Mystery Mob and the Circus of Doom

Roger Hurn
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and the

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Illustrated by

Stik

RISING★STARS
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Meet the Mystery Mob

Name: Gummy
FYI: Gummy hasn’t got much brain – and even fewer teeth.
Loves: Soup.
Hates: Toffee chews.
Fact: The brightest thing about him is his shirt.

Name: Lee
FYI: If Lee was any cooler he’d be a cucumber.
Loves: Hip-hop.
Hates: Hopscotch.
Fact: He has his own designer label (which he peeled off a tin).
**Name:** Rob

**FYI:** Rob lives in his own world – he’s just visiting planet Earth.

**Loves:** Daydreaming.

**Hates:** Nightmares.

**Fact:** Rob always does his homework – he just forgets to write it down.

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**Name:** Dwayne

**FYI:** Dwayne is smarter than a tree full of owls.

**Loves:** Anything complicated.

**Hates:** Join-the-dots books.

**Fact:** If he was any brighter you could use him as a floodlight at football matches.
**Name:** Chet

**FYI:** Chet is as brave as a lion with steel jaws.

**Loves:** Having adventures.

**Hates:** Knitting.

**Fact:** He’s as tough as the chicken his granny cooks for his tea.

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**Name:** Adi

**FYI:** Adi is as happy as a football fan with tickets to the big match.

**Loves:** Telling jokes.

**Hates:** Moaning minnies.

**Fact:** He knows more jokes than a jumbo joke book.
The circus has come to town. The Mystery Mob are watching the big parade. All the acts are wearing colourful costumes. There are fire-eaters, clowns, jugglers, acrobats, stilt-walkers and a very loud band. The boys think it’s totally awesome!

**Adi**  Hey, do you know why clowns wear loud socks?

**Rob**  I haven’t got a clue.

**Adi**  So their feet don’t go to sleep!

**Mystery Mob**  Duh!
Lee  You should work in the circus, Adi.

Adi  Too right! I’m funnier than any of the clowns.

Lee  No, I meant as a human cannonball. Then we could fire you for making awful jokes.

Adi  Yeah, yeah – whatever. But I still can’t wait to see the show tonight.

Rob  Me too.
Gummy  I want to see the sword swallower. I reckon I could do that.

Dwayne  Only because you’ve got no front teeth.

Adi  Only because he’s got no brain, you mean.

Gummy  Are you saying I’m daft?

Adi  No, just a few fries short of a happy meal, that’s all.

Gummy  That reminds me – I’m hungry. Who’s coming for a burger?
Rob, Lee and Dwayne go off with Gummy, but Chet and Adi want to follow the circus parade.

Chet Let’s go and see the Big Top.
Adi What’s a Big Top?
Chet It’s the tent where the circus guys put on their show. We can sneak inside and see them trying out their acts.
Adi Great idea. Hey, what’s this?
Adi points at a Wanted poster on a wall.

Chet It’s a Wanted poster for Robin Desafe, the famous bank robber.

Adi Yeah, he’s escaped from jail and gone on the run. The cops are looking everywhere for him. I saw it on the news this morning.
Chet  Wow, he looks mean.  
I wonder where he’s hiding out?  
I wouldn’t want to bump into him down a dark alley.

Adi  There’s no chance of that happening. We’re going to the circus – not down a dark alley. But the others will be hopping mad when they find out we’ve seen the show for free.

Chet  Even if it is only the dress rehearsal.
Adi  Yes. Hey, did you hear about the boy who ran off with the circus?

Chet  No – what happened?

Adi  The police made him give it back!

Chet  I wish you’d run off with the circus.

Adi  Well, I’m going to run after the circus. Catch me if you can!
Chet and Adi are outside the Big Top. They can hear loud music coming from inside the tent.

**Chet**  I’m really glad circuses don’t have performing animals any more.

**Adi**  Why’s that?

**Chet**  Because I think it’s cruel to make animals perform tricks. Lions and tigers and elephants belong in the jungle, not in a circus.
Adi  You’re right. But it isn’t cruel to let animals watch humans doing tricks, is it?

Chet  I don’t think so.

Adi  That’s good, because I’ve got my pet mouse Jumbo in my pocket. I’m going to let him see the show. I think he’ll love it.

Chet  Sometimes I really worry about you, Adi.
Adi  No. You need to worry about important stuff – like how are we going to get inside the Big Top without a ticket?

Chet  That’s easy. We can lift up this bit of the tent and crawl inside while nobody’s looking.

Adi  But what if someone does see us?
Chet  No problem. We’ll say we’re trying to catch your pet mouse. It’s just escaped from your pocket and run into the tent.

Adi  But Jumbo hasn’t escaped. Look, here he is.

Adi puts his hand into his pocket. He pulls out a small, white mouse. It has long whiskers and a pink nose.
The mouse sits up. It sniffs the air, and then jumps out of Adi’s hands. It lands on the grass and races off into the Big Top.

**Chet** I don’t believe it!

**Adi** Don’t just stand there, Chet. We’ve got to get him back. Jumbo’s never been out on his own before. He’ll get lost!

The boys dive under the tent flap after Jumbo.
The boys peep out from behind a row of empty seats. In the circus ring, Biffo the clown is standing next to a table piled high with custard pies. Adi spots Jumbo. He’s sitting on Biffo’s hat. The trouble is – Biffo is wearing the hat!
Adi  We need to find a way to grab Jumbo off Biffo’s hat without Biffo seeing us.

Chet  How are we going to do that?

Adi  That’s easy. We’ll slip into the ring, tiptoe up to the table, grab two of those custard pies and throw them at Biffo. Then, while he’s wiping custard from his face, we’ll nab Jumbo. We’ll be out of there before Biffo knows what’s hit him.

Chet  Good plan. Let’s do it!
Adi and Chet pick up the pies and hurl them at Biffo. Splat! Adi’s pie is a direct hit. The plan is working. Biffo’s face is covered in gloopy custard. He can’t see a thing. But Chet’s pie knocks Biffo’s hat off. Jumbo falls through the air. He lands with a splash in the pie.

Chet Don’t worry. Jumbo’s safe. Cats can’t stand the taste of custard.

Adi Very funny. But there’s no time to lose. We’ve got to get Jumbo out of that pie. I don’t think he can swim.
Chet and Adi dash into the ring but don’t see the big banana skin that is lying on the floor. It has fallen out of Biffo’s pocket. They both step on it.

**Chet and Adi**

AAAARRRRGGGHHHH!!!!!!!
Crash! The boys skid into the table. The custard pies fly up in the air. Splish! They land on Chet and Adi. Both boys are smothered in yucky yellow goo. Chet and Adi have soggy custard in their hair, their eyes, their ears and up their noses!

But that’s not all. Biffo is standing over them. When he wiped the custard off his face he also wiped off his clown make-up by mistake. The boys can now see his real face – and he isn’t laughing!
Adi  You’re not Biffo – you’re Robin Desafe!

Robin  Grrr … you’ve seen through my perfect disguise.

Chet  What have you done with the real Biffo, you crook?

Robin  He’s locked in his caravan. I’ve tied him up and taken his place. The police are looking for a bank robber – not a clown.
Adi  So what are you going to do with us?

Robin Welcome to the Circus of Doom, boys. You sneaked in without tickets so nobody knows you’re here. I’m going to lock you up with Biffo. His jokes are so unfunny he’ll bore you to death!

Chet grabs a large bucket that is on the ground next to him.
Chet  Don’t move or I’ll chuck this bucket of water all over you.

Robin  Go ahead – that bucket’s empty.

Chet  Oh no it’s not.

Robin  Oh yes it is.

Adi  Hey, this is a circus – not a pantomime.

Robin  What are you on about, you idiot?
While he stops to glare at Adi, Chet rams the bucket on to Robin’s head.

Robin
Urgh!

Chet
I told you it wasn’t empty. It’s full of a crook’s head.

Robin staggers around the circus ring trying to pull the bucket off. Then he trips and falls over. The bucket makes a really loud clang as Robin’s head hits the ground.
Adi  Ouch. That must have hurt.
I can see stars going round
the bucket!

Chet  Yep. He’s knocked himself out
cold. He’s not going anywhere
for a bit, so come on.
Let’s free the real Biffo
and send for the cops
before Robin wakes up!

But then Adi spots Jumbo.
The little mouse is running up a rope
that leads to the high wire!
Sorry, Chet. No can do. 
Jumbo’s up on the high wire. 
He’ll fall if I don’t save him.

Before Chet can stop him, Adi starts to climb up the ladder to the tightrope. But if Adi falls off the tightrope this really will be a circus of doom – for him!
When Adi gets up to the top of the ladder, he sees Jumbo sitting on the wire just out of his reach. There’s only one thing for it. To save his pet mouse, Adi must walk the tightrope. He looks down and sees Chet looking up at him. It’s a long way back down to the ground. Adi gulps.
Chet  Take care, Adi. Try not to fall off.

Adi  That’s a brilliant idea, Chet.
Why didn’t I think of that?

Chet  Stretch your arms out.
That’ll help you keep your balance.

Adi  Okay. Here I go.
Adi steps on to the tightrope. It wobbles. Adi wobbles. Jumbo wobbles. Jumbo grips the rope with his claws. Adi hasn’t got any claws to grip with. He waves his arms in the air. This doesn’t help. It makes him wobble even more. Then he falls off.

Adi (shouting) HELP!
But just in time Adi grabs at the rope. He stops falling and dangles in the air.

Chet  Don’t let go of the rope, Adi.

Adi  That’s another top idea. I don’t know how you keep thinking them up. So I’m going to just hang around here while you figure out how you’re going to get me out of this mess – and save Jumbo.
But Jumbo is fed up with tightrope walking. He scuttles along the rope and runs down Adi’s arm and back into Adi’s pocket. He’s safe – but Adi isn’t.

Adi Oh no. All that custard is making my hands slippery. I can’t hold on any longer!

Chet You’ve got to. It’s way too far to fall!
Chet is too busy looking up at Adi to notice that Robin has woken up. Robin pulls the bucket off his head. He is really angry. He creeps up behind Chet. Robin has an evil look on his ugly face.

Adi  It’s no good, Chet. I’m done for! Arghhhhhhh!

Chet  Nooooooooo!
Adi tumbles down. He lands smack on top of Robin. Robin is flattened!

Adi  Hey, I think a bank robber just saved my life.

Chet  Yeah, but I don’t think he meant to. You’ve KO’ed him. And that serves him right. When he wakes up he’ll be back in jail.
Adi  Hmmm … but I think this is one bank robber who’ll be glad to be back in prison.

Chet  What makes you say that?

Adi  Well, let’s face it, this circus has been nothing but a great big headache for him!
Roger Hurn has:

- been an actor in ‘The Exploding Trouser Company’
- played bass guitar in a rock band
- been given the title Malam Oga (wise teacher, big boss!) while on a storytelling trip to Africa.

Now he’s a writer, and he hopes you like reading about the Mystery Mob as much as he likes writing about them.
The Big Top circus quiz

Questions
1. Who is in charge of a circus?
2. What is the Big Top?
3. Where do circus artists perform their acts?
4. Can you name three or more things that clowns wear?
5. What do we call the person who walks on the high wire?
6. What do we call the swing acrobats use in their act?
7. Why wouldn’t you want a ride in a clown’s car?
8. In the song which famous elephant packed her trunk and said goodbye to the circus?
How did you score?

 Fist: If you got all eight answers correct, then you could be the Ringmaster in a circus!

 Hand: If you got six answers correct, you could be a circus performer.

 Fist and Hand: If you got fewer than four answers correct, you’ve been spending too much time hanging out with the clowns!
When I was a kid

Question: Did you ever go to the circus when you were a kid?

Roger: No.

Question: Why not?

Roger: I couldn’t find it.

Question: Why didn’t you ask someone?

Roger: I did. I said, “How do I get to the circus?”

Question: What did they say?

Roger: They said I had to practise very hard.

Question: Well, have you ever seen clowns?

Roger: Yes. I once saw two of them walk into the Big Top. I was surprised.

Question: Why?

Roger: I thought they should have seen it.
Adi’s favourite circus joke

Why don’t you ever see elephants at the circus?

Because they much prefer going to the movies!
How to be a circus star

- If you want to be a fire-eater always keep a bucket of water handy.
- Avoid butter if you want to be a juggler.
- Always wear a parachute if you want to be a trapeze artist.
If you want to be a clown:

- Buy a big red nose (or catch a terrible cold).
- Buy shoes ten sizes too big for you.
- Make sure your trousers don’t fit.
- Wear polka-dot underpants.
- Buy a car with square wheels and a steering wheel that keeps coming off – but don’t join the AA.
Fantastic facts about the circus

1 An Englishman called Philip Astley invented the first circus in 1772. His circus had horses, rope dancers, clowns, jugglers and acrobats.

2 Horses were the stars of the first circuses. They danced to music.

3 Circuses became more dangerous when wild animals like lions, tigers and elephants became part of the show.

4 In 2006 a law was passed to stop wild animals doing tricks in circuses.

5 Clowns with white face make-up always get the better of the other clowns. They’re the smart ones – which isn’t saying much.
Big Top  This is the tent where the circus acts perform. It is not an extra-large T-shirt.

Main guy  This is the rope that holds up the centre pole in the Big Top. The main guy is not the man in charge – that’s the Ringmaster.

Ringmaster  This is the man in charge of the show. He is nothing to do with hobbits or Middle Earth.

Roustabout  This is someone who works doing odd jobs for the circus. A Roustabout is not a traffic island.

Sledge gang  This is the crew of men who hammer in the tent stakes. They are not bank robbers who drive a getaway toboggan.

Troupers  These are the circus entertainers. If you like their acts they are Super Troupers. If not, they are Pooper Troupers.
Mystery Mob books are available from most booksellers.

For mail order information please call Rising Stars on 0871 47 23 010 or visit www.risingstars-uk.com
When Adi and Chet sneak inside the circus tent, they’re hoping to watch rehearsals for free. They get more than they bargained for at the Circus of Doom!