

A YEAR IN THE LIFE



DEDICATED TO

- This is my cat. When we first got him, he was called Dijon. Dijon is a town in France where mustard is made, and he was mustard coloured. We changed his name to Scrumplet, because he was so small and sweet. When he grew bigger, he slept more and more and his coat got thicker and thicker. He was so warm and cosy to snuggle up against, we started calling him the Sleeping Bag. Now, he's just the Bag.



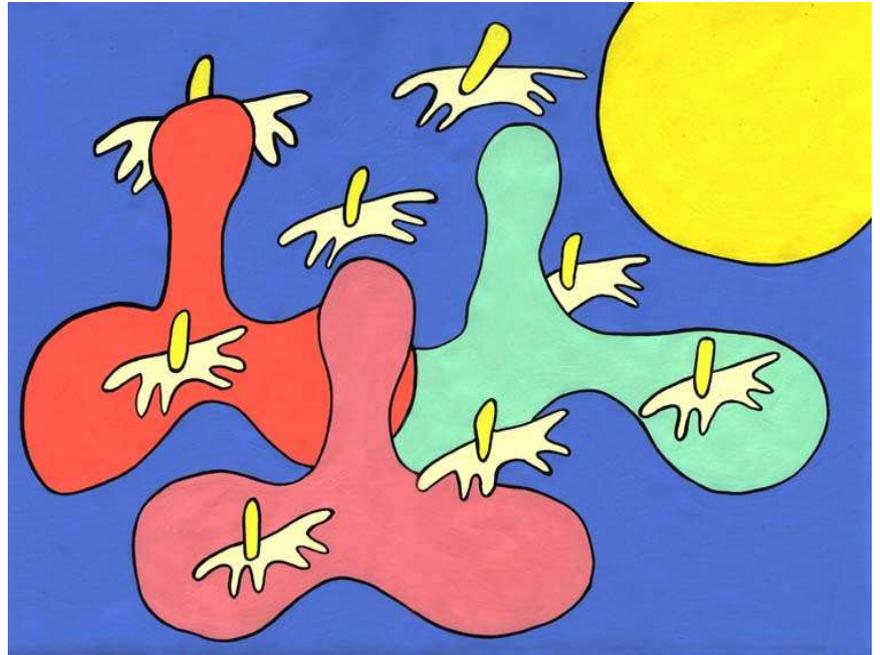
JANUARY

- We went for a long bike ride. Mum was in the lead. We passed lots of fields with cows in them. They were all busy eating grass. They have such funny, soft, squidgy mouths. Often, their calves were with them. In one field, I saw a fox. I asked Dad if he thought it might attack the cows or calves and whether we should warn the farmer but he said they were big enough to look after themselves.



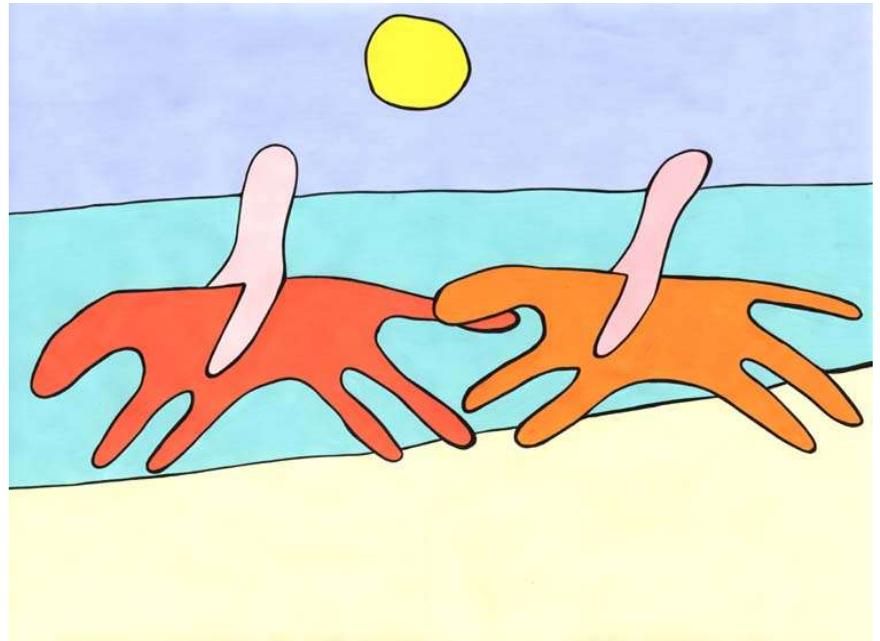
FEBRUARY

- I had a dream. Mum and Dad were bicycling with me, high up in the air. There was blue sky all around. As we approached the sun, angels on horseback flew past us, going in the opposite direction. It felt as if we were bicycling through heaven.



MARCH

- We went for a walk on the beach. The tide was out and we saw two people on horses. They were galloping along the edge of the sea. The horses went into the water, splashing it all over themselves and the riders. It looked very exciting. Grandpa was with us and he said he used to ride horses in the old days. I asked him when the old days were, and he said before I was born.



APRIL

- Mum did a lot of washing. She called this her Spring Cleaning. She hung everything out in the morning and it was dry by early evening. She folded it up and laid it in warm piles in the kitchen. I love the smell of the dry, folded things. Then, she put them away in the airing cupboard. Whenever she's in the garden, the Bag and the Minion (the Bag's friend) are there, too, keeping her company.



MAY

- We visited Mum and Dad's friends in London. When we got there, we had a cup of tea in the sitting room. The room was full of books on shelves and paintings on the walls. The sun was shining through a big window and lit up everything. There was a yellow parrot flying around, squawking. We fed it crumbs from our cake. In the kitchen, there were more books and paintings, and some shelves with lots of different shaped orange saucepans. It was a lovely, cosy house to be in, and I was sad to leave.



JUNE

We all visited my uncle's house. He has a swimming pool. The water was cold but it was a hot day and everyone except Grandpa swam. There was a new baby boy there who I thought would cry when he got wet but he laughed instead. I carried him while his mother ate her lunch.



JULY

- We went on holiday to Spain. It was so hot we spent nearly all the time at the beach. All sorts of people were there. Old people, young people, people like Mum and Dad, even babies. Most of them wore swimming costumes; but some people had nothing on at all. Mum told me not to stare but I couldn't help it. In England, when we go to the beach, I've never seen anyone wear nothing. They were all shapes and sizes, too. I think some people must wear clothes to pretend they're not the way they are.



AUGUST

In the summer, Mum and Dad had to water the garden almost every day. They each have their own plants that need watering in a special way. The cats love being out there, too. I don't, because Dad always starts squirting me with water. He pretends it's an accident, but I know it isn't. I don't mind getting wet; but the water's so cold, I squeal.



SEPTEMBER

- Dad had flu. He lay in bed, groaning. He was very hot. He kept saying he could see Grandpa on a horse. Mum would bring him 'grog' to drink. It tasted very bitter. Dad drank it all up. He called it his "healing brew". When he wanted more, he would ring a small bell Mum had left in their room. Sometimes, I took the grog in on a tray. When Dad was better again, whenever he was brought a drink, whatever it was, he would sigh, and say, "Ah, the healing brew"!



OCTOBER

Mum took us to an art gallery. We were supposed to stay quiet, while we wandered around looking at other people's paintings. Dad started yawning, and complained of backache. Mum took ages, studying everything in detail. Most of the pictures were old and gloomy. When I got home, I looked for my artist's set, and painted something bright and cheerful.



NOVEMBER

Grandpa died. We all went to his funeral. It was a dry, cold day. Everyone was wearing dark clothes, except the priest, who was dressed in white. Dad was crying. Mum looked sad, too. I didn't understand what the priest said. I thought he meant Grandpa was going to become alive again, but he hasn't. When I stopped looking at the coffin with Grandpa in it, I thought I saw angels in the sky, like the ones in my dream about heaven; but they weren't there when I looked again.



DECEMBER

Dad was grizzly about Christmas. He said everyone sits around wearing silly hats and giving each other presents they don't want. Mum called him a grouch. She said she doesn't think the hats are silly and she always likes whatever she's given. I reckon Dad's pretending, really. I love Christmas. My favourite time is after lunch, when everyone's in the same room, relaxing together.

