

JACK & BEA'S  
SURVIVAL GUIDE  
TO  
CHURCH

This work is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or events, is 100% coincidental. Like 100%. At least. Also, sometimes we've paraphrased the Bible and, if you want to, you can look up what it actually says. Some of the passages we've referred to are: **Genesis 1-3**, **Matthew 6:25-34**, **Genesis 37**, and **Genesis 40-41**, but we recommend reading the whole thing. :)

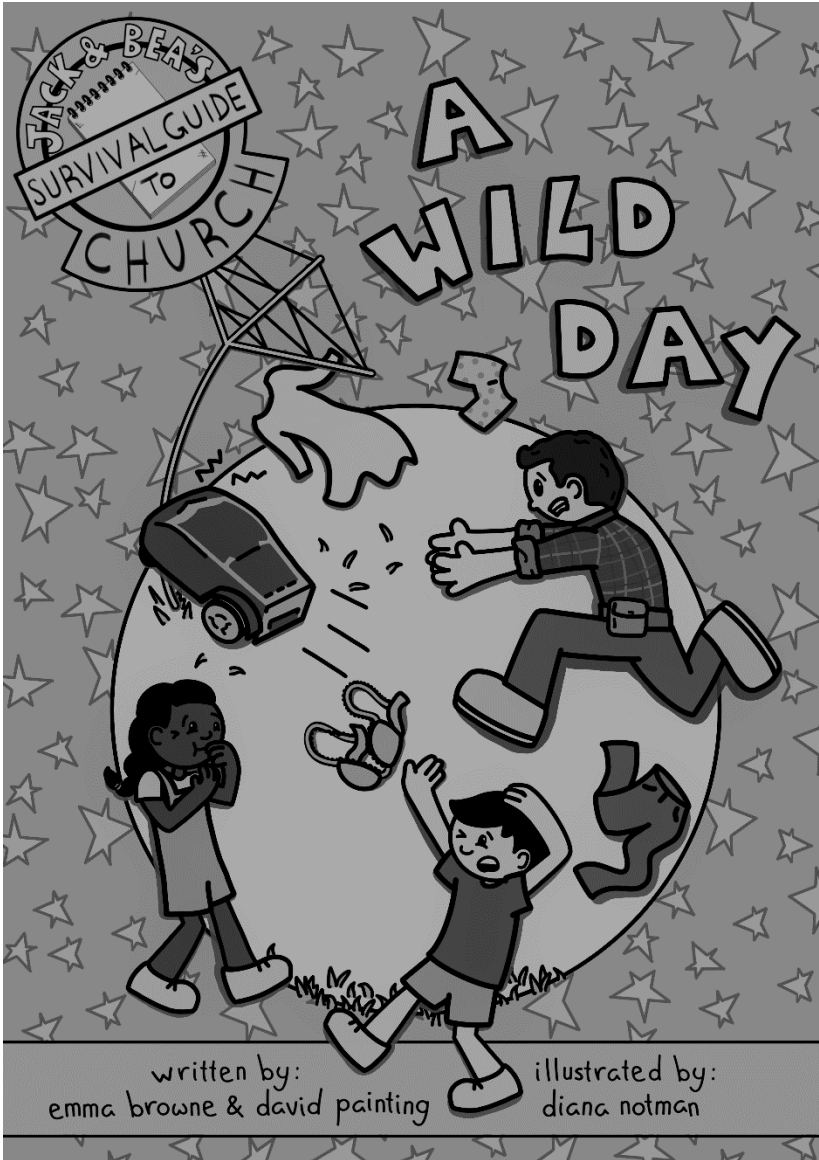
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Illustrations by Diana Notman.

Edited by Mary McCorkle.

First published 2022.

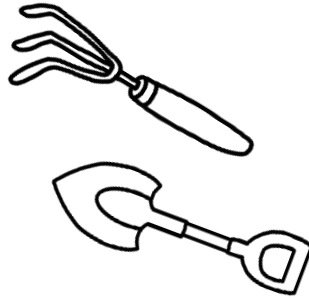


written by:  
emma browne & david painting

illustrated by:  
diana notman

## **Caution!!**

Read this book at your own risk



## Chapter 1

I know Holiday Club isn't Jack's idea of fun, but I don't mind it. In fact, I'd rather be at Holiday Club than at home.

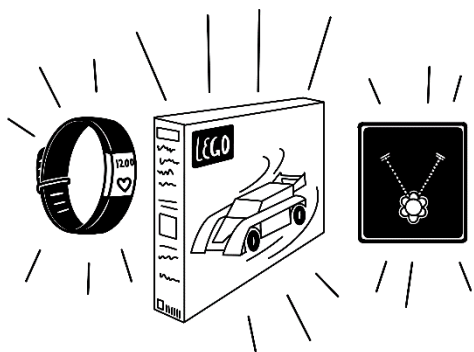
I know: you're not meant to say things like that. And I wouldn't tell my Mum or Dad that, so maybe let's just keep it between you and me?

I used to like being at home, but since Mum got sick, everything has changed. Mum and Dad try to pretend that everything's all good, like before, but yeah... Mum being sick sucks, and at home there's no escape from it.

Before, I used to LOVE having screen time. Since Mum got sick though, that's all I ever do, and it's boring.

So, when Dad asked me if I'd be up for going to Holiday Club, I actually got pretty excited.

And at the start of the Holiday Club, Miss Turner announced that there was going to be a Holiday Club game where you could earn points, and the one with the most

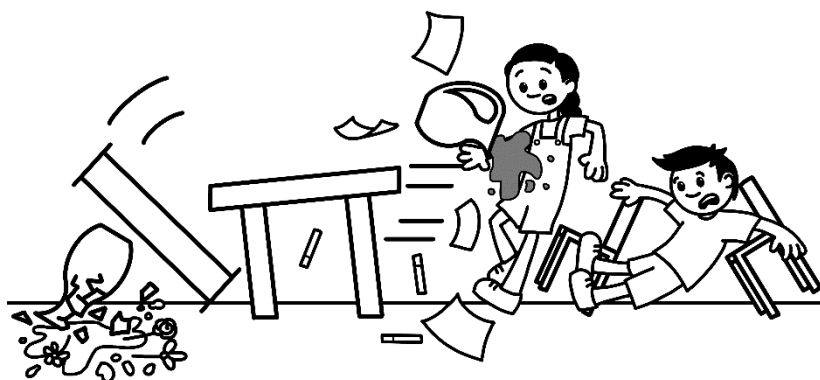


points could win a Fitbit, a Lego set, or a really pretty necklace.

It's Mum's birthday next week, and I really want to cheer her up, so I was

hoping to win the necklace for her.

But then that clumsy Jack spilt juice all over me before it even started. And yeah, okay, maybe it was a little over the top to throw a box of crayons at Jack, but he really should have been more careful.



And that was probably where my chances of winning the necklace ended, which also SUCKS!

Anyway, then we ended up kicked out of Holiday Club by Miss Turner.

I normally really like Miss Turner. She smells nice and always has mints in her handbag. Not the too strong kind,

but the kind that's nice. So, when she told us we had to go spend the rest of the morning with Bob, the church caretaker, I was even more disappointed.

But then, Bob asked us to do a whole bunch of puzzles, and I like doing puzzles, so it turned out to be an okay morning after all. I mean, Jack was there too, so it wasn't PERFECT, but I guess it was okay.



Now we're back for the second day, and today we're gardening.

I know. Gardening is, like, for old people, and I'm ten, but it's kind of nice to be outside. It's DEFINITELY better than going with Mum to the hospital to find out the results of some tests she had last week - so I think it'll be okay.

'Morning,' Bob says. 'Lovely day for gardening. I thought we'd start out the back.'

'What, in the jungle?' Jack mutters.

'Ha, is that what you call it?' Bob chuckles. 'Yes, it is pretty overgrown, isn't it? But I reckon with my two willing helpers, we can tame the jungle. Mind you, we'll need to watch out for lions and tarantulas.'

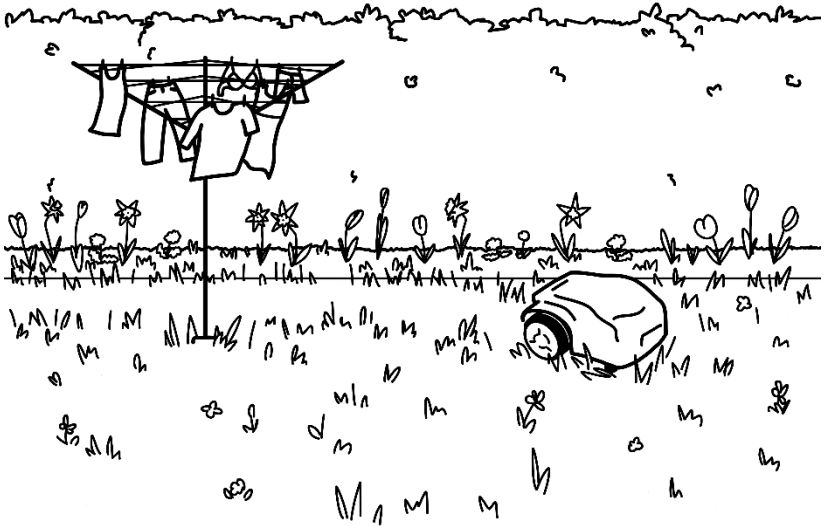
I roll my eyes. 'There aren't any tarantulas in Scotland. And lions don't live in the jungle, anyway.'

'Well, you can never be too careful is what I say.' Bob opens the back door and steps out. 'Come on.'

Jack and I follow him into the overgrown mess that is the church garden.

'Maybe the next-door neighbour would like to come help do some of the gardening here, too.' I point toward the neighbour's garden. It looks pretty different from the church garden— all neat and tidy with a row of flowers along the front of the house, and a big piece of grass which has a robot lawnmower going over it.





'Ooh, look,' says Jack. 'There's one of those cool robot lawn-mowers. That's what we need here!'

'Ah, robots!' Bob shakes his head. 'You need real people to take care of things. Robots just follow their programming.'

'But how cool is that?' Jack's hands fling up. 'You just set it going and sit back and watch!'

I shrug. 'It is clever, but what if it goes wrong? It might just keep mowing away. It might end up in the pond, or anywhere, really...'

'That would be even cooler!' Jack looks at me, and I don't think I've ever seen him look so excited before. 'A submarine lawnmower!'

I sigh. Sometimes I wonder what planet Jack thinks he lives on.

A submarine lawnmower.

Really.

Bob smiles at him and points toward the church garden.

'Ok: enough, you two. Leave the robot and let's get on with some proper work for people - weeding.'

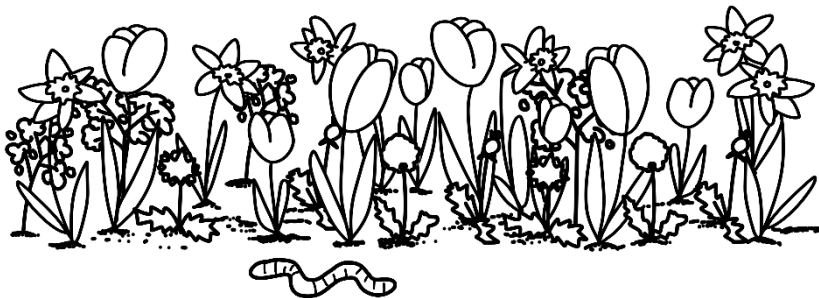
Jack sighs, and I can tell he's not super excited about the idea.

'Oh, great. Even better than drawing: weeding...' He groans, and I bet he's thinking of how to get out of it. 'How do I even know what's a weed?'

'It's obvious,' I say, because it's not like it's THAT difficult. I point at some flowers. 'These are flowers: tulips and daffodils. These aren't, so they're weeds.'

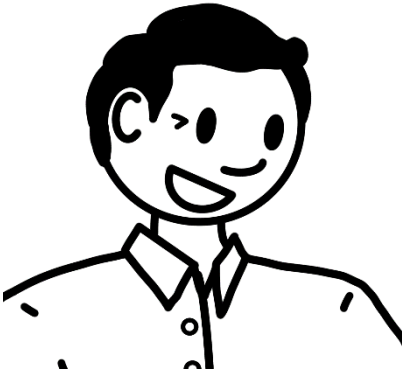
Jack frowns. 'But these little ones have nice flowers as well. Surely they're not weeds?'

Bob looks to where he's pointing. 'Ah, they are pretty, I agree, but Bea is right - even something nice in the wrong place needs to be removed, otherwise even the nice things spread and push out the flowers you want.'



Of course I'm right.

'Well,' Jack says (still looking like he's trying to get out of doing any weeding), 'How is anyone supposed to know what is meant to be here?'



Bob smiles, and I get the feeling he knows exactly what Jack is doing. 'It's a bit like the jigsaws, remember? You have to know what it's meant to look like; you need to know the picture on the box. So, picture this bed, full of

daffodils and tulips. Then, anything that isn't a daffodil or tulip, you can take out. Off you go.'

Jack sighs. 'Fine.' Even Jack must know what daffodils and tulips look like.



We get to work and start pulling the weeds out of the garden.

'It looks like nobody's done any weeding here for a very long time,' Jack says.

I agree. It's pretty overgrown.

We work quietly side by side for a while.



Well, I say quietly. I mean, I'm quiet. Jack does an awful lot of groaning and sighing.

And maybe it's because I know what a weed is, and Jack doesn't, or because he keeps staring at the robot next door, but my pile of weeds is growing a LOT faster than his is.

A little while later, Bob comes back to check on us, and I sit up properly to have a look at how far we've come.

'Ah, that's looking better already,' says Bob. 'We'll soon have the place looking like the Garden of Eden!'

Jack groans. Again. 'If God hadn't created weeds, we wouldn't have to do this!'

I shake my head at him. 'God didn't create weeds. The Bible says everything God created was good, and weeds aren't GOOD.'

'Mhm,' Jack sounds even more sceptical than usual. 'But then where did weeds come from? And besides, I thought it says that God created EVERYTHING.'

Jack does have a point, even though I hate to admit it.

As usual, when we have a question, Bob asks another one. It's really annoying.



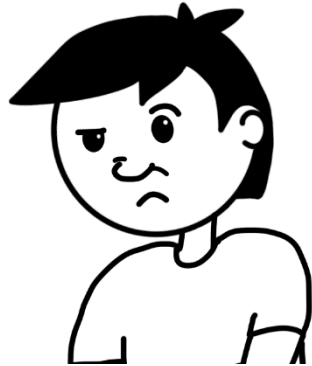
'Well, whatever he created and however he created it, we know he gave us freedom to choose. Right?'

Jack huffs. 'I didn't choose weeds or weeding.'

'True.' Bob nods. 'But you did choose to do things that led to you having fun with me and Bea...'

'FUN!?' Jack looks like he thinks Bob's out of his mind. 'I didn't decide to go to Weedy City!'

I laugh and pick another weed. Gardening clearly isn't Jack's happy place. 'I'd have preferred Tulip Town.'



'Ha ha.' Bob makes a show of rolling his eyes. 'You two are hilarious. But God did put two trees in the garden, didn't he? He gave Adam and Eve a choice about which trees to eat fruit from, and described what each choice would lead to. Wonderful, amazing life forever, or...'

'Or death.' I nod.

'That's right,' Bob continues, and he gets down on his knees and starts helping us with the weeding. 'One of the trees had fruit that brought life. And the other would lead to all things dying, and beautiful things becoming weeds. God could have left the bad tree out of the garden but he decided to keep it so that Adam and Eve could make a real choice - if the tree of life was the only option, it wouldn't

have been a choice. And without any real choice, we would just be robots doing what we were programmed to do.'

'Well, Adam & Eve must have been stupid to have chosen that!' Jack says. 'Who would choose rotten, stinky apples with maggots crawling out of them over a nice juicy orange?'

I get the feeling apples aren't Jack's favourite kind of fruit.

'Nicely put!' Bob says. 'Do you ever do things that feel really silly afterwards?'

Jack looks away, so I clear my throat and say, 'Like kicking a table over, or breaking vases, or spilling juice all over people, or...'

Bob picks up a stick and hands it to me. 'There you go, Bea. Here is a good stick, and there is some good soil. Draw me a little picture - this is Holiday Club, after all!'

I like drawing, and I like to think I'm pretty good at it. Still, drawing with a stick in soil might not be the best way to portray my abilities, so I decide to just draw a house.

Jack looks over and snorts. 'That house is going to fall down. Look at the walls!'

Bob hands Jack a stick and clears some soil. 'Ok, Jack. Now you draw something.'

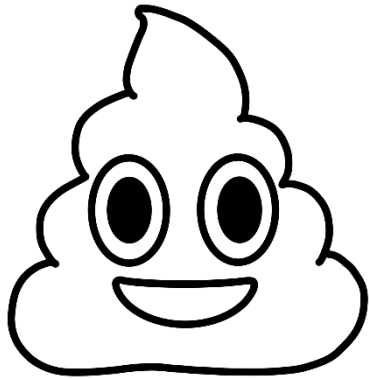
Jack smirks, leans over, and starts to draw.

I look over. He's drawn the poop-emoji.

Because, of course he has.

'That's disgusting, Jack!' I sigh, and go back to weeding.

'It's ok,' says Bob. 'Here's the thing: I gave you both a good stick and some good soil to create something in. I didn't make you draw something good, or something bad. Just like God didn't create bad things - they came about because we chose to use the good things badly.'



'Well, giving us choice was a bad idea, then!' Jack says. I think he's feeling a bit sensitive today, because he gets up and stomps off in a huff.

I shake my head. Maybe he needs a minute to calm down.

A minute later, he shouts. 'Er, I think the robot has a problem!'

I roll my eyes. He's clearly just trying to distract us from how he just stormed off. 'Just ignore him,' I tell Bob. 'He's in a huff and obsessed with robots.'

Bob frowns as he looks over to where Jack is pointing. 'I don't think so, Bea. There does seem to be something odd going on.'

'That's just Jack.' I snort. 'He is very odd.'

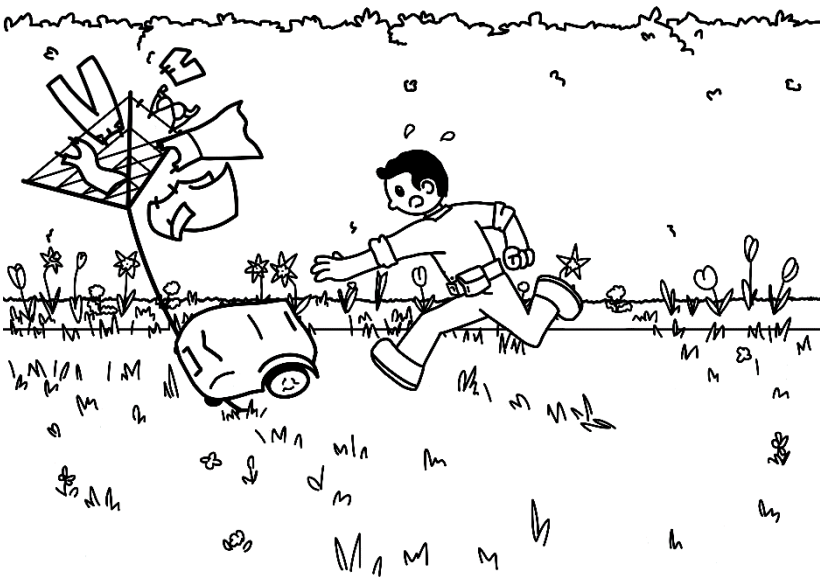
'It's just going round in circles,' Jack yells. 'Mowing the same bit over and over.'

Bob gets up. 'Stay here. I'm going to have a look...'

I don't stay there, because now I'm curious, too. There's definitely something happening.

Bob goes through a gate that connects the church garden with the garden next door, and starts chasing the lawnmower.

You wouldn't think it would be that hard to catch a robot lawnmower because they're usually pretty slow. But this lawnmower has gone into some kind of turbo gear, and it's going all over the place. Bob does his best to try to distract it, or change its course, but he doesn't have much success.





I look at Jack. He's started giggling as he watches Bob chase the lawnmower.

The lawnmower knocks into a whirligig full of drying clothes, which causes some of the clothes to fall off onto the grass and on Bob, who's running under it, still trying to catch the lawnmower.

'Come on,' I say to Jack, and we run through the garden gate to help get the clothes up. We get there just as the lawnmower starts mowing over a t-shirt. 'Grab the clothes!'

Jack and I quickly try to collect the rest of the clothes, probably trampling a few, as Bob keeps chasing the mower. It's heading for the flower bed, which has beautiful flowers blooming and I can't look away as the lawnmower gets closer and closer to mowing them all down.

Just as the robot goes into the flower bed, it stops.

Jack often finds himself getting into trouble. List the top five troubles you've been in:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

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