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The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish
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How did you begin writing *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*?

This book started like this.

My son, who is called Michael or Mike these days, but was Mikey back then, was angry at me. I'd said one of those things that parents say, like "Isn't it time you were in bed," and he had looked up at me, furious, and said, "I wish I didn't have a dad! I wish I had ..." and then he stopped and thought, trying to think of what one could have instead of a father. Finally he said, "I wish I had goldfish!"

And he stomped off to bed.

I was awed by the idea: Of course one ought to be able to trade a father for goldfish. It seemed a very sensible thing to do.

I wrote the first sentence or two on my computer and then wasn't quite sure how it went after that, so I stopped and did other things.

A few years later I was in a hotel in Galveston, Texas, where I had gone to write a television script. I was stuck on the script, so I looked at the files on my computer to see if there was anything there that was interesting – and waiting for me was the first sentence of that book I'd started about the boy who swapped his dad for two goldfish

I knew what the next sentence was, so I wrote it. And the one after that. Eventually I'd finished a whole book (and I'd named a rabbit Galveston), and wasn't much further along with my television script.

I gave the book to Dave McKean, who drew the magical pictures.

The boy and his sister are a little bit Mike and his sister Holly, who spent the first dozen years of their lives locked in a bitter and deadly cold war, and a little bit me and my sister Claire, who, oddly enough, did exactly the same thing through most of our childhoods, but actually rather like each other these days. But mostly they are just themselves.

I always wanted a really convincing gorilla mask.