

ME, MY BROTHER
AND THE
MONSTER
MELTDOWN

The title is rendered in a bold, bubbly, hand-drawn font. The words are stacked: 'ME, MY BROTHER' on the top line, 'AND THE' in smaller letters between the second and third lines, 'MONSTER' on the third line, and 'MELTDOWN' on the bottom line. Two black lightning bolts are positioned on either side of the word 'MONSTER'. A small, grey, stylized character with a circular head and a pointed body is integrated into the letter 'D' of 'MELTDOWN'.

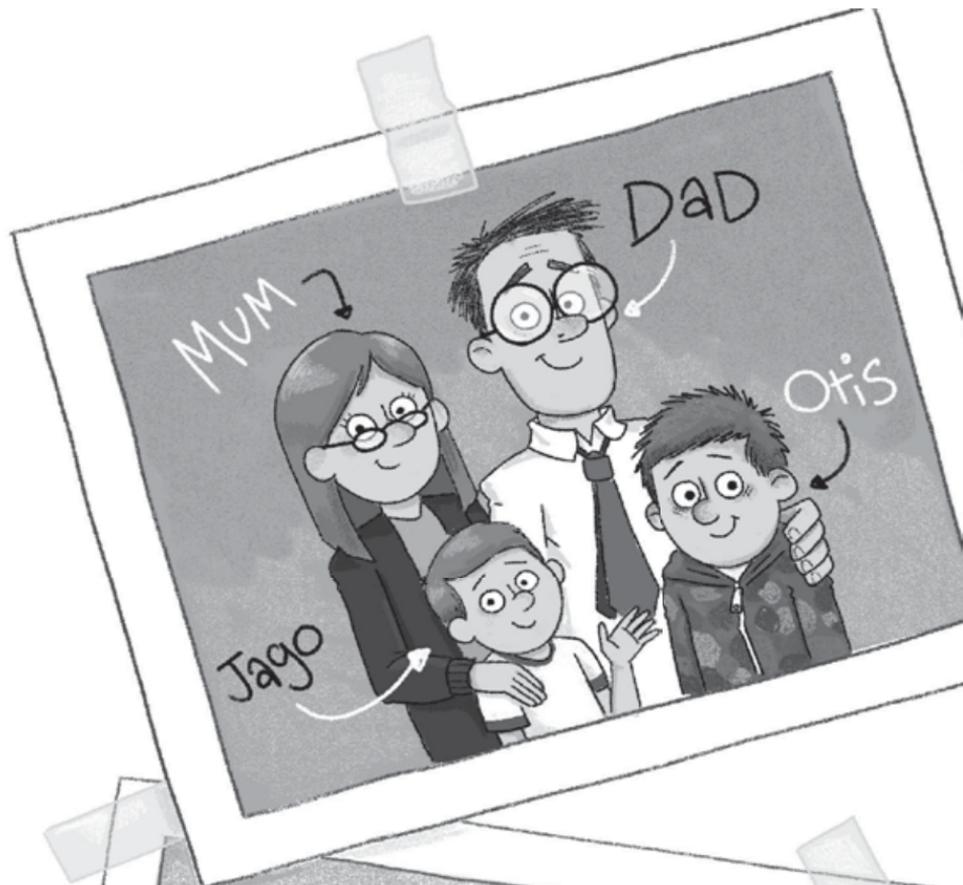
ME, MY BROTHER AND THE MONSTER MELTDOWN

ROB LLOYD JONES

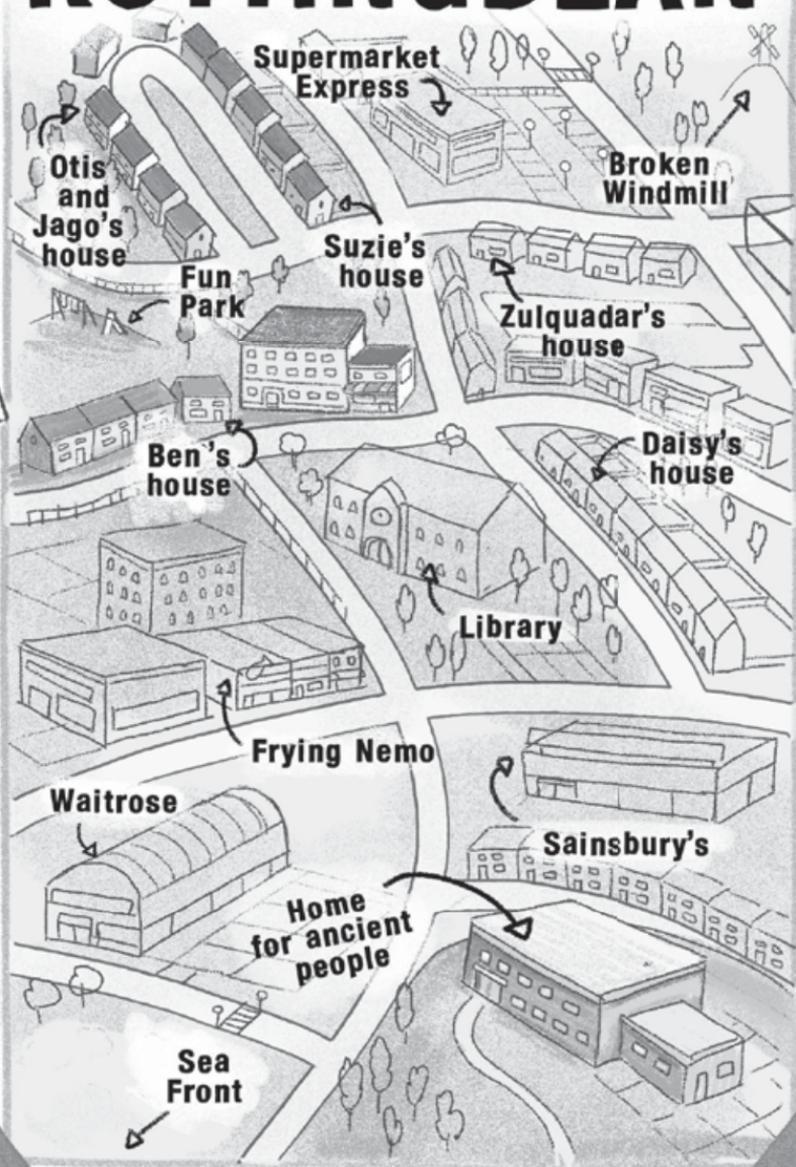
illustrated by Alex Patrick



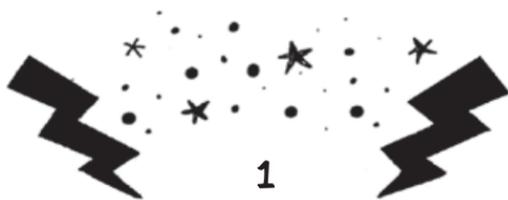
WALKER
BOOKS



ROTTINGDEAN







ALL THE ADULTS ARE FREAKING OUT

I knew something weird was going on when the six-headed gingerbread man smashed up our local Tesco.

The mega biscuit monster was the size of a skyscraper, with icing sleeves and Jelly Tot buttons bigger than small cars. Well, about the size of big cars, really. According to the news, it blasted the baking aisle with lightning bolts from its gingerbread hands, grinning weirdly the whole time.

Maybe it would have destroyed the other aisles too, but the Army sent in a tank and the soldiers shot it to smithereens. Army scientists ran around collecting the biscuit bits in special bags, but old Mrs Liphook found a piece they'd missed in the car park and took it home to dunk it in a cup of tea. Mum said that



was a dumb thing to do and we should stay away from her in case she turns into a mutant monster, too.

Loads of stuff like that has been happening lately.

Three weeks ago, a giant part-shrimp, part-lion, part peacock creature appeared in Brighton and blew up an Aldi with



zaps from its knees. Since then, freaky monsters have smashed up supermarkets in loads of towns and villages close to Rottingdean, which is where we live. The TV news even thinks the monsters may be targeting Rottingdean, although no one knows why. It's a pretty tiny village with the sea on one side and big chalky hills called the Downs on the other, and not much else really. It's got a lot of old people, a windmill that doesn't work, a fish and chip shop called Frying Nemo and a fun park – which isn't really a park, just a slide and swing round the back of Frying Nemo where no one's ever had any fun. Well, apart from my friend Suzie Grotwood, who goes there to practise burping the whole alphabet in one go so



she can get onto Britain's Got Talent.

The only unusual thing about Rottingdean is that it has a lot of supermarkets. Like, way more than it needs. You can't leave the village in any direction without passing one, and people come from all along the coast to shop in them. That used to be a really good thing because all the local adults

have jobs in them, including my dad. But now it's not such a good thing because it seems to have made our village the centre of a Monster Apocalypse.

Ever since the giant gingerbread man incident in Tesco, all the adults have been freaking out. Dad has turned our basement into a survival bunker,

filling it with tins of baked beans he bought with his work discount. Baked beans! That's all we'll eat during the end of the world.



Mum has started praying to every god from every religion, including the ancient ones. She's convinced one of them is punishing us but she doesn't know which. That's like 12,000 gods, so it takes her most of the day to do all the prayers because there are, like, 12,000 worshipped deities or something. Dad says if a god wanted to punish us, why would it send flying jellyfish with googly eyes?

There have been loads of other monsters since then, too. They're totally random, except for one common theme:



they all hate supermarkets. Just in the last few days, in and around Rottingdean ...

- * Sixty pink pandas (with bits of broccoli sprouting from their heads) pounded a Sainsbury's.
- * A gigantic neon poo emoji (with vampire fangs) pulverized a Co-op.
- * An enormous, bouncing bum (with an enormous grin) destroyed a Budgens that they tried to disguise as a cinema but somehow the monster knew.

Scientists gave them boring names, but “Unspecified Destructive Entity No. 62” really was just a massive pink butt. It bounced through Brighton, crushing cars on its way to Waitrose. People said it grinned at them each time it bounced up. Apparently, one time it did a fart so



loud that the pennies finally fell from the shelves in the slot machines on the pier. It bounced to Sainsbury's, and then bounced up and down on Sainsbury's until the supermarket was smashed to pulp. By the

time it was finished, the fog of fart gas was so thick that a news reporter puked her guts out on live TV.

The giant butt had bounced off by the time the Army turned up. It was last spotted headed into the Downs, and no one's seen it since. Monsters that escape are never seen again. Sometimes they actually vanish. One moment they're smashing supermarkets and then they're gone. It's one of the Big Mysteries about the Unspecified Destructive Entities.

But it's not the REALLY WEIRD thing.

The really weird thing about the giant gingerbread man – the thing that made me spit out my squash when I heard it on the news – was that it had six heads.

Gingerbread men do not usually have six heads. I know this because when I eat them, I always bite the head off first, and there's only ever one. Unless I steal my brother's biscuit... But that's not the point. Another proof is that in the story of the runaway gingerbread man. He DOES NOT sing, "Run, run, as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the six-headed gingerbread man."

Why would a gingerbread man need six heads?

Dad suggested that maybe where giant living gingerbread men come from, six heads is normal, but no one knows where the monsters come from.

The prime minister gathered an **ELITE TEAM** of scientists to work it out. He gave

them a long and serious name –

the **B**ureau for the
Investigation of
Giant
Beasts and
Unexplained
Monsters

– but didn't realize until later that the initials spell **BIGBUM**, so that's what everyone calls them.

BIGBUM put up posters along the coast telling us not to panic. One of them said,

DON'T PANIC!

Another said,

EVERYTHING IS FINE!

A third said,

**IF YOU SEE A MONSTER, LOCATE YOUR
NEAREST BALLISTIC WEAPON AND ATTEMPT
TO DEFEAT THE INVADER WITH SUPERIOR
FIREPOWER (BUT DON'T PANIC).**



The prime minister is on TV every day, speaking about not panicking. But the broadcasts always come from the government's secret underground survival

bunker, and sometimes he starts sobbing and pulling his hair in the middle of his speech, so I guess he's not really not panicking, either.

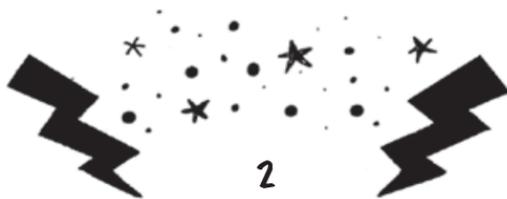
All the adults are freaking out about the Monster Apocalypse. But everyone is so busy freaking out that no one's stopped to think about the actual monsters doing the apocalypsing.

Why would a giant gingerbread man have six heads?

No one has asked that.

Well, I didn't need to. The moment I heard about it, I knew the answer.

The giant gingerbread man has six heads because that's how my brother drew it.



SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JAGO

Here are some things you should know about my little brother Jago:

- * He thinks he's a punk rocker. He doesn't even know what a punk rocker is, but he heard the words once and liked them and decided he was one. If you ask him what that means, he'll say it's his job but he'll dodge explaining what it involves.
- * He is six years old.
- * He likes dancing. A lot. If any music

of any form is playing in any place, turn around and Jago will be dancing.

- * He is not a very good dancer. Mostly he just thrashes his head and swings his arms. Dad said once that when Jago dances, he looks like a windmill in a hurricane. Jago

always says, “See? That’s what punk rockers do.”

- * He is almost always happy.

- * When he is not happy, he is ultra not happy. Like the monsters, he stomps



around and smashes things up. It takes ages for Mum to stop him crying because his breathing goes funny and he can't calm down even with his asthma puffer. He once cried so hard that he pooped himself – an actual poo came out! But we never mention it in case it sets him off again.

- * When he grows up, he wants to be a scientist, a dancer, a ninja and a blacksmith. All at the same time.
- * He likes licking the froth off the top of coffee.
- * He follows me around and copies what I do.
- * He hates supermarkets.
- * He draws things.



3

A MASSIVE NON-COINCIDENCE

I don't know why my brother draws so much, because he's not particularly good and he never gets any better.

All the schools shut when the apocalypse began, in case a monster smashed them up on the way to a supermarket. So Mum and Dad have to homeschool us while they work from home. I mean have to because they don't want to. They take turns and whoever's turn it is spends most of the time yelling,

“It’s your turn now!” at the other person.

They are rubbish at homeschooling, too. Mum stares at the work set by my school and mutters that “This isn’t how they did things when I was young...” Then she runs to the stairs and shouts to Dad that it’s his turn.

Dad is even worse. He reminds us not to panic about the apocalypse almost every minute.

“Don’t panic,” he says. “Otis, are you panicking? Jago, stop panicking!”

We never are panicking. Usually, we’re watching cartoons.

Then he charges across the room, waving his arms and

LINE · DON'T PANIC · POLICE LINE · DON'T



yelling, “OH MY GOD, WHAT ARE THESE THINGS AND WHY ARE THEY HERE?!”

The other day he charged straight into a wall and knocked himself out. I shouted to Mum, who shouted back that it was still Dad’s turn so we should just leave him there and get on with something.

So we did what we usually do when Mum and Dad are going nuts.

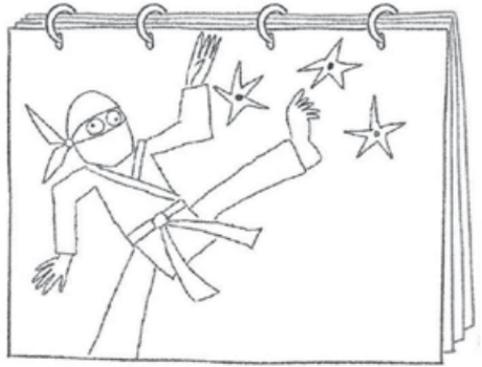
We drew stuff.

We draw a lot, my brother and me, and all over the place. Sometimes we lie on the trampoline and draw, sometimes we draw at the kitchen table and sometimes we draw on the table, although we always have to scrub it off. But the things we draw aren't quite the same. My drawings are a bit weird, but Jago's are just properly demented.



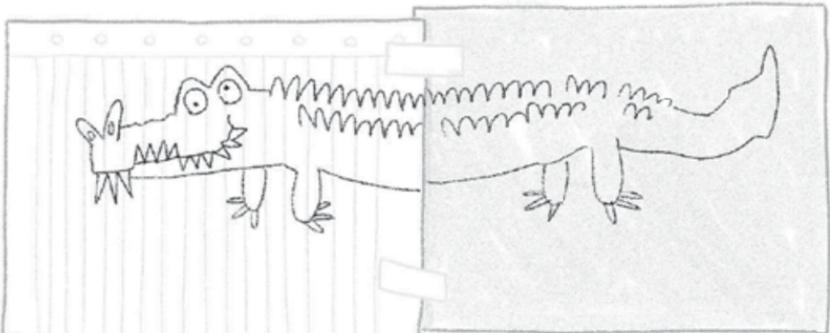
THREE THINGS I DREW RECENTLY:

a manga ninja
assassin



a musketeer with a twirly
moustache that goes
“twang” when he plucks it

a weird crocodile



THREE THINGS JAGO DREW RECENTLY:



a part-shrimp-part-lion-part-peacock monster with neon rays splurting from its knees

a massive bouncing butt



a giant grinning gingerbread man ... with six heads. You may recognize two of those?



I didn't work it out when I heard about the bouncing butt in Brighton, because the **BIGBUM** scientists didn't call it a butt. They called it a "bispherical fleshy sentient being", or a "peach-shaped creature with distinctive central opening".

I know now that one of those means "big thinking butt" and the other means "big bum with obvious bumhole", but at the time I didn't get it.

Then came the gingerbread man...

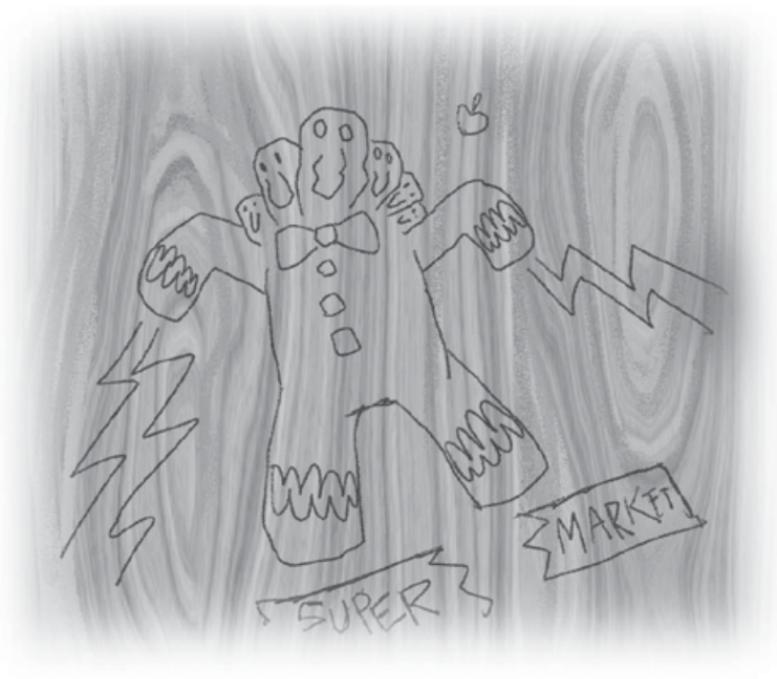
It was a massive non-coincidence. I spat out my squash (orange and mango) and spluttered something like, "What – no – wait – hang on – no – wait – what?"

Dad hurled his newspaper in the air and screamed, "WHAT IS IT? IS THERE ONE COMING? GET IN FRONT OF ME!"

I didn't want him running into any more walls, so I said I needed a poo and dashed off. But now I was freaking out, too, as I raced up to the bedroom I share with Jago. I leaped onto the bottom bunk, Jago's bed, my heart beating so hard I thought I might puke. Then my heart seemed to stop as I found what I was looking for.

Something Jago drew on the bed frame.
A six-headed gingerbread man.

It looked exactly the same as the monster that pulverized Tesco. I mean exactly the same. Same crazy red grin, same six heads (each one smaller than the last, as Jago was running out of space on the shoulders) and the same jagged yellow lines blasting from its hands.



Lightning bolts.

It was the monster.

Only, Jago drew it two days ago, before he'd ever heard about the Tesco pulverizer. Before anyone had ever heard about it, or seen it.

Just like the bouncing butt.

Was he ... somehow ... causing all this?