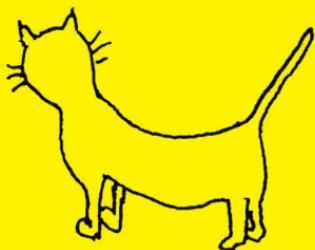


**Excerpts from**  
The Awfulness of  
**Tom & Kate**



'How alarming  
To think that once they seemed so charming.'



With 81 illustrations by the author

MARTIN PROBERT

**EXCERPTS**  
**from the Paperback Version of**

The Awfulness  
of  
Tom and Kate

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# The Awfulness of Tom and Kate

Martin Probert

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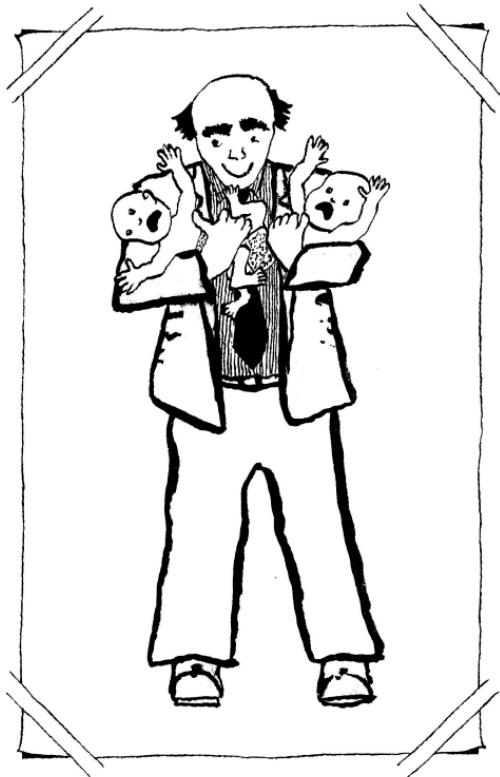
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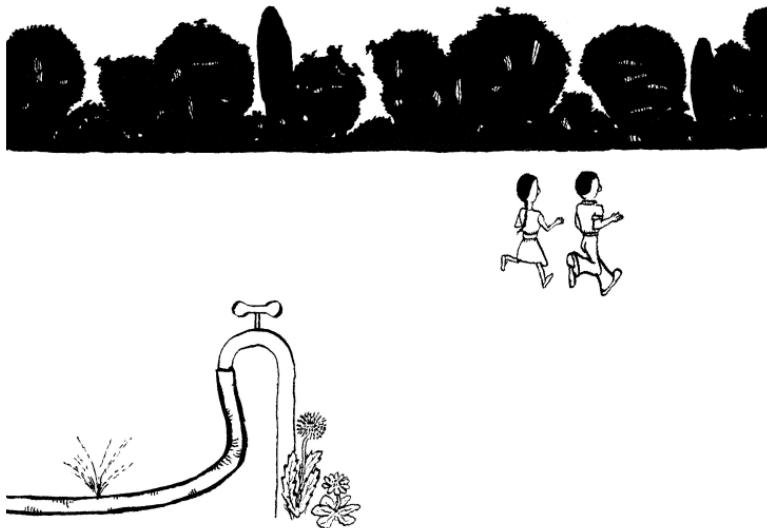
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# Once Tom and Kate were babes in arms



With father smiling at their  
charms



But now, in just a few short years,  
Dad's tender smiles have turned to tears.  
Were these his babies?



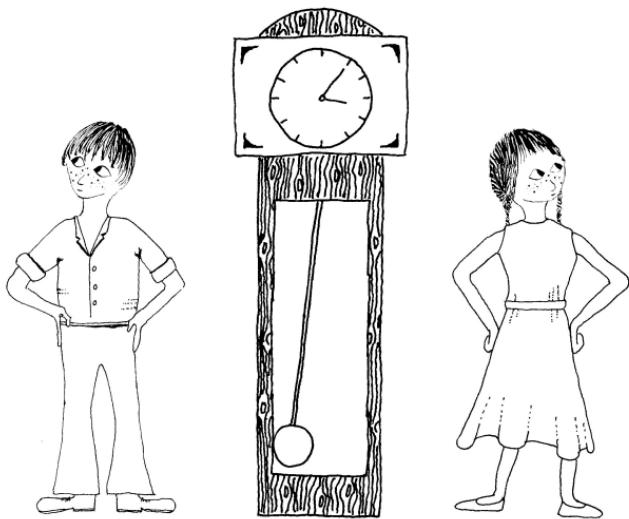
How alarming  
To think that once they seemed so charming.

# The music lesson

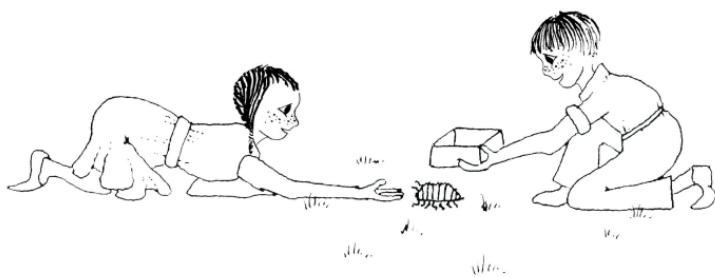
Father, dreaming of the times  
When Tom and Kate lisped nursery rhymes,  
Gets wondering if they've got the ear  
To start a musical career.

Close by (ten minutes' walk would reach her)  
Lives Mary Quail the music teacher  
And Father, when he hears about her,  
Can't make out how he does without her:  
If she could keep those twins in tune  
He'd gain a peaceful afternoon.

So Mary's asked, and answers 'Yes'  
And guarantees complete success:  
By just one hour per week's tuition  
She'll make each twin a choice musician,  
And soon will have them play with skill  
Staccato, tremolo and trill.



O where's Miss Quail? It's five past three,  
The twins look bored and fidgety,  
So Tom and Kate, since Mary's late,

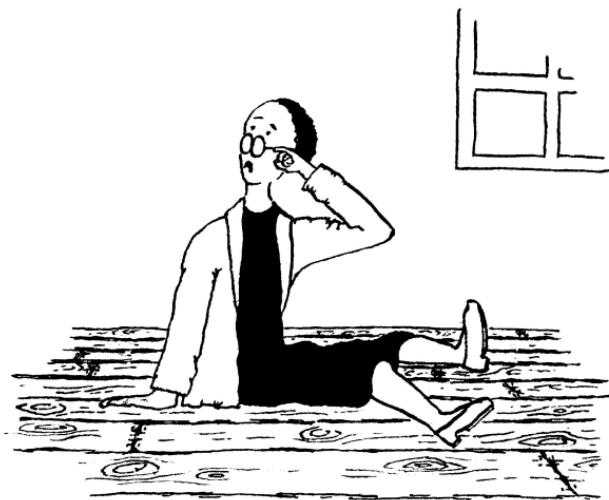


Catch pillbugs for her while they wait.

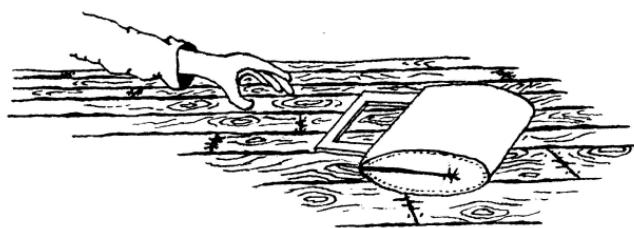
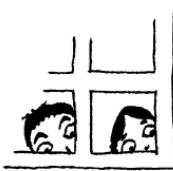
**Pages 12-24 not included**

## A box of pills

Poor Mary has a sad complaint:  
When things go wrong, she tends to faint,  
And though it's silly, when one's ill,  
To always swallow down a pill,  
She carries, lest her knees should sag,  
A pharmacy within her bag  
Of tablets, weird and bitter-sweet,  
To keep her standing on her feet.



No one at all sees Mary waken  
And she, still rather dazed and shaken,  
Peers round about her for the twins



Then reaches for her medicines.

**Pages 28-58 not included**

## A bad day for butterflies

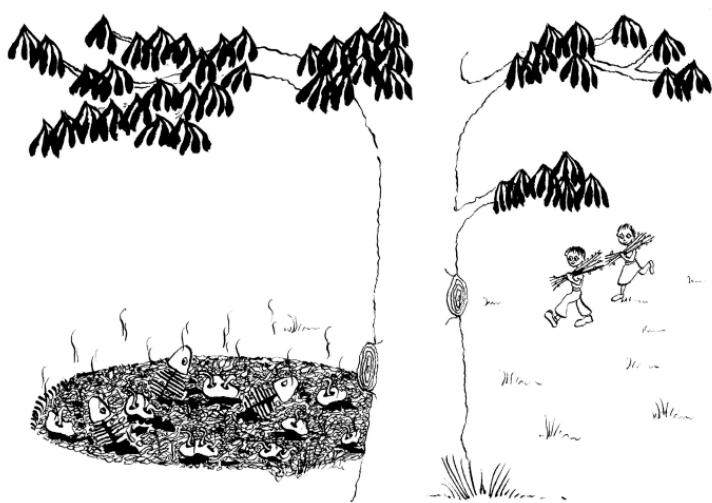
When one compares the wars of nations  
With what takes place between relations  
One sees why many of us dream  
To wake up as a king or queen  
For then we'd quit that endless rattle  
Of close relations pitched in battle.

Today's post brings Dad's latest sorrow:  
Aunt and Uncle come tomorrow!  
Dad groans: 'I hardly think this visit  
Is really necessary, is it?  
It's no one's birthday; no one's ill;  
It's not the season of good will;  
In fact there's not the least excuse  
For hospitality's abuse.'  
Then he and Mum, who must play host,  
Curse the postman and his post.

Yet Mum, with duster, brush and pan,  
Works hard to get things spick and span;  
Puts Tom and Kate into the tub  
And gives them both a hearty scrub;  
She drubs and drubs despite their whining  
And only stops when both are shining.  
The victims, glaring round morosely,  
Consider they've been treated grossly,  
And since they cannot see the point  
Of scrubbings till they're out of joint  
They set their minds on getting even  
With Aunty Liz and Uncle Stephen.



Dad's compost pit smells worse each minute  
With all the fish bones dumped within it



But covered up by branch and twig



They hope to capture something big  
‘A pitfall trap! What fun!’ says Kate.

‘And now,’ says Tom, ‘we hide and wait.  
But first we need a butterfly.’

‘They’ve all gone,’ Kate says with a sigh



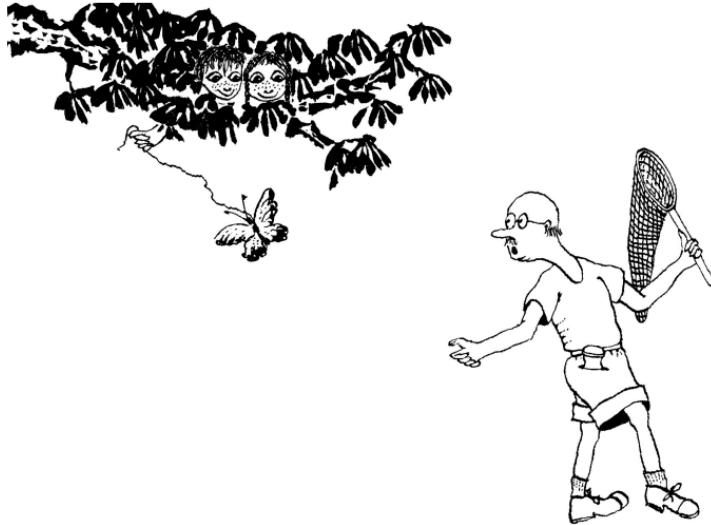
And so, with scissors and guffawings,  
They cut one from a book of drawings



And then with cotton make a kite  
And, climbing high up, hide from sight.



Soon Tom and Kate hear Uncle grunt:  
'Huh! not one cabbage white to hunt!'  
(For reader, you should know that he  
Delights in lepidoptery,  
Stalking butterflies for hours  
While trampling all Dad's precious flowers.)



But as he waits with net held high  
A glorious rarity flutters by.



Uncle with an expert look  
Half thinks he's seen it in a book,  
Then makes for it with swoops and sweeps  
While Tom and Kate direct his leaps.

**Pages 68-78 not included**

## The conjurer's table

It makes mankind profoundly sad  
To see the way our world grows bad  
And yet, though all things make him frown,  
Man still delights to play the clown.

Thus Dad, who tends to find life tragic,  
Is strangely fond of jests and magic  
And often, from behind his ear,  
A fan of aces will appear;  
At other times he'll pluck a rose  
From underneath a lady's nose;  
Or sit upon an egg, and then  
Stand up to show a clockwork hen;  
Or else, between two dinner plates,  
He'll find a box of choc-o-lates  
'Oo,' cry the twins, 'they look fantastic!'  
But UGH! they're only made of plastic;  
Or taking up a hand of rice  
Will roll out twenty weeny dice;  
Or burn a lady's handkerchief  
Then mend it to her great relief...

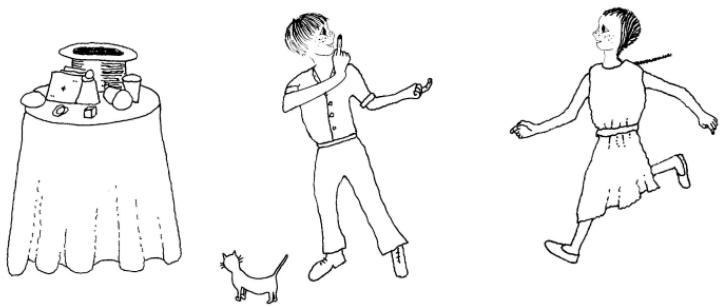
In fact, his friends say with a leer,  
Dad does all things but disappear.

Now since no friend has paid a visit  
For months to see his tricks exquisite  
Dad phones them round, bids each Hello,  
And asks them to a magic show,  
Then adds that as he's out on Sunday  
They'd better all come round on Monday.

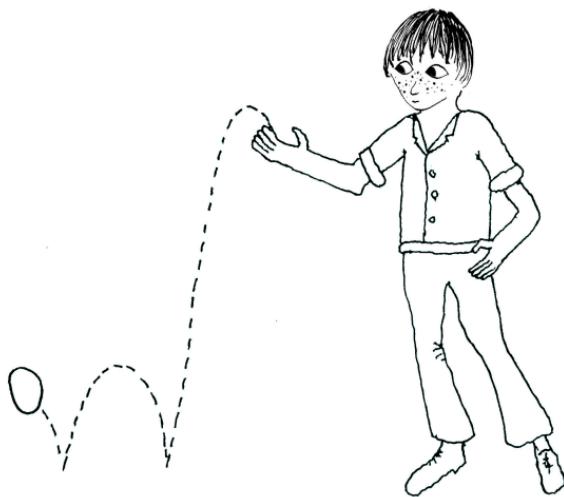


The guests, at 25 past 6,  
Arrive to see Dad's conjuring tricks.

'Ssh!' whispers Dad, 'they're up in bed;  
Keep quiet, or they'll be down instead.  
We packed them off,' he winks, 'so early  
For making too much hurly-burly.'



But Tom and Kate, in bed since 5,  
Have snoozed, and now feel quite alive  
And hearing all the talk and chat  
They creep down, followed by the cat.



'Look! here's an egg' – oops! down it drops  
SPLAT! on the ground – then off it hops!  
'This egg,' says Tom, 'seems strange to me;  
It feels quite soft and rubbery;  
And one that won't break when you drop it  
Can't be too good; we ought to swap it.'



'You're right,' says Kate, 'it should be harder;  
I'll fetch a fresh one from the larder.'

**Pages 84-106 not included**

## About the Author

In January 1970 I had written, ‘When I was younger I did a lot of painting and I had a feeling that one day I would make a book of paintings or drawings, but that somehow there would be words there too. As my idea of poetry has developed, I have felt I wanted to make a little book, and that somehow there would be pictures there too. So you see for about 15 years it seems I have wanted to make a little book of words & pictures.’

The text was finished in about 1985, but the drawings had to wait another 35 years before I had them all complete. So as things turned out this ‘little book’, first conceived when I was at school, had to wait a lifetime to see the light of day.

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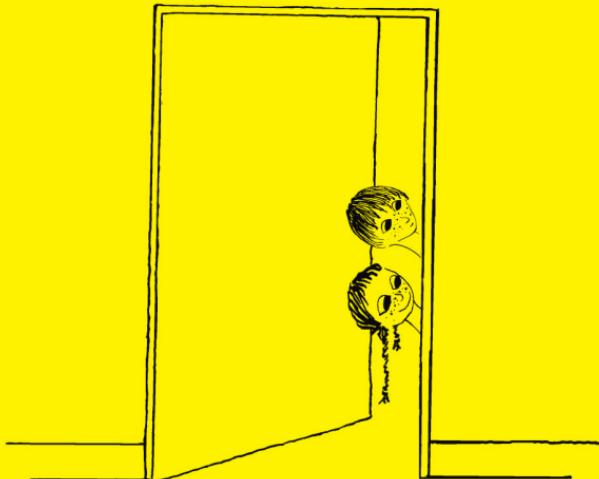
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# **The Awfulness of Tom and Kate**

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Tom and Kate seem so innocent, so deceptively charming, it is hard to believe that any child could be so mischievous. They roll pillbugs inside their music teacher's recorder. They tuck a donkey inside father and mother's bed.

A lavishly illustrated romp in rhyme which will delight young and old, mums and dads, aunts and uncles, and lovers of cats, donkeys, bugs and butterflies.



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