

Not on purpose

The experiences of Harry, a boy with albinism



BARTIMEUS SERIES

Bartiméus wants to record and share knowledge and experiences about the potential of people with a visual impairment. The Bartiméus Series is an example of this.

Colofon

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PREFACE

Even if you've spent a long time working with people who are blind or have a visual impairment, it's still possible to be surprised and moved. That happened to me when I read the manuscript *Not on Purpose*. My initial reaction was: this must be read by as many children as possible, as well as parents, grandparents and teachers.

In *Not on Purpose*, Harry, a boy with albinism, gives us a glimpse into the world of a child who can't see well. Who better than Harry to let us experience what that means for him.

In her introduction, the author Jantina Boelaars, mother of a son with albinism, writes: By watching our son, he made it clear what he need. This talent for wry observation combined with a sense of empathy results in a readable and humorous style of writing which makes this book a gem.

Bartiméus regards it as its duty to develop and provide access to information about visual impairment and blindness. We are convinced that the professional knowledge which we develop and the experiences of people with a visual impairment truly complement each other.

In addition, we warmly embrace Jantina's social objective with the publication of this book – contributing to a safe life for people with albinism in all parts of Africa.

Like all of us, Harry and all the other people with albinism are entitled to a good and safe life. This book about Harry's experiences makes an indispensable contribution to this.

Paula van Woudenberg
Director Knowledge and Innovation

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes there are moments which move you, which make you take action. Resulting in a book. Let me take you back to 2012, when we gave birth to a son with albinism. Obviously we wanted to know everything about albinism and went looking for information. There didn't seem to be much available. We wanted to know how best to support him, how we should protect his skin, how we could make life more visible for him. By observing our son, he made clear what he needed. He proved to be very inventive in looking for solutions. We were regularly amazed by him. People around us didn't always realise that he was visually impaired. In familiar surroundings, you might have thought that he saw everything. But in reality, it meant that he knew what his surroundings looked like.

In the Netherlands, it is very possible to grow up, even if you have albinism. Resources and support are available. In some parts of Africa, the situation is totally different. Children with albinism are mutilated or even murdered because many people believe that their limbs have a medicinal benefit. A dreadful situation that we can't forget. We became involved with the Josephat Torner Foundation (www.jtfe.org) which works to improve the lives and safety of people with albinism in Africa. Josephat Torner is a Tanzanian with albinism whose mission is to show Africa what albinism and remove the prejudices. The proceeds of this book go to the Josephat Torner Foundation.

I hope that this book will contribute to the knowledge about and familiarity with albinism. All children, with or without an impairment, must be able to grow up in a safe environment. For that reason, I want to use my talents to make the world a slightly better place and give back what I have received. Use the book to talk to children who have a classmate with albinism (visually impaired), for example. The appendix contains an explanation about albinism, questions and experiments.

Jantina Boelaars

July 2018, Hendrik Ido Ambacht

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1 STUPID, STUPID, STUPID

'It's so stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid....!'

Harry walks angrily up the stairs. At each step, he stamps his feet as hard as he can. Thirteen times in a row he says 'stupid'. He doesn't dare shout it too loudly. Imagine that the neighbours heard him. Let alone the chance that Mum might call out and tell him to be quieter. But it feels so good, to stamp his feet thirteen times in a row. Because it's just so stupid!



He crashes onto his bed, pulls the blanket over him so that it's pitch black around him. His blackout curtains are still shut, lucky him. He likes darkness. Now he doesn't have to squeeze his eyes against the light. Still he keeps his eyes firmly shut. He's angry. Angry that he watched the news. Angry about what he saw, and angry because of what his sister had said. The words are ringing in his head again: 'You should be happy that you live here. In Tanzania, they'd have chopped off some of your body parts by now!' It's not hard for him to imagine what that would look like. On the news, they'd said that children with albinism aren't safe in Tanzania. How stupid can you be to believe that white skin has medicine in it? Harry doesn't understand it at all. Really stupid! Slowly but surely it's getting warm under his blanket. But he doesn't want to get out, not yet at least. This is a cosy, safe, dark place. Here he can think. He's just never going to watch the news again. Never! And especially not with his sister.

Deep under the blanket with fists clenched, he doesn't notice that his mother has come upstairs. She opens his door and knows how to find her way to his bed in the dark. She sits on the edge of his bed. For a little while, it's very quiet. Harry hears the quietness. He hears everything. He hears his mother sigh and he knows that she's about to speak. Very calmly and slowly, as if she's pondering every word. Once when he was sitting on her lap, very close to her, and she was thinking, he could see wrinkles forming above her eyes, just above her glasses. He waits.

'I think that you're very sad. And I think that it's to do with the news you saw. I do understand.' Harry holds his breath. He ponders her words.

'Mum, can I use the laptop? Please?' he suddenly hears. Because he's still hidden deep under his blanket, he hasn't heard his sister come closer.

'No you can't Gloria, leave us alone for now. You understand that your question can wait for a while,' his mother says. When his mother sounds so strict, he knows that she means what she says. Thankfully his sister retreats. He doesn't want to talk with Mum when she's around as well.

'Now come on out from under that blanket, little man, then we can talk.' His mother pulls the blanket away and helps him get up.

'Where are your glasses?' Mum asks.

'I don't know,' Harry says.

'Take a deep breath. It was horrible what you saw on the news. I thought it was awful too. I understand that it makes you even sadder, because you've got albinism yourself. So I'm glad that people are becoming more aware of it. They're building lots more safe places, villages, where these children can be looked after and be safe. Don't forget honey, we're very happy with you. You're a very special boy. Snow-white and all.'

'And smart,' Harry adds with a grin.

'That as well,' Mum says with a smile.

'Let's go and eat now. I hope the food isn't burnt. And.... please walk a little bit more quietly down the stairs.' She hugs him tightly and presses a long kiss on his forehead. Harry is glad that Gloria didn't see that.

2 AT SCHOOL

Harry pulls his cap deep over his eyes. He's chosen the red cap today. He likes that one, and it fits so nicely. He climbs on the add-on bike. 'Have you got everything? Your drink, your cookie, your sheets of Calculus, Tiger?' Mum asks. 'Yes, I've got them. Let's go.'

They cycle fast. He can dream this route. He knows exactly which paving stone is crooked on the cycle path.

'Are you still pedalling?' Sometimes he forgets to pedal, but his mother always notices. He didn't want to go on his own bike today. The sun is much too low, which isn't comfortable.

When he was smaller, he always sang. Really loudly. Cycling and singing, they kind of belong together. Mum often sang along. But now he doesn't do that anymore. After all, he's older now, and even though he doesn't see it, he knows that people are watching him. No, singing and cycling don't go together anymore.



His mother brakes to a stop at the school gate.

'Have a good day!'

'Bye!' He calls to his Mum. He walks to the fence and almost bumps into somebody.

'Sorry,' he murmurs. That girl shouldn't have put on a grey coat. The fence is also grey. Greyer than grey. He doesn't like grey. Grey is nothing. Once there was a grey car parked in the street, just around the corner. It was drizzling that day. He remembers almost running into it. But almost doesn't mean completely. But it gave me a good scare. If he were the boss of the country, he would simply ban grey. He just doesn't know what that road sign should look like. 'No grey,' how do you draw that? But he doesn't need to know that answer, because he isn't the boss of the country yet.

'Hey Joey! Are you feeling better?'

'Yeah, I'm feeling better, but now my Dad's ill. So you can't come and play at my place this afternoon. Can we play at your house?' Harry throws his bag against his table and hangs his cap on the hook.

'Sure,' says Harry to Joey, 'what do you have in mind?'

'Sit down everyone and be quiet. I want to tell you something,' Liam says. Harry is happy to finally have a male teacher. A male teacher is simply different from a female teacher. On Wednesday and Friday morning, Miss Anne is their teacher. But today Mr Liam's there. He's fun. His mother calls him a young buck. He had to laugh about that. Mr Liam talks funny, you can hear that he's from another country.

Harry quickly sits down on his chair, but then changes his mind. It's handy to put on his screen magnifier already. Harry has two tables in the classroom. A work table, whose top can be placed at an angle. And then there's a table with a screen magnifier on top. A kind of computer that can enlarge all books. There's a camera on it too, so that he can zoom in on the teacher or on the board. He's really happy with this magnifier, otherwise things would be a lot more difficult for him. The teacher would then be like a big dark spot. It's useful to see who's in front of the class. Now he can see whether the teacher looks stern or happy. Once when he zoomed in very close with the camera, he saw that the teacher had a pimple on her nose. At home they all laughed about that.

Harry dives under his table and turns on the switch. When he gets up again, he hits his head against the table. The children around him laugh.

'OK Harry, if you wanted our attention, you've got it dude,' says Mr Liam. Harry rubs his head and quickly sits down.

'Listen! If you've looked around you, you'll have seen a new boy in our class today.' Harry inhales deeply. He hadn't seen this, of course. He quietly slides behind his screen magnifier and turns on the camera.

'Mats, come and stand next to me for a minute. Right. Welcome to our class! We're happy to have another boy, since the girls are in the majority and also the noisiest.

'Oh, that's so not true...!' some girls exclaim.

'Exactly what I meant,' Mr Liam says.

By now Harry has pointed his camera at Mats. He doesn't know him. Mats has freckles on his nose, and his hair's a bit of a mess.

'Boys, I expect you to help Mats find his way around school. He moved last week, so everything's still new to him.'

'Welcome Mats!' Jasmine hollers through the classroom.

'Thank you Jasmine, for this contribution,' Mr Liam says. Mats smiles.

'Go and stand behind your seat. Then we'll the song of the week.' Harry pushes his chair against his table and stands. Mr Liam has a good singing voice. He teaches the class a lot of new songs. They're often funny. The teacher picks up his guitar and starts strumming. The class sings along:

My bed's a special bed, a very special bunk bed.

A bed flat, a tower bed, my bed's a rocket.

And if you come to spend the night, you can choose one or the other.

The lower bed, the upper bed. Two beds on top of each other.

Kinda weird, .. kinda special weird, two beds, one on top of the other.

My bed's a special bed, a very special bunk bed.

A bed flat, a tower bed, my bed's a rocket.

3 THE GARDEN CENTRE

'Gloria, Harry, dinner's ready!' Mum shouts at the bottom of the stairs. Harry runs out of his room and down the stairs.

'Hold on,' says Mum, who's still waiting at the bottom of the stairs.

'Go back upstairs, turn off your lights and then come slowly down the stairs.'

Harry doesn't understand how his mother can now know that his lights are still on. It's annoying that mothers know everything. Well, not everything, but almost everything. He sighs and goes back upstairs. He stamps once on the stairs, but knows that he really has to walk quietly up the stairs now.

Harry is enjoying his fried rice. It's delicious.

'Mum, what's that on the table?' Gloria hands him a jar. 'Since when are you my mother?' Harry asks.

'Guys, let's keep things nice,' his Dad says.

'There's sambal in that jar, Harry'

'Oh, never mind, I don't want that.' He quickly puts the jar down.

'I thought I saw a new guy in your class,' Gloria says.

'Mmm,' Harry mumbles, with his mouth full.

'What's his name?'

'His name's Mats, and he's just moved here,' Harry says.

'Did you realise he was watching you all the time?'

'No, of course not,' Harry says angrily.

'Well, he was staring at you from across the table tennis table.'

'So what, let him have a good look,' Harry remarks.

'Gloria,' Dad butts in, 'suppose that something bad happens at school, would you help your brother?'

'She really doesn't have to, I'm not a toddler', Harry objects.

'You've got that right. In any case, be kind to Mats. And that goes for both of you,' Dad tells them.

Harry tries hard to put all the rice on his spoon for the last bite. It's a difficult job, but he manages.

'Can I have a bit more, Mum?' 'The pot's empty, sorry. Let's have dessert, what do you think?'

'Harry, will you be going to the garden centre with me?' Dad asks.

'What are we going to do there?'

'I want to get some bags of potting soil. For the garden.'

'All right! Now?'

'Let's help Mum clear the table first. The decent thing to do, right?'

It's quite busy at the garden centre. They have to search for a parking spot. Dad wants to go straight to the bags with potting soil.

'Can we have a look at the fish, Dad?'

'Well OK then. But not for too long.'

Harry knows exactly where he can find the fish. He loves them! Especially the brightly coloured fish. They swim close by him, so Harry can see them well. The water's clear and bubbles appear. Harry is so close to the tank that the glass condensates. He cleans it with his sleeve. He could watch them for hours.



'Can I help you?' An assistant in a green shirt asks.

'No, I just wanted to have a look,' Harry says. His Dad walks up and tells him that they have to get going.

They go to the department where they have potting soil. Dad's looking for the one he wants. A big sign says: 3 + 1 free. An employee walks up to them. He offers to put the bags on the cart for them.

'Great,' says Dad.

'Now we don't have to carry them, Harry.' Dad holds the cart, while the assistant puts the bags of potting soil on it.

'Thank you very much for that.'

'You're welcome,' the assistant says kindly.

'I'll walk with you. I assume you've come by car? Then I can put the bags in the boot for you too.'

'That's service. What do we owe that to?' The assistant laughs and points in the direction of the cash register.

'That will be clear soon, sir.' Harry doesn't understand what the assistant means.

'Dad, what does he mean?'

'No idea, mate. Behind the cash register I can see a sign, decorated with balloons. Well take a look in a minute.'

Dad pays and walks with Harry towards the balloons. There's a large sign with beautifully decorated letters on it:

Garden centre The Peony
supports the shelter for albinos in Tanzania.
If you enjoyed our service,
please consider donating to this charity.
Thank you!

Harry reads the sign aloud. He falls silent for a minute. Dad's quiet too. He seems to be waiting for Harry to say something first.

'Well, Dad,' Harry finally says, 'we can give them some money, right? You got a free bag of potting soil, so we can give the money you saved on that, right?'

Dad laughs at his son's reaction.

'Well observed, son. I think that's a good plan. And I think I've got some more in my wallet.'

Dad drives into their street and slows down. He pulls the handbrake on and bends over to Harry.

'That was fun together.' Dad presses the red button, which unbuckles Harry's seatbelt.

'Come on, let's get inside.'

'No, don't forget the bags of soil. Now you have to carry them yourself.' Harry's cracking up over his comment.

4 THE CAP

One more assignment, before Harry's finished too. He really regrets that he's never the fastest. Reading takes him more time. Fortunately he can use the magnifying glass and he's allowed to take more time. Sometimes he doesn't have to do everything. That's nice. He likes maths. He can't explain why, but the numbers seem to slide through his head. His friend Joey struggles with maths. Harry thinks of the song that his mother so often sings: 'What I can't do, you can do just right, everybody's necessary.' Harry believes his Mum sings that on purpose. He can't see well, but he's good at maths.

'Harry,' Miss Anne says, 'are you daydreaming?'

'I've finished my assignment, Miss,' Harry answers.

'Great, then you can get your reading book. Celeste, please hand Harry the right book.'

Harry puts his maths book away and walks to the bookshelf. Celeste is looking for the book Harry needs. The letters on the spines of the reading books are too small for Harry. Celeste swiftly finds it for him. Quickly they sit down again. Harry doesn't see Mats watching him.

The bell rings. Break time. The children want to go outside as quickly as possible. Harry pushes his chair at the table.

'Harry, here's your sunscreen. But why was that bottle on the floor next to the cupboard?' Joey asks.

'Don't know,' Harry says. He quickly covers his ears, cheeks, neck and hands with sunscreen. Every two hours he has to apply sunscreen, otherwise his skin burns. That's why he always wears long sleeves. And long trousers. Harry puts the bottle back on the assigned spot on top of the cupboard. He takes his cap off its hook and goes outside with Joey.

'Race you to the top?' Harry asks. Together with Joey he stands at the bottom of the climbing pyramid.

'OK, but we start at the same time. I'm counting down,' Joey says. They move into position.

'Three, two, one, GO!' Harry climbs the rope at lightning speed. He knows exactly how this climbing frame works. Soon, Harry is the first one at the top of the pyramid.

'I won!' Harry calls out! Joey is sitting next to him, panting.

'You always win.'

'You're not a sore loser, are you?' Harry asks with a smile.

'No, but you don't realise that I let you win.'

'Whatever!' Harry shouts. He grabs the rope Joey's sitting on and wiggles it back and forth. They're both laughing out loud.



'Mats is standing all alone at the entrance. I'm going to ask if he wants to join us,' Joey says. He carefully climbs down.

'Mats, do you want to climb the pyramid too?' Mats shrugs his shoulders. He's leaning against the wall and looking beyond Joey. Joey doesn't know what else to say.

He sees Miss Anne walking in the schoolyard and joins her.

'Miss, Mats doesn't want to join us.'

'Well it was nice of you to ask. But Mats is having a hard time. He's missing his old school. Leave him be for now, it'll be fine.' Miss Anne pats Joey on the back. Joey climbs back onto the pyramid.

'Mats doesn't want to join us,' he tells Harry.

'Oh, why not?'

'He's missing his old school, Miss Anne said.' Harry leans back on the ropes and rocks back and forth. Joey joins in.

When the bell rings again, all the children run inside. Everyone tries to go inside at once. But the door just isn't wide enough. Harry hears the headmaster at the door. He tells the children to go inside calmly. Harry allows the smaller kids to go first. After all, he's already in fourth grade, so then you're one of the bigger kids at school.

The day seems to take forever. Sometimes school is just so boring, he thinks. He tries to listen to the teacher. But it doesn't work very well. He doesn't like history. Why does he have to learn all those stories about the past? But he knows what Miss Anne would say: 'We can learn from the past.' He tries to imitate her voice in his head. When she narrates, the teacher always pretends to have been there herself. Harry figures that that's simply not possible. Middle Ages... He repeats the word a few times in his head. Middle Ages... Middle-Ages... Cages... Stages... Wages. He silently cracks up because of it. Every time the teacher says Middle Ages, he repeats all the words that rhyme to it.

Suddenly it's very quiet. The teacher stopped talking.

'Harry!' Startled, Harry drops his pencil and sits up straight in his chair.

'I asked you something, Harry,' the teacher says. Her voice doesn't sound sweet at all at that moment.

'Uh...,' Harry says, 'uh... animal cages, Miss.'

All the children start laughing very loudly. They're drumming their hands on the tables. Harry laughs as well. He understands that he's said something very silly. But he has no idea what the teacher actually asked. 'Always laugh at your own mistakes,' his grandfather would say. So that's what he does.

Harry quickly puts his things away. He pushes his chair to the table. Turns off his computer and walks to the door. He grabs for his cap. But his cap isn't hanging on the hook. How is that possible? Harry bends over to see if his cap is lying on the floor. But he can't see it. He walks to the coat racks where Joey is waiting for him.

'Have you seen my cap?'

'No.'

'I don't get it,' Harry says.

'This morning your bottle of sunscreen was also somewhere else. Kind of strange,' Joey says.

'Now, what? Can you go home without a cap?'

'I think so,' Harry says.

'At home I've got plenty of caps, I can quickly pick another one.'

5 A PLAN

Thump, thump, thump! Harry and Joey run up the stairs.

'Do you know how many steps a staircase has?' Harry asks.

'No, I don't! Joey is still pondering the missing cap and the misplaced bottle of sunscreen. He hardly hears the answer Harry gives.

'Thirteen. Really!'

They plop down on the bed.

'I still think that it's strange,' Joey says.

'What's happening to your stuff? Let's make a plan, to find out who's behind this. You know, my uncle's a detective. He looks into suspicious things and catches crooks.'

'So you think there's a crook in our class? How can you be so sure of that?' Harry frowns and waits to hear what Joey says.

'But isn't it strange, first your bottle of sunscreen and now your cap is gone! Something isn't right!'

'Guys, are you coming down for a drink?' Mum calls from the bottom of the stairs.

'Were you in a hurry? You guys went upstairs so quickly. Is something wrong?'

'Oh, it's nothing. We're just planning nice things,' Harry quickly says. 'Sounds exciting. How was school?'

'Oh OK,' Harry replies with a full mouth. The boys eat their biscuit and quickly finish their drinks.

'Nice,' Joey murmurs. With his finger, he picks the last crumbs from the table.

'Let's go upstairs,' Harry says and is already opening the door to the hall.

'And now calmly up those stairs, boys!' Mum calls after them.

'Suuurree...!' Harry calls back.

'One, two, three, four,' Joey counts, 'five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen. It's true. There really are thirteen steps.' Harry waits for him at the top of the stairs.

'I told you so.'

They plop down on the bed again next to each other. There's a stuffed monkey on the bed. Harry slings it back and forth at its tail.

'What would you do if you detected a crook?' Harry asks. For a moment it's quiet.

'Well,' Joey slowly says, 'I'd take him to the police station. Or even better: I'd tie him up and call my uncle. He'd know what to do.'

'But the police wouldn't believe us. We'd have to collect evidence. Or preferably catch someone in the act. And take pictures.'

'True, but how are we going to do that?'

'The thief isn't crazy either, of course. He wouldn't steal your cap in front of everybody.'

'Camera surveillance! That'd be useful!' Harry says enthusiastically. But Joey doesn't sound happy at all.

'Camera. Do you have one? A camera has to be mounted somewhere where it's not noticed. It's not like we can do that.' Harry has to agree with him. It's not easy to track down a crook.

'Do you have a notebook or something like that?' Joey asks. 'We can at least write down everything that happens. The date, the time. Everything.'

'A notebook...' Harry ponders. He doesn't have a blank notebook in his room.

'Or one of those small ones that fit in your pocket. That might even be better,' Joey says.

'Oh yes, my Mum has some of those. And Gloria too. I'll ask if I can have one.'

Harry walks to his sister's room.

'Gloria!' He goes into her room, but his sister isn't there. He peers at her desk to see if he can see a little notebook. There are lots of things, but Harry decides not to look any further. Gloria probably doesn't like him looking through her stuff. He'd better go to his mother.

'Mum!' Harry calls while he's still on the stairs.

'Mum, do you have a small notebook for me?' His mother's in the kitchen, the cooker hood is on. She hasn't heard what he asked for.

'A small notebook, to write things down. Can I have one?'

'What do you need a notebook for? You never write anything down.'

'Well, Joey and I have a plan and he'll write it down.'

'You're full of plans today. Are you going to tell me what the plan involves?'

Harry sighs, but so softly that he hopes his mother won't hear it. He might have known that she'd ask questions. She always does that.

'No,' Harry says, 'you can't know that yet.' Thankfully she laughs, walks to the cupboard and takes out a small notebook.

'Is pink all right?' she asks.

'No, please, not pink! That's really ugly!'

'You're lucky, I also have a white one, with lines.'

'Thanks, Mum!' Harry grabs the book and runs up the stairs again.



'Did you get one?' Joey asks.

'Yep!' Harry hands him the notebook.

'I've already picked up a pen from your desk. Yesterday your bottle of sunscreen was moved. What time was that?' Harry thinks to himself. They discovered it when it was break time and they wanted to go outside.

'That was around 10.30. But we still don't know when the crook did it.'

'OK I'll write down: between nine and half past ten.'

'And then my cap disappeared. I discovered that when I wanted to go home. So at quarter past twelve.'

'OK, so between eleven and quarter past twelve.'

Joey is trying hard to write everything down.

'You have to carry this notebook around with you at all times. Then we can write down everything that we find suspicious.' Joey hands the notebook to Harry, who takes a good look at it. He puts the notebook very close to his eyes so that he can decipher Joey's fine print.

'You know what,' Harry says, 'I've got a great idea!'

'Really?' Joey asks. 'Tell me!' Harry explains his plan. Joey totally agrees with it.

They'll put this plan in motion. When they go back to school on Monday, they'll find out whether this plan has been successful. For now, Harry has to look for an old cap to wear.

6 WHAT A MESS!

'Do I really have to go with you?'

Mum is standing in the hall, holding his coat up for him. 'Yes come on please, it's only for a little while.'

'I don't want to! I won't do it! I'm staying home!'

'Come on, Harry, it's just to congratulate Aunt Ria. She really likes it when you go.'

'I don't.'

'What's so bad about it?' Mum asks.

'Everything!'

'What do you mean, everything?'

'Well, there are all those old women. And they all stroke my hair. They all feel sorry for me. And they don't need to.' Harry says the last words very hard and slowly. Mum takes a step in his direction. She's still holding his coat.

'And then they ask: how are you doing at school, can you see it all?' Harry mimics with a high pitched voice.

'I can see everything. I can even see that those old women are hippos.'

'Hippos?' Mum giggles, 'How do you figure that?' They both laugh out loud.

'Hippos... now I won't let you go to Aunt Ria. All I can see now are hippos sitting on the couch! 'They can't stop laughing.

'Hippos drinking tea. And eating cake,' Harry says. He's holding his tummy. Which hurts from all that laughing.

'OK Harry, you can stay home. Dad's helping Uncle Ward out at his place. But Gloria is home as well. If anything happens, she can give me a call. Don't do anything stupid, OK? '

'OK Mum.' Harry is overjoyed that he doesn't have to go. He gives his mother a kiss and quickly goes up to his room.

Shortly afterwards, he hears the front door close. He's glad he can stay at home. That's much more fun. Last time he visited Aunt Ria, he just wanted to run away. When he came in, everyone fell silent. And he just felt that everyone was watching him. And that's not a nice feeling. Who cares that he has white hair? And lots of people wear glasses. Most old people wear glasses. And you should see those glasses! Harry shakes his head. They should take a good look at themselves. He finds himself a very ordinary boy. Very normal. Well, if he's very

honest, he doesn't always feel normal. There are some things he can't do. Like riding to school on his bike alone. Or watching the animals at the zoo. They're all too far away from him, behind a very wide ditch. And driving a car. Harry sighs. How cool that would be. Driving all by himself. He'd obviously choose a very nice car. Recently he heard on the news that they were working on designing cars that can drive on their own. That would be something. But that'll probably take a long time...

After the summer holidays, they had a project at school about professions. He'd like to be a police officer. Or a pilot. But he understands that won't be smart. Harry's turning around on his swivel chair. He talks softly to himself. 'It's not possible. It is possible. It's not possible. It is possible.' The chair turns faster and faster. Racing driver not possible. Truck driver not possible. Harry grabs his desk to try and stop the chair from rotating. Before Harry figures out what's happening, the top of his desk slides onto the floor. Harry topples over with his chair and all. What a noise! Harry is shocked! He'd completely forgotten that his desktop was loose. Now everything's a huge mess: his books, pencils, desk lamp, everything's on the floor.



Gloria comes running into his room.

'What are you doing? Get real man! You've thrown everything on the floor!'

Harry scrambles to his feet and puts his chair upright again.

'Sorry, I didn't do it on purpose.'

'You certainly weren't thinking!' Gloria says angrily to him.

'Mum won't be very happy about this! Next time you'll just have to go with her to Aunt Ria. Your own fault!' Harry doesn't say anything. When his sister rants like that, you just have to leave her be. Something he's learned by now. He tries to lift the top of his desk up again. It's heavy. And the whole thing is awkwardly large.

'I'll help you,' Gloria offers. Harry is secretly glad about that. He couldn't manage it on his own. Together they lift the top back into place on the desk frame.

'Oh, your light bulb has broken.' Gloria bends over and picks up his desk lamp. Harry looks closely, and sees glass shards lying on the floor.

'Chips,' he says, 'now what?'

'Now what? Duh! Clean it up of course. You go and get the vacuum cleaner.

'Harry stomps down the stairs and gets the vacuum cleaner from the cupboard under the stairs. Walking up the stairs has become a lot more difficult now. The vacuum cleaner is an unwieldy thing. Step after step he carries it up. He pulls out the cord and looks for a socket.

'Come here, I'll do it,' Gloria says. Harry just stands there. How stupid this all was. He should never have grabbed the desk and pulled off the top to try to stop the chair. And he still doesn't know what job he could do later on in life. He's upset. Why does everything go wrong? When Gloria has finished vacuuming, he pulls the plug out of the socket.

'You can clean the rest up yourself.' Gloria leaves his room.

'Thank you,' Harry says. But it doesn't sound very enthusiastic. Later he will have to tell Mum that the light bulb is broken. He doesn't know where the new bulbs are kept.

Harry takes the vacuum cleaner downstairs. When he puts the vacuum cleaner back in the cupboard, the thing tumbles over. Angrily Harry pulls the vacuum cleaner back upright again. He shoves in the hose of the vacuum cleaner and quickly closes the cupboard. Done.

Now what? Harry is trying to figure out what to do next. It's probably best not to ask Gloria if she wants to play a game with him. She probably isn't very pleased with him. Harry thinks hard. He knows what he can do. He can go on the computer and look for professions. He turns on the computer in the living room. He knows how to log in. He waits for the computer to start up. Then he opens the Internet.

He types in: jobs for bad eyes. When he types in the word 'bad,' the computer completes it for him. It says: jobs for the visually impaired. Yes, that sounds better, Harry agrees. He quickly presses enter. Harry peers at the screen to see what will pop up. He doesn't know what link to click now. Bartiméus. Blind or visually impaired. Visio. Sports for the disabled. Blind for one day. Resources. Harry sighs. He'll stop with this. It doesn't help him at all.

Harry is about to shut down the computer when he hears his mother arrive. 'Hello, I'm home!' she calls as she comes into the hall.

'Oh, here you are! What are you doing?' Harry hesitates whether to tell her or not. Oh well.

'I was looking for jobs on the computer.'

'Jobs? How come? Was that for a school assignment?' Harry sighs. Why does his mother always ask so many questions? And so many at the same time. What question should he answer first?

'No, not for school. Just for myself.' Mum hangs up her coat and walks back into the room.

'But didn't you get a note from Mr Liam the other day with all sorts of jobs on it?' Harry jumps up. That's true, he'd forgotten about that.

'Do you know where that note is?' He asks.

'Listen, it's your note. So you can figure out yourself where you put it.' Harry's annoyed with this answer. Because he doesn't know where he put it. He thinks hard. Mr Liam had given him a note, with all kinds of professions that he might be able to do. He was so happy with that note. He's sure he's put it somewhere. But where?

'Hi Mum! How was your visit to Aunt Ria?' Gloria asks.

'It was fine,' Mum says.

'Well, it wasn't fine here, Mum. Harry threw his desktop on the floor. A real mess! And his bulb's broken. I had to vacuum everything.' Harry forgets about the note. He anxiously waits for mother to respond. Why does his sister always have to tell on everything? She always ruins it for him. He wished he had a big brother. Who really wouldn't tell on everything. But Gloria does.

'Is that right, Harry?' Mum stands in front of him and looks at him. Harry knows that she will be frowning now.

'Kind of,' Harry says.

'What do you mean? What happened?' Harry stares at the ground.

'Well, I swivelled my chair around and then I grabbed my desk. And then everything fell. I really couldn't help it. Not really.'

'Well, I think you were just being stupid,' Gloria says.

'Gloria, enough! I'm talking to Harry.' Mum sounds very annoyed now.

'Couldn't you really help it?'

'Well, maybe a little then. I'm sorry, I won't do it again.' Harry knows that when you say 'sorry,' his Mum calms down.

'Have you cleaned up everything upstairs already?'

'No not yet.'

'Well, up you go! Go and clean up quickly. Ask your Dad tonight if he can fix your light. '

Harry goes upstairs. Thirteen steps. But he takes his time. He doesn't want to clean up. The afternoon will last so long anyway. He picks up his pencils from the floor. He feels with his hand if he's picked up all the pencils. He neatly stacks up the books again. It's good enough for him. He closes his bedroom door. And shoves his swivel chair against it so that Gloria can't come in. The chair blocks the door handle. Smart thinking. Harry is proud of his discovery.

Oh yes, the note from his teacher. Where is it? He opens his cupboard. All sorts of things come rolling out. His ring binder falls on his feet. He browses through it. There are all kinds of papers in it, but not the note. Harry kneels down and discovers even more things. Elastic bands from the postman. And a car. A bedroom slipper. Harry puts it aside. What's the use of having one slipper? And what's that? It's an old cap. He'd had that one from Dad, but now it's too small. He tosses the cap behind him and continues looking for the note. But then

Harry realises suddenly that the old cap might come in handy. He'd need that for school on Monday. That's convenient. He's very glad he found that. Later he'll put it in his schoolbag.

Harry sighs deeply. Sometimes it's quite handy to keep old stuff. But now what? Oh right, he was looking for the note. Where else might it be? He remembers how happy he was when he received this note. Mr Liam seems to understand him. Harry looks around his room. Suddenly he knows. It's in his treasure chest of course. This is where he keeps all the important things he wants to hang on to. When he finds the note, he unfolds it. He quickly reads what it says. After just a few words, Harry is already excited. Artist. Mayor. Prime Minister. If he could get that job, he'd be the boss of the country!

Architect. What a difficult word. But he knows what it means. Then you design all sorts of things, like buildings or ships. That appeals to him somehow. And that's all possible on the computer. If he has a large screen, he could enlarge it. That would be fine!

He continues reading. And discovers even more: raising guide dogs for the blind. Working at a bank. Then it's important to count well, Harry thinks. He folds up the note and puts it back in his treasure chest. After all, he's just an ordinary boy, Harry concludes. Whatever anyone else says. He just knows for sure.'

7 BLUE GLUE

Quietly Harry sneaks into the school. It's still very early. Hopefully the teachers still in the staff room. Every Monday morning, the teachers start the week together. He closes the door very gently behind him. Still, he jumps at the sound of the door closing. His heart pounds in his throat. For a moment he waits to hear whether he can hear anyone walking around. It remains silent. In the distance, he hears people laughing. Probably in the staff room.

Harry continues step by step. This morning he woke up very early. He'd thought through his plan. The hardest part was that his mother had to bring him to school extra early. He was glad that his mother believed him. Otherwise, his plan would've failed before he started. He'd told her that the teacher wanted to help him build a castle. In class they all had to make their own castle. On the Internet they had to look up what a castle looks like and then copy it exactly. Which is a really elaborate and detailed task. The teacher had offered to help him. Mother believed his story and dropped him off at school really early. Harry had never told his mother such a big lie. He'd practised the story about twenty times in his head. The castle thing was true. So he wasn't lying about everything. But it wasn't true that the teacher wanted to help him so early this morning.

Harry walks down the corridor. His shoes squeak on the tiles. He carefully places his feet so that they don't make a sound. Boom! A door is being slammed shut somewhere. Harry jumps. He quickly looks round to see where he could hide. The door of the first grade classroom is open, so he quickly slips inside. The footsteps go the other way. Fortunately. Harry takes a deep breath and looks into the corridor. No movement visible. Or is there? He takes a good look around again. No nothing. He rapidly continues towards his own classroom.

In the cupboard he looks for his glue. He always uses the blue glue stick. He used to have his own pot of glue. They always put a drop of blue ink in it so he could see the glue as well. Transparent glue is difficult for him. From his backpack, he takes out his cap. A blue one. It's an old cap. One that doesn't fit him anymore. He walks to the door, since the hook for his cap is close by. He

always hangs his cap there. If the sun shines too brightly in the classroom, he's allowed to put on his cap. And it also helps him not to lose his cap.

He takes the lid off the glue stick and puts the cap down. Carefully he turns the glue up, and smears it on the hook. Harry wonders if it will be enough? Just to be sure, he applies more glue. His heart is still pounding very loudly. Probably because he's doing something secretive. And secrets aren't nice. But how else can he track down the thief?



'Come on Harry, you can do it!' he says to himself. He's startled by his own voice. He hopes that nobody has heard him. He also smears some glue on his cap and then puts it on the hook. He pushes it down firmly. That should be enough. Satisfied he looks at the job done. Now he has to quickly clean up. He looks round to find the lid. He doesn't see it. What time is it? How much time does he have left? He decides to put the glue back without its lid. That's just the way it is. He picks up his backpack. His work is done. Now he has to quickly go outside and wait until the bell rings. And then he'll put his good cap in his backpack.

'Hey Harry,' Nova whispers.

'Harry! Hey. Harry, your hands,' Nova tries again. Harry is looking closely at his screen. He turns the knob to zoom in even further. Nova kicks against his chair to draw his attention. Harry looks at her.

'Your hands. They're completely blue,' Nova whispers. Harry looks at his hands. And yes, they're completely blue.

'What is it?' Nova asks.

'Oh, nothing,' Harry whispers back. He puts his hands under his table and tries to peel off the hard glue residue. He hopes his plan won't be discovered now. With his camera, he tries to locate his cap. He just wants to know if his cap is still there. Yes, his cap is still neatly on its hook.

Harry is so glad when it's finally time for the morning break. Then he can discuss the next step with Joey. He hasn't found his other cap. Strange. Still he finds it hard to believe that they have a thief in their class. Harry takes his cap from his backpack, puts on his sunscreen and goes outside with the other children. Joey is already waiting for him.

'And? Did you get through?' Together they walk to a quiet spot in the school playground. 'Yes, it was pretty exhilarating! But the teachers were still in the staff room. So that went well.'

'Oh good. So nobody saw you?'

'No, I don't think so.' Harry and Joey walk round the bicycle shed. 'Look out, a ball!' Before Harry figures out what's happening, Joey kicks the ball away.

'Be careful, dude!' He calls to a bunch of guys. Harry's glad that Joey isn't afraid of the big boys from sixth grade.

'Joey, what nothing else happens again in our classroom? Then we still don't know where my cap has gone.'

'Wait and see,' Joey says, 'my uncle always says...'
'Yes, yes, your uncle...,' Harry says with a sigh.
'Your uncle can catch thieves, but his thieves aren't in school.'
'No, that's true.' Joey grins.
'But crooks will make mistakes, and then they get caught. Really!'
'We'll see,' Harry says.
'See? I will, yeah,' Joey says, slapping Harry on his back. Harry laughs as well.
They often make these kinds of jokes at home.

When they go back inside, they both look at the hook. The blue cap is still hanging there.

'There's a lot of glue on it,' Joey says softly to Harry.
'It's a good thing your cap's blue. But the grey wall is covered too. '
'Oops, mistake. My hands were covered in it as well. One guess who noticed that.' Joey thinks for a second, as they go into the classroom.
'Curious Nova, I guess?'
'Yes, it was her. How do you know? Did she tell you? '
'No, but she sits close to you. So it's logical.' The boys go to their places. Mr Liam asks the class to be quiet.

8 WHAT'S WRONG?

'Uno!' Harry calls out. He presses his last card firmly against his belly. Now Gloria can't see what colour card he has. Harry looks at his sister, who now has to put a card on the pile. He hopes he'll win again. 'Come on, Gloria,' mother spurs her on, 'you're building up the tension.' Gloria smacks her card down on the table. A plus four. Harry thinks that that sucks, but he doesn't let it show. He doesn't say anything and draws four cards from the stack.

'What colour will it be now?' Gloria asks. Harry hears from her voice that she wants to laugh. He can handle it. Which isn't always the case. Harry doesn't always like playing a game that he struggles to see. When they play Ligretto, Gloria always wins. That game goes so fast and there are so many cards on the table at the same time. Harry sighs when he thinks of it. That's why he prefers playing Uno.

'Yellow!'

When the telephone rings, Gloria jumps up.

'Stop!' Mother cries out, 'I'll answer that. You're playing a game with Harry.'

Gloria sits down again. She pushes her chair a bit too hard against the table.

'Julia Kramer,' they hear from the kitchen. Harry and Gloria continue their game. But Harry tries to listen to the conversation in the kitchen.

'Yes, it's OK.' Harry always finds it amusing when you hear only one side of the story. He tries to guess what the other person on the phone is saying then.

'Of course, I'll need to have a think about it, but I'm definitely enthusiastic.'

Harry has no clue what the man has asked his mother. Or is it a woman? That's possible too. Harry tries to focus on his cards again. Fortunately, he sees a card that he can put on the pile.

'What's the money being spent on?' He hears his mother ask. Money? Harry doesn't understand it anymore. 'Do you understand what it's about?' He asks Gloria.

'No, I don't. We'll hear that later, bro.'

'It's horrifying, yes.' The conversation is getting odder and odder. Money and horrifying. What is Mum talking about?

'Out!' Gloria calls out loudly. Harry is startled.

'Oh, but you didn't say Uno!'

'Well, then you weren't paying attention. Come on, let's put it away.' Harry picks up all the cards and makes a nice pile. Gloria puts them in the box.

'Good. You'll be hearing from me. Bye!'

Gloria and Harry both turn round at the same time.

'What was that about, Mum?'

'So, you're nosy! First I want to discuss this with your dad and then I'll tell you.'

Gloria tries again, but Mum is saying anything.

Harry has to go to bed at the usual time that night. Mum still won't say who she was talking to.

'I'll tell you more tomorrow, and I think I may need you.' That was the only thing she said about it. So Harry went upstairs. Thirteen steps. And now he's in his bed. His mother always says that he has a great imagination, but now he can't fathom what it might be about. What does his mother need him for? He's the youngest at home. Often that means that they don't need him. He's often too small or he can't see it anyway.

Suddenly, Harry is alarmed. He hopes it's not about school? Did the teacher discover it? Would he have called about the glue on the wall? Harry is getting into a cold sweat. He tosses and turns in his bed. Mother said she thought it was horrible. It was just a bit of glue, Harry thinks, that can't be so bad. And wanted to resolve something. Of course the teacher has no way of knowing that. The duvet is half off the bed. He kicks it off completely. But after a while he gets a bit cold. He dangles his foot over the edge of his bed. Harry sighs. This way he'll never get to sleep. He could go downstairs. Then he could tell his mother what had happened at school.

Carefully he steps out of bed. The light on the landing is still on. But even without the light he knows the way. He knows exactly where the handrail starts. Slowly Harry walks down the stairs. But after five steps he stops. Should he do this? He'd made this plan with Joey. And if he goes to his mother now, they still won't know who stole his cap. Harry tugs at the handrail to make sure that it's firmly fixed to the wall. No movement possible. Will he go downstairs? Or won't he?

Suddenly he hears the front door open. Harry jumps. That means that his Dad has come home from a meeting. As fast but as quietly as he can, he runs back upstairs. He needs to go to sleep quickly. He grabs the duvet off the floor and jumps into his bed. Harry has now decided. He won't say anything. Not yet. First he wants to talk to Joey. Harry tries to make a nice lair in his bed. Oh how stupid, Harry figures, if he'd done something horrible at school, Mum would have said something. Then she'd have told him off. She surely wouldn't wait till next day. It's probably something else. Harry feels slightly relieved and soon falls asleep.

The next morning, however, Harry is still a bit tense. He doesn't know for sure that his mother doesn't know anything. Maybe he'll still be told off if his mother had found out about the glue on the wall. He puts his best foot forward this morning. He gets dressed quickly. And he's emptied the dishwasher. All on his own accord, without his mother having to ask him. He was glad when his mother thanked him very kindly. Her voice was cheerful, so Harry cheers up a bit as well.

Do you still want to know what I was discussing yesterday, guys?' Harry sits up straight in his chair.

'Yes, Mum, do tell,' Gloria says. Harry swallows his last piece of bread. 'And you, Harry? Don't you want to know?' his mother asks.

'Yes, yes, I do.' Harry almost chokes on his bread. What would she tell them?

'Do you remember when you were watching the news a while ago? I think we were all sad when we saw what happens to children with albinism in Tanzania, right?' Gloria and Harry both said nothing. They waited. Harry still remembers how sad and angry he'd been when he'd crawled under his duvet.

'A man has been in touch with me. This man has started a foundation that supports people with albinism in Tanzania. They send sunscreen, and clothes with long sleeves and caps. They've written a comic book, in which they explain what albinism is. Not all people can read and write, but through a comic book they can understand it.' Mother stops talking as she's stacking the breakfast plates.

'Yes, Mum, and?' Gloria asks. Harry also has a lot of questions in his head. But sometimes there are so many, that he doesn't know where to start.

'Dad and I talked about it and we want to help this foundation. At school they also want to organise campaigns, to raise money. For example, they're going to put a very large barrel in the hall, in which empty bottles can be collected. So, what do you think, are you in? '

'Will there be other ways of fund raising? Collecting empty bottles is a bit boring,' Gloria says.

'No, it's not,' Harry says, 'I want to hand over those bottles to the supermarket. It's fun.'

'That's great, Harry. And Gloria, do you have any other ideas?'

Harry looks for his school bag, and hears Mum and Gloria talking in the background. About a high tea, making invitations, decorating everything. Girlie stuff, Harry thinks. He wants to carry those empty bottles. He'll make sure that a lot of money is collected.

In fact, he can't imagine what it's like to live in Tanzania. He has albinism. But he's safe here and is able to go to school. OK, with a bit of help at times. And he has sunscreen and special clothing that blocks the sun's rays. He doesn't have to worry about being kidnapped because he's white. He becomes angry again, when he thinks of it. Harry looks at the clock on the oven and is alarmed when he sees what time it is.

'Mum, come on, I have to go to school!'



9 WHAT A DAY

Harry puts his pencil down. He's not getting it right today. He wanted to draw a knight, but it doesn't look like anything really. Angrily, he looks for his eraser. But even that doesn't work out. Where's his eraser? Has someone stolen his eraser as well? He looks over to Joey, but he can't see if Joey is looking at him. He'll look in his pencil case once more. Nothing. He puts all pencils and pens back in the case.

'Are you looking for something, Harry?' Miss Anne asks. She's standing at his table.

'My eraser, I can't find it.'

'Is this yours? It was under your chair. The teacher puts an eraser on his table.

'Thank you,' Harry says softly.

'And is this lid from your glue stick?' Harry jumps, and feels himself turning red.

'I want to talk to you later. Wait here for me at break time.' Miss Anne walks on.

Harry forgets that he wanted to draw a knight. He's stabbing holes in his eraser with his pencil.

When the bell rings, Harry stays seated. He's put away all his belongings and is waiting at an empty table.

'Joey, you can wait outside for Harry. I just want to have a chat with him.'

Harry's glad that his friend wants to wait for him. But he'll have to face up to this talk himself.

Miss Anne sits down in front of him.

'Well Harry, tell me. How did that glue get onto the wall? It's blue glue, so it's yours. It's your hook for your cap, so tell me.' Harry is startled by Miss Anne's fierce voice. This isn't the voice she uses when she tells stories about the past. Harry fiddles with his sweater and takes a deep breath.

'Sorry, Miss. I didn't mean to get in on the wall. I wanted to solve something. But I used too much glue, so I didn't see that. Really Miss, I didn't do it on purpose! And then the lid rolled away too.' Harry talks fast because of the tension he's feeling.

'Then why didn't you ask for help? This is simply not OK, Harry. I don't expect this from you. I want you to clean it all properly. Go to John and ask for cleaning

wipes. Ask him if he knows how to remove glue from the wall.' Miss Anne got up. Harry stayed seated.

'Well, come on, don't just sit there! Get going!' Harry tries to get up as fast as possible.

He walks into the corridor looking for John. Usually he can be found in his room where you can also make photocopies. Harry decides to check there first. He's sorry that he can't play outside now. Outdoor games are much more fun than cleaning. The door of the room is open. Harry looks inside, but doesn't see anybody. The photocopier is making a noise and spewing out one sheet after another. Harry loves seeing that. He bends forward a little so that he can see exactly how the sheets of paper roll out. It does smell a little.

The photocopier seems to sigh at all the work and then suddenly stops. Harry looks at the little screen. A light is flashing and there's an arrow pointing to tray two. He knows what that means: there's no more paper. He's helped John before and then he was allowed to fill the drawer with new paper. Harry decides to give John a hand. He looks around for the boxes of paper. There are four boxes on top of each other. And the top one is open. Harry can reach the top and pulls out a thick wad of paper. Now it has to go in drawer two. He holds the thick pack of paper with two hands, but this way he can't open the drawer. Harry thinks to himself that he should have thought this through. He puts the pack of paper down on a chair and looks for the right drawer. Fortunately, there are big numbers, that's easy! He pulls the drawer open with both hands. Puts the paper in, and the machine is almost ready to go again. Carefully he closes the drawer. The device immediately starts making a noise again. Harry is quite proud of himself. He's fixed this nicely.

'So, young man, are you taking over my work?' Harry is startled by the sound of the voice, but he also hears that John doesn't sound angry.

'Yes, I've refilled the paper.'

'That's great. You've helped me a lot with that! I'm delighted that you want spend your break at the photocopier.' John laughs and slaps Harry on his shoulder. Harry feels that John has very big hands. Harry suddenly remembers why he was there.

'Well, I was supposed to clean something during the break, and...' Harry stammered.

'Clean?' John mutters.

'Yes. Do you know how to remove glue from the wall?'

'Glue? Am I hearing that right? Glue?'

'Yes, that's right,' Harry says.

'I'd better not ask how it got on the wall. Come on, let's fill a bucket with water and detergent. We'll get a piece of cloth and that should do the trick. And otherwise I still have some glue solvent.' Harry laughs to himself a bit. Grandpa always talks about a bucket of soap. Then again John is also a bit like the school's grandfather. Relieved, he walks alongside John.

'You take the cloth, I'll carry the bucket.' Harry takes the lead and walks to his classroom.

'My, what a beautiful colour.' Harry tries to look at John's face to determine if he's for real.

'Well, let's get going.' Harry drops the cloth into the bucket and then fishes it out again. The water's a bit warm, but he isn't complaining. He squeezes some water out of the cloth and starts wiping the wall.

'Mate, even your cap is glued to the hook.' John takes a knife out of his pocket and carefully uses it to remove the cap. He then scrapes the wall with the knife.

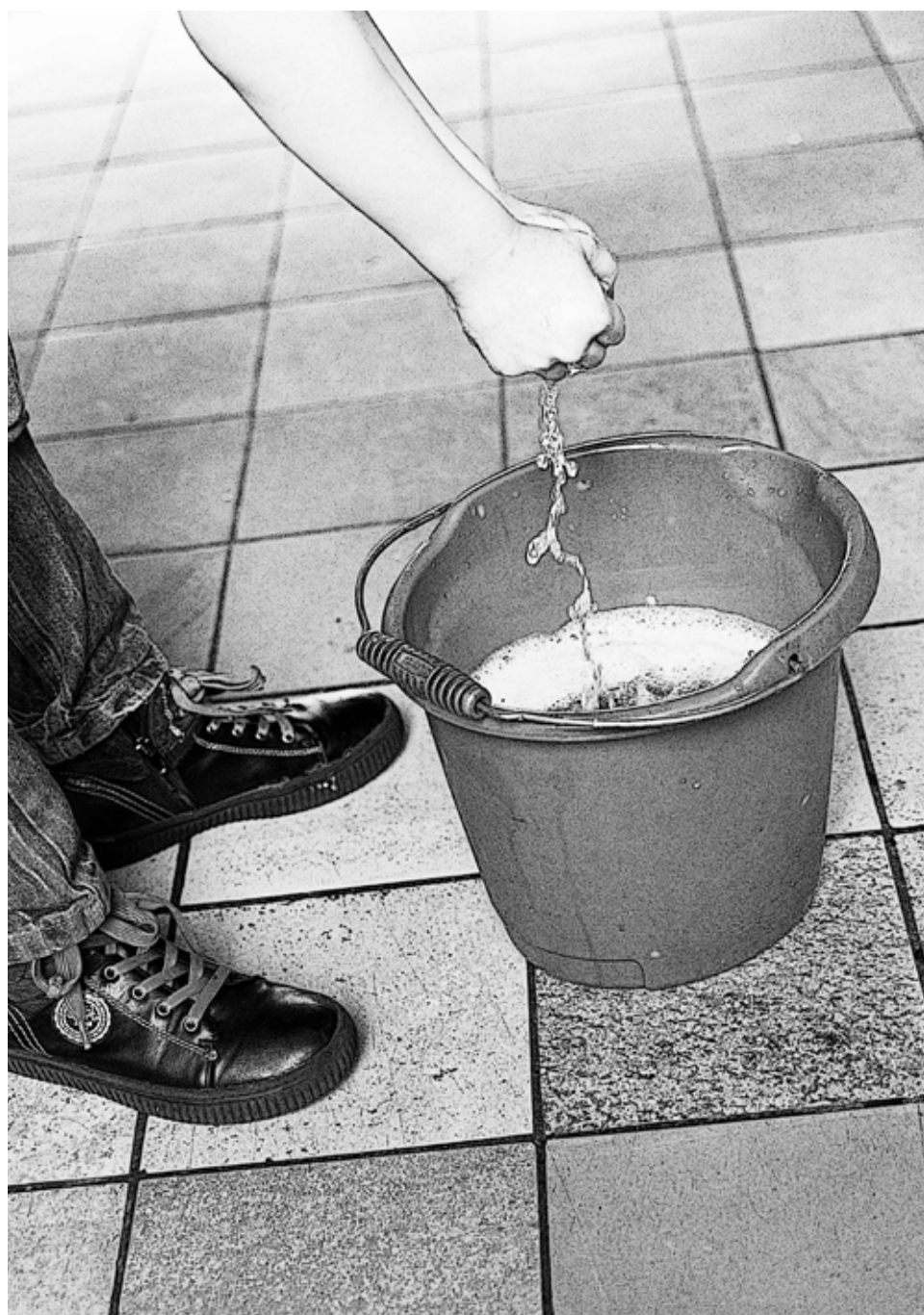
'It's going to be fine. You see?' Harry wipes the wall once more and thinks it looks OK. John takes the cloth from him.

'That's enough now. I'll touch up the paint another time. I bet the teacher won't notice! '

'Thank you.' Harry's relieved and carries the bucket to the kitchen himself.

'Promise me one thing, though. No more glue on the wall.'

'Promise!' Harry calls out. He's super glad with John! John didn't ask any questions at all! Harry decides to help John more often. And on his birthday, he'll take two extra treats for John.



During the last half an hour of class, the teacher will read to them. The class has earned enough points this Friday morning. The teacher came up with this system at the beginning of the school year, to motivate the class to work hard. Sometimes the class forgets that they can earn points. But today they earned enough for the teacher to read them a story. Harry's looking forward to it. Because the teacher is very good at reading aloud. She uses lots of crazy voices, which makes it fun.

'Let's sit in a circle, everyone!' Harry lifts his chair and walks all the way to the front. There's quite a racket with everyone looking for a place to sit. The tables are pushed to the side so that they can make a large circle.

'Woohoo!' Jasmine shouts through the classroom, 'read aloud, read aloud!' Harry wants to put his chair next to the teacher, but notices that Mats is already there. He hesitates about what to do. The whole class knows that he can sit there, so he can actually see the book as well. The teacher often chooses books with beautiful drawings.

'Mats, could you please move a little so I can sit here?'

'No, I'm here, can't you see?' Mats snapped. Harry looks around to locate the teacher. He doesn't know how to solve this. It's never been a problem in the classroom before; everyone helps him if necessary. Harry looks around and sees that everyone has found a place to sit. He's standing in the circle, holding his chair. The class has quietened down again.

'Mats, make some room for Harry,' Miss Anne says.

'I'm sitting here!' Mats says angrily. Mats isn't about to get up.

'Mats,' the teacher says again. Mats sighs deeply.

'Mats, one more warning!' Miss Anne stands up and grabs Mats' chair. Mats stands up.

'He's always allowed to do everything!' he shouts angrily. Harry doesn't say a word and puts his chair down.

At the very moment that Harry wants to sit down, Mats pulls the chair backwards. Harry falls to the ground and feels a stabbing pain in his back. Tears well up behind his eyes. He doesn't want to cry, but the tears seem to come automatically. Miss Anne stands and sends Mats to the headmaster. Then she bends over to attend to Harry. The pupils all talk at the same time.

'Harry, Harry, are you OK?' Harry hears that the teacher is really worried.

'Can you get up, Harry? Is that possible?' When Harry is finally seated, the class calms down again. Celeste comes running with a cup of water.

'You could have broken your neck,' Jasmine shouts. The children all know that it's very dangerous to pull a chair away from someone. Harry wipes away his tears with his sleeve. He takes a sip of water. Luckily, the pain is getting less.

'If you don't feel OK, you must let me know,' Miss Anne says.

'I'll talk to Mats later. I don't know why he reacted like that, but this is not OK. Did you guys have a fight?' Harry shakes his head. The teacher sits down and picks up the reading book.

Later on Harry can't remember what the story was about.

10 CAN YOU SEE IT?

'That was a lousy thing to do!' Joey shouts. He went along with Harry to his house. On Friday afternoon, they're off school. They sit at the kitchen table and enjoy some snacks. They've told Mum the whole story. She was very shocked and has just taken the phone. Now she's in the hall talking to the teacher so that the boys can't hear the conversation.

The boys don't know what to do. Joey wants to play outside, but Harry doesn't feel like it. Harry would like to watch a film. But it's nice weather outside and then he's never allowed to. Now the boys are bored. They aren't saying much to each other. But they still can't hear what Mum is saying. They finish their drinks.

'Do you still have the notebook?' Joey suddenly asks.

'We can continue with our search. We'll just write down all sorts of things.'

'OK,' Harry says. He doesn't really feel like it, but he doesn't know what else to do either. He's just angry. And sad too. Actually he's also still in pain, but he doesn't say that. On some days nothing seems to work out right, Harry contemplates. His drawing of the knights didn't work. Then his eraser was gone. And then his talk with the teacher. Fortunately, the wall is clean again. And then the hassle with Mats.

Joey is leading the way to his room. Harry follows him up the stairs. He takes two steps at a time. Then it's only seven steps instead of thirteen, Harry knows. He doesn't say it to Joey. They plop down on the bed. Joey pulls out the notebook.

'OK, what else can we write down?' Harry thinks about that.

'This morning I thought someone had stolen my eraser.'

'Really? Did you lose it?'

'No, the teacher spotted it under my chair.'

'Oh, we don't have to write that down, right?'

'Do you remember who was off school the day your cap disappeared?' Joey asks.

'Why do you want to know that?'

'Well, those children couldn't have done it.'

'Oh, that's smart.' Harry thinks his friend is coming up with very clever things. He thinks again.

'Actually, we should have written that down right away. Now I can't remember it so clearly.' Joey agrees.

'Could Mats have something to do with it?'

'Mats?' Harry asks. 'Why? Just because he pulled my chair away? '

'Well it could be, couldn't it?'

'Anything's possible,' Harry says.

'But I've never had a fight with him before. So why would he steal my cap? '

'I don't know either.' Joey sighs and throws the notebook on the desk.

'We'll never find out this way.'

'Should we ask whether we can collect empty bottles on our street?'

'Why?' Joey thinks it's kind of weird.

'Well, at school we're going to collect empty bottles. We then take those empty bottles to the store where you get money for them. '

'Yes, deposit money,' Joey knows.

'That money will be donated to a foundation that supports children with albinism in Africa.'

'Are they poor then?' Joey asks.

'I don't know,' Harry says.

'But if you have albinism, you're not safe there. Did you know they kidnap those children there? They think their bones are a kind of medicine.' Joey is silent for a moment.

'How do you know all this?' he wants to know.

'I heard it on the news. And now we're going to help those people there. '

'So if you'd lived there, you'd have been taken?'

'Yes, my sister said something like that too.'

'Well, I'm glad you live here. Let's go, ask your Mum.' Joey jumps up, but Harry is quicker and opens his door. They run down the stairs.

'Mum!' Harry calls as he runs down the stairs.

'Mum! Can we go and collect empty bottles?' But they can't find her. 'Mum!' Harry calls out again. She's not in the kitchen either.

'She's in the garden,' Joey says.

'Talking to the neighbour.'

'Let's put on our shoes, I'm sure we're allowed to go.' They put on their shoes and go outside.

'Mum!'

'Guys, I can hear you just fine. Don't yell. What is it?'

'Can we collect empty bottles from people in our street?' The neighbour smiles.

'Your mother's just told me everything. I'm going to save up my empty bottles for you. Great plan.'

'So, can we Mum?'

'Sure. Take a bag with you. And put some sunblock on.'

Joey and Harry walk down the street. Joey's carrying the bag. There are already a few empty bottles in it.

'Whose house shall we stop at next?'

'Oh, just the very next house,' Harry says. He walks on at a steady pace.

'But they've got a big dog there.'

'Are you afraid of a dog?' Harry smirks.

'No, I'm not afraid. But this dog is very big.'

'So you are afraid,' Harry says. Joey keeps his mouth shut. He lets Harry take the lead. Without hesitation, Harry goes to the front door.

'Where's the doorbell?' he asks. He looks to the left of the door and to the right. But he can't find one.

'Joey, do you see the doorbell?' Joey comes closer and presses the bell. Exactly at that moment, they hear loud barking. Joey is terrified and takes a big step backwards. He forgets that he's standing on the doorstep and tumbles backwards into the hydrangea bush. He lets go of the bag and the bottles roll out onto the pavement. Harry starts to laugh very loudly. The dog barks even louder.

'Don't laugh!' Joey says angrily. But Harry can't stop laughing.

'Haha! I did see that bell, in this street it's always in the same spot! Haha, but now you had to ring the bell!' He reaches out a hand to Joey and helps him on his feet.

'Don't you think it's a good joke?'

'Not really,' Joey growls. He picks up the empty bottles and puts them back in the bag.

'Shall I ring the doorbell again?' Harry asks.

'I'm moving on.' Harry follows Joey.



'Shall we visit Aunt Ria as well? Maybe she'll have some empty bottles for us.'

'Do you know where she lives?'

'Yes, in the next street, the third house, with the green gate.' They quickly find the house.

'I'll ring the doorbell, in case you can't find it again,' Joey chuckles. Harry has to laugh. They hear someone approaching. The lock is unlatched and the door swings open.

'Oh boys, how nice that you came to visit. Come on in.' The boys look at each other for a moment and then step inside.

'Why are you carrying a bag? Were you going to the store?' Harry sighs very softly and whispers to Joey:

'Auntie Ria always wants to know everything.'

'What are you saying, Harry?' She strokes his hair. Harry shivers. He hates it when she does that.

'Let me get you a drink. Would you like a snack too?' The boys don't get the chance to answer. Aunt Ria keeps talking.

'How are things at school, Harry? Can you see everything?'

'It's OK,' Harry says.

'Sometimes he can't find a doorbell, but everything else is fine,' Joey whispers. The boys are both laughing.

'I've got cola. Would you like that?'

'Really, do you have cola?' Harry asks. He's surprised that old people would have cola. But he likes it. He almost never gets it at home, except when it's someone's birthday.

'I do.'

'Me too.'

'Then you can have cola!' Auntie Ria disappears into the kitchen. She comes back with a bottle of cola and two glasses. Very big glasses. Aunt Ria even fills them right up to the top!

'I'm so pleased you came over,' Aunt Ria says. 'Did you have to run an errand?'

'We're collecting empty bottles,' Harry explains.

'Oh, what for?' she wants to know. Harry knew she'd ask this, but he doesn't like to tell a sad story.

'It's for the poor children in Africa,' he says quickly as he puts down his empty glass.

'We've got a fundraising at school.' Under the table, he kicks Joey and hopes that Joey will keep his mouth shut.

'Can I have another drink please,' Joey says.

'Me too,' Harry says, 'then we'll have one empty bottle, Aunt Ria. Do you have any more?'

'I'll check.' Auntie Ria disappears into the pantry.

'Why did you kick me?' Joey whispers.

'Because I don't want you to say anything about those children with albinism in Africa,' Harry whispers back.

'How come?'

'Because Aunt Ria already feels sorry for me, and that would make it even worse.'

'I get it. I won't say anything.'

The boys finish their drinks. Harry is just able to swallow a big burp. He's glad that Aunt Ria didn't hear it. They take the empty bottle. Aunt Ria couldn't find any other bottles. But she's promised that she'll save some for them.

Harry and Joey walk back home. They agree that they've worked hard. Now they've collected twelve bottles.

'Hey Harry, can I ask you a question. Are you an albino, or do you have albinism?' Joey asks.

'Did you make up this question yourself?' Harry laughs. Joey doesn't respond.

'Do you have flu, or are you flu?' he asks Joey. It remains silent for a minute.

'I get it,' Joey says.

'But,' Harry says, 'I don't mind if you say albino. It's nice and short. And everyone understands it.'

'All right.'

As they walk home, Harry hears his Dad's car approaching. They wait for him to get out.

'Dad, we've picked up empty bottles!'

'Great, boys. Well done.'

11 TO THE BEACH

'Man, it's hot,' Grandpa Matthew sighs. He wipes the sweat from his forehead with a big red handkerchief. Harry finds it hot too. Fortunately Grandma has put up a large parasol so they can work in the shade. Dad has got a large piece of plywood. Grandpa will saw that into a nice sign. The sign will be placed in the school, so that everyone knows where to donate their empty bottles.

'Well, Harry, how big does it have to be?' With a pencil, Dad has marked the size of the sign.

'Look, from here to here,' Dad points out. Harry follows the movements of his Dad, to see how big the sign is going to be.

'That's big. And are you going to saw that, Grandpa?' Grandpa Matthew has picked up a big electric saw.

'Yes, straight cuts, that's not so difficult!' Harry is impressed with what Grandpa can make. Grandpa can make anything from wood. And his grandmother can make anything out of fabric.

'Step aside, son! Not too close, that's dangerous.' Harry quickly takes a step backward. The saw is making a noise and the wood chips are flying all around. It looks a bit like snow, Harry figures. But it's not snowing at all, because it's very hot in the garden. And the sun is shining very brightly. Harry gets sore eyes. He pulls his cap a little deeper over his eyes.

'Could you go and see Grandma?' Dad yells above the noise.

'I'd like a cold drink!'

Harry is thankful that he can go inside. Grandma is in the kitchen.

'Can we have a drink, Grandma?'

'Of course! In this kind of weather, you need to drink a lot!' She picks up a tray and puts large glasses on it.

'This weather isn't nice, is it?'

'No, not really,' Harry says.

'Everyone went to the beach today. Except me.'

'Neither did I,' Grandma says, laughing as she touches Harry on the shoulders for a moment.

'But I understand what you mean,' she adds.

'We don't want to expose your skin to this bright sun.'

'Expose?' Harry asks, 'I won't be on display.' Grandma laughs at the thought.

'Of course we won't turn you into an exhibit.' Grandma fills the glasses.' But your skin burns very quickly. And that's not nice. Do you know what can happen then? '

'Yes, you can get skin cancer,' Harry says in a low voice.

'Today the sun's very bright.'

'Maybe Dad will go swimming with me tonight, when the sun's less bright.'

'That would be nice! What if I make some goodies, then we can have a picnic at the water together. I'll give your mother a call later.'

'Yes, I'd like that,' Harry says. Grandma always has good ideas.

The men worked hard on the sign. Harry painted it and Dad did the lettering. Grandpa sanded the sign, so that all splinters are gone. Harry thinks it looks lovely! The paint was very thin because of the heat, but it all worked out in the end. He hopes that everyone will collect empty bottles. All for the good cause.

'Watch your head, Harry.' Dad opens the boot of the car. He puts the back seats down, so that the sign will fit into the car.

'It's still a bit sticky,' Harry says. 'Never mind, I'll put down an old sheet for protection.'

'See you later, Grandma!' Harry calls out.

'See you later! Don't forget your swimsuit! '

'Don't you forget either,' Harry laughs, 'or you won't be able to swim.' Harry gets into the front seat, next to his Dad. On the drive home, Harry is deep in thought. He's thinking of the news broadcast a while ago.

'Dad, do you think it's stupid that albinos aren't safe in Africa?' Harry wipes the sweat from his forehead and feels that his back is soaking wet too.

'Aha, so that's what you were thinking about... Yes, I think it's terrible too. Children with albinism have a hard time in Africa. Superstition is a big thing there, and it's not something that will just disappear in a moment's time. Until then, there are safe places where they can find shelter.' Harry would hate not to be able to live with his own family. He can't bear the thought.

'The money we're trying to raise is for a foundation that sends sunscreen and caps to those shelters. In Africa, it's always hot. The sun is always shining there, so children with albinism burn very quickly. And they don't know that.'

'They don't know?' Harry asks amazed.

'No. Many people can't read or write. But a comic book has been made that explains what albinism is. That comic book is now being translated and will be distributed there.'

'Oh,' Harry is quiet. He decides that he'll try even harder to collect more deposit money.

At the end of the afternoon, Harry looks for his swimsuit. First he rubs sunscreen all over his skin. With extra care for his neck, his ears and his hands. Then he puts on his swimsuit. It's a sturdy diving suit, with long sleeves and long legs. Harry remembers how he thought it was stupid at first. Nobody had a suit like that. Just him. In Australia, almost all the children wear a suit like that. When he saw it on television, he wanted to emigrate. Gloria thought he was exaggerating. They had a big fight about it. It was easy for her to talk, he thought. She could just wear a bikini or something else. Harry couldn't remember what it was called and Gloria had laughed at him. He pushed her and she had fallen. She'd screamed like a pig in trouble. Mum came and sent them both to their rooms.

Harry walks slowly down the stairs with his swimming bag on his back. It's way too hot to run down the stairs. He hears Grandma and Mum talking downstairs. They've prepared food and are packing it now.

'Harry, can you carry this bag to the car?'

'Wow, that's a heavy bag,' Harry sighs. He feels even hotter. Everyone helps out and soon they can go. Harry gets into the car with Grandpa.

After driving for an hour, they arrive at the beach. There's enough parking space.

'Everyone's gone home already. We've got the beach to ourselves,' Grandpa says cheerfully. They're looking for a nice spot. Mum's already putting down some blankets.

'What shall we do?' Mum asks, 'eat first or swim first?'

'Swim!' Harry shouts.

'I vote for swimming,' Gloria says. Harry throws down his bag, takes off his shoes and runs into the sea with his socks on.

'Don't go too far!' he hears Grandma shout. Gloria takes it a bit slower and checks out the water.

'Cold!' she screams.

'Not really! It isn't cold.' Harry plunges into the water again. When he turns round, he sees Dad coming. He splashes toward him and tries to get him wet. But Dad dives into the water next to him, blowing water as he comes up again. 'You look like a seal, Dad!' 'Then you're a polar bear!' He lifts Harry up and throws him into the next wave.

Dripping with water, they go to their spot on the beach. Mum has already put up the big bright red parasol. Harry is looking for his towel.

'You're getting everything wet, Harry,' Mum mutters.

'Here's your towel. And let me put some more sunscreen on you.' Harry dries himself and sits down under the parasol.

'Where's your bathing suit, Grandma?'

'What me in a bathing suit? No, you won't live to see that. I'll do a bit of paddling later. I think that's more than enough.' 'She thinks the water's too wet,' Grandpa jokes.

'What do you think?' Dad says, 'it's nearly seven o'clock, I'd like something to eat.' Everyone agrees with him. Grandma takes the cool box. Mother hands out plates. Harry tries to keep his plate as straight as possible. There's baguette, rice salad, cucumber and fruit.

'It's delicious,' Grandpa grunts, his mouth full. Nobody says anything, but Harry figures that everyone is nodding. Food seems even better if you eat it outdoors.

'Harry, do you want more baguette?' Grandma asks, 'or something else? And you Gloria?'

'Honey, go and sit down! If they want something, they'll ask,' Grandpa tells her.

'Ugh!' Gloria screams.

'Oh nasty,' Mum says, 'That's disgusting!' Harry hears Grandpa and Dad laughing very loudly.

'What?' Harry wants to know. He's got no idea what's happening.

'Oh, gross!' Gloria has got up and Mum puts her plate on the blanket too.

'Haha! That gull has chosen well!' Grandpa roars with laughter.

'What?' Harry tries again.

'A seagull has pooped on your mother's head,' Dad says laughing.

'You just laugh,' Mum says frustrated, 'can't you give me a hand.'

'Let me have a look.' Harry is trying to look at his Mum's head and sees a big white blob dripping from her hair.

'You'll have to go for a quick swim, dear,' Dad says.

'I feel sorry for Mum,' Gloria says, 'I'll join you in the water. I'll rinse your hair.'

'Does it smell?' Harry asks.

'Do you want to smell it?' Gloria snaps at him. She walks towards the sea with her mother.

'Let's clear up the food before more seagulls come,' Grandma says.



12 EMPTY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN

Harry jumps out of bed. He's looking forward to today. Today he's going to put up the sign at school with his dad. If all goes well, John has assigned a nice spot in the hall. Harry quickly gets dressed. In the rush, he forgets to wash himself and comb his hair. He runs down the stairs, skipping a few steps in his rush.

'Calm down!' Dad calls out.

'The school won't open up earlier for us.' Harry struggles to eat his breakfast. He finishes first, but Mum makes him wait for the others. He sighs.

When it's finally time, he and his dad get the sign from the pantry. The paint on the sign is now completely dry. In big clear letters, you can read: EMPTY BOTTLES HERE! Harry actually thought that there shouldn't be a line between bottles and here. But grandfather thought it looked better this way. So there's a line between them. Harry hopes that Miss Anne won't not say anything about it. But he's not sure.

Dad parks his car in the playground.

'Sure that's OK?' Harry asks.

'Today it is. Sometimes you have to help yourself.' As they carry the sign inside, John comes walking towards them.

'And, did you get it done?' They put down the sign.

'I made it together with Grandpa and my Dad,' Harry says.

'Wonderful! I think it's wonderful.' Harry is happy. He's actually quite proud of himself.

'Look here, I've brought my empty bottles with me. Throw them in the barrel, Harry! Those are the first.' Harry takes the bag from John. There are four bottles. The empty bottles bounce around at the bottom of the barrel.

Then the bell rings and children storm into the hall and corridors. Harry is looking for his way through the crowd. He doesn't like this hustle and bustle, but it can't be helped now. He hangs his cap on its hook and sits down at his table. Joey smacks his table.

'Cool, that sign. Did you make that yourself?'

'Yes, sort of,' Harry says. Mr Liam motions for silence. He walks to Harry and whispers:

'No more problems with your back?'

'No,' Harry whispers back.

'Good.' It only takes a little while and then the class is quiet.

'We're going to start with a new song! So take a seat.' Mr Liam puts on the digital school board so the children can read the lyrics. Harry has set up his video magnifier. He zooms in on the text.

O oh, it is quite a thing!

What is what?

Well that's what!

When was was was,

That was that.

But that was that is now what?

'Do you understand this song?' the teacher asks. It remains very quiet in the classroom. Nobody responds.

'It's a riddle. Listen carefully: Before was was was was was... ..?' The teacher ends the sentence as a question, and waits for a response.

'Is!' Jasmine calls out.

'It is is.'

'Very good Jasmine. Well done.' The teacher picks up his guitar and sings the song a few times. The class knows the song in no time at all. 'Tomorrow we're going to sing it again but then in canon. Now let's work!'

The morning goes by quickly. The pupils have worked hard. The teacher is pleased.

'I've got a letter here for you! Take it home with you! And I expect you to bring lots of empty bottles to school.' Meanwhile, the teacher is handing out the letter.

'Harry, do you want to tell us something about it?' Harry thinks about that.

'No, no,' he says. He isn't sure what to say about it. He folds up the letter and puts it in his bag. There's buzz around him. Children talk to each other about the letter.

'Albinism? What's that?' someone asks.

'Oh, those children are being kidnapped!' another person calls out.

'I'm going to collect empty bottles this afternoon.' The buzz is getting louder. The children all talk at the same time.

Harry has a feeling that he has to answer all their questions. But he doesn't feel like doing that at all. He picks up his lunch box and walks towards Joey.

'Are you coming?' The children who stay at school for lunch are expected in the assembly hall. Together they walk through the corridor. Harry is glad that Joey is also silent at times. No questions asked.

'Oh, I've forgotten my lunch box,' Joey says, 'I'll walk back.'

'OK.' Harry looks for a place and keeps the place next to him free. Joey is soon back again.

'Look at this,' Joey says to Harry.

'Where?'

'Well, here, in my pocket.' Harry bends over and sees Joey taking his hand out of his pocket. In it there are shreds of paper.

'What's that?' Harry takes a few fragments and looks at them very closely.

'That's the letter about the empty bottles,' he says.

'Yes! Do you know whose?'

'No.'

'I saw Mats shredding the letter and throwing it in the bin.' Harry frowns.

'Why would he do that?'

'I think we should keep an eye on him, Harry.'

'Yes, but why?'

'I think Mats has something to do with all those strange things. The disappearance of your bottle of sunscreen, your cap, and that he didn't want to move over for you. And now this... I think it's Mats.'

Harry is silent. Why would Mats do that? He doesn't understand it at all. Harry no longer focuses on his lunch box, which is still in front of him. He thinks of Mats. Mats is a new boy in their class. His parents are separated. He's sad, that's what the teacher had told Joey. Now that Harry thinks about it, he doesn't think that Mats really fits into the class. He never plays along.

'We don't know for sure,' he says to Joey.

'No, but just wait, it's him.'

'What are we going to do?'

'Nothing, right now,' says Joey with his mouth full.

'Do you have the notebook on you?'

'No, it's at home.'

'Then we'll write it all down this afternoon,' Joey says. Harry sighs deeply, and then starts to eat his sandwiches.



13 ANGRY

'You're in the way!' Harry pretends not to hear his sister.

'Get out of the way!' Harry is watching the nature film on television. He watches this series every week. This time it's about sharks. The reporter is in the water and enthusiastically says: 'They are gigantic animals, and harmless to humans.' 'Harry!' He hears Gloria again. Harry knows he is too close to the television. No one else can see anything then. But he wants to have a good look, and he can only do that if he's close by.

'Here, take a seat,' Mum says. She put his chair close to the television on the side so that Gloria can watch as well. Harry bends all the way forward, and at exactly that moment the reporter is bitten!

'Oh, look at that!' he cries. He slides down from his chair and tries to see what happens. A reef shark has bitten the man in his upper arm. He's bleeding profusely. He's hoisted into the boat by the others.

'Oh, how scary. Shall we watch something else?' Gloria asks.

'No, this is cool.' Gloria takes the remote and zaps to another station.

'Gloria! Don't!' Now Gloria isn't responding to Harry's protest. 'Mum, Gloria's changed the channel!' Mum comes into the room. 'Work it out together, will you. I know you can.'

'Gloria, please change it back.'

'No, I don't like that programme.'

'Yes, but you changed the channel without asking.'

'OK,' Gloria sighs, and changes channels again.

'Oh, great. Now it's finished. Thanks for that,' Harry says angrily. He bangs his chair down in front of the television. He throws open the door and stomps up the stairs. He stomps his foot hard on every step. He thinks his sister is stupid. Now he doesn't know how it ended. She always ruins things for him. First he had to move. And then she changed channels.

Harry closes his bedroom door, sits down and leans against it. Nobody will enter his room, he thinks. It's just not a nice day today. Everyone's been grumbling at him. This morning he wanted to make a sandwich. As he grabbed the butter, he spilled his milk. He didn't do it on purpose. He hadn't seen the cup at all. Mum was upset with him. Gloria was angry. And Dad had cleaned up all the mess.

Everything is my fault, Harry thinks. He wanted to put salt on his potatoes tonight. He hadn't seen how much had come out of the salt shaker. Everyone laughed at him when his food was spoiled. Luckily he was allowed to take some apple sauce. I never get it right, Harry sighs in silence. When he asks for help, they call him a baby and if something goes wrong they laugh at him. Harry is puzzled and confused.



'Can I come in for a minute?' Mum asks on the other side of the door. Harry wasn't planning to let anyone in, but even so he stands up and opens the door. He quickly sits down on his bed. Mum enters his room.

'I think you're angry,' she says. Harry doesn't say anything. He doesn't think he needs to, because she already knows that he's angry. He pulls up his knees so that he can hide his head between them. Mum sits on the edge of the bed, slightly in front of him. She strokes his hair. Harry wants to push her hand away, but doesn't do it.

'So what's the matter?' Harry frowns and wonders what to say.

'I just don't know anymore,' he says very softly.

'Oh..., and what is it you don't know?'

'Well, just, everything!' He tries to press his knees even closer. But they can't get any closer.

'Then tell me the two most important things.' It's quiet for a while. And then Harry starts to talk.

'Everything I do goes wrong. I don't want to be visually impaired. Everyone grumbles at me.' When he's done, he puts his head on his knees.

'If you feel that way, I do understand that it makes you feel very angry. And that's OK.' Harry pulls up his nose. He feels tears pricking behind his eyes. He doesn't want to cry. Crying with glasses is not at all handy, he finds.

'When you're angry, you can stamp very hard. But talking also helps, Harry.'

'I know,' Harry sighs. But he finds stomping around much easier than talking.

'Would you like to cycle on your own, just like the other children?' Mum asks. Harry looks up.

'Yes. I'd love that. Then I can go to school by myself, too.' Mum smiles.

'Listen carefully Harry! I can't promise that it will happen that way. But I've contacted the Bartiméus foundation. They want to observe you to see whether you can cycle independently in traffic. It's different for each child and situation. One visually impaired child can do it, while another can't. And cycling is also easier in a quiet street than in the centre of the city. Do you understand that?' Together they talk some more. Harry plans to do his very best and hopes that one day he'll be allowed to go to school on his own. He reminisces about the other times he went to Bartiméus. He had to do all kinds of exercises. There he discovered that paving stones with ridges can be very useful. That way he knows exactly where to cross. With his group they also practised walking with a symbol

cane. Harry didn't want to use one at all. But he did realise that it might come in handy in town. Other people will see that you are visually impaired and won't just bump into you. Harry doesn't have a symbol cane yet. And maybe he will never have one, maybe he will. He'll see. He knows that a solution can be found for almost every problem. That's what Grandma always tells him. And she must know, because she's very old!

'And Harry, I'm sorry we grumble at you, when you can't really help it,' Mum says to him.

'I love you,' she whispers in his ear. They give each other a big hug. Relieved Harry stands up and together they go downstairs.

14 TO THE SHOP

Harry and Joey softly knock on the door of the fourth grade.

'Yes,' they hear a voice say. Joey opens the door and they step into the classroom.

'How come you guys are so late?' Mr Liam asks. Joey pokes Harry.

'The barrel was full of empty bottles, Mr...,' Harry starts to say.

'And is that a reason for you to be late?' Harry hears that the teacher doesn't sound angry. The whole class is quiet and Harry feels that everyone is watching.

'But John called us over. He wants us to start emptying the barrel. He doesn't like a mess.'

'Indeed a mess isn't nice. Go and sit down.' Joey takes over the conversation from Harry.

'But Mr Liam, is it possible now?'

'What is possible now?'

'Can we take the empty bottles away now?'

'Now?'

'John wants to help us,' Harry quickly adds.

'Are we allowed to?'

'Wait a minute. What about your assignments?'

'But, sir, please?' Harry says. He would much rather take those bottles now.

'We will work extra hard later on.'

'Yes, really,' Joey says.

'I'll keep an eye on them, Mr Liam.' Harry and Joey turn around and see John standing there. They hadn't noticed that he was listening to them all this time.

'Oh, go ahead. But make it quick.' Harry and Joey want to leave the classroom fast. But John stops them at the door. 'Aren't you forgetting something?' he asks.

'Thanks, Mr Liam,' they both call at the same time.

'Right, but I didn't mean that.' John takes Harry's cap off the hook. He waves it around above Harry.

'This one maybe?' Harry grabs the cap and then walks out of the classroom with Joey.

A little later they are walking in the playground. Harry and Joey are carrying a very large bag together. The bag is packed. The bottles are almost hanging out

of it. It isn't heavy, but they have to make sure that nothing falls out. John also has two bags full of bottles. They only have to cross one street to reach the mall.

'Are you OK, boys?' John asks.

'Yes.' The boys are enjoying the fact that they are being allowed to go to the mall during school hours. 'Which store do we have to go to?' John asks.

'Just a little bit further,' Harry says, 'it's next to the bakery.'

'John knew that already,' Joey says. Harry feels a bit silly.

'But he asked?'

'He laughed secretly when he asked,' Joey says softly.

'Well, I can't see that, can I?' Harry sighs. He watches the bag again, which is hanging between them. The bag sometimes wobbles back and forth. Harry tries to match Joey's steps. Then the bag almost stops wobbling.

'Were you allowed to leave school during school hours?' Harry asks John. John laughs, as only John can laugh.

'I was more often outside than inside school, mate. I always came up with excuses not to have to go to school.'

'Really?' Harry asks.

'Didn't the teacher call your parents at home?'

'No, school did not even know when I wasn't there. In those days, school wasn't as much fun as it is now. Me, I'd rather play in the street than spend time at school.'



They've reached the store. Harry visits this supermarket frequently. He knows exactly where to hand in the empty bottles. They just have to wait their turn. There's a lady in front of them. She walks with a rollator. And she's taking her time. Harry tries to see what's happening. He accidentally stumbles over the handbag next to the rollator.

'So little man, can't you look where you're going?' The lady reacts angrily.

'Today's youth... they think they can do anything they want. But that's not right, little man.' Harry is startled by her fierce tone and quickly steps aside. He forgets to say sorry. He often accidentally bumps into something or someone. But he'd rather leave this lady be. The lady is finally done. She picks up her handbag and puts it back on the rollator. She shuffles past them.

'Better watch out next time! It's your turn to hand in your bottles.'

Joey takes the bottles out of the bag and gives them to Harry.

'Hey guys, is it finally your turn?' John asks.

'Greetings from my sister. I just saw her over there.' They put the bottles in the machine at a steady pace.

'Hey, this bottle isn't going through,' Harry says. Again he puts the bottle in the hole. But the device returns it just as fast.

'How is that possible?'

'Just open the bottle.' Harry loosens the cap, and the bottle fills with air.

'Close it and try again. There it goes.' Now the bottle does disappear into the machine. Joey presses the green button and a voucher comes out.

'What does it say?' Harry wants to know.

'€ 4.50,' Joey says.

'That's not much.'

'Wait a minute, boys. I still have two bags of bottles.' With enthusiasm, the boys clear out the other bags. Bottle after bottle disappears into the hole. Now it's Harry's turn to press the green button. And again a voucher appears.

'It's € 12.25,' Harry says.

'Let's go and find a cash register.'

Harry chooses a cash register. When it's their turn, the boys hand in their vouchers to the cashier.

'Where are your groceries?' the lady asks.

'Uh, we don't have any,' Joey responds.

'Then you can't hand in the voucher,' the lady remarks.

'Why not?' Harry asks. The boys look at each other and then at John.
'You can only use your debit card here.' The boys don't know what to say.
'But it's for charity,' Harry says.
'Yes, we collect empty bottles at school,' Joey adds quickly.
'It's just not possible,' the woman says again. Her voice doesn't sound friendly at all, Harry thinks.
'Cash is available, isn't there?' John asks.
'No. You can only use a card here,' the cashier reacts.

'Can't you hurry up?' They hear someone saying. It's the lady with the rollator. She's in the queue behind them.
'Come on guys, we'll come up with something. Let's go,' John says. He gently directs the boys towards the exit.

Harry is angry. And disappointed. Both at the same time. He doesn't know what they can do about the situation.
'Come on mate, it'll be fine.' John puts his big hand on his shoulder. Together they walk to the door.
'Look after your vouchers.' The door opens automatically. When they are outside, they turn around and look for Joey. But he isn't there.
'Where's Joey?' John walks back to the door, which opens again. He looks inside.
'OK, let's wait. He'll be right back.' Harry stays with John.
'What's he doing?' he asks.
'You'll see in a minute.'

A moment later, the door opens again and Joey comes running through.
'Look what I've got!' He waves his hand.
'I received more vouchers from the people in the queue.'
'How did you manage that?' Harry wants to know. He grabs Joey's hand, and sees a stack of white papers.
'I told them that we're raising funds. For children with albinism in Africa. And that you have albinism too.' Joey continues enthusiastically. 'And you know, I even got the voucher from the lady with the rollator.' 'Really?' Harry asks. And they all laughed.
'How much is it?' Harry wants to know.

'You can count that up at school, boys. Come on, let's go.' They join John. He carries the empty bags. And Harry holds the vouchers firmly in his hand. When they get back to school, Harry puts the vouchers on his table. He puts his eraser on top of it.

15 THE THIEF

'Who, me?' Harry asks.

'Yes, you Harry. Do you want to keep track of the score, or would you rather play along?' Mr Liam asks. Today during the last half hour of class, they're playing korfbal in the playground. For a moment, Harry considers what to do. 'I'll keep the score.' The sun is shining brightly. And even though the ball is bright orange, he'd rather look after the scoreboard.

'I'm glad you want to do that.' The teacher divides the class into two groups.

'Remember to work together! So try to cross over, and run free.' Then the game starts. The children call to each other and do their best to score points.

'Give me that ball! Quickly!' Celeste calls out. The ball is thrown at her. 'Don't walk!' the teacher shouts.

'Ian, catch!' The teacher blows his whistle when a team scores.

'A point for the blue team,' he tells Harry. Harry keeps the score neatly.

Sometimes he finds it hard not to be able to play along. But he appreciates that the teacher checks it with him. The teacher always tries to find a solution. If he'd played today, his team would have put on bright yellow vests. And sometimes they make the playing field smaller. But at the moment, the sun is just too bright.

'Are you dreaming? One point for team red.' Harry makes sure he pays attention to the rest of the game.

Mr Liam blows the whistle three times in a row.

'Team blue has won! Nicely done.' Team blue cheers. 'And compliments to you all. You've worked well together. Super!' Now team red cheers too.

'Hand in the ribbons. Mats, will you take the ball inside? See you all tomorrow!'

'See you tomorrow, Mr Liam,' most children respond.

Joey walks over to Harry.

'Gosh, I'm hot.'

'You won.'

'Yes, it went pretty well. Come on, let's go home.' Together they walk to the school gate.

'Oh wait, I still have to get the vouchers,' Harry says.

'I'll walk with you,' Joey says. They have to walk against the crowd. The bell has gone by now and the children from the other classes are also running out. It's slow going this way. Harry walks closely behind Joey, keeping close to the wall. Occasionally someone bumps into them. 'We should have waited a bit longer,' Joey shouts. He opens the door to the toilets and goes inside.

'Do you need a pee?' Harry asks.

'No, if we wait here two minutes, everyone will be gone. I'm already hot enough.' Harry opens the tap and splashes some water towards Joey.

'Here, cool off a little.' Joey laughs and opens the other tap. He drinks as if he hasn't had anything to drink all day.

'Soon all the water will be gone,' Harry jokes. Joey wipes his mouth on his shirt.

'Come on, let's go.'

The door of the classroom is open. Harry goes in and starts to walk towards his table. Joey grabs him by the shoulder.

'What are you doing?' Joey's voice sounds very angry. Harry sees Mats standing at his table. Joey pushes Harry aside and runs to Mats.

'It's you, isn't it?' He grabs Mats by the shirt.

'What have you got in your hand? Behind your back?' Harry asks, who has come closer.

'Nothing,' Mats says very softly.

'Yeah right! You stole the vouchers.' Harry tries to catch them, but Mats drops the vouchers on the floor behind him.

'You're a thief,' Harry says. He can't recall ever being this angry with anyone. Joey is shaking Mats roughly.

'You stole Harry's cap! You're nasty!'

'Open that cupboard, Harry.' Harry immediately understands what Joey wants to do. As a result of their research together and them writing it all down. They do not need help from a real detective. They can solve this themselves. He turns the key and opens the cupboard. There are piles of notebooks and books on the shelves. At the bottom, there's the vacuum cleaner and a broom. Harry gets the vacuum cleaner out.

'No, don't,' Mats struggles. Joey and Harry hold him tight and push him on his knees into the cupboard. It takes some effort to close the door again. Together they lean against the cupboard. Mats bangs the door. 'Let me out! Let me out!' Joey turns the key in the lock.

'So you were right,' Harry says very softly. He notices that he's shaking. He isn't sure whether Joey has a red face because of the heat or because of anger. 'I knew it,' Joey says. Mats is still pounding on the door.



'Open that door immediately!' Mr Liam has come in.

'What on earth are you doing?' Harry and Joey obey the teacher. They have never heard the teacher so angry. Mats crawls out of the cupboard and gets up. He snuffles and can't stop crying.

'I'm absolutely furious at your behaviour, boys. Harry and Joey, get out of my sight! I'm very disappointed in you! Just go and report to the headmaster!' The teacher walks over to Mats and puts his arm around him.

'Come and sit here.' Mats is invited to sit down on the teacher's chair. Joey and Harry leave the classroom.

'It's not fair,' Harry says and grits his teeth, 'now we'll get punished.' Joey doesn't say anything. Silently he walks along the corridor to the headmaster's room. Harry walks behind him, clenching his fists.

Joey knocks on the headmaster's door.

'Come on in,' they hear the headmaster say. They slowly enter his room.

'Hi, guys, haven't you gone home yet?'

'No sir,' Harry says.

'Take a seat then.'

'What have you been up to? You have a guilty look on your faces.' Harry takes a deep breath, but no words come. He's so angry. The headmaster looks at them, but the boys stay silent.

'Good, you've reported to the headmaster. Glad you didn't disappoint me there,' they hear Mr Liam say.

'They locked their classmate Mats in the cupboard.' The teacher emphasises the words locked in the cupboard. He pauses a moment before continuing.

'Mats is that new student, just moved, parents separated.'

'Yes, I know who you mean,' the headmaster interrupts him.

'Is that correct, what the teacher says?'

'Yes... uh... no,' Joey starts.

'Both of you are going to write down exactly what happened. And we're going to call your parents.' The headmaster gives them both a pen and a large sheet of paper. Then they are left alone.

'Write, Joey! Write down everything. This is our chance,' Harry whispers. He positions himself and starts writing. It isn't very neat, but he doesn't care. He writes everything down. His fingers hurt. He's holding on to his pen tightly. He

hears Joey's pen scratching the paper as well. Occasionally they both sigh deeply.

'How long will it take before our parents get to school?' Joey asks.

'No idea. Keep on writing.' Small drops of sweat appear on Harry's forehead. His hands are also sticky with sweat. But he's not quitting. The teacher must know what has happened. His sheet of paper is full, so he continues on the other side of it. Joey puts down his pen with a sigh.

'Ready.'

'Have you forgotten anything?'

'I don't think so.' Harry finishes his last sentence, and then leans against the back of the chair. It's silent. After a while they hear footsteps in the corridor.

'Are you ready?' the teacher asks them. His voice still sounds angry. He grabs the sheets of paper from the desk.

'Let's go back to the classroom then.' Quietly the boys walk ahead of the teacher. Mats is still sitting on the teacher's chair. Two more chairs have been set up. Harry and Joey take a seat. The teacher keeps standing.

'We'll wait here for your parents. The headmaster will escort them here.' The boys don't say anything to each other.

'I'll read your notes, later on you can read them aloud.'

Harry thinks it's taking forever. He puts his hands under his legs. That way the teacher won't see his clenched fists. He jiggles his legs. He's angry and nervous. The teacher sighs deeply and turns the note.

16 PUNISHMENT

'Ahem...,' The teacher clears his throat.

'I need your help. I have a big problem.' The three boys wait for what's coming. They still don't say anything. The teacher turns the notes again. And again. And then puts them on his desk.

'I've just spoken to your parents. I told them what I saw.' The teacher walks back and forth. And he waits a moment before continuing.

'Harry and Joey, your parents are very angry. They'll be coming to school soon.' Harry clenches his fists even more tightly. They hurt.

'But, I think,' the teacher goes on, 'that the story has more to it.' The teacher stops in front of Mats.

'Harry and Joey have written down what has happened. Can you guess what they wrote, Mats?' Mats snuffles again.

'Yes,' he says very softly.

'What would that be?'

Harry stopped wobbling. He anxiously waits for what Mats is going to say.

'Well, I...,' Mats starts. But then he doesn't go any further. The teacher picks up the notes again.

'Did you hide the bottle of sunscreen?'

'Yes,' Harry hears him answer.

'And is it true that you stole Harry's cap?'

'Uh no... yes...'

'Yes or no?' The teacher asks sternly.

'I didn't steal it, Mr Liam, but I did hide it.'

'And did you want to take the vouchers from Harry as well?' Mats is sobbing softly.

'Yes.' The teacher slaps the notes down.

'Well then, can you explain why you did all that?' Harry holds his breath. Joey also listens intently.

'Well..., I...,' The teacher interrupts him.

'Mats, it's important that you tell the truth.' Mats sighs and starts to talk.

'When I joined this class, I saw everybody helping Harry with everything. Even getting a book from the shelf. And he was always allowed to sit close to the teacher. And he can wear a cap in the classroom.' Mats sighs deeply.

'I don't get it. And I think it's stupid. I have to figure out everything myself. And I don't have any friends. And then I hid that bottle. I wanted to test whether he's really visually impaired. Because I thought he could see everything. And then...' Mats starts to cry softly. Harry holds his breath. Mats' story sounds sad. Yet Harry is still angry.

'I'm really visually impaired! You better remember,' Harry says fervently. 'Harry, wait a minute,' the teacher says. He puts his hand on the boy's shoulder.

'You'll get your chance to talk later.'

'But, I didn't do it on purpose,' Mats says.

'The way I see it,' the teacher says, 'is you felt lonely in class. You'd just moved. Your parents are divorced. It must have been very difficult for you.' The teacher stoops down in front of Mats.

'But Mats, do you understand that what you did isn't smart? It doesn't solve anything.' Mr Liam sits down on top of his desk.

'The problems have only grown, boys. All three of you carried out your plans on your own. And even though you didn't do it on purpose, you've hurt each other.' They all nod. Carefully they look at each other.

'Harry, now you've heard a bit about how Mats felt in class. Do you want to tell us something about albinism? '

'OK,' Harry says.

'I have albinism. That means that I'm white, I've got white skin and hair. And I'm visually impaired. I see about 10% so I have to look at everything up close. And the sun bothers me.'

'Oh,' Mats declares, 'I didn't know that. It seems like you see everything. You don't bump into anything.'

'Sometimes he does,' Joey grins.

'I know exactly where everything is at school. That's why I don't bump into anything.'

'OK, guys, I think that's enough for now. Your parents are here.'

The boys' parents enter the classroom. Harry is happy that the teacher tells them what has happened.

'And what punishment do the boys get?' Harry's father asks.

'Because it's really not OK to lock someone in a cupboard.' Harry can feel his face turning red. He knows his Dad is right.

'I agree,' the teacher says.

'I think all three deserve to be punished.' The teacher turns around to the boys.

'Until the summer holidays, you will do chores for John, when school is out.

Understood?'

'Yes, Mr Liam,' the three of them say at the same time.

'Go and tell John. So that he can figure out what chores you can do tomorrow.

It also gives me an opportunity to talk some more with your parents.' The boys leave the classroom as fast as they can.

'Hold on, Harry. Wait a minute.' Harry turns around and walks back into the classroom.

'Here are your vouchers. Look after them.' Relieved, Harry pushes the vouchers deep into his pocket. Then together with Mats and Joey, he goes to look for John.



The moment Harry gets home, he runs up the stairs. Never before has he taken the thirteen steps so fast. He looks for the notebook, in which Joey had written everything. Then he runs back down the stairs just as quickly.

'Dad!' he calls.

'Here's the notebook.' His father reads it.

'Shall we throw it away, Harry? Then it really is over! Otherwise you might keep thinking about it even though you really have to give Mats a new chance.' Harry holds the bin open, and his father throws in the notebook with one smooth move.

'That's that. I hope you've learned from it.'

Every day, the boys report to John. They work hard. They empty the waste bins. They vacuum clean. They pick up cups from the classrooms and put them in the dishwasher. They stock toilet paper. John has chores for them every day. And Harry has to admit that it's not actually that bad, in fact it's even fun. On the last day before the summer holidays, John has a surprise for them.

'Hey, guys, you have to promise me that you won't say anything to your teacher.'

'What can't we say?' Harry asks.

'Promise first.'

'OK, we won't tell,' Mats says. Joey and Harry agree with him.

'I've called your parents to let them know that you won't be going home straight away.'

'Why?'

Harry can't think of a reason why they won't be going home yet.

'Patience, lad. Don't worry.' John slaps him on his shoulder.

'You've worked hard. You've been a tremendous help. We're going to order pizza!'

'Really? Pizza?' Harry's excited.

'Why can't we tell the teacher about this?' Joey asks.

'Wasn't this your punishment? Eating pizza doesn't sound like punishment to me.' The boys crack up laughing.

A little later, four pizzas are delivered.

'Oh, that smells nice.' John rubs his big belly.

'Come on, let's go to the staff room. I think we're allowed to do that today.'

They sit down and wait for John to hand out the boxes.

'Who ordered pizza Hawaii?'

'Me!' Mats says.

'And who wanted a Salami pizza?' No one answers.

'Oh, of course I did.' Joey ordered a Margarita pizza.

'And what's this?' John hands the box to Harry. Harry quickly opens the box and checks that it's the right one. He bends over deeply, but makes sure his nose doesn't touch the pizza.

'Is it the right one?' John asks.

'Yes. Delicious, with chicken.' Then it goes quiet. Everyone's enjoying their pizza.

'How's the fundraising going Harry?' John wants to know. Harry has his mouth full, but when it's empty he responds.

'Good! We've raised a lot of money. Gloria's class had a high tea. Together we've raised about 175 euros.'

'That's a lot,' Mats says, 'then they can probably buy a lot of bottles of sunscreen'.

'Who wants a drink?' John gets up and comes back with four glasses and a bottle of cola.

'Wow, they have cola at school?'

'Ah, if you knew everything,' John laughs. He fills up the glasses.

'And, what are we toasting to?'

'To us,' Harry says, 'that we'll stay good friends.' Harry can't see that John is smiling and that Mats is looking very happy.

'To us,' they all say, and they gently tap their glasses together.



APPENDIX: INFORMATION ABOUT ALBINISM

Objective

You've read Harry's story. Harry seems like a very normal boy. Yet something's different about him. He has albinism. In this appendix, you read what albinism is.

Characteristics of albinism

Albinism means you have less pigment than other children, sometimes no pigment at all. Pigment is what gives colour to your hair, your eyes and your skin. There are different forms of albinism. Someone with albinism can have the following characteristics:

- white hair
- white skin
- visually impaired
- nystagmus (also known as dancing eyes).

Harry has full albinism, with no pigment in his eyes, skin and hair, meaning that his hair is white. In the other form, only the pigment in the eyes is missing.

What is albinism?

Albinism is a genetic condition that a child is born with. Albinism is very rare and affects 1 in 10,000 people. Something goes wrong with the creation of pigment, which means that no or very little melanin is made. Melanin gives you the colour of your skin, hair and eyes. So Harry has no melanin and so no pigment, colouring. That's why he's completely white, also his hair and his eyes. The amount of pigment determines whether you have blue, green or brown eyes. The pigment in your eyes protects you from sunlight. Because they have no or very little pigment, people with albinism often find the light too bright. Sunglasses and a cap can help.

Pigment is a kind of protective layer for the skin cells and prevent the sun damaging the cells. Without pigment, the UV rays penetrate deep into the skin.

People with albinism have to protect their skin very well from the sun to reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Most people with albinism are also visually impaired, varying from 5 to 40 percent of the normal eyesight. That's because the yellow spot in the eye hasn't developed properly. This yellow spot is at the back of your eyeball. The yellow spot enables you to see details. How well the yellow spot works therefore affects how well you can see.

Many children with albinism have nystagmus, which means that their eyes dance. The brain corrects what they see so that they still have a still picture.

Aids

Albinism is incurable and looking at things can be tiring. Nevertheless, people with albinism can play a full role in society. The following things can help:

- More time to look at things.
- Contrasting colours.
- Good lighting.
- The possibility to enlarge letters and images, for example on a tablet or a (screen) magnifying glass.
- A cap and/or sunglasses to protect the eyes from (bright) light.
- Using a high factor sun cream and/or wearing protective clothing. The skin must be protected from UV rays to prevent skin cancer.
- People with albinism who have no pigment at all must visit the dermatologist (doctor) and optician regularly.
- Support from Bartiméus or Visio. These are organisations which offer support at school, home and at work.

Questions

1. What did you notice about Harry?
2. Is there anyone in your class who has a lot of pigment or very little?
3. What's the difference between being blind and visually impaired?
4. What aids does Harry use?
5. Are there any games that Harry might not be able to play? What games could he play?

6. Harry comes to your house. What might he find difficult in and around your house?

Examples

You can't always notice that Harry is visually impaired. He has about 10% vision. That means that details that someone else can see 10 metres away, he can only see from 1 metre.

Even though he doesn't see everything in focus, in his head he knows exactly what the school playground looks like. Here are some examples mentioned in the book. These examples help you to better understand Harry and other children with albinism.

In chapter 1, Harry is lying under his duvet in bed. He hears his sister Gloria coming. Harry uses his ears very well so that he can gather important information.

In chapter 2, Harry knows exactly which paving stone is crooked. He can dream the route to school. Harry uses his memory to get around. In new surroundings, Harry has to be careful. He might bump into a glass bus shelter for example. When Harry tidies up his room (in chapter 6), he feels the floor with his hand. That's a quick way to find out if anything's still there.

Harry can fill the photocopier with paper himself (chapter 9). He's done that before. And imagine how difficult it must have been then. But he's got experience and now he can do it!

Because Harry is visually impaired, he lacks information. In chapter 11, they're sitting on the beach together. Something happens which makes his grandpa and dad laugh. Do you know what it was about? Harry wonders what's happening, because he hasn't got that information.

Experiment 1

Take an (old) pair of diving goggles. Ask an adult to help. Spray some hairspray on the goggles and leave to dry. Put the goggles on.

- Walk around the room. What do you notice?
- Colour in a colouring sheet. Are you happy with the result?

- Look at someone else. Describe the emotions on the other person's face.

Experiment 2

Take a cardboard box. Make a round hole in it so that your arm fits exactly inside. Ask an adult to place different objects in the box without showing you what they are.

- What do you feel?
- Is it smooth, cold, slippery, woolly, long, soft, round or itchy?
- What does this information tell you?
- Could you have guessed what it was if you'd never seen it before?

More information

www.oogvereniging.nl/ledengroep/patientengroep-albinisme/

www.bartimeus.nl

www.visio.org

www.oogartsen.nl

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