

## Chapter 1

My mum makes cakes. Lemon cakes, chocolate cakes, Mars Bar cakes, butterfly cakes, lamingtons. You name it, she bakes it. She takes her big trays of cakes to the shops in her pink van. When Gail's Cake Van comes down the street, everybody feels hungry.

She is the best cake maker in town, but now and then a cake fails. It slumps in the middle or gets too brown on the top. That is no problem to Mum. She just eats the cake. If there is too much for her to eat, she lets me take some for the Garden Gang.

When Adam and Jack and Ben and

Liv and Jess see me coming with a cake tin, they are very happy.

‘You have the best mum, Zac,’ they tell me.

My dad eats no cake at all. That is why he is so skinny and Mum is so fat.

Dad says he fixes brains, but really he is just trying to be funny. In fact, he fixes drains. He says he has to be a skinny snake to slither down the drains to clear out the muck that blocks them up. My dad thinks he is witty. I wish he would stop trying.

When I told him about the big old house we have for our club house, he wanted to know about the drains.

‘Some old houses have smelly drains,’ he told me. ‘They get blocked by the trees. Do you think I should come and

inspect them?’

‘No Dad. There are no smells in that house, apart from Adam’s socks.’

The Garden Gang have an empty old house for the summer. Just us kids on our own. No grown-ups. I did not want Dad to invade our club house, cutting down the trees, digging up the drains and trying to be funny.

‘Say howdy to your mates for me then,’ said Dad. ‘Ask them what you get if twenty teachers sit in a gutter?’

‘What?’

‘A brain drain. Get it?’

‘See you later, Dad.’

