



SUPER

LOUD

SAM

VS

BIRDMAN

Jo Simmons

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**TO MY BOYS.
YES, GEORGE, YOU CAN
HAVE SOME CEREAL.
NO, DYLAN, YOU CAN'T
HAVE A PUG.**

Chapter 1

PECK UP A PICNIC

“YUCK!” yelled Sam.

Sam’s friend Nina flinched at the noise. She couldn’t help it. Sam Lowe was just so loud: a dinky little dude with a massive voice. People used to find Sam’s voice annoying, until he showed them how awesome it was. It could be heard ten streets away (who needs a mobile?). It could form a sonic shock wave and blast objects out of the way. It could make grown men

spill tea down their fronts in surprise. See?
Awesome.

It was more than a voice, it was a power: a superpower! Because Sam Lowe was also Super Loud (with capital letters, thank you very much), the hero who just a few weeks ago had defeated his dangerous, noise-hating teacher Mrs Sandy Mann, and saved the children of Topside from a life filled with no fun.

For the moment, though, Sam was just being Sam, enjoying the summer holidays with his best friend Nina. Right now they were having a picnic in Topside Park.

“BLUURRGHH! I HATE

WOOLLY PEARS!” Sam blasted. He spat out a mouthful of fluffy fruit.



“Woolly pears, nature’s cares,” said Nina. Nina had a habit of speaking in weird Zen-master riddles. Sam mostly ignored it. “What else don’t you like?” Nina asked.

“Woolly pants,” said Sam. “Too itchy!”

Nina giggled quietly. “I *really* love knitting,” she said, “but even I would never knit a pair of woolly pants.” In fact, as Nina spoke, she was knitting an extension to the woolly rug the children were sitting on. Somehow she was nibbling a cheese sandwich at the same time.

“Too-tight pants,” said Sam. “Broccoli, obviously. And I don’t like brushing my teeth if I have my coat on, either. It feels really. . .” He trailed off as something had caught his eye.

“Weird,” he said, pointing over Nina’s shoulder.

There were some pigeons on the grass. Nothing odd about that, you might think.

Parks are full of pigeons. Towns are full of pigeons. The whole country is full of pigeons.

Only, these particular pigeons were standing in a neat row, staring sternly at Sam and Nina. They didn't move. They just stared. When did you ever see pigeons do that?

Then, suddenly, they took off, flew high in the air, gathered speed and height, turned and . . .

“FLIPPING FLIP HECK!”
roared Sam. **“THEY’RE COMING
STRAIGHT FOR US! RUN!”**

Sam and Nina scrambled to their feet and scattered as the line of birds dived, like a squadron of fighter planes, at their picnic.

They swooped over the cheese sandwiches and crisps and chocolate fingers and pears, scooped them up in their claws – and then dropped them like bombs.

Again and again, the pigeons dived, swooped, grabbed and dropped. Sam and

Nina watched, wide-eyed, from behind a tree.

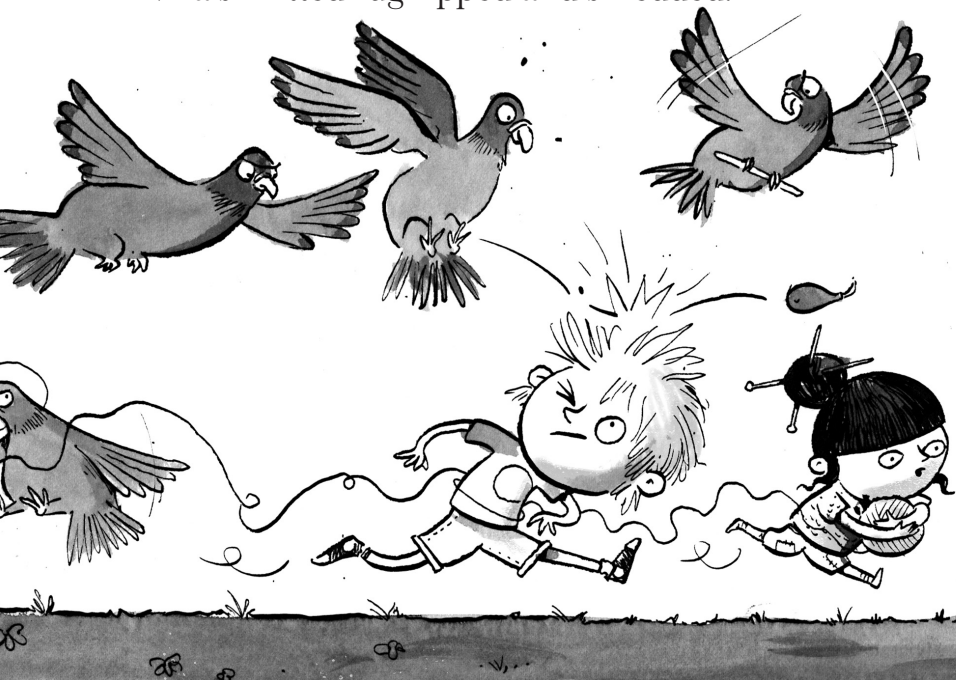
“HEY!” bawled Sam in his massive voice.



“LEAVE OFF OUR SARNIES!”

Lummy! That shout was loud, but the picnic-pilfering pigeons ignored Sam’s exceptional outburst. Were they deaf? Or just really tough? Impossible to say.

Finally, the bad-news birds flew off and the children returned to their picnic. What a mess! It was destroyed: food scattered everywhere, Nina’s knitted rug ripped and shredded.



“I thought pigeons were meant to be thick, but these guys seemed to know exactly what they were doing,” said Sam, surveying the scene.

“Actually,” said Nina, “pigeons are quite bright. They can recognize their reflection in a mirror, and even learn to play ping-pong.”

“This wasn’t exactly ping-pong, though, was it?” said Sam. “They deliberately wrecked our picnic.”

The children gathered up the remains of their meal and blanket and dumped it all in the bin.

“OOOF!” exploded Sam as they were walking away.

Something had hit him on the head. Something soft and damp. He looked up to see one of the pigeons that had demolished the picnic flying off. Then Sam looked down to see what had struck him. There, lying on the grass a little way off, were the remains of the woolly pear!

“YUCK AGAIN!” shouted Sam.

Nina looked serious. “When fruit is falling,” she said, “dark days are calling.”

“If you say so,” Sam shrugged. “Let’s go home before I get hit by something nastier than fruit.”

Chapter 2

BIRDS BEHAVING BADLY

Over the next few days, Sam and Nina noticed several other peculiar pigeon events. They saw three pigeons stealing sun hats from a group of old folks who were snoozing in deckchairs in Topside Park. That's no way to treat senior citizens, is it? Another time, Sam and Nina spotted pigeons picking up bits of litter – mushy chips, banana skins, empty drinks cartons – and dropping them on people walking along the street below. Sam yelled in

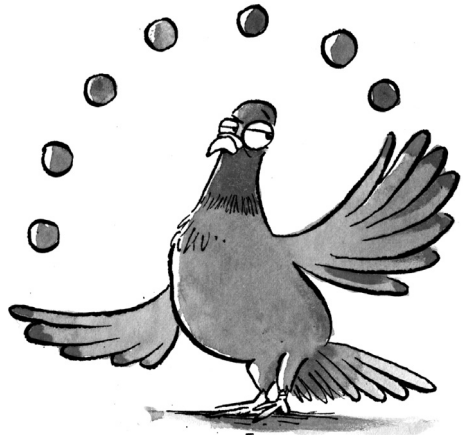
his toppest of topmost voices, but that only scared the people half out of their skins, while the pigeons just looked at Sam as if to say, “Really?”

On top of these mean misdeeds, pigeons were up to all kinds of clever stuff, too. One afternoon Sam and Nina were walking to meet Sam’s mum, Jen, where she worked at a local hairdressers, Prime Cuts. Suddenly, Sam let out a huge shout.

**“A PIGEON
JUGGLING!”**

he boomed.

**“OVER
THERE!”**



“What with?” asked Nina.

“I dunno, peas or something,” said Sam.

“Peas?” said Nina. “Where’s he going to find peas? Peas don’t grow on trees, you know.”

“What do they grow on?” asked Sam.

“They grow underground, I think,” said Nina.

“No, you’re thinking of *peanuts*,” said Sam. “Anyway, I know what I saw. A pigeon juggling! What is it with pigeons at the moment?”

Sam told his mum what he had seen as they all walked home.

“What’s a pigeon going to juggle with?” she also asked.

“I don’t know!” exploded Sam. “But I know what I saw.”

“He said it was peas,” whispered Nina.

“A pigeon juggling peas?” Sam’s mum laughed. “Garden peas or petits pois?”

Nina giggled, but Sam had the last laugh when the three of them sat down after dinner to watch *Talking Topside*, the local news programme. . .