

HORRID HAMSTERS!

MOBILE GNOME!

WELCOME TO THE

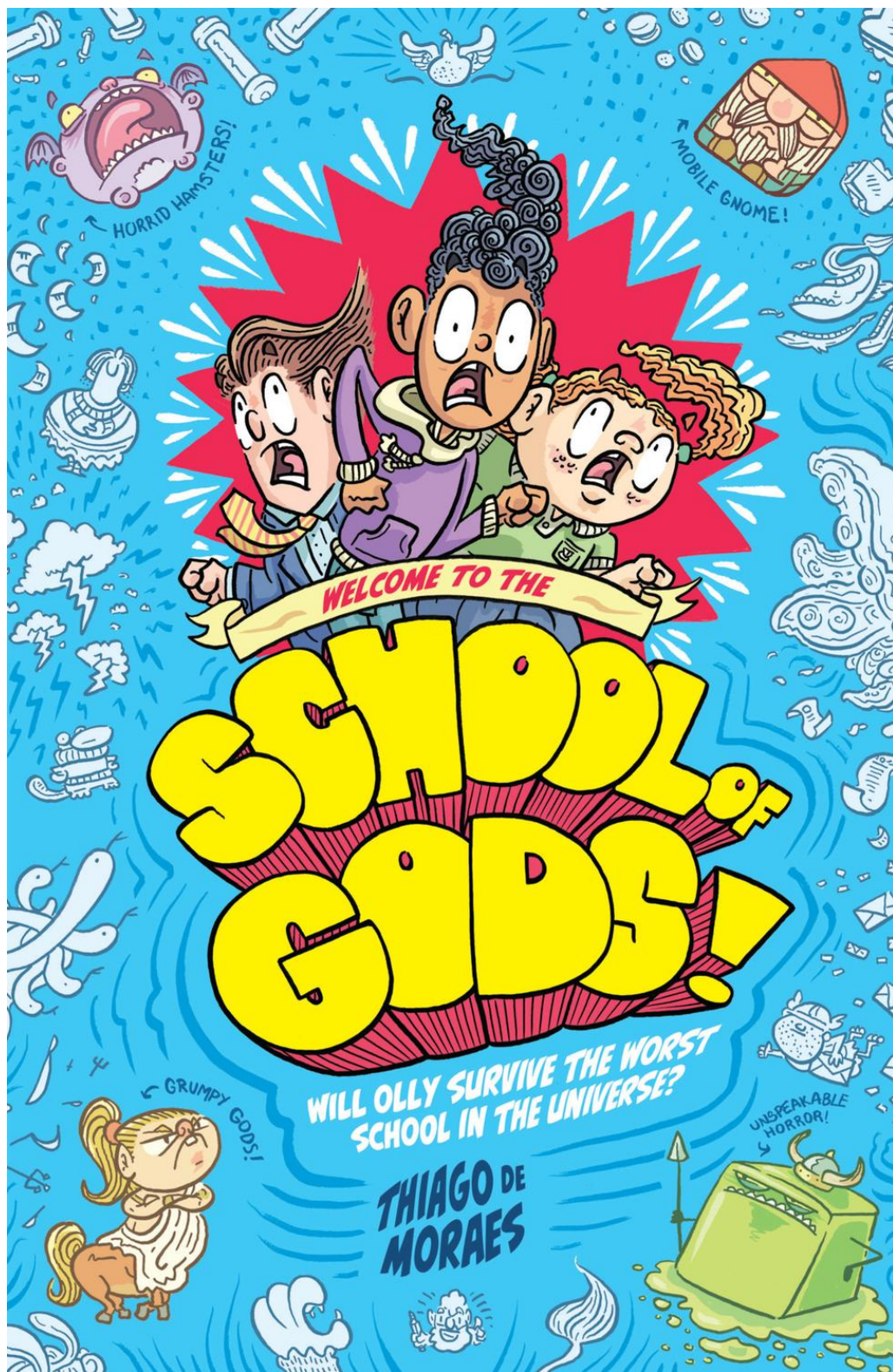
SCHOOL OF GODS!

WILL OLLY SURVIVE THE WORST
SCHOOL IN THE UNIVERSE?

THIAGO DE
MORAES

GRUMPY GODS!

UNSPEAKABLE
HORROR!





www.davidficklingbooks.com

Also by Thiago de Moraes

Old Gods New Tricks
Let Sleeping Gods Lie

Myth Atlas
History Atlas
Discovery Atlas

Mighty Myths and How to Survive Them

A Mummy Ate My Homework!
A Gladiator Stole My Lunchbox!

For younger readers
The Night Bear (with Ana de Moraes)
The Zoomers' Handbook (with Ana de Moraes)



*To Ana, Tom and Billie
and with enormous thanks to Liz and M
who were very serious about making
write something that is not serious a*

WELCOME TO THE SCHOOL OF GODS

First published in 2026

by David Fickling Books, 31 Beaumont Street, Oxford, OX1 2NP

EU Rep: Authorised Rep Compliance Ltd., Ground Floor,

71 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, D02 P593

www.arccompliance.com

This ebook edition first published in 2026

All rights reserved

Text © Thiago de Moraes, 2026

The right of Thiago de Moraes to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This ebook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights, and those responsible may be

liable in law accordingly.

ISBN 978-1-78845-364-6



Olly Morris wasn't looking forward to the summer holidays.

That's normal. Most kids, even those who *really* like school, don't like the end of their holidays. It's hard to say goodbye to mornings watching cartoons, late evenings playing video games and all the time in between, filled with playgrounds, friends, crisps, ice creams, trading cards and, probably, more video games.

Even harder is returning to the harsh reality of very early mornings (sans comfy bed), stuffy uniforms, endless lessons, and

and all that comes with being back at sc
Those are

reasons enough to make any kid sadder th

Clowns are creepy enough with
clown, who es, so sincere
apologies for introducing the
absolutely terrifying idea of a
nose, clown. People usually say
that difficult or scary things like
this build character, but all this
not the expression builds is a
larger fear of clowns.

Olly was



very

uniforms,

dinners,

reports and

8

that comes

has lost

but they

reasons

sad.

He was

the exact

reasons.

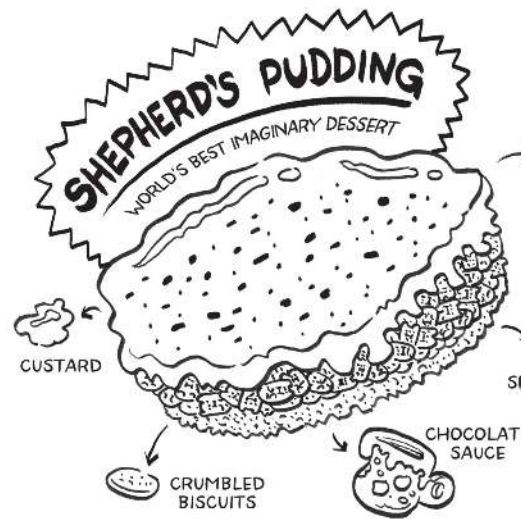
Olly wa

early morning

lessons, sci

homewor

all the sti



chocolate sprinkles, accompanied
sauce;
served on Wednesdays).

It can be universally agreed that
imaginary
school, regardless of how delicious
might
be, is an extremely odd way for a y
spend his

summer. But Olly had a good reaso
Oliver Louis Morris, aged eleven-a
had

his whole life, been a pupil at one. He had r
heard his
name called from the register, never waited in
to go
back to class, never been sent to
headteacher's office
for drawing farting bums on his desk.*

Olly's parents were the reason he had
never been to school.

They weren't enemies of education,
overly afraid of bacteria or incredibly
forgetful. They were *musicians*.
More than that, they were *travelling*
musicians, who spent their lives going up and
down the
country in a big old canal boat, playing shows
anywhere
they could.

Some people like being *still*, they find their s
and
stick to it like chewing gum on hair; others can
stop
in one place. Martha and James Morris (for the
were
Olly's parents' names) were like that. They lo
travelling.

mean he hadn't learned anything,
parents

taught him all he w
studying

more at sc

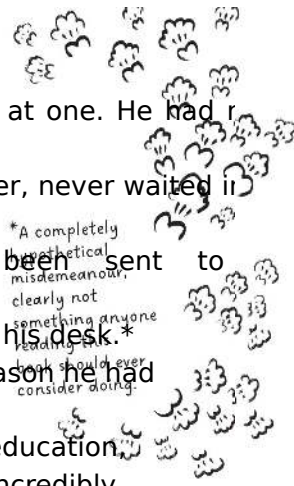
By age
already

to steer a b
h

sew,

play several
musical instruments
(the keytar was his favourite) and in
the calls of dozens of birds.

Olly liked living on the boat and d
being
taught by his parents, but he did fir
move
hard. It's difficult to make friends w
stay
more than a few days in a single pl
friends were





That's why Olly grew up wishing that his family would settle somewhere, so he could go to school and finally make some real buddies.

He always felt saddest at the start of a new school year.

The kids he'd meet during the summer holidays would

all go back to school, and between the hours of nine and

three thirty the world became a strange place populated

only by tiny babies and

really old people, two

groups united by being

mostly bald and having

trouble with nappies.*

This year it was even worse. Olly was at the place where

he should be going to secondary school. The other kids

he had met during the summer seemed really excited

about secondary school, and that made Olly sad.

The idea

that every other kid his own age was going off to some

*This might be offensive to babies and very old people, but they're not like you and me. Please don't tell them about it; both can be vicious. Especially the babies.

white clouds was moving across wasn't odd,

moving across the sky is something that regularly do.

What was odd is that they were different

directions, as clouds most definitely clouds

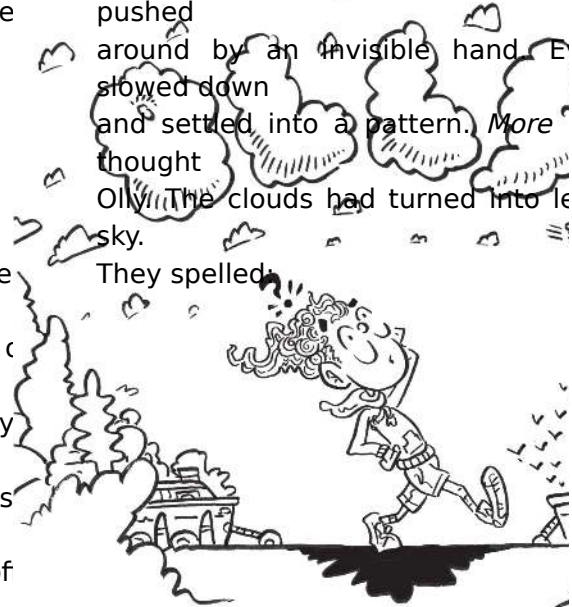
went up, others down, left or right pushed

around by an invisible hand. They slowed down

and settled into a pattern. More thought

Olly. The clouds had turned into letters in the sky.

They spelled





That wasn't possible, Olly thought. He must be seeing things. He blinked a few times, looked down and up again and . . . the letters were still there. He shook his head, rubbed his eyes and had another look, but nothing had changed. There was still a great big 'X' plastered across the summer sky.

That's it, he thought. I've gone mad. Insane. Loco.

Cuckoo. Bananas.

Olly looked at the ground, hoping that the clouds would disappear if he ignored them long enough. He sped up towards his family's houseboat, eager to get away from the baffling writing in the sky. As Olly speed-walked along the banks of the canal, he heard a loud



14

from behind him.

sounded again, louder. Olly spun around and looked

at the place where the noise had come from. There was

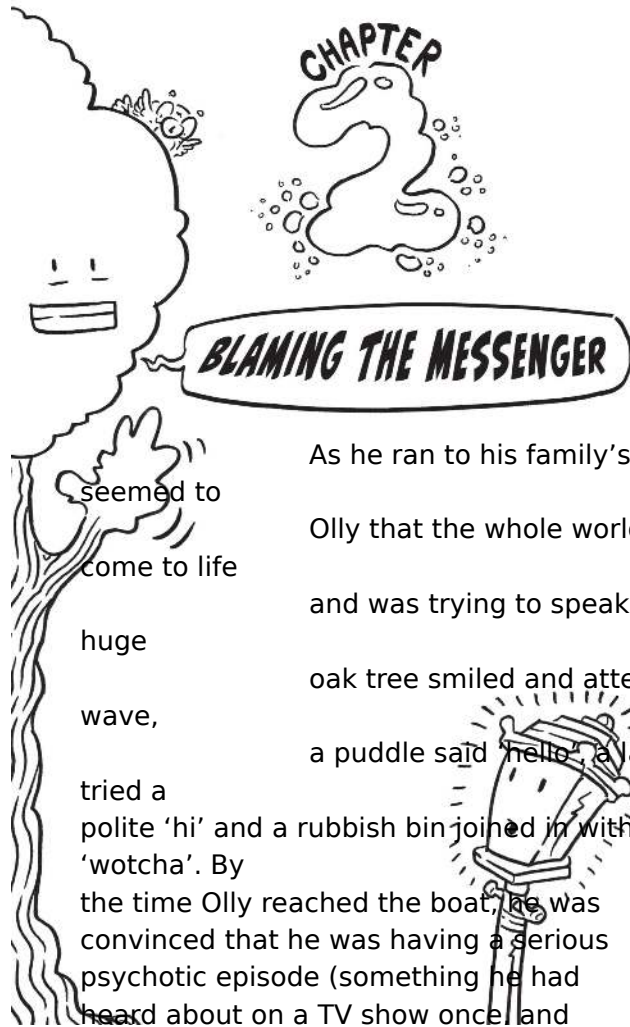
nothing there besides a small round bush. 'Hey!' said the bush.

Olly stared at the bundle of leaves and clouds, now a talking bush. What was going on?

'Sorry! I can't stay to chat,' Olly told the bush. Then he

turned round and ran away yelling





CHAPTER 2

BLAMING THE MESSENGER

As he ran to his family's boat
seemed to
come to life
huge
wave,
oak tree smiled and attempt
a puddle said "hello", a lamp
tried a
polite 'hi' and a rubbish bin joined in with a
'wotcha'. By
the time Olly reached the boat, he was
convinced that he was having a serious
psychotic episode (something he had
heard about on a TV show once) and

He ran into the boat, tripped
dining table
and fell head first onto the kitch
struggled to
get up from the floor, Olly began to
what
had happened.

'Mum! Dad!' he yelled. 'Somethin
Something weird! A bush hissed at
puddle tried
to say "hello"! There was a lamp po
too!'

'I believe you might be trying to c
attempts
to contact you,' said a voice

The voice worried Olly. It wasn't h
voice, or his
father's voice, but it was definitely
inside the
boat. Olly turned round and looked
slowly, hoping
that he wouldn't come face to face
umbrella
or a chatty coat rack.

To his relief, both the
umbrella and the coat rack were

