



↳ BRUVHOOD

‘Mum! Fred’s been keeping snails under my bed again...’

They say we’re all made of stardust. Your toes. A badger. Even a Twix. Everything in the universe is made from the same stuff. Well, not EVERYTHING. My younger brother definitely isn’t. He’s seventy per cent annoying and thirty per cent fart.

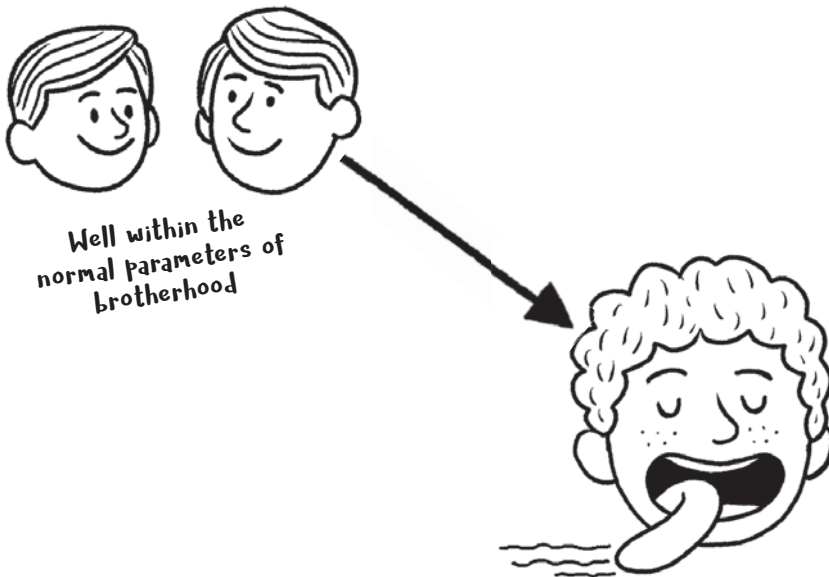
I’m not sure he knows how to be a brother. Like when he turned my **PLANETS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM POSTER** into a **BOGIES OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM POSTER**. Or the time he put a family of ladybirds in my lunchbox. Or the day he threw all my pants out the window just as Jess McGregor walked by, including the pair with space rockets on.

7



Dad says: 'YOUR BROTHER KNOWS EXACTLY HOW TO BE A BROTHER, STANLEY. THAT BEHAVIOUR IS WELL WITHIN THE NORMAL PARAMETERS OF BROTHERHOOD.'

Brotherhood The relationship between brothers. A feeling of friendship, support, and understanding.



Well within the normal parameters of brotherhood

My brother stood so far outside the parameters of brotherhood, he's entered into his own warped dimension where licking the cake shop window is acceptable behaviour

At no point in the definition does it say: *THE YOUNGER SIBLING ABSOLUTELY HAS TO BE IN JUST HIS PANTS WHENEVER YOUR MATES*

8



CALL ROUND. OH, AND CHECK UNDER YOUR BED FOR WILDLIFE.

'D'you think they're too big for the Hoover?' Mum sighs heavily at the prospect of de-snailing our room.

The only way she can cope with Fred's antics is with MUM O'CLOCK at the end of each day, which involves watching loads of EastEnders.

'Are you sure we have to share a room?' I ask her as we watch the gastropod molluscs slowly leave a trail over my **SKY AT NIGHT POSTER**, creating new constellations as they climb. 'What about the landing cupboard? He could sleep upright like the astronauts on the International Space Station.'

'He can't sleep upright, he's your brother.' Well that's no excuse.

There are at least a hundred billion planets in the **MILKY WAY**. How come I ended up on the same planet as Fred? Mum says he's an effervescent life force. An effervescent life force doesn't put toothpaste in your

9



slippers. An annoying life force does that.

'You have to take the rough with the smooth,' Mum explains, picking snails off the walls.

She's always quoting her bonkers fridge magnets to try and convince me having a brother is worth it.

Why can't life be like my **1001 SPACE FACTS BOOK**? If a few nifty illustrations can help explain a solar eclipse then why not how to understand Freds? There's always one hanging about at your ninth birthday party who would rather play pin the **BOGEY** on the donkey. Or make the entire buffet null and void at your tenth birthday party by licking all the crisps and putting them back again. Or running about completely starkers at your eleventh birthday party shouting

**I'M WEE
WILLIE WINKIE!**

so your mates up and leave because they need to wash their eyes (and hang on a minute, didn't Wee Willie Winkie run about in **AT LEAST** a nightgown?) Fred should definitely

come with diagrams.

I'd like a diagram to help explain why Mum called me **STANLEY WINSTON FOX**. You'd think I'd been named after an ancient great-grandfather with a name like that, wouldn't you? But no. Mum travelled back in time to the eighteen hundreds to find a name buried in an archaeological dig of ridiculous names they hoped nobody would ever dig up again, and then came back to the future to give it to me.

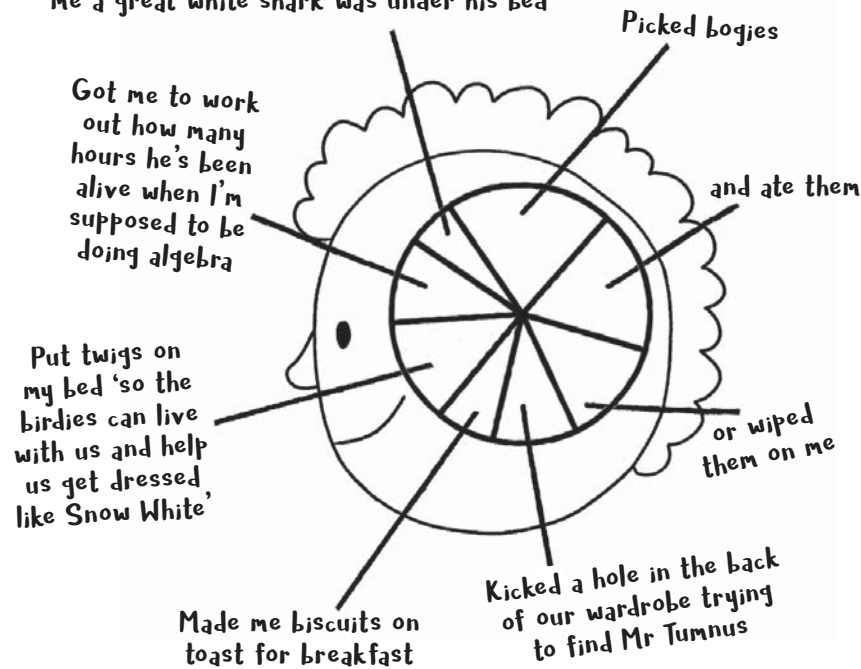
Parents should lay off calling their babies anything until they're old enough to choose their own. Or admit they've got it wrong, like they did with **URANUS**—a planet that was originally called George and probably wishes it still was. I should have had a cool space-themed name, especially as I have seven freckles on my right cheek shaped like the **PLOUGH**. Which people love to point out to me all the time, even though IT'S ON MY FACE.



My younger brother fared slightly better on the name front: **FREDERICK ALBERT FOX**. Pretty apt his initials spell **F A F** seeing as that's what he spends a hundred per cent of his time doing.

**FAFFING ABOUT
ACHIEVED BY FRED THIS WEEK**

Shone a torch in my eye at 3 a.m. to tell me a great white shark was under his bed

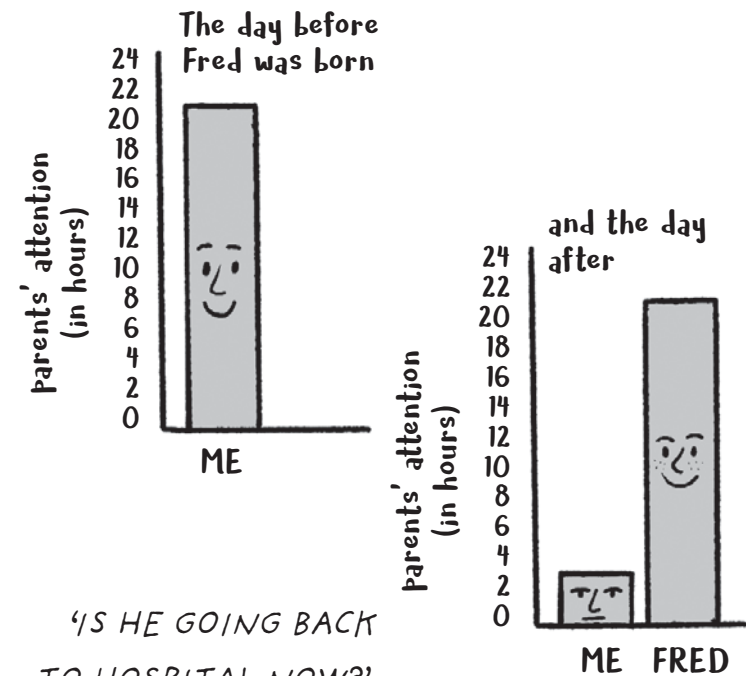


'Can we be brothers for ever, Stan?' Fred dashes in, ignoring the snail chaos, and trampolining on my bed whilst scoffing toast to make sure there are

more crumbs than duvet left on my bed.

'Well yeah. Dur.'

Because we actually **ARE** brothers. Have been since he was born. And did I have a say in this? No. All of a sudden I was expected to share my parents (and by share I mean not share at all):



'IS HE GOING BACK TO HOSPITAL NOW?'

I enquired politely on Day Two.

'OF COURSE NOT STANLEY, HE'S GOING TO BRING JOY TO OUR LIVES FOR EVER.'



MY GENERAL STATE OF MIND

OVER THE MOON
SUNNY
CALM
OK
PHEW
NOT OK
ALARMED
NEED CAKE
STORMY
BLACK HOLE OF DOOM

JOY FLOW CHART



Mum holds up the missing salad that's been stashed under my bed with a slug still attached. 'Snails I can cope with, but slugs—what were you thinking, Fred?'

'Squelchy didn't want to be left alone in the puddle,' he pouts.

'Squelchy's going to wish he still WAS in the puddle after I've finished with him. Now go fetch your father from the garden,' Mum orders.

While Fred's out of the room I decide to take advantage of the situation. If you're ever going to ask your parents for anything, do it when your younger bruv infests your room with snails.

'Things I have to put up with eh?' I tut. 'And he

destroyed the **DEATH STAR** last night.'

Obviously not the *ACTUAL* imperial battle station a long time ago in a galaxy, far, far away, but my Lego version.

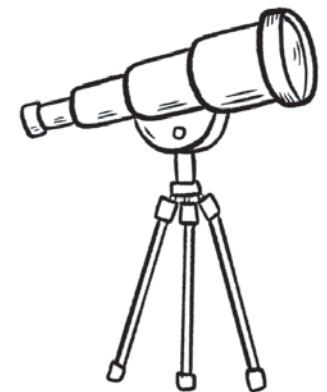
'I know, pea-pod,' Mum draws me in for a hug. 'But we'll soon fix it.'

I admire my mother's optimism but there's nothing north of the basement.

'Soooo, I was wondering... ' I take a deep breath. 'Can I have a telescope? Because you've got Mum o'clock and Dad's got his shed, while I'm still upstairs with Fred and his bogies. It's the least I deserve.'

I've been after a telescope since I was a small-year-old. I thought I'd got one at the age of seven, when I excitedly opened a present from my parents. Turned out to be a crazy golf set.

'Is it sensible to keep Fred and a telescope in the same room?' asks Mum, leaning her head on mine. 'A house of inexpensive



things is just **BASIC FRED-PROOFING.**'

I guess she's got a point. I mean, it doesn't even have to be expensive for Fred to wreck it, as I look around and spot my papier mâché **JUPITER** that he squished flat with his bottom.

'Um, I'm not sure how to tell you this.' Dad is standing at the bedroom doorway with a trowel in his hand. 'But Fred's been widdling in the plant pots again. Your pansies have had it.'

'Fred!' Mum cries. 'Why can't you widdle in the toilet like normal people?'

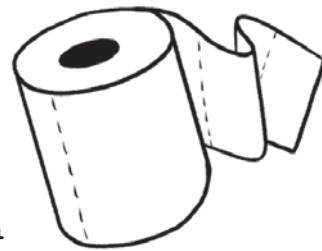
Why indeed.

'Cos of the lav-lav snakes.' Fred twiddles the cotton dangling from his T-shirt.

'There aren't any snakes living in the toilet waiting to bite your bum,' Mum reminds him. 'I don't know where you get these fantastical ideas from, you little monkey-flea.'

And yet it's Mum who tells us that every time we leave the loo seat up a fairy dies.

She goes to walk out of the room, but stops



suddenly at the sound of a disgusting crunch. She's just stepped on a snail. With her bare foot.

ARRRRGGGGHHHH!
GET THESE SNAILS OUT OF HERE
OR MUM WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE
FOR HER ACTIONS!

She always talks in the third person when she's really mad.

My parents don't get my obsession with space at all. I must have discovered it all by myself. Maybe it was when I spotted the moving point of the International Space Station and waved to the astronauts. Or found out the glinting red star of Betelgeuse will one day explode into a supernova. Or when I counted meteors on a cold December night (forty-two if you're asking).

But I've got a plan. There's a science fair coming up. A space-themed science fair. And guess what the first prize is? Not crazy golf clubs, that's for sure. It's about time I put Operation Stanley Wins A Telescope (SWAT) into action.

I put on my slippers, not wishing to get squished snail bits on my bare feet, only to discover they're full of toothpaste (again). If I had a book about Fred I would have known that was about to happen, but I've had to survive the hard way.

**WELCOME TO
MY UNIVERSE.**

HELP!!!

