

2 How to Redecorate Your Kitchen!

Problems. Dad's alligator has eaten two cushions from the sofa. The TV remote control has vanished too. We think that's been swallowed as well, because each time the alligator snaps his jaws shut the TV changes channels.



Mum shouted at Dad because he had told her the alligator was harmless. 'It is harmless,' insisted Dad. 'It eats cushions. Where's the harm in that? It was only making itself at home.'

'So what's it going to nibble next? The whole sofa? I suppose it ate the TV control so it could watch its favourite TV programme. It's no good, Ron. I am not having it in the house any longer. Have you seen the state of the kitchen?'

'It likes dog food.'

'Yes I know, but it doesn't have to puncture the cans with its teeth and then pulverize them. There's dog food squirted all over the kitchen. It's on the floor. It's on the walls and, believe it or not, Ron, it's on the ceiling. Who's going to clean it up?'



Dad looked desperately at me. I shrugged my shoulders and retreated rapidly. Mum fixed Dad with a razor-sharp glare. 'You're going to clean it, Ron,' she said in a voice made from pure Toledo steel. 'You!'

I can't wait to see Dad cleaning. He's never cleaned anything in his life. Mum's always complaining about it.

My Dad's Got an Alligator!



Mum has got one of Granny's old walking-sticks and tied a barbecue fork to the end of it so that she can protect herself. Dad just laughed, which is more than he'll do when he has to clean that kitchen! He's shut the alligator in the garage because he's building a cage for it now, out in the garden. He's using one of the legs from the *Tyrannosaurus rex* for the cage.

My Dad's Got an Alligator!



I know that sounds odd, but last year Dad had one of his **BRILLIANT IDEAS**. (He gets these about once a week.) He decided he was going to make a slide for me. Then he said he was going to make it in the shape of a *Tyrannosaurus rex*. He got all this wire and wood and built a huge frame in the back garden.

My Dad's Got an Alligator!

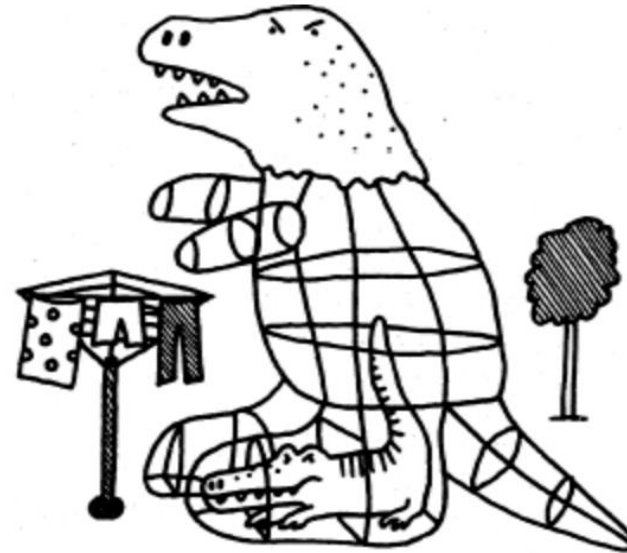


It looked a bit weird and Mr and Mrs Tugg, the next-door neighbours, complained to the council. Dad doesn't like the Tuggs very much because they always seem to be complaining about something or other. Whenever he sees them marching up the front path he yells, 'The Martians are coming!' Anyhow, the council said they couldn't do anything about it.

Dad never finished the tyrannosaurus. He started covering the head with the fibreglass stuff you use for repairing cars and then he ran out, or just got fed up. The fibreglass head and

My Dad's Got an Alligator!

wire frame is still there. It looks a bit like a vampire horse.



Now the tyrannosaurus has an alligator in one leg. It must be the only tyrannosaurus in the world that can eat things with its left foot!



My Dad's Got an Alligator!

Dad wants to call the alligator Norman. Talk about boring. Mum grunted and suggested we call it Armageddon, which I didn't understand. Dad said it meant The End of the World and Life As We Know It. I still didn't understand why it should be a good name for an alligator and Dad said it was a stupid name anyway. I thought my name was best –

CRUNCHBAG.



'That's exactly what I was thinking,' grinned Dad. 'Crunchbag is a brilliant name. I'm glad I thought of it.'

'But I said it!' I shouted.

'Ah, but I was thinking it,' said Dad.

My Dad's Got an Alligator!



The trouble with my dad is that when he thinks he's done something clever he goes all stupid and starts singing. I don't mean like normal people sing. On no. Nothing my dad does is normal. He's got this karaoke machine and a microphone and amplifiers. You could hear him on Mars.



As soon as he'd finished the cage he was upstairs warbling. I could hear Mum hammering on the door. She was probably telling him to shut up, but he wouldn't have been able to hear

My Dad's Got an Alligator!

her. He was making too much noise. Even Crunchbag seemed to be trying to bury his head in the ground.



My Dad's Got an Alligator!



I went to see if Granny was all right, with such a din going on. I asked if she was OK and she said, 'Yes, dear. It's in the top drawer under my karate tunic.' Don't ask me what she was talking about. I just shut the door quietly and went into the front room. That was when I saw Mr Tugg charging up our path. He didn't look very happy.

What a row! When Dad realized who was at the front door he started singing 'The Martians are coming, hurrah! hurrah!' Mr Tugg shouted at Mum, complaining about the racket that was going on. Mum said Dad was only singing.



My Dad's Got an Alligator!

'You call that singing?' squeaked Mr Tugg. (Nobody squeaks quite like Mr Tugg. He sounds like a balloon when you pinch the neck and let the air out slowly.) His moustache was jumping about like a caterpillar with a heart attack. Mr Tugg is ever so little, even shorter than Mum. He's bald in the middle of his head but he tries to camouflage it by combing straggly bits over the top. It looks utterly stupid. I'll never do anything like that if *I* go bald.

Eventually Mum went to the fuse-box and switched all the electricity off. It was the only way to stop Dad's karaoke machine. After that, he came downstairs.

'Evening, Mr Tugg,' he said. 'What a fine night for a moonlit stroll with a beautiful woman on your arm!' and he slipped one arm through Mum's.



'That singing ...' began Mr Tugg.

My Dad's Got an Alligator!

'Ah, you like it then,' Dad said quickly. (He can be a real stirrer!) 'Yes, I was in fine form tonight.' And he started again on the doorstep. 'Just a song at twilight ...'



Mr Tugg left very quickly. You could almost see the anger spitting out of him like mini lightning bolts. It was a good thing he didn't know about Crunchbag. (The alligator was by this time buried under an Everest of mud.)

Mum wasn't very pleased though. She said it was all right for Dad, larking about and enjoying himself, but that kind of behaviour upset some people. 'They take life more seriously,' she added. Dad went down on one knee and clasped his hands together. Guess what he started singing? 'Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do ...'

My Dad's Got an Alligator!



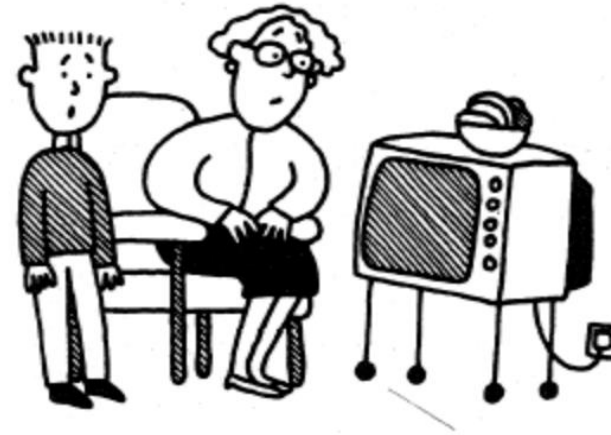
Mum couldn't help smiling. I'm sure I heard her call Mr Tugg a 'goblin'!

Granny was calling from her room, so I went to see if she was OK. She was sitting in front of the television watching a blank screen. She asked me to sort out the sound for her.

'But Granny, there isn't any picture either,' I said.

'I think it's foggy,' said Granny.

My Dad's Got an Alligator!



'Mum switched off the electricity,' I shouted. 'The TV isn't on.'

'No thank you, Nicholas. I had a cup of tea not ten minutes ago.' Sometimes I look at Granny and realize why Dad's the way he is. After all, she is his mother.