

Adrian Edmondson

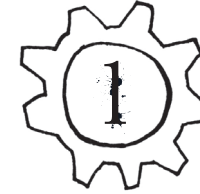
Tilly and the



Time Machine

illustrated by Danny Noble

CHAPTER

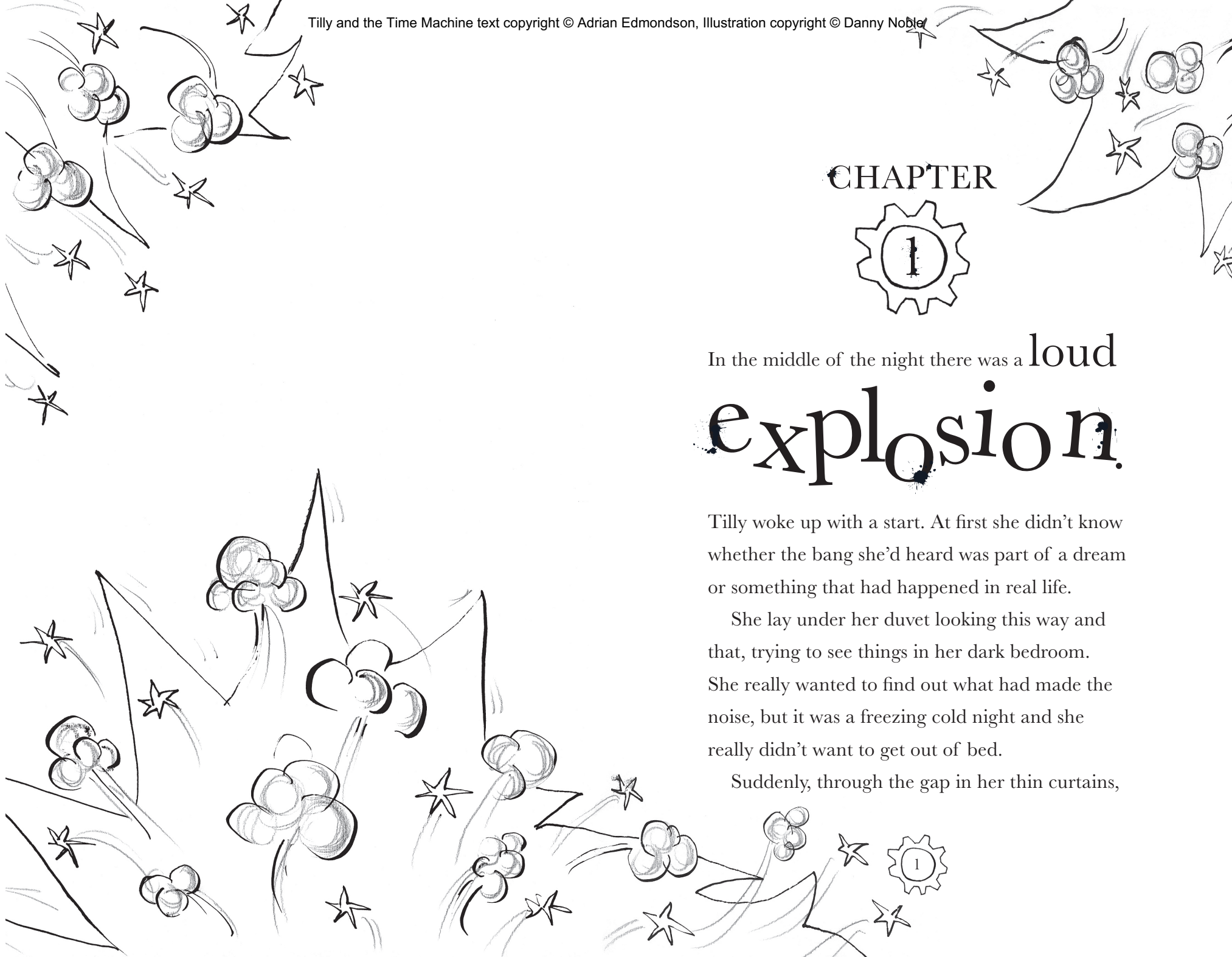


In the middle of the night there was a loud
explosion.

Tilly woke up with a start. At first she didn't know whether the bang she'd heard was part of a dream or something that had happened in real life.

She lay under her duvet looking this way and that, trying to see things in her dark bedroom. She really wanted to find out what had made the noise, but it was a freezing cold night and she really didn't want to get out of bed.

Suddenly, through the gap in her thin curtains,



she saw a shower of sparks, which lit up her tiny bedroom. It was as if someone had set off a large firework just outside her window. In the light of the sparks she could see Big Tedder and Mr Fluffybunny sitting on the shelf at the end of her bed. She could also see her uniform laid out on the chair behind the door, ready for school in the morning. And she could see the big photo of her with her mummy and her dad, which she kept in a frame on her bedside table. The photo had been taken in the kitchen downstairs, and they all looked very happy.



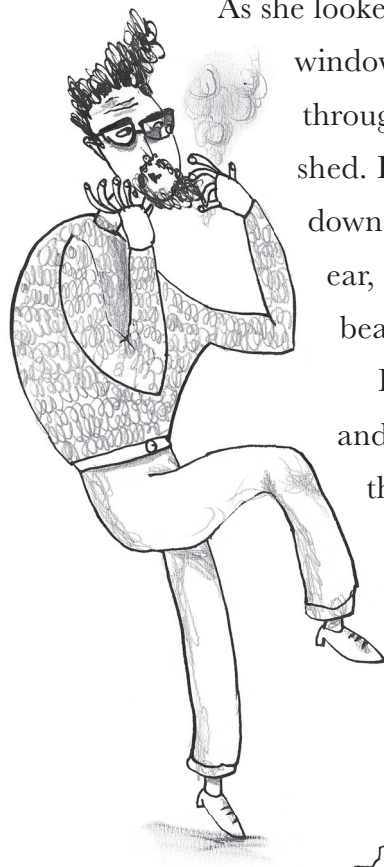
Tilly's house was what her dad called an old-fashioned 'two up, two down', which meant it had two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs. Though this wasn't strictly true: there was just her bedroom and her dad's bedroom upstairs, but downstairs there was a living room, a kitchen *and* a new bit of house that stuck out at the back, which was their bathroom.

There was another explosion, much smaller this time – more like a *crump* – followed by a different-coloured shower of sparks. Tilly sniffed the air with her tiny button of a nose. Could she smell burning? She would have to get up and investigate.

She slid out of bed, dragging the duvet with her, wrapping it round her like a lovely warm cloak. She shuffled across to the window and looked out.

The bathroom took up most of the space in the small yard at the back of the house, but her dad had still managed to squeeze a shed into the

corner. This was where he did his ‘experiments’. Tilly’s dad was a scientist, and he loved inventing things. He used to invent things for the government, but he didn’t work for them any more. In fact he didn’t work for anyone any more, so he did all his inventing in the shed at home.



As she looked out of her bedroom window, Tilly could see her dad through the window of the shed. He was leaping up and down, grinning from ear to ear, and it looked like half his beard was on fire.

He turned and saw her, and immediately ran out of the shed, patting his beard to extinguish the flames.

‘Tilly! Tilly! Come down and look at this!

My machine – it’s working!’



‘Wow!’ said Tilly excitedly, although she didn’t really know what the machine was. But she moved away from the window, dropped her duvet on the floor and started towards the door.

‘No time for the stairs!’ shouted her dad. ‘Just jump out of the window – I’ll catch you!’

Tilly couldn’t believe her ears. She ran back to the window and flung it open. ‘Are you sure?’ she shouted.

‘Yes, of course! You’re only small – I’ll catch you!’

Tilly didn’t like being called small. She was seven and a half, which in her opinion was quite big. But in the excitement of the moment she couldn’t be bothered to argue. She scrambled on to the windowsill and looked down at her dad. His hair always stood on end as if he had just electrocuted himself, and he was smiling the big cheerful smile he always smiled. His beard was still smouldering, and she could see that one of the lenses of his thick black glasses was broken.





He held out his arms, ready to catch her.

Tilly stood there in her pyjamas.

‘I-I’m f-frightened,’ she stammered.

‘Don’t be such a scaredy-cat! It’s hardly any distance at all – come on!’

Tilly knew that if her mummy was still alive she wouldn’t let her do anything like this. Tilly missed

her very much, but if there was any good side at all to her mummy dying it was that

she could do the crazy stuff her dad

let her do, like jumping out of windows.

‘Life is for living, Tilly, my love,’ shouted her dad.

‘You only live once!’

‘Here I come!’ she shouted back, and she jumped off the ledge and landed safely in his arms.



‘That’s my girl. Come and look at this,’ said her dad, carrying her quickly to the shed.

It was quite a small shed, but it was jam-packed with machinery. There were wires everywhere, as if the whole place was full of brightly coloured spaghetti. Lights blinked, wheels turned, and some things just shook and gurgled.

‘What is it?’ asked Tilly.

‘It’s a time machine!’ said her dad. ‘They told me I’d never get it to work, but finally it does! This evening I’ve already been to visit Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar, and to the 1966 World Cup Final. You wouldn’t believe it – I met the German goalkeeper Hans Tilkowski *and* Geoff Hurst! He scored three goals for England, although some people think his third goal didn’t actually cross the line.’

These things didn’t mean much to Tilly, but she could see that they impressed her dad.

‘Come on,’ he said, twiddling some dials and tapping away at his computer keyboard. ‘Where

would you like to go? You can go anywhere you like at any time in history – although at the moment I can only manage to stay there for a minute or two, then I pop straight back . . .’

‘Anywhere at all?’ asked Tilly.

‘That’s right, anywhere at all.’

‘At any time I like?’

‘At any time you like,’ said her dad. ‘You could see a chariot race in ancient Rome, or travel with the Pilgrim Fathers to America. Or – aren’t you doing a school project about Victorian England? You could go there if you like.’

Tilly thought hard. She knew at once where she wanted to go, but she was afraid to say, in case her dad got upset.

‘Come on,’ he said enthusiastically. ‘You could see what life was really like for children in Victorian times. You could even meet Queen Victoria!’ And he turned to his machine and started typing in the details for Buckingham Palace during the reign of Queen Victoria.



‘I’d like to go back to my sixth birthday, when Mummy was still here,’ said Tilly.

She didn’t mean to say it aloud, but it just came out, because that’s what she was thinking, and that’s where she really wanted to go.

She knew her dad didn’t like talking about her mummy, or the fact that she had died, because it made him sad.

He stopped what he was doing and sat very still for a moment. He sniffed hard a couple of times, and his eyes sparkled as if he was about to cry. Then he turned to Tilly. ‘Are you sure you want to go back to your sixth birthday, my angel? Mummy was very poorly then, wasn’t she?’

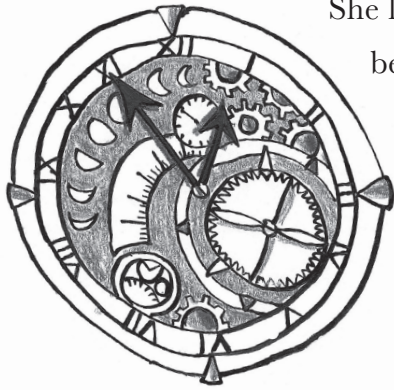
‘But she was very smiley,’ said Tilly. ‘And that’s when the photo was taken – the one I keep next to my bed; the one where everyone’s laughing. It’s the last photo of Mummy.’

Her dad took her in his arms and hugged her very tightly. ‘Oh, Tilly, you’re such a lovely little girl. Of course you want to see your



mummy. Why didn't I think of that?'

One of her dad's arms was wrapped right round her head, and Tilly could hear the loud ticking of the watch he wore on his wrist.



She liked her dad's watch because her mummy had given it to him the Christmas before she died. On the back it had an engraving that read:

TO MY DARLING JOHN,
I WILL LOVE YOU FOR ALL TIME,
LOVE JULIA X

It was a very special watch. Not only did it have an extra-loud tick but it could tell you the day and the date, and what time sunrise and sunset were going to be. It also worked as a compass. Her dad was very pleased when he got it, and he always wore it.

Tilly also liked being hugged tightly, but after

a while she found it a bit difficult to breathe. Her face was pressed into her dad's jumper, and when she tried to speak her voice came out all muffled.

'Yuffoldenmeetootye,' she said through the thick wool.

'Pardon?' said her dad.

'Yuffoldenmeetootye,' said Tilly again.

Her dad stopped hugging her as tightly and looked at her. 'What did you say?' he asked.

'I said, "You're holding me too tight,"' said Tilly, and they both burst out laughing.

'Right, let's see what we can do!' her dad said, suddenly letting her go and turning back to his time machine. He was always happier doing things than talking about things.

'All I have to do is type in the details of your sixth birthday,' he said, merrily tapping away at his keyboard.

'The date.'

Tap, tap, tap.



‘The exact address.’

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap.

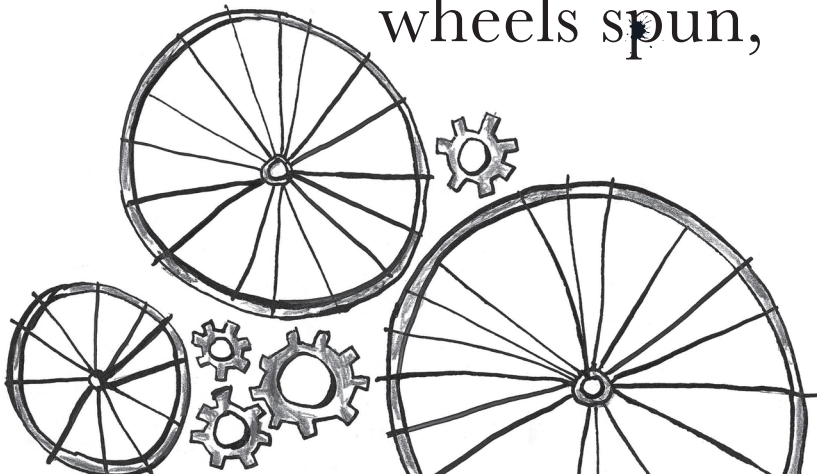
‘And then we press this button here.’

Fixed to the time machine there was a big green button marked GO, and Tilly’s dad pressed it.

‘And off we go!’ he said. ‘Come on – no time to dawdle!’

He grabbed Tilly by the hand and took her into a small metal booth that was attached to the time machine by wires and tubes. He held her tight as the machine started to whizz and whirr.

Lights flashed,
wheels spun,



and the machine

started to make

a sound like an

aeroplane taking off,

and then . . . something

that looked a bit like a dustbin lid

fell off the top of a big cylinder in the middle of

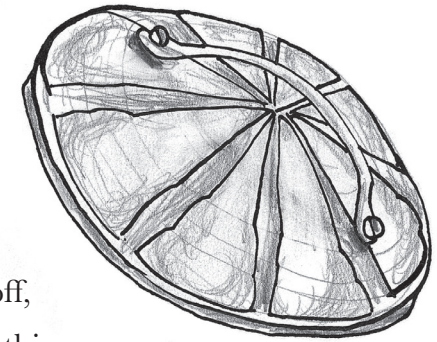
the machine. There was a teeny-weeny explosion and

an even smaller spray of sparks, like the last

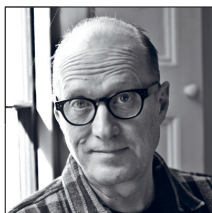
second of a sparkler before it dies. Then all the

lights faded and the machine turned itself off

with a loud



POP!



ADRIAN EDMONDSON

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Adrian Edmondson is an English comedian, actor and writer (well-known for his role in *The Young Ones*). He has three daughters with his wife, Jennifer Saunders, and lives in London. *Tilly and the Time Machine* was partly inspired by his small next-door neighbour – who occasionally wears a cardboard box on her head to travel through time.