

'Don't be a nob forever.'

**DEAD**



*in my*

**HEAD**

**BARBARA CATCHPOLE**

*For my wonderful grandson, Finlay*

Dead Ed in my Head  
by Barbara Catchpole

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RAVEN







# ONE

*In which Tod shouts a lot, gets thrown  
out of class and signs a contract.*

‘Why don’t you just \*\*\*\* off!’

The kids gasped. Some grinned, but most just waited, pleased for a bit of excitement. This was better than fractions!

A large number of the kids put their pens down, leaned back in their chairs and mentally encouraged the boy: *Go for it, this is brilliant!* The ginger boy next to Tod, who still hadn’t found his Maths book, stopped ferreting about in his bag. A grin lit up his ferrety, freckly face. His ferrety front teeth were on display.

Some kids turned towards Tod, their mouths hanging open like particularly dim goldfish.

Tod stood up, shouting full-pelt at the teacher. He felt the blood pounding in his ears and he clenched his fists in anger. There were spots in front of his eyes and he felt that little vein throb above his left eyebrow. The shouting felt very good.

He was a good six inches taller than Mr Jones and, as he moved towards him, the guy backed off, making little flapping motions with his hands, his eyes darting about looking for an escape.

At that moment Tod felt pure hatred.

He hated the man's stupid cartoon tie and matching socks.

He hated his stupid comb-over.

He hated his stupid brown jacket with its patches on the elbows. (What was that about? W\*\*\*\*\*!)

He hated the flappy little movements he was making with his hands.

He hated his bad breath and the way he laughed at his own weak little jokes.

He hated his half-human, half-goldfish classmates, especially the extremely fit Bianca Clark whose silly, fit, lip-glossed lips made a little glistening, strawberry O of excitement. She looked like the stupid one-eyed alien on 'Futurama'. Except with two eyes.

He hated the world and some of the closer planets.

'I don't care what you think! I don't care! You don't know my parents!'

*Not so big now, are you? Not so adult and sarcastic? Not so mature! Do you think I might hit you? Well I actually might. I might strangle you with your sad Mickey Mouse tie and stuff the matching socks in your mouth. I would like to, oh yes, I would like to hit you hard. Right on your particularly ugly, squashy, red road-map nose.*

OK, so Tod *had* been daydreaming in Maths. He'd had

English before Maths and they'd done a poem by Seamus Heaney. It was something about Heaney's father. How his father had been, like, this huge guy who took him out on the farm, ploughing with big old farm horses, and how he admired him.

Tod had listened to his English teacher read it and had been there himself – in a world where you were little and the big people took care of you. He was out of the classroom and into the open air, ploughing the field and his dad was his hero, sailing the plough like a huge sailing ship.

Tod remembered how he had felt about his own father before *The Affair with That Slapper*. Admittedly his father didn't have a team of farm horses – there wasn't much call for that round Tod's way (there wasn't even much of a back garden) – but his dad could bowl 175 on a good day.

Tod had loved bowling with him, every Friday night. He'd loved the smell of the bowling alley and the excitement of getting a strike. He loved the wait while the pins toppled over into each other and the noise they made. He had even loved sitting on the plastic chairs in the café eating greasy chips.

His dad had really listened to him on a Friday night. Tod had been able to talk to him, ask advice or tell him about school. His dad obviously hadn't shared his own thoughts and feelings, though, as he'd run away with *That Woman Who Wears Her Skirts Up To Her Bum* without telling Tod 'The Plan'.

He had betrayed Tod.

Then Tod got to thinking how it was written 'Seamus' but pronounced 'Shay-mus', and he thought about the new girl who everyone had called 'Sy – ob – han' for a whole day, like an alien when her name 'Siobhan' was apparently pronounced 'Shiv - orn'.

What was that about? What *were* her parents thinking? She must have had to explain that like a zillion times. Thank goodness his name was easy! You couldn't really mess up 'Tod'. It meant 'death' in German though, which wasn't so nice. If he went to Germany, he would be really cool. He could wear black all the time and watch people's eyes as he introduced himself.

'My name is Death. Na – ha-ha-ha!'

He hoped the new baby would be given a decent name. Not Tracey or Martin, *pub-lease*. He would have to have a word with Mum ...

CRACK!

The teacher had brought the board rubber down on Tod's desk, making him jump, and then had started on at him for not listening.

Tod had just waited – Mr Jones would run out of steam eventually. But there was no real need for the board rubber thing, was there? Really? He could have just pointed out nicely that he would have liked Tod's attention. It was a bit rude.

That's when Tod had started to feel angry – a little fire had started in the pit of his stomach.

Mr Jones had also been enjoying *his* good shout though.

His old Ford Fiesta needed a four-hundred-pound repair.

His wife's mother was coming for the weekend. He hated her – *and* she watched 'Coronation Street'.

The head of department wanted to watch his lesson later, 'to make supportive suggestions' and 'to encourage good practice' – which meant telling him he was a rubbish teacher again.

His piles were playing up again and this boy – this horrible, hairy boy – was sitting in his lesson, drawing. What was it? It looked

like a bowling ball he was drawing in the margin of his book. This particular irritating shaggy-haired boy – and several others – had to get a C grade for Mr Jones to meet his all-important (‘you won’t get a pay rise’) target – and the boy had all the mathematical talent of a gerbil. A young, hairy, brainless and probably vicious little gerbil, too. Not even your average gerbil. The sort that your mum bought you for Christmas and it bit your thumb during the Queen’s Speech.

‘Your parents can’t have brought you up very well if you don’t value the education provided for you! Do you want to be stupid all your life? How immature!’

Mr Jones was really worked up now and little flecks of spittle flew from his mouth onto Tod and Tod’s book. That was when Tod started shouting. He hadn’t really made a conscious decision to shout. It was funny – one moment he was sitting being spat on and the next minute he was shouting. It was like he went from 0 to 60 miles an hour in sixty seconds.

‘Get out of this classroom! You will *not* use language like that to a member of staff!’

*Well, I just have – obviously!* Tod took several deep breaths like his mentor had told him, and almost immediately felt regret for his outburst (and slightly dizzy). He still felt sick and angry though, and he was still swimming in a deep pool of hatred and resentment.

He did his best to spoil the drama of the teacher’s moment.

He made sure he took ages to get his books together.

He upset his chair.

He apologised nicely, interrupting the bloke going on about fractions.

He left.

He knocked on the door and went back in to look for his pen, coughing a lot on the way, apologising again ('Sorr-ee!').

In fact, he tried really hard to be downright irritating. His blood still pounded in his ears and the little dots still blurred his vision. He would leave when he was ready to leave.

He left because he thought Mr Jones might actually have a fit. The man was almost purple with suppressed rage and the little hairs actually seemed to be sticking out of his ears at right angles.

Tod then spent about a quarter of an hour amusing the class by staring back in through the classroom window. Bianca gave him a little wave and made a kissy face.

Then a big hand fell on his shoulder. The Behaviour Patrol bloke had caught him.

An hour later, he sat outside the Learning Mentor's office looking at the water stain on the wall that looked like a kangaroo upside-down.

The whole school had moved into in a brand-new building, but some sort of peculiar process was happening and the new building was changing back into the old building. It was like magic. You could really see it happening.

There was a lot of vandalism. The door handles came unscrewed really easily. Already there was chewing gum in many of the electricity sockets and under the handrails. The site maintenance guy was developing a hernia keeping the white walls free of graffiti. He would paint over it on Friday and it would all be back by Monday break. It was just too easy!

For some reason all the corridor lights were on chains

hanging from the ceiling, so the bigger boys could easily jump up and bat them as they walked along.

The biggest design point was the open walkway above the canteen, from which you could throw things or even spit onto the heads of the lucky diners. Tod didn't do that because he felt it was gross. But he had on a number of occasions wondered if the blokes who built the academy were mentally deficient.

Tod found the decay of the new building comforting. He didn't like things to be too clean or organised. The other day he'd found a pizza in his room that had been there for at least three weeks. It had made a lovely smell – all cheesy and musty, and it had rather interesting furry bits. He expected his mum would throw it out after the baby was born, but at the moment she couldn't see the floor. She couldn't even see her own feet. She certainly couldn't reach it without a load of bother and a forklift.

Tod liked his room a lot. You could get in there and shut out everybody else in the world. He spent a great deal of his time just lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling and trying to think of nothing at all. Nearly all the things he liked doing were things you did alone. He contemplated the kangaroo water sign.

*Kangaroos*, Tod thought. *It would be cool to be a kangaroo.* They can really move, those guys. If anything upset you, you could run and run, just run across the bush until you felt better. Those huge back legs would just kick in and there was so much space in Australia. You could run for miles and miles without hitting a fence – *and* it was always sunny.

Kangaroos could hold things in their dinky little hands. And they were intelligent. There was a rerun of Skippy where Skippy had known that a kid had fallen down the mineshaft, even though

all the adults were just running about, shouting the kid's name and crying. No messing with having babies either; tiny little things like worms they are. They just climb up the mother and pop themselves into her pouch. Bet she doesn't even know she's had a baby. She would be just boing-ing along one day, put her dinky little hand down into her pouch for a kangaroo hanky or something and, 'Whoa ... how did that get there? I must have had a baby – must boing down to the post office and claim the child benefit.' Not like Mum, who is the size of a small bungalow.

I wonder how kangaroos have sex? Do they stop still? Do they bounce at the same time? She could keep condoms in her pocket! Not at the same time as her little wormy baby though. That would send a terrible message to the youngster.

'What are you thinking about, Tod?'

*Mentor alert! Take cover!* Prepare to be asked painfully embarrassing questions! Should he say, 'Kangaroos having sex'? Should he say, 'Condoms'? No! Panic!

'Nothing.'

'Come in and sit down, honey.'

And there she sat, looking at him, a painfully thin woman in a cardigan that looked like it had been put together in a car factory. Probably by robots. Blind robots. Wearing driving gloves. Or mittens. Furry mittens.

That really was an ugly woolly. It appeared to have little paper dolls holding hands embroidered around the bottom. (The bottom of the cardigan that was, not her bottom.) The cardigan's bottom was about twenty centimetres below hers.

Now he was thinking about her bottom! Couldn't he get a grip? Of his mind, not her bottom ...

Perhaps he was going mad. Was she sure it was a cardigan? It didn't really look comfortable as a cardigan, although Tod couldn't see another part of her body it would fit.

She wanted to understand him, he could see that. He could almost *feel* it. She loved teenagers and she really thought that if they were properly understood, there would be no problem.

Tod's mum didn't understand him, and he didn't even understand himself, so was she really in with a chance? He supposed she had been properly trained.

They were always having training days, the teachers. Tod found that a bit worrying. Most of his teachers were really old – over thirty at least. Why did they need so many training days just to say, 'Do the sums on page 39 – miss out exercise C – underline the date. Stop talking at the back!'

Were they slow learners or what?

The mentor smiled at him, her pale blue eyes all watery behind enormous specs.

'What's the matter, sweetie? Do you have any problems? Any issues?'

'Tissues?'

'Issues!'

*Issues*, Tod thought. *Well, yes. My dad's left home with Lisa from Accounts. My mum says her skirt shows her bum. (Lisa's, that is.) He took my iPod. With absolutely superb timing, after fifteen years of either being very careful, no sex life or some sort of problem, he's left Mum pregnant. At the moment she is the size of a four-wheel-drive truck and keeps crying all the time.*

*She keeps sending me down the road to the chemist for pile creams and stuff for after the birth. I'm only fifteen and I'm a boy; I'm*

*not supposed to be able to talk to chemists. I'm supposed to just snatch stuff off the shelf and smuggle it to the counter or even straight out the door under my hoodie. The girl behind the counter makes it plain she thinks I've got a terminal disease, or perhaps she thinks I really fancy her, because she keeps saying, 'You again?' and giving me a really goofy grin. Then everybody looks at me.*

*Mum hasn't got anyone to be with her at the birth. I'm certainly not going to be there. If she asks, I'll have to emigrate. I might go to Australia and study kangaroos, because I'm interested in them. I can't cook, I can't wash, I can't iron and I can't deal with body parts.*

'Er, nothing, nope,' said Tod.

'Sure?'

'Nope. Zip. I'm good.'

She stared at him for a bit and understood him a bit. She asked if he felt very sad and she carefully checked him out for suicidal tendencies.

He said he was hungry.

Then she took him down a floor to sit outside the Assistant Head of Year's office. Tod looked at a poster about the dangers of chlamydia.

*Chlamydia – that would be a pretty name for a girl.*

Tod read the poster.

*Ooops! Perhaps not.*

Whenever Tod read health information, he was sure he had the disease. He was now positive he had chlamydia, despite the fact that he had never even had a girlfriend. Not even held hands. Well, unless you counted Patti Snelson in Year 7, and she had just got stuck to him when they'd glued that Tudor Castle together.

It was perfectly normal not to have had sex at his age, Tod

reminded himself. At his age it was normal to be waiting. It was normal. Yes that was what he was doing – *waiting*.

Not that anyone had offered to have sex with him. It might be a long wait, but one would come along sooner or later – like the bus, but a lot more exciting, he hoped.

The teacher who had done the sex education lessons had said sixty per cent of sixteen-year-olds hadn't had sex. The boys had all sat there trying to look like the forty per cent and the girls had yawned as if they were too cool even to be in the class: too cool for school.

Tod suspected they *were*, actually, far too cool. They were like cats, girls. They did what they wanted when they wanted. They didn't need you. Get too near and you were scratched. Some of them terrified him – like Jade and Jodie in Year 11.

Jade and Jodie, queens of Year 11, stood on the top landing, looking down into the main open space of the Academy.

Jade was a very pretty mixed-heritage girl, white and Afro-Caribbean, her father a primary school teacher, her mother a nurse. Jade, as bright as a button, top sets for everything.

Jodie was clever as well, but not so fortunate: single mother, council estate, a little bit angry, a little bit scared, waiting for better times.

Jade admired the little tropical palm trees painted on her long white nails, holding her hand out in front of her as if the varnish was still drying. Both girls wore shed-loads of make up. They could get away with a lot as long as they stuck to natural colours.

As Jade explained patiently, 'They know we ain't got purple

eyelids or blue eyelashes. They ain't *stupid*. They know we don't *sparkle*.'

Their eyelashes were heavy, sweeping curtains, fake stuck in amongst the natural, held there by a heavy coating of black mascara. Like Japanese geishas they wore painted masks of foundation, which gathered in the few creases of their smooth, hopeful young faces and the folds of their tiny necks.

Their uniforms were as tight and skimpy as, again, they could get away with, and their ties were casually hanging down, the huge knot about two buttons down on the collar button.

Their big black school bags were in their lockers, to be collected after the last-minute trip to the toilets.

During break they clutched tiny sparkly little pink handbags, each containing make-up and a collapsible brush. Clompy high heels thudded as they walked.

When they did walk, it seemed the balcony might shake, like in Jurassic Park. Like tiny dinosaurs, the smaller kids parted to let them through. This was their queendom. They ruled the balcony. It was theirs.

Jade leaned on the low wall and opened her pink glossy mouth to speak. It paused in a perfect O, before the words tumbled out, one running into another.

'Went up the Centre Saturday, bought a new top, black Top Shop. So I'm in a cubicle in the ladies ...'

'Can't go in there.' Jodie rummaged in her bag for her lipgloss.

'Not allowed?'

'No, I can't ... you know ... *go*. Can't go in a public one – dunno why. Nothing happens, y'know? Can't pee in a public loo!'

‘Yeah, well, *any*-way, it was like Debenhams not the bus station so it was OK, not gross or anything. Floor was clean. Anyway, like all these girls from the High came in and I was at the mirror doing my gloss and one says, “Do you like my hair?” and I goes “Yeah”, though I can’t see anything special, y’know? She goes, “Cos I’ve just got extensions and shit.” I said it was cool, but honestly yours looks way better.’

Jodie had a moment of quiet satisfaction, because she couldn’t afford hair extensions, no way, but her hair looked way better than the unknown girl with extensions and shit. Life was good. Jade was her best friend.

She smiled at Jade and offered her gum. The girls chewed in near silence for some minutes, like two glamorous cows. Then the pepperminty bit was gone and they stuck the gum under the handrail.

From where they stood, they watched Tod being escorted across the open space way below by Miss Matthews, the AYH.

Jade yawned prettily.

‘I hear he went apeshit in Maths. Whatsisname? Tod.’

‘Yeh – told Mr Clark to F-off. Got sent out. Big behaviour bloke got him,’ Jodie said in her refined manner.

Jodie didn’t use the F-word because her mum had always said only slags used that word, and Jodie cared a lot about what people thought, even though she pretended she didn’t. She wasn’t a slag just because she came from the estate.

‘Think he’ll be excluded?’

‘No. My mum says they’re trying not to exclude people because of targets an’ that.’

‘He’s a weirdo!’

‘Fit, though.’

‘Nice bum.’ They both laughed.

‘Yeh, fit but a bit of an idiot.’

‘Fancy him?’

‘Nah. Bit of an emo.’

The girls stared into space for a while, until the deafening siren sounded for the start of the next lesson. They slowly gathered up their stuff and headed for a last-minute groom in the toilets. Smaller children scattered hurriedly. They didn’t mess with Jodie and Jade. Nobody did.

The Assistant Head of Year had a stain on her wall that looked like a lizard upside-down.

Tod was off again. How on earth did lizards have sex? Could they catch Lizard Chlamydia? (After taking E at Lizard nightclubs? The Hot Iguana – Friday nights – girl geckos get in free.)

Tod crossed his legs, then uncrossed them, because it looked weird even to him, and sighed loudly.

The AHY sighed too and looked at him from behind huge, round glasses. She looked for the pencil she had stuck in her hair and failed to find it. She arranged her paperclips while waiting for Tod to say something, as she had been told to do on her pastoral care course.

Tod started to think about Spurs’ next match and how he would like an iPhone so he could get an app to listen to the commentary. So she had a bit of a long wait.

In the end the Assistant Head of Year sighed again loudly and sent him on to the Head of Year.

*It was like a treasure hunt, thought Tod, like that programme on TV with the rushing woman with a big bum who went around in a helicopter.*

The Head of Year was a very different kettle of fish to the Mentor and the AHY.

That was a funny expression as well: *kettle of fish*. Why would you put fish in a kettle? Wouldn't the small ones get stuck in the spout?

Sharp black suit, red lipstick, Jennifer Aniston pricey haircut, heavy specs, stressy, no smile. It was the difference between a velociraptor and one of those pink cuddly bunnies on the battery ads.

If Tod had thought he knew what spit was before, he certainly knew now. He could have drowned in it. He could have taken a boat out and rowed home in it. He could have launched a liner ...

Well, you get the idea. There was spit. Plenty of it. Rivers. Why hadn't his horoscope said, 'Your lucky plant is buttercup, your lucky colour is maroon and, by the way, wear a mac all day today and take some tissues.'

When she stopped shouting, she said, 'I think it's about time you went on a PSP.'

Tod focussed on a gleaming spot of spit right on the edge of the desk. A games console – surely not? Whatever it was, it wasn't going to be *so* bad; just another thing, wasn't it? PSP? Pupil's a Pest? Purple Shiny People? Prickly Spiky Porcupine? Pizza, Sausages and Pasta? Pizza ... *mmmmmmmmmmmm* ... pizza!

‘It’s very serious, Tod. A PSP is a support programme especially for pupils who could be on the road to exclusion. Permanent exclusion from the Academy. This has very serious implications for your future. It would be very unlikely that any other school would take you on if that happened. You would stand no chance of taking your GCSEs. Then what, Tod? Life on benefits, no money, no friends, no purpose to your life.’

*(Living out of bins at the back of McDonald’s and a horrible lonely death, drunk and drugged in the gutter, Tod thought.)*

‘Are you listening? Sit up straight, please! It’s very serious indeed. Seriously serious. Now, I need your parents to come in so we can set this up.’

*No way is my mum going to waddle into this school.*

‘Dad ain’t there any more and Mum can’t come in.’

‘Can’t?’

‘Ill.’

*Don’t meet her eyes, don’t meet her eyes.*

The Head of Year looked at the boy in front of her. Young man, really. His legs stretched halfway across her office. He was slumped in the chair as if he was bored, but his fists were clenched tight and his knuckles were white. His face was closed down and he stared angrily at a point on her desk.

She carefully wiped some spit off the PSP form with a tissue.

‘We’ll set it up today, but I want your parents to sign a copy. It’s, well, extremely serious.’

*Sure – that’s what’s going to happen.*

## Academy PSP Set Up Proforma

Surname: *Mortimer*

First Name: *Tod*

Tutor Group: *11D*

Reason for PSP: *Disaffection, persistent disruption of learning.*

‘Now, what are your strengths?’

*Football, football analysis, supporting Spurs. I can eat a large pizza in one sitting. And part of a second one. I can average 150 on Wii bowling. I’m a good friend. I control a strong desire to smash things up. I’m unwillingly pure. I may become a monk.*

‘Like football. In the team.’

Strengths: *Tod is a keen sportsman.*

‘Do you do anything worthwhile? Community service? Charity work?’

*Shall I tell her about Ed? About helping Mum to decorate the nursery? About the Shoe Shop from Hell?*

Long silence, but she waited him out.

‘Nope. Nothing.’

‘And what do you need to improve on?’

*Would like to get my bowling average up to 200. Need to find someone to do my Maths homework. Want to get to know That Fit Girl down the Road. Stacey? Macey? Not Tracey, puh-lease!*

‘Want to do well in school.’

‘And to achieve that you have to ... ’

‘Be good?’

Targets: *Not to disrupt Maths lessons.*  
*To do my homework on time.*  
*To actually give it in.*

‘Is there anything else you want to say?’

*Aaaagggggggggghhhhhhh!* Tod heard the silent scream echo round his head.

‘Nah.’

The outcome was that Tod was sent to Inclusion. Despite its name, this meant you were actually excluded from anything fun to do until they let you out. It was the Academy’s equivalent of maximum security prison.

In his bag was the PSP which he could carefully sign with Mum’s name that evening and take back to school. In Ice (as the pupils more accurately called it, as it was really cold in there) a huge, gigantic, unsmiling male alien called ‘Mr Selby, sir’ gave you English worksheets all morning and Maths worksheets all afternoon. The walls were covered with motivational posters:

*Everyone is good at something.*

*Your behaviour is your choice.*

*Kindness shows strength.*

They were superglued up there because otherwise the pupils stole the blu-tack and threw it at each other when the teacher’s back was turned, or they stuffed it in the power sockets.

Tod was actually very grateful that he had not been excluded from school, which would no doubt have brought floods

of tears and a lot of yelling from Mum. He didn't want her upset at the moment. Well, actually, Dad had done a pretty good job on that front, going off with That Ugly Cheap Young Tart With The Tight Blouse From Accounts, but he didn't want her any more upset.

Tod had absolutely no desire to take a step on the road towards permanent exclusion. He didn't want to be educated in any sort of a unit. The guys who were, waited around at the school gates on their bikes with their sad faces and their sad little cigarettes and their sad swearing every other word. If their lives were so great in the Pupil Referral Unit ('in the \*\*\*\*ing PRU'), why did they want to hang around outside the school gates? No, Tod liked being educated with his mates and didn't usually mind his school, especially soccer lessons.

He watched his class trot out onto the school field with a sigh and traced around an ink mark on his desk that looked like a rabbit.

He knew how rabbits had sex – he used to keep them. They only had to look at each other across the garden and wiggle their cute little pink bunny noses. Tod had kept two females and he ended up with fifteen.

With any luck he could keep this sorry episode secret from his mum. He must remember to examine the post each morning for a while. At least he would miss the homework.

The small ginger kid next to him was in for taking all the door handles off the doors in C block. He had a huge pile of them in his locker apparently, which had been discovered during a routine drugs bust.

Tod watched as the kid tried to unscrew the side of his chair.

Tod carefully signed his PSP (Pretty Stupid Paper) twice and put his hand up.

‘Got an envelope, Mr Selby, sir?’

The ginger kid’s chair collapsed and he fell onto the floor, where he lay sadly twitching. Mr Selby-sir ignored him. He stepped over him as he walked down the room to Tod.

And again as he walked back.

In her office the Head of Year carefully painted her nails red. She liked doing her nails in school time. It made her feel naughty.

She held her hand out and blew on them.

*Nice kid, she thought. He’d be alright. Probably. Maybe. Oh well ... Should she buy a kitten at the weekend? Was Dexter on tonight? She might go to Marks and Spencers on the way home and buy pink fizzy wine and chocolate ...*

When her nails were dry, she sent an email round to everyone saying Tod Mortimer was on a PSP, added him to various lists, got up and wandered down to the canteen. Fish and chips on Friday.

Tod stretched his long legs out under the tiny desk in Ice. He’d been brought a sandwich because he was being punished and was not allowed to eat in the canteen. As if he cared!

The smell of fish and chips wafted up the central air vent and Tod dug his pencil into the desk. It snapped.

He was glad he could go and tell Ed about it all after school. He hoped Ed was feeling better, because Tod really needed to unload.

Yes, Tod thought, comforted by the fact. *Ed would make it alright again. He always did.*

That would never change. Ed was the one thing in his life Tod could count on.



*Barbara Catchpole was a teacher for thirty years and enjoyed every minute. She is the author of many books for children and young adults, including the hugely successful (and, she modestly admits, award-winning) PIG and Feely series.*

*Barbara has three sons of her own who were always perfectly behaved and never gave her a second of worry.*

*She also tells lies.*