

To entertain children during the lockdown, I have written a short story spin off from my It's A Kid's Life series and invited children to write their own ending! My message to them is...

**"You may be stuck inside, but your imagination is as free as a bird, so let it fly!"**

I regularly speak at schools, giving talks about my journey as an author and running creative writing workshops. Inspiring children with their reading and writing is incredibly important to me. I have written five books in my It's A Kid's Life series and was a finalist in the 2018 IAN Children's Book of the Year Awards. This particular short story is highly relatable to children right now and brings humour and hope through their amazing imaginations.

It is completely free to read and use so please do enjoy it and if your children would like to send me the endings they write, I would love to read them!

# **It's A Kid's Life - Lockdown**

## **Chapter 1**

Still dressed in my pyjamas, I lay on my bed stroking my dog, Obi. I had woken up about half an hour ago but was in no hurry to get up. Usually Mum would be nagging me to get my school clothes on by now, but today was different.

Reaching under my bed, I located my secret stash of essential food that I kept hidden in a box – I chose a chocolate biscuit. I was just about to tuck the box away again when Obi looked at me with puppy dog eyes. I never could resist them. I pulled out another chocolate biscuit and carefully scraped the chocolate layer off of the top of it with my teeth before popping it into Obi's watering mouth.

Lying back against my pillow, I thought back to a conversation I had had with my best friend, Tommy, a few weeks ago.

"Tommy, do you remember when I used to say how unfair it was that we had to go to school for five days every week and only had two days at home?" I had said to him with a glint in my eye.

"How could I forget, Ben," he had replied, laughing. "You say it at least five times a day!"

“Well, what would you say if I told you that my dad reckons we won’t have to go to school at all this time next week?”

“I would say that you had eaten too much sugar from the secret school tuck shop and gone crazy,” had been his response. Little did we know then what was about to happen.

## **Chapter 2**

The last day that we came home from school, Mum had made us all a mug of hot chocolate with marshmallows and sat down with a very serious look on her face. I think it was about two weeks ago but I’m not sure. I don’t even know what day of the week it is at the moment as it really doesn’t matter right now anyway.

Whilst we sat enjoying our comfort drinks, Mum had told us that the problem we had all been hearing adults talk about lately had got worse. This meant that schools were now closing and we’d all need to stay at home with her for a while. My brothers and I had all cheered like we’d just been told Christmas was coming early. The thought of spending all day doing whatever we wanted instead of going to school was the best feeling ever! The euphoria lasted for all of about two minutes though!

In the midst of imagining pyjama days and movie afternoons, I had caught the end of mum’s

sentence... “so ‘Mum School’ starts every day at 9am, ok?”

“Mum School?” I had asked, perplexed. “What on earth is ‘Mum school’?”

It had become clear very quickly that this wasn’t going to be the easy life we had all imagined moments before. School were going to set us work to do every day and Mum was going to be our new teacher. She had looked far too excited about it for my liking!

Things got even stranger just days after Mum told us this as the whole country, and much of the world, went in to something called lockdown, which meant we could only leave our house for one bit of exercise a day, or to get essential food and medicine. The government thought that this would be the best way to keep us all safe.

## **Chapter 3**

Bringing my thoughts back to the present, I decided I’d better drag myself out of bed in time for 9am ‘Mum School’!

“Nice of you to join us, Ben,” said Mum, as I wandered into the kitchen.

Pocket Rocket, Big Spud and Little Spud were already sitting at the table eating their breakfast. I sat down and poured myself a bowl of cornflakes, yawning.

“OK, now we’re all here, let’s take a register,” announced Mum, cheerily. Big Spud and Little Spud giggled, finding it fun to be playing schools. Pocket Rocket and I just looked at each other with raised eyebrows. Mum was so embarrassing. If she thought I was going to play along, she had another thing coming. It might have been slightly amusing for the first few days, but how Big Spud and Little Spud still found it this funny was beyond me.

“Can we do this later, Mum?” I interrupted. “I thought I’d go to see Tommy this morning.” Mum may have had plans for me to do school work today, but my ideal plans were somewhat different and mainly involved sitting in Tommy’s tree house with him all day. I was far too bored of staying at home every day.

Mum looked at me with an apologetic smile. “We have spoken about this Ben. You’re not going to be able to see Tommy for a little while. I’m really sorry.”

I looked at her feeling frustrated. It wasn’t the first time we’d had this conversation over the past few weeks.

“Everyone just has to stay with their families for a bit until things get back to normal,” Mum continued.

“But Tommy is family,” said Big Spud. “You always say he’s like your fifth son, so that means we can still see him. Right Ben?”

I nodded, hoping Mum would agree.

But she didn't. Shaking her head, she looked at me with those same apologetic eyes.

"Tommy is like family," she said. "But he doesn't live here. And right now, I'm afraid that you boys have to stay here with me and Dad, and Tommy has to stay at home with his parents."

"But his parents are never there!" I argued. "Tommy is going to be all on his own with his housekeeper."

"Trust me Ben, even Tommy's parents will be home at the moment. It's just the way life has to be for a little while.

I let out a big breath of air, feeling sad. I had thought it would be great not having to go to school, but I hadn't realised that this would mean not seeing my best friend either. Things definitely felt strange right now.

## **Chapter 4**

After accepting that Mum wasn't going to change her mind about me going to see Tommy, the rest of the morning actually went quite quickly. Mum made us all do some sort of PE class that was streaming live on YouTube. I did most of the exercises the guy running it told us to but drew the line at hopping up and down like a bunny rabbit and exploding out into a star jump like a shooting star. I mean really, come on! I'm ten, not

four! Little Spud got beside himself with excitement when the fitness guy turned a boring stretch into a 'spidey-move'. Instead of just stretching your arm across yourself, you had to shoot out a pretend Spiderman web with your fingertips. Between you and me, I did secretly enjoy this adaptation and may have even made a suspect 'ptchew' noise out of my lips as I did it to emphasise the web shooting out my wrist – but that was only to make it fun for Little Spud of course.

After the PE session, Mum told us it was time to do our school work. 'Mum school' pretty much meant leaving me and Pocket Rocket to our own devices to do our work set by the school, and Mum letting Big Spud shoot his nerf gun at a list of words she had stuck on the wall. Every time he hit a word, he had to read what it said to the sound of Mum cheering wildly whenever he got it right. Her initial enthusiasm did start to wane a little after he decided that instead of aiming at the words, he would aim at her bottom and say 'bum, spelt b, u, m' whenever the nerf bullet struck. According to Mum, Big Spud took advantage of her at this point as he wouldn't dare do that to his actual teacher. Mum didn't seem to appreciate my input that his real teacher wouldn't be teaching him to read with the assistance of a nerf gun! Mum's annoyance at Big Spud was diverted though as Pocket Rocket banged his hands down on the table in frustration.

“Oi,” I said, “You nearly knocked my drink over!”

“This is stupid,” he said. “I need to write the answers on the screen but my fingers are too podgy to write it properly!”

I totally understood his pain. I too had been struggling to use my fingertip to write the answers on my iPad. Suddenly, I had a light bulb moment.

“Let’s make some home-made touch screen pens,” I said. “I saw someone do it on YouTube once and it’s so easy!”

Pocket Rocket looked keen. “What do we need?” he asked.

I grabbed a couple of pens out of the Mum’s carefully arranged ‘mum school pot’ and emptied out the ink tubes and tips. “Just cotton buds and tin foil,” I said. “It couldn’t be easier!”

“I’ll get the cotton buds,” said Pocket Rocket, racing off to the bathroom with a new found spring in his step. I grabbed the tin foil out of the kitchen cupboard and ripped off two small squares. I knew not to use too much as Mum had told me how scarce everything was in the shops at the moment. She even restricted us to one sheet of toilet paper each when we went to the loo! We were allowed more if we needed a poo but I’m not too sure what we’ll do when it’s all gone. Maybe we’ll have to start wiping our bums with Little Spud’s old baby clothes. It was certainly better than using leaves from the garden!

Pocket Rocket appeared back with a handful of cotton buds. I took one and slotted it inside the now empty pen case, telling Pocket Rocket to do the same with the other one so that he could make his own. I pushed it down far enough so that just a tiny bit of the plastic was poking out of the pen with the soft cotton wool tip above it. Fastening it with a small strip of sticky tape, again from Mum's highly organised pot, I then grabbed the tin foil. I wrapped it around the pen and the plastic so that it reached just to the base of the cotton wool. Pocket Rocket did the same.

"What now?" he asked.

"Now we just wet the cotton wool," I said as I dipped my finger in my glass of water and dabbed it all over the cotton end. Typical bolshy Pocket Rocket literally dunked his whole pen in the water.

Picking up my iPad, I tested out my new gadget. I was genuinely shocked when a line appeared clearly on the screen. It had actually worked to perfection.

"Mine doesn't work," snapped Pocket Rocket. "This is a rubbish idea."

"You've just put too much water on it," I told him. "Here, dab some off on this tissue and try again."

Sure enough, as soon as the pen wasn't soaked, it worked!

"Ben we could sell these!" he exclaimed. I had been moaning to him yesterday about how the one downside of not being at school meant that I

couldn't run my secret school tuck shop. My little brother was on to something. I quickly saw a flaw in his idea though.

"We can't leave the house to sell them to people though you doughnut." I said.

"Oh yeah," he answered, deflated. "We could sell the idea though! We could make a website and give people half the idea and tell them if they want to know the rest then they need to pay £1 into our bank account. We could make thousands of pounds without even making any of them."

Usually I would have jumped at the idea to make some money and Pocket Rocket was definitely showing some entrepreneurial flair that I was proud of. The nagging part of my brain that knew right from wrong wouldn't turn a blind eye though. Lots of parents were out of work at the moment because of the crisis that had caused the lockdown. It didn't seem fair to be charging for an idea that was so simple for people to do themselves. Mum looked at me and smiled when I told Pocket Rocket this. I took this as the mum look of approval... it was definitely better than the mum look of disappointment I had seen on previous occasions!

## **Chapter 5**

One of the best bits about how things had changed in the world all of a sudden was that Dad also got to stay home. He spent most of his time working on his laptop and talking on the phone to other people from his office but it was great when he popped out to see us for a break.

After lunch, Mum said that we could have some free time to do what we wanted as she had some things she needed to do. Pocket Rocket went into the garden to film himself doing a keepy-uppy challenge with his favourite football, and Big Spud and Little Spud ran to get some dressing up clothes to put on our dogs, Obi and Lola. Seeing that everyone was nicely distracted, I ran upstairs to call Tommy. I chose to do a video call so we could see each other whilst we were talking. Tommy answered straight away.

“Hi Ben,” he said smiling into the lens. “What are you up to?”

I was about to tell him about Big Spud and his nerf gun when my eye caught sight of something behind Tommy. Bouncing around in the background was a rather large lady dressed in a leopard print leotard with florescent pink leg warmers.

“Who’s that?” I asked.

“That is my mum,” Tommy answered in a tone that said something more like “I can’t actually believe that woman is my mum. Someone please help me and call the fashion police whilst you’re at it.”

In all the time I had known Tommy, I had never met his parents. As rich millionaires, they were always out at some sort of event whilst Tommy was left at home in the care of his housekeeper. That was why he spent so much time at my house usually. Not wanting to cause himself any further embarrassment, Tommy angled his phone away from the woman who was now bending her body to a level of contortion that was seriously questionable for a woman of her age.

“So, what have you been doing?” he asked.

I filled him in on “Mum School” and how annoying it was being stuck inside with all my brothers. He looked green with envy though.

“You’re so lucky,” he said. “I’m going out of my mind with boredom here. I wish I could come and stay at your house.”

I wished he could to. My brothers would love that. So would Mum come to think of it. I knew it wasn’t possible right now though.

Tommy and I chatted for a few more minutes until I heard Mum making a noise that sounded like a weird combination of shrieking and laughter. My curiosity got the better of me, so promising I’d call him later and let him talk to my brothers too, I hung up. Running to my younger brothers’ bedroom, I was met with the scene of Obi and Lola, looking somewhat different to the last time I had seen them. Obi had one of Dad’s ties hanging around his neck and one of Mum’s hair bands on his paw with a yellow flower

tucked in it. Lola stood there wearing a wedding veil on top of her head that fanned out across her entire body. Little sequins sparkled as the veil swished catching the light as she wagged her tail. Whereas Obi looked very disgruntled to be dressed up so smartly, Lola looked to be loving her little outfit.

“Would one of you please tell me why our dogs are dressed up like me and your dad on our wedding day?” said Mum, attempting to sound angry. She was trying very hard to hide the smile forming on her lips as she struggled to give my brothers the mum look of disappointment.

“They’re getting married,” said Little Spud innocently.

Now I had heard it all. Dogs getting married! My brothers had officially gone crazy. But at least I had brothers. They might be annoying but at least we had each other. With a new appreciation for my big and busy family after speaking to Tommy who sounded so lonely, I shouted “who’s up for some wrestling on the trampoline?” I heard three little voices shouting “me!” in unison followed by a charge of footsteps to the back door. I vaguely heard Mum’s voice shouting, “no, boys, you know it will end in tears,” but I chose to ignore that one as I too raced for the back door. She would be far too busy removing her veil from Lola’s head before Obi chewed it off her to worry about the chaos that was about to ensue. Maybe being in lockdown wouldn’t be so bad after all.

## Chapter 6

I woke up the next morning, feeling energised after a good night's sleep. I knew that Mum would be calling me down just before 9.00am and I'd have to do some exercise and some school work for a few hours. But, after that, the day was all mine. And I intended to make the most of it by...

NOW IT'S OVER TO YOU! CHAPTER 6 IS YOURS TO WRITE SO GET THOSE IMAGINATIONS WORKING!

### A bit of advice...

Whenever I run creative writing workshops at schools, I always tell children this...

You may not get lots of ideas in your head straight away, but all you need is one! That idea will then trigger another idea in your brain which will then lead to another one, and so on. I often compare it to a snowball gaining momentum rolling down a hill.

A good tip is to always think about what you actually know already as a starting point and then to build on that with your imagination.

I tend to write funny books that have a bit of drama and suspense in them. But you don't necessarily need to write a funny story, you could write a dramatic one, or one with a good moral message to teach people right from wrong, or one with mystery in it, or one that is very emotional. It is entirely up to you what you write as writing is a fantastic way to express yourself, and your individuality.

### A little help to get you started...

We have come up with a few ideas that you could let your imagination run away with, or you could come up with something entirely your own!

Idea 1 (Sci-Fi)... An alien lands in Ben's garden and he keeps him hidden in his bedroom...

Idea 2 (Mystery)... Ben plays a game of hide and seek with his brothers and one of them literally disappears. Try as they might, they can't find him anywhere...

Idea 3 (Adventure)... Ben's house is really old, and when they go exploring, they find a hidden cave underneath it....

Idea 4 (Fantasy)... Ben and his brothers fall down a hole in their garden and end up in an enchanted forest...

Idea 5 (Comedy)... Ben and his brothers make a YouTube channel to keep other kids entertained during lockdown...

Idea 6... Come up with something completely different that we haven't mentioned here as there is nothing better than your own imagination!

**YOU MAY BE STUCK INSIDE, BUT YOUR  
IMAGINATION IS AS FREE AS A BIRD,  
SO LET IT FLY!**

I would love to see all your stories so if you would like me to read them, please ask your parents to take a photo of them and send them to [kerry@kerrygibb.com](mailto:kerry@kerrygibb.com). I will put some of the stories I receive on my website for others to see too! [www.kerrygibb.com](http://www.kerrygibb.com)

Top Tip - if you would actually like to make a home-made touch screen pen, we have uploaded a video with how to do it on YouTube. [Click here to see it!](#)

You can also see me reading *It's A Kid's Life - Lockdown* on YouTube - [click here!](#)

**The It's A Kid's Life series...**

If you haven't yet discovered the It's A Kid's Life series, they are aimed at children aged roughly seven to eleven years old. I have made all of the books just £1.99 on Kindle whilst we are on lockdown and paperback copies ordered through my website will be put in the post box daily when I walk my dogs. There are five books in the series which should keep you busy for a while! Click on the links below to order them.

### **It's A Kid's Life**

[It's A Kid's Life \(paperback\)](#)

[It's A Kid's Life – \(Kindle\)](#)

### **It's A Kid's Life – Arch-Enemies**

[It's A Kid's Life – Arch-Enemies \(paperback\)](#)

[It's A Kid's Life – Arch-Enemies \(Kindle\)](#)

### **It's A Kid's Life – Double Digits**

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