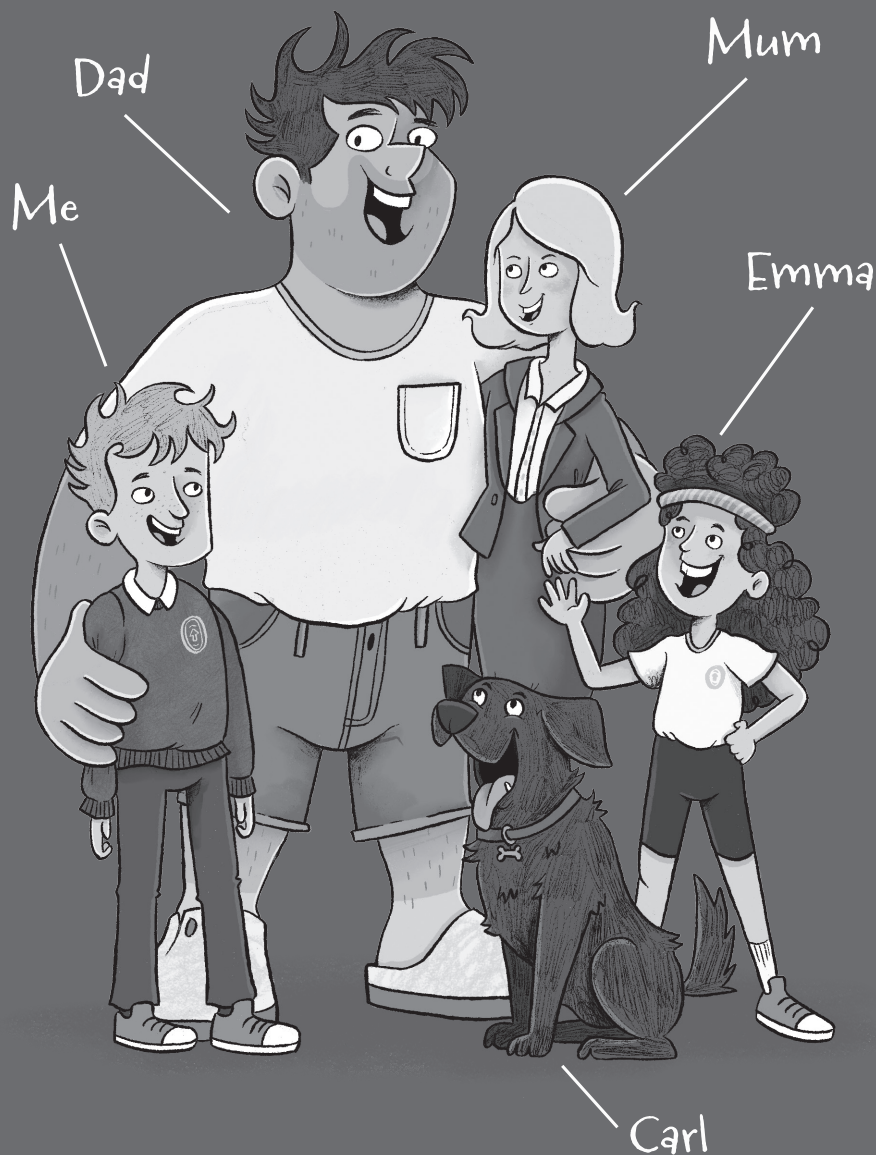


OUR FAMILY

Hello. Welcome to our family. I'm Finn.





This is Mum. She's the glue that keeps our family together. She works in quality control, which means she makes sure things are done properly. She loves lists and following instructions. She hates peanut butter and is scared of heights.

This is Dad. It's impossible to miss him because he's tall and big and wide. This came in handy when he played rugby for our country before I was born.



He's like an overgrown puppy chasing a squirrel, and he gets easily distracted. He's very good at writing computer codes. Mishaps and disasters happen to him a lot. He can be VERY embarrassing but we adore him.



This is my sister, Emma. She's seven but thinks she can boss me around. Her dream is to be an actor and she behaves like she's on a stage the WHOLE time. Sometimes, she's cute and very funny (but don't tell her that I said that).

This is Carl, our black Labrador. He gets giddy with excitement, especially when he hears the words walk, ball, or sausages. He wants to eat EVERYTHING, even food that can make dogs sick, like milk or chocolate. He's curious, playful, and wants to love everyone.



This is me. I'm ten. I'm the quietest in our family. I like running with Carl and playing football. I read books and tell stories. Some of them are even true. Like this one!



1



Mum was in the middle of a cooking frenzy. She whizzed around the kitchen like a magician casting spells. Sausages sizzled in a frying pan. Pasta bubbled in boiling water. Curry cooked slowly in a large pot. They all smelled wonderful. My stomach rumbled, even though it wasn't lunchtime.



Dad came into the kitchen. He leaned over Mum's shoulder and tried to sneak a carrot stick without her noticing.

'That's for the curry,' she said, tossing it into the pan before he could reach it.

'I'm hungry,' he moaned.

Dad's always hungry. Sometimes, he's *hangry*. That's when he's angry because he's so hungry. He has to take snacks with him everywhere.

Emma skipped into the kitchen. 'I need to eat NOW or my body will stop working,' she declared.

Mum rolled her eyes and laughed. 'I could make scrambled eggs on toast,' she said.



Emma beamed.

'That'd be great,' said Dad.

He opened the fridge and his mouth
dropped open like the world had ended.

'There are no eggs left!'



Emma clapped her hand to her forehead.
'It's a disaster!' she said.

'It's a catastrophe,' said Dad.

'You and Emma can go to the shop and buy some,' Mum told him calmly. 'Take Carl. He could do with a walk.'

Hearing his name and the magic word WALK, Carl hurtled into the kitchen. His paws skidded on the smooth grey tiles, and he had to use his bottom as a brake.

'Woof.' His tail wagged manically. Then his nose twitched.

'He can smell the sausages,' said Emma.

'Woof woof.' His doleful brown eyes begged for food.

'They're not for you, boy,' I told him,



stroking his silky soft ears. They were for us, but not yet. According to the label on the box, we'd have to wait until *Wednesday!*

Mum was cooking enough food for an army because she was leaving us for seven days. Yes, seven

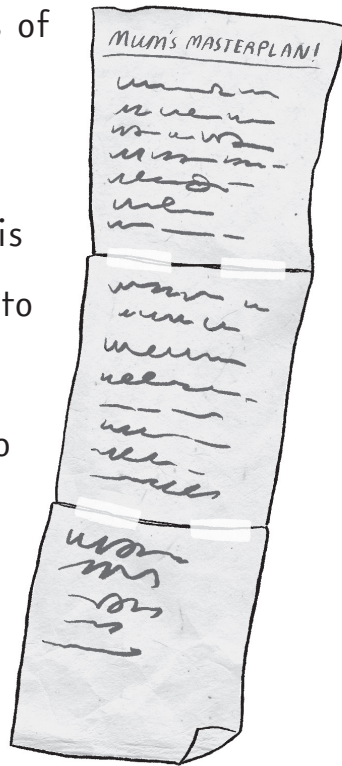
whole days. She was going to visit her aunt and uncle who live in an American city called Boston. We were staying at home because Emma and I had to go to school.



Dad would be looking after us. Mum would have liked to go for longer, but I think our house would fall apart if she did.

While Dad, Emma and Carl went to buy eggs, Mum led me to the kitchen table. On it were three large pieces of paper taped together.

'This is the master plan,' she said. 'On it is everything you'll need to know while I'm away. I've already shown it to Dad but it's important that you and Emma check it every day, too.'



She pointed with a wooden spoon at the different headings.

FOOD

ACTIVITIES

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Mum had thought of everything. What could possibly go wrong?

