

## Rose's Blog

23rd April

I have never been so tempted to press SELECT ALL :  
DELETE

Indigo is back from Iceland where we should never have let him go even though he said it was wicked.

He has:

A suntan

A snowtan

17 mosquito bites (the earliest in the season he explains, rather proudly)

Used his ice axe on real ice at last

Wrenched his shoulder using his ice axe on real ice at last

Crossed the arctic circle on a special arctic-circle-crossing-boat

Sleep deprivation.

He is in bed, passed out. Dead with exhaustion. It is not possible to wake him, not with noise or cold water or pulling him out of bed and dumping him on the floor. But before he collapsed he did say that I could unpack his rucksack, and so I up-end it while he snores and find (Hurray!) the camera.

Let's have a look.

Ah!

Outside school, whole family, as seen through coach to airport's rear view window, waving goodbye.

Two pictures of chaotic interior of coach.

Sea from several thousand feet up in sky.

Reykjavik airport.

Black sand. White snow.

Large merry group of familiar faces in a crowded bunk beddish room flinging pillows about.

Several screens of darkness with blurs which may or may not be Northern lights.

Photo of perfectly normal breakfast with cereal and jam.

Geyser

More geysers..

Mud.

Snow.

Goodness.

It is still impossible to wake Indigo, and so I do not know the name of the white blonde, round faced, skinny jeaned, Icelandic witch who grins from 47 of the remaining 54 photographs which my brother has taken on this camera.

Which is not his camera, by the way. Not at all. It was kindly lent to my parasite-chewed, skin-peeling, Deep-Heat-Rub-reeking, treacherous brother by Sarah, his girlfriend, for the purpose of photographing landscapes.

NOT

GIRLS!

"That girl!" I screech into the sleeping one's only visible ear. "That girl! Her name?"

And from somewhere deep in dreams, somewhere close to the Arctic circle, some far off place of photo opportunities for long legged blondes, Indigo murmurs, "Ilsa."

Ilsa? What kind of a name is Ilsa?

"Wicked," whispers Indigo, still fast asleep.

25th March 2009

Indigo is packing to go to Iceland this Easter. He does this by loading as many tracks as possible on to his iPod whilst Sarah and Saffron and I run around with fleeces and cereal bars and suncream and ski gloves and waterproofs and cameras and thermal hats and phrase books and packets of hot chocolate that you make by just adding water.

'Do try to see the Northern Lights,' says Mummy.

'Don't mention the recession,' says Dad. 'It may be a sore point.'

(How little they seem to know their son. My brother Indigo is the least likely person in the world to either ignore the Northern Lights, or mention the recession.)

'I'll miss you, mate,' says David, as if he was going for a year instead of just-over-a-week.

I have more or less forgiven David for what he did to me after Valentine's day (I have not yet forgiven Tom, who is sending cheerful messages as if nothing had happened) (Nothing did happen. That was the problem). I have noticed that I am getting good at forgiving David, and I

suppose this is because I have had to do it so often. David, who in the past has posted me on unknown trains without any ticket, wrecked my bedroom, shipped me to the grown ups when I went to live in the zoo, and caused my sister to be sliced open by a drumkit (among many other things), now says very solemnly to Indigo, 'I'll take care of Rose while you're gone.'

'Thanks, mate,' says Indigo.

9th March 2009

After Valentine's day when Tom did not send me a valentine I did a good bit of moping and moaning until my brother Indigo kindly noticed. And then I allowed him to drag out of me what was wrong. Indigo understood completely and said he would very subtly and carefully ask Tom whether he sent valentines to other people but not me, or whether he just forgot. Indigo said he was sure the answer would be just forgot, and he reminded me of all the other things Tom had forgotten and I was beginning to feel better BUT THEN that great big nuisance David who lives in our attic and plays a drumkit in our shed and is forever interfering in our lives came bouncing in.

And he said, "Indigo, mate, I have texted that prat Tom and asked him what he is thinking of, upsetting our Rose like he has. Oh hullo, Rose."

What a pity murder is illegal, and probably so messy too.

Otherwise I would.

14th February 2009

Happy Valentine's Day Although I Prefer Pancake Day. Less Stressful.

My friend Kiran is very, very lucky. Her birthday is on Valentine's Day. Naturally she gets birthday cards,

and of course people add after the Happy Birthday an extra Happy Valentine's. So she gets loads and loads and the postman is always very impressed. It would be fairer if she explained to him that it was actually her birthday, not incredible popularity, but she doesn't.

Kiran was still ripping open cards when Molly and I arrived at her house for the Annual Valentine's Day Moan.

Molly began.

Very gloomily.

After arranging her Valentines in a tidy line on Kiran's mum's kitchen table. Two cards, and two edible tributes.

"I can guess who sent them all," she said, and sighed.

That is the fatal thing about Valentine's cards. You can't help guessing. And then, how your heart sinks when you recognise your mother's pathetically disguised hand writing. Or even worse, your Gran's. (Yes, Molly's Gran, I am talking about you. No one else does Card Craft with cut out pictures from Saga magazine that we know. Or recycles old envelopes previously addressed to The Sunny Side Residential Home. You will have to try harder if you want to be mysterious next year.)

The second of Molly's cards came from the next door dog, and included a poem.

Molly says she will kill me if I put the next door's dog's poem on line.

The edible tributes were:

1. A pink marshmallow heart on a stick which her Brown Ted was found clutching when she woke up this morning.
2. A packet of Love Hearts selotaped to a red paper rose from Guess Who?

We can all guess who, unfortunately. There is only one boy in the world who spells Molly so it looks like Moley.

No wonder Molly sighed.

BUT do not be too sorry for her! Think of me! I am almost 100% certain that the only Valentine I received came from my favourite-person-in-the-world's LITTLE SISTER!

"That is so not good," said Kiran, shaking her head.

I know.

Molly and I did not cheer up until Kiran unwrapped a very glamorous looking purple and silver birthday parcel which turned out to contain school uniform.

Then we all went into town with Kiran's birthday money to make ourselves feel better with retail therapy. And all the way into town we chanted:

The Dog's Poem  
It's very jolly  
To live near Molly  
Even though her cat has died  
She still has me faithfully by her side.

It was signed with an actual muddy paw print.

(Now Molly will kill me.)

14th January 2009

I am the only person I know who does not live in a centrally heated house.

"Can't we get central heating?" I moan at Daddy.

"Certainly," says Daddy, "if you can find a plumber who will do it for free."

"The frost patterns on the windows are lovely," remarks Mummy, when pursued with the same question. "Besides, it is nearly Spring."

I don't know if I would call January 14th nearly Spring, but it is true, the frost patterns are lovely. Molly and Kiran came here for a sleepover so that they could see them for themselves. They prepared for this subzero experience with fleeces over their pyjamas, space blankets on top of their sleeping bags, socks and hats and fingerless mittens, hot black currant and hot water bottles.

None of these devices worked. I knew they wouldn't. By midnight the air was icy. Kiran and Molly begged to come in bed with me but I cruelly would not let them, and so they huffed and moaned and blew on their fingers until hypothermia set in, and they went quiet at last.

But in the morning they thought it was worth it. The frost patterns were spectacular. Our huffings and moanings and shivering breaths had crystallised on the thin glass of the windowpane into a frozen forest of wild spinning fern patterns. And then the sun rose yellow and hit them from behind, and it looked like the window had been blasted by the breath of an arctic dragon, all swirling flames of fire and ice.

But we forgot it when Saffy came in with hot chocolate and a blow heater to defrost any survivors (she explained). When we looked back again the magic was all gone. The window was just wet grey glass, with puddles on the windowsill.

"It will be here again tomorrow," I said.

"But we won't," complained Kiran and Molly. "Oh, it's not fair! Oh, you are so lucky! Oh, why can't we live in houses with no central heating?"

"Well," I said. "You could always turn it off."

Then Kiran and Molly went a bit quiet and thoughtful for a while, until Kiran said, very loudly and firmly,

"That would be BONKERS, Rose!"

And I have to admit, she was right.

22nd December 2008

Christmas cards are arriving with every post. A lot of them have printed letters inside, from people we have not seen for ages. The letters are descriptions of everything that the family has done for the past year, holidays, exam results, newly discovered talents, all squashed onto one page with little tiny blurry photos in the corners.

Everytime a new one arrives Mummy exclaims (before she stuffs it behind the kitchen clock), "Oh, how thoughtful! Oh, how organised! Why don't we do something like that?"

So we are. At least I am.

The Christmas Casson Family Junk Mail

So another year has gone by! How fast it was (that is how they all begin). Where shall we start with the Latest News?

With Daddy of course, otherwise known as Bill Casson, famous artist. Poor old Daddy is going very bald on top and his antique business is turning into a coffee shop owing to the Credit Crunch. However, he stills calls it The Gallery and prances around in a pale cream jacket, charming old ladies into parting with their cash. He is not as appreciated as he should be.

(He says).

Mummy. Well. Mummy has started painting nudes.

That's enough about Mummy.

The Casson Family Exciting Holiday.

For various reasons we did not do this. Thank goodness. Because what could be worse than being cooped up with no one to talk to but relations and none of your own things for TWO WHOLE WEEKS.

Newly Discovered Family Talents.

None yet.

Saffron.

Saffy went to Italy with Sarah in the spring. She came back with her hair dyed bright pink. Sarah came back with a shoulder tattoo (sea horse) and more piercings (eyebrow).

Indigo and David-who-lives-in-the-attic spent a lot of the summer camping at various muddy music festivals. They had lots of swampy adventures doing this, but the worst was when sounds from a nearby tent led David to believe the girl inside was having a baby. So he rushed to help as quickly as possible, chopping his way into the tent with his Swiss army knife. Oh dear. And she wasn't having a baby after all. It was something else.

Buttercup my nephew (that's not his real name) and Caddy and Michael are still living at the zoo. I went to stay with them not long ago and while I was there I painted the walls of Buttercup's room with a design of hot air balloons, helicopters, sky scrapers and rockets. It is an animal free zone (except for Buttercup). Michael repaid me for my hard work by teaching me to drive in the zoo car park after closing time. My friends Molly and Kiran are very jealous.

How I wish I had a photograph of me driving to stick at the end of this letter. And one of Saffy with her pink hair, and Indigo in his tent, and Daddy with his cakes and coffee and bald patch..

But I don't. You will just have to imagine us all instead.

Happy imagining!

Love Rose

3rd November 2008

Cool

For nearly a year my brother Indigo has been saving up, and I have just found out what for,

Iceland.

Not the shop, the country. Every other year school does a field trip there for the 'A' level Geography students. I don't know why I am so surprised that Indigo is going. Ever since I can remember he has had a thing about the ends of the world. The North and South poles, I mean. The arctic and the antarctic. Indigo is the family expert on pack ice, Northern lights, glaciers, and permafrost. Iceland will be his Furthest North. It is very nearly arctic up there, and one of the things they do on the field trip, says Indigo, is take a boat trip out to the North and cross the Arctic circle.

So no wonder he wants to go.

"It is just a start," says Indigo. "One day I will go the Pole.

But.

I have heard the arctic is melting. Defrosting, like a too warm fridge.

Because of global warming.

I am doing my best to hold it back. Turning off lights and having very short showers which my friend Molly (who is an eco warrior) says will help a lot (Are the ice caps really melting because of hot shower water running down the plug holes and into the rivers and out to sea? 'Something like that,' says Molly).

I really do not want the North Pole to melt, especially not before Indigo gets there.

'Well, then, stay cool,' orders Molly, and adds, 'Cool is the new cool.'

'The world needs more Mollys,' says Indigo.

9th October 2008

Big School

Well, for a start, nobody calls it Big School. Only me. In my head. In the mornings when I wake up and think 'WAAAAHH! Big School! How much longer can I keep this up? I won't get out until I am seventeen and by then I will be past caring.'

Before we started B.S. they gave us a list of rules. This list was very inaccurate indeed. Here are the rules that are not true:

The No Make Up Rule Isn't True

Au contraire (French for not remotely like it). Here in year 7 there is not a female-owned pencil case that does not contain at least three shades of lip gloss. Mascara matt-black lowered lashes are everywhere you look. (To arrive at school unblackened would be equivalent to arriving carrying a large placard saying, 'My Mum Won'). And don't forget to pluck your eyebrows, otherwise you will have a monobrow.

Oh dear. I am finding it very difficult to switch so completely from only sometimes washing my face to all this early morning effort. Why don't they make a rule saying Full Make Up Compulsory, Monobrows Banned? Then we could all relax.

The Homework Amnesty Rule Isn't True

"No homework," they promised, "for the first four weeks. To get you used to our Routine"

But by Day 3 they were saying, "This is not homework. But we would like it if you did it. It would show that you mean to make a success of your time here with us."

So I didn't do it.

And had to go to a Little Talk.

About not doing non-homework.

Is that fair?

No.

The Uniform Rule is Not True.

Oh, how annoyed Daddy is about that! He bought me the whole lot (x2) plus black lace up shoes. Our uniform is purple. I looked like a deep purple beetle.

But only for one day.

Hurray!

I have discovered that any old rags will do as long as you tie a blazer round your waist.

Another thing that I have discovered is that at B School nobody knows who you are. Except the other people in your form.

I am the Class Tattoo Artist. I have tattooed most of the girls and all the boys with special marker pens from the art shop that do not wash off. I do it in the dinner queue which stretches halfway round the canteen. Even year 9s and 10s come for my tattoos. And they say, "Are you Saffy and Indigo Casson's sister? Cool."

So that's okay.

Recently I have stopped getting lost all the time.

And made friends with the nice person in the office who gives back the confiscated mobile phones.

And joined the Drama Club.

And actually, it's not bad here at Big School.

ONLY DON'T CALL IT THAT.

1st September 2008

David

Exam results are out. It would be showing off to write how well Saffy and Sarah and Indigo did, so I will say nothing.

I will write about David.

David is Indigo's friend from school. He keeps a drum kit in our shed, and most of the time he lives in our attic because he does not get on very well with his mum.

Anyway.

All this summer David has been working at the burger stand in the market place. They sell mile-long hot dogs, and turkey rolls with stuffing, and roast pork sandwiches and things like that. You can smell the burger stand right across the market place, and if you are even very slightly hungry you become suddenly starving and can think of nothing else. Since David has been there they have started using a hot plate to make pancakes. Those are my favourites, pancakes rolled up with cinnamon fried apple slices inside. David invented them all by himself in our kitchen.

After David had invented his fried apple pancakes but before he got his exam results the burger stand owner offered him a permanent job.

Nobody could have been more pleased than David was the night he rushed home smelling of turkey and fried apples to tell us this news. And now he is leaving school forever, and he is going to be a burger stand man, and he is saving up for a burger stand of his own.

I am writing this to explain that even if someone gets one 'C' and five 'G's and two 'U's for Ungraded it is still possible to be very happy.

Like David.

12th August 2008

Babysitting

Kiran and I had Buttercup (that is my 11 month old nephew) (and no, of course he is not really called Buttercup) all to ourselves today. Babysitting. Buttercup needs a lot of babysitting at the moment because he has suddenly learned to crawl very fast, and also to pull himself up and grab things that were out of his reach until last week. This makes him very happy, and when he is happy he makes loud noises like an engine revving up, and flaps his hands and stomps his feet.

He made his engine revving noise when Kiran arrived.

"What'll we do with him?" asked Kiran.

I repeated Caddy's parting instruction ('Watch every move') and continued entertaining him by balancing a piece of paper on my head and groaning when it fell to the ground. This had him completely rocking, but it was not enough for Kiran.

"Let's teach him to read," she said. "Imagine how surprised Caddy and Michael will be when he picks up a book, and just, like, reads!"

They certainly would be surprised at that, because Buttercup can't even talk yet.

"Can't talk?" asked Kiran. "What, not at all?"

"No."

"Not a word?"

"Hadn't you noticed?"

"I noticed he didn't talk," said Kiran. "I didn't know he couldn't. I thought he just hadn't anything he wanted to say. I could talk when I was six months old."

"What could you say?"

"Anything, I think," said Kiran. "My parents have a video of me when I was much younger than Buttercup asking very nicely, 'Would someone please open the door?'"

Oh dear.

So, anyway, that is how we spent the morning, teaching Buttercup to talk.

It was the most exhausting morning of my life.

We tried with bribery, and we tried with begging. We bounced out at him from unexpected places, shouting useful words. We tried in total darkness, like you do with parrots, and we tried with a spotlight trained on the objects we were naming. We sang, chanted, whispered and role-played.

Also from time to time we lay on the floor and groaned with despair.

Buttercup loved it. He flapped and zoomed and stomped and revved and made starfish handprints on everything he touched. And he chewed the phone, and swung on Kiran's plaits, emptied a vase of flowers and tried to eat them, bit my hand, pulled the backs off several books, flung orange juice into an orange juice fountain, ransacked the kitchen bin, emptied Mummy's handbag and wore it like a hat. All this, while we did not take our eyes off him.

And he learnt to say one word;

'KIKEE!'

"Crikey?" asked Kiran. "Crikey? Where ever do you think he heard that?"

15th July 2008

Oh, the end of term is very, very near now. We have had Last Sports Day and Last Healthy Dinner Day and Last Swimming and Last Summer Fair. We are getting old. The whole school is getting old. Even those squidgy little infants in Class 1 are looking too big for the sandpit, and at lunchtime they can get the lids off their yoghurt pots no trouble at all. Before they know it they will be in Class 2 where there is no Wendy house. They will have to survive the Class 2 playground where the footballs are not made of sponge and no painted jungle animals brighten the walls. There will be a new lot of little squidgy ones in their place but I will not be there to see them.

I will be at Big School.

I am scared of going to Big School.

Change the subject.

"What shall we buy Mr Spencer for a leaving present?" asks Molly. "We have collected £19.60 so it can be really good. I thought a David Attenborough DVD (£11.99), a goldfish from the garden centre to go into that empty goldfish tank (£1.20), some weed for the goldfish (49p), goldfish food (£1.65) and a genuine artificial silk tie. They have got some on the market that play Nellie the Elephant. She packed her bags and said goodbye to the circus, so I think it would be appropriate. They are

£2.50 or two for £4 but he wouldn't want two. That leaves £1.77 for Pic'n'Mix or 57p if we buy two goldfish which might be kinder. Why are you crying, Rose?"

I am crying because of Nellie the Elephant.

It is a very sad song.

23rd June 2008

News From the Casson Family

Indigo and Saffron are no fun at all. All they talk about is exams. Sarah is just as bad, only instead of exams she talks about cars. She is getting her own car for her 18th birthday, she says. She has the Sat Nav for it already, and she is always checking out exotic locations.

'Hammerfest, North Norway,' she announces. 'Only 44.09 hours non stop, not avoiding toll roads. Their coat of arms is a polar bear and there are reindeer in the streets. I don't know why everyone doesn't go there. Who's coming with me?'

So we all agree to come and start googling 'Permafrost' and the next day she has discovered some place that she read about when she was 10 years old actually exists in real life. And is only 22.34 hours away, including crossing the Channel and the Alps.

'Admit that's quick,' says Sarah. "Rose, stop sulking. We can always do Norway on the way home."

Caddy and Michael and Buttercup are still living in the Zoo Flat. They are perfectly happy but rather squashed.

Daddy's antique shop is very, very popular. This is mostly because of the large wicker basket outside the door into which he dumps what he supposes is junk. So far he has accidentally sold for nearly nothing a small Saxon cross, a first edition of Peter Rabbit and a very nasty Victorian pendant made of human hair. And diamonds.

Mummy is very supportive though, and says, 'You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs,' (although she is far from an omelette expert).

School. Amazing. I told Mr Spencer how unhappy I was about SATS and Big School and not being with Kiran and Molly because of being so unclever. And Mr Spencer said, 'Hmmm, hmmm, stop worrying, Rose. I'll see what I can do!!!!!!''

Kiran is doing a sponsored silence. Five days now. Very peaceful.

Molly has decided on her future career. She is going to be a Green Peacer and save the planet. (Thank goodness for that). She already knows the Japanese for 'Please leave that whale alone.'

So,

End of the news.

12th May 2008

SATS WEEK

The only good thing about SATS week is that the revision classes have stopped.

I have been going to them all by myself because Molly and Kiran very kindly refused to take part, saying they were already so far ahead of me that I would never catch them up if they carried on learning.

It is Science today. All weekend Saffron and Sarah have been trying to explain eclipses and forces and how the sun manages to burn without any oxygen and why gravity only pulls things down to ground level and no further, and why, if you did manage to dig an impossible hole all the way through to the other side of the world, you could not afterwards jump down it and pop up a minute or two later among the kangaroos.

How I wish I had been born in the sensible olden days, when science had not been invented and the world was run by ancient gods and primitive powers and magic.

"It must have been lovely," agreed Mummy, when I mentioned this, and she gave me a largish blue stone with a hole in it threaded on to a silk thong to wear round my neck in the exams.

"It came from a sacred mountain on the borders of Pakistan," she said. "And it has been dipped into every holy well that you pass on a bike between North Wales and the Hindu Kush. I know because I dipped it. It will avert the evil eye..."

(Just what I need)

"...and free your soul from error and fear."

Oh good.

28th April 2008

As a change from SATS panicking (don't imagine it has stopped though) I will write about Daddy's new shop which he calls Studio Two.

Hmm.

It is one of those very long narrow buildings in the market square. There is a studio at the top where he is supposed to live/paint/cook the books, an art gallery underneath that, an antique shop on the ground floor and coffee in the basement. Victims Customers are encouraged to roam freely between floors, lingering and admiring, and hopefully parting with vast quantities of cash. The staff are supplied by Mummy, who has access to unlimited numbers of starving students and charming but reformed young offenders. Often Saffron and Sarah work there as well, serving astonishingly priced teas and coffees, joining the SSs and YOs in their lunchtime feasts of out-of-date bagels, and keeping an eye on Daddy.

"We often have to quell the DFCs," says Saffron, grinning.

DFCs are Drooling Female Customers, because Daddy is still (alas) charming.

Sarah has a particularly good way of quelling DFCs. Whenever she is asked any version of the usual question ('Can you tell me about that absolutely gorgeous man with the smile/paint palette/vast crowd of admirers/' she says very firmly and sweetly,

"He's gay."

12th April 2008

Panicking

SATS panicking.

I asked Mr Spencer (our class teacher)(not someone you would call a friendly person) "What is the use of these exams?"

And he resisted the temptation to say, 'They are to prove I am a Good Teacher and this is a Good School (and therefore deserves extra pupils and MORE MONEY).'

Nor did he say (as he would have done in the very bad old days before my friend Kiran partially tamed him) 'Life is tough. Get used to it.'

He said, 'Big school will use the results to decide which classes to put you all in.'

WHAT?

"So those of you who do well will go into top sets," continued Mr Spencer, "and those of you who do less well.... won't."

That was the first time I realised that in September, when we go to Big School, we will be split up for ever. There will be no more Class 6.

I have know these people since I was five. I have spent more time with them than I have with my brother and

sisters. We know each other's habits and jackets and fears and school bags. We have quarrelled and been kind and helped each other out. Where would I be without my best friends Kiran and Molly who are ten times clever than me?

Yes, where will I be?

Not with them.

My SATS results will make sure of that.

What can I do?

Join all the after school exam classes?

Yes.

Cheat?

If I can think of a way.

Panic?

Yes. I am doing that already.

Panicking.

10th April 2008

Panic!Panic!Panic!

I am panicking because I am eleven years old, and in Year 6 at school. If you live in England and are that age and go to the sort of school I go to (which is the sort of school nearly every one goes to) then you will very soon be facing a week of exams called SATS.

At school they say 'Oh we do not worry our students about these little exams.' 'Oh, we take the whole experience very calmly. In fact, the children hardly know anything unusual is happening.' 'Oh, actually, isn't it amazing, the classes find being examined for hours and hours, day after day,(just when the weather has got lovely at last) GREAT FUN!'

(Oh yes?)

So I will politely not mention the letters that go home to parents saying, 'Don't dare let your children be ill in SATS week. Don't even think of going on holiday. Please put off all out of school events to a more convenient time.

And for goodness sake make sure they eat a good breakfast before they come to school, and go to bed early and bring bottles of water and brain stimulating snacks and lucky mascots (Not more than three).

We don't want any fainting or nodding off or panic attacks.

And in the terrible weeks leading up to SATS week, make sure homework is done, and revision sheets gone through, and spellings and tables are recited at every available opportunity.

And don't forget the extra SATS classes we are running after school.

And, by the way  
NO PRESSURE!'

All this is bad enough.

But I have a worse problem.

And that is why I am panicking.

I will write it down tomorrow.

Today I am just explaining how I feel about SATS.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would be interested.

16th March 2008

I wrote so much about Caddy's wedding-that-didn't-happen that I think I should say very little about the one that took place yesterday.

Except that during the part of the service when the vicar asks if anyone has any reason why this marriage should not go ahead the whole church burst out laughing.

And I said, "No, no! Do it now! Get married quick!"

So they did.

21st February 2008

The Good News is No School this week because it is half term. Molly has gone to Winter Guide Camp. Molly's mum, who is helping to run it, said Kiran and I could go too, if we liked, to help make up numbers.

Because they are short of actual Guides.

'Please come, please come, please come,' begged Molly.

'What?' we said. 'Camp? This weather? In a tent? Are you mad, Mollipop?'

And we went on about slugs and snails and spiders, and the probable horrors of winter camp hygiene, and coldness and dampness.

'Don't do it, Mol!' we said. 'Come and stay with one of us instead. You know you will only get frozen/mildewed/attacked by wildlife/ lost in the dark.'

But Molly went.

And ever since, she has been texting us about campfires and teepees and star watching and circus skills and how everyone was given a choice between a free harmonica or bongo drums or multicoloured recorder the moment they arrived. And about the weather, which has been fantastic, blue skies every day.

Kiran and I have been ounging about.

Ounging.

That's what Kiran's mother called it.

Ounging means hanging about, making sure everyone knows how bored you are in a slightly sad, slightly complaining, very annoying kind of way.

When Kiran and I ounge at my house nobody takes any notice, so we mostly do it at Kiran's. It drives her mother mad, and so she finds us jobs to keep us from under her feet. We are so bored we do them with only minimal moaning.

So today it was shopping. All the bits Kiran's mother cannot do in the supermarket. Eggs from the organic egg stall. Watch battery from the jeweller's (who said come back in 15 minutes)( and what are we supposed to do for 15 minutes?). Worst of all, lamb chops from the three fingered butcher.

'I am not going in there,' said Kiran. 'It is terrible watching him with his axe.'

So I had to go on my own, and Kiran was right, it was terrible. I am not surprised he has only got three fingers. Amazing that he has any at all, if you ask me.

Then we got another text from Molly saying she was sitting in the sun cooling off from a very hot shower. Theatre tomorrow, said Molly, then Pizza Hut for supper and then back to the campsite by narrow boat.

We stamped back to Kiran's house saying, 'Boiling hot shower? Theatre? Narrow boat?'

And other things too.

'Now what are you going to do?' asked Kiran's mother. 'What about vacuuming the inside of my car?'

So I locked myself into the bathroom and sent a private text, and now I am waiting for the reply.

Is it too late?

Is it too late?

Is it too late?

NO!

Crash out the bathroom, run down the stairs, hug Kiran, rush about packing. Worry for two seconds about who will take us? Hundreds of volunteers! Our families are only too glad to get rid of us.

Tonight we will be sleeping in goose down sleeping bags in a tent. For supper it is veggie spag bol and choc bananas. Molly says they are getting it ready now. They are putting in extra for Kiran and me.

Interesting Fact

The average yawn takes six seconds from start to finish.

'Whoever discovered that,' said Kiran, when I told her. 'Really needs to get a life.'

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21 January 2008  
Just Believe It

This year my friend Kiran gave me a diary for Christmas. It has roses on the cover and an INTERESTING FACT for every day.

"Oh," said Kiran greedily. "I didn't know that! I didn't look inside. Lend it back to me, Rose!"

No. I won't. She would read the whole 365 INTERESTING FACTS in one go. I shall save them and give them out one by one, for prizes when people are wonderful.

Kiran knows me quite well, so I do not think she will mind if I do not fill in my diary every day. I have decided only to record the very special days.

Like today.

Last night, while I was asleep, it snowed. When I looked out of my bedroom window our shabby January street had been transformed. It did not look like real life. It looked like a painting. All the muddled clutter of the everyday world had vanished. Only the lines that mattered were left, and the best shapes, and the grey-blue shadows.

And it was Saturday, and still very early.

So I got my friends Molly and Kiran out of bed and we rushed about saying, "Look at that roof! Look at those footprints! Look how it's drifted against the windows!"

But the best place of all was the park. Especially the corner where the trees grow close together. They looked like magic trees painted on shadowy, sparkly paper.

"They are perfect," I said.

Kiran said, "As long as no one walks on the snow underneath."

Oh dear.

It was still quite early in the day, but already the snow in the playground and on the paths round the pond was ruined and kicked and stained with footprints.

"It might not snow like this again for years and years," said Molly. "Not with global warming. We might be grown up!"

Then Kiran had a very good idea.

We made six notices on Molly's computer that she got for Christmas:

PLEASE DO NOT WALK ON THE SNOW UNDER THE TREES

And in case people wondered why, we added:

It might not snow like this again for years and years

Not with global warming.

We might be grown up!

We pinned our notices onto the bandstand and the gate to the playground and the wall of the little hut where you buy ice creams in summer and hot drinks in winter.

All that day there were people in the park. Throwing snowballs and running down the paths with sledges. Reading our notices, chattering and calling, warming their hands round cups of coffee. Someone built a snowman in the middle of the bandstand. Kiran and Molly and I helped make a huge mountain at the bottom of the slide for the squealing toddlers to land in when they slid down.

And you may not believe this, but it is true:

NOBODY WALKED ON THE SNOW UNDER THE TREES!!!

It stayed quite perfect, shadowy and glimmering, without a single footprint.

All day.

Thanks to Kiran and Molly's brilliant notices.

So I rewarded them both with an INTERESTING FACT and it is driving them mad.

They find it impossible to believe. Molly is buried behind a pile of Natural History books. Kiran is Googling the night away.

This is the INTERESTING FACT:

All polar bears are left handed!

(Just believe it).

Rose

Logon