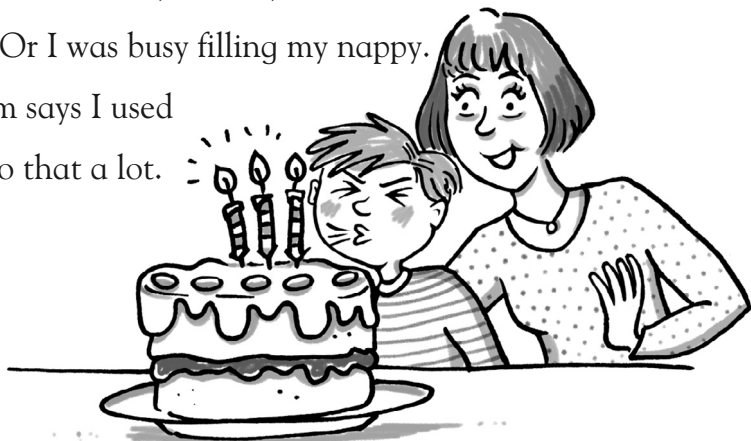




I've had nine attempts at birthday wish-making up to now, and not one of them has ever come true. Not even a tiny bit. And yes, you've guessed, that's one attempt for each birthday I've had.

I suppose the first few birthdays don't count. I was probably just thinking, "Mmm ... CAKE!" or "Oooo ... FIRE!" as everybody shouted, "Blow out the candles, Daniel, make a wish!"

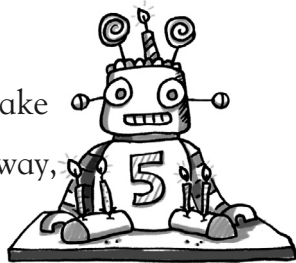
Or I was busy filling my nappy. Mum says I used to do that a lot.




But, by the time I was seven years old, I'd really started putting a lot of thought into what to do with that special birthday wish.

For my **seventh** birthday, there was nothing I wanted more than a hoverboard. (OK, I know they don't exist. But that doesn't mean I couldn't wish for one.)

Anyway, as my robot-themed cake came near (it was awesome by the way, with red shoe-lace antennae and flying saucer eyes), I remember squeezing my eyes shut and blowing as hard as I possibly could.



I may have accidentally spat a bit on my



annoying little brother, Fergus. He was only five at the time, and started singing “Happy Birthday to you,” like an opera singer. You know, with that big voice thing. So instead of looking at

➔ ME with loving expressions, my parents were busy fussing over Fergus. “Oh Fergus, you’re a musical genius!”

Anyway, I just kept on pleading with the Universe for a sleek, green, floating board that I could rock up to school on every day, like a super-hero.

In the following weeks, I raced around our flat every morning to see if it had magically



appeared. And every morning I was totally gutted when there was no sign of anything that could hover – even just a bit. I don't know how I thought it would happen, but I totally believed in the power of my birthday wish.

Well, of course, no hoverboard ever appeared. I didn't even get my hands on a skateboard that year, even though I begged my parents for one every single day. I ended up trying to make my own hoverboard with my mum's hair dryer and a tray. (I'll save you some time: it doesn't work – **and** my dad banned all my screen time for a week.)





On my **eighth** birthday I wished for a swimming pool. To be fair, I hadn't really thought this one through, considering we live in a third-floor flat which doesn't even have a bath. It would probably have needed to be a roof-top pool or something.

Anyway, two years later, we're still stuck with a **rubbish**, dripping shower that feels a bit like someone is weeing on your head. It's warm, too, so that's quite a realistic comparison, just in case you were thinking I was exaggerating.

My **ninth** birthday wish was a disaster and I'm so glad *that one* didn't come true. My parents






had let me take five friends to the trampoline park and, of course, “You have to invite your brother and sister to your party.” (That was Mum speaking. And, yes, I’d also got an annoying little sister, Ruby, by then).

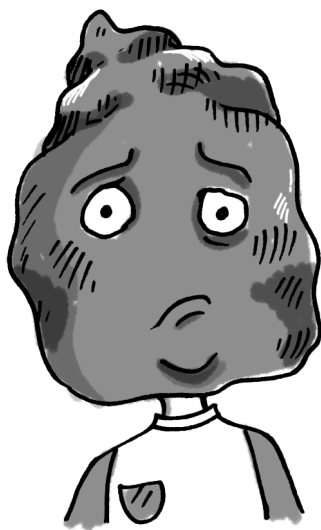


Well, we were all exhausted and sweaty after jumping non-stop for an hour (and Fergus had stolen all the attention as usual, with his stupid backwards somersaults). Anyway, when the gooey, marshmallow-decorated cake was shoved in front of me, I panicked. I couldn’t remember what I’d been planning to wish for. My mind was blank.

My friends had finished singing “Happy  birthday to you,” and everybody was waiting, eyeing up the cake, when my wish idea shot back into my brain. I’d decided to ask for a private jet to Disneyland.

But then Fergus shouted, “Come on, POO FACE!” to me, so that was all I could think of.

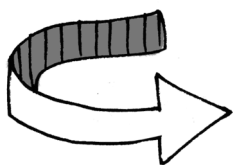
Can you imagine how horrendous school would have been if that wish had come true and I’d ended up with poo for a face?



Like, forever?

Anyway, this year, you really can't blame me for what happened. It was half-past six in the morning, and I'd been dragged out of a lovely dream where a **giant gummy bear** was chasing my brother down the street.





Chapter 2

The problems really began when my mum announced she had to go to Scotland for work. Of course, Dad thought it would be a ‘good idea’ if he went too, so my parents could spend some ‘quality time’ together.

It didn’t sound like my kind of ‘good idea’. It was pretty obvious to me that this wasn’t just



not good – it was a **terrible** idea!

“It’s in two weeks’ time,
Danny,” Mum explained. (She always calls me
Danny when she’s trying to butter me up. It
never works.)

“You mean the same two weeks’ time as my
tenth birthday?” I replied.

I was stunned. Their trip was happening the
same week as my birthday! MY BIRTHDAY!
My tenth birthday, the one day where
everyone has to be super nice to me,
and make me breakfast in bed ...
and fill the living room with balloons ...






and ...

and ...

and ...



I couldn't believe they were really going to do this to me.

"You don't mind, do you, Danny?" Mum pleaded. Of course I minded, but Mum insisted that it would be good for them.

For THEM!

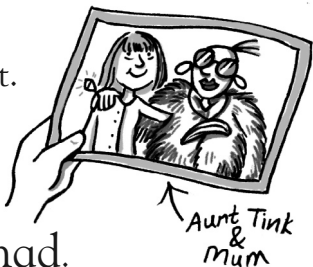
Not for me, the birthday boy. Oh no, don't worry about me. I'm sure I'll have another tenth birthday at some point in my life! (That's sarcasm, by the way. Look it up.)



Then she told me that Aunt Tink (who's not even our real aunt), would come to look after us, and that they'd leave a really special gift for me to open on my big day.

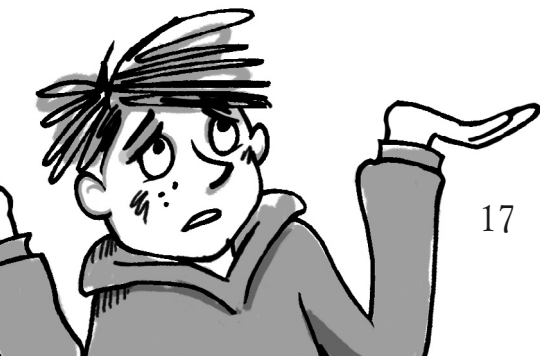
As if that makes up for it.

Aunt Tink is my mum's oldest friend and, in a nutshell, she is completely mad.



Like really bonkers.

She's into reading the future from bits of old tea – and she's always on about ghosts. Once she made me catch a ghost spider from her bathroom (I kid you not).





And this is the responsible adult my parents had decided was suitable to leave us with.

ON MY BIRTHDAY!

Aunt Tink also looks off her rocker. She wears the weirdest clothes, like a huge, shaggy jacket in August and flip-flops with plastic daisies on them in December.






She's got huge, CRAZY orange glasses too.

(She says she's almost blind without them, but I reckon the glasses shop saw her coming. I mean it's not a choice of wearing huge, crazy orange glasses or being blind, is it? She could wear normal glasses, like most people. It's not *that* hard to work it out.)

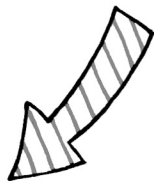
Every time she comes to visit us, her hair is a different colour. (I like to make a bet with Mum what she'll go for next, but neither of us got it right last time, when she showed up with a massive green afro).

She forgets everything, too, and is always



late, sometimes by days. She gets all sorts of things muddled up as well, like when Mum planned for us to all go to Legoland and she went to the Land of Leather instead. Or that time when we all went to an ice-cream parlour and she asked the waiter if she could have anything without ice or cream in it.

It can't be that hard being an adult.



“Mum, we won't survive if Aunt Tink is looking after us,” I insisted.

“Well, Dad and I think it will be good for you to start looking after yourself a bit more. You know, get your own school clothes ready, like

your younger brother already does ...”

[Ouch!]

“... and make breakfast for your little sister. You’re going to be ten soon.”

Well, I’m glad she mentioned that. I mean, I’d forgotten already.



(More sarcasm.)

“It’s only for a few days, Danny.”

I scowled. The problem wasn’t that it was just for a few days. The problem was, those few

days just happened to include the most important day in the year!

I didn't really think my parents would actually go on this Scotland trip. But they did, just like that, at eight o'clock on Tuesday morning. We were left with mad Aunt Tink for three whole nights (and three whole days as well, in case you hadn't worked that bit out).

It was obviously going to be a weird and a not-how-I-had-planned-it tenth birthday, but even *I* would never have guessed how crazy things were going to get.

