

# Megan Goes Hiking



*A Spirit Guide, A Ghost Tiger and One Scary Mother!*

*by Owen Jones*



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by

**OWEN JONES**

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## ***I MEGAN'S BORED***

Megan was sitting in the garden with her parents one warm, sunny Saturday afternoon admiring her flowers and bushes.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, I don't have to go in next weekend," she informed them. "Apparently, they're repainting the Civic Offices over the next couple of weeks now that it's quiet and Mrs. Williams' office is being done next Saturday. So, lucky me, eh? Lucky old me! As if I'm not bored enough as it is with the school holidays, now I've got another day off as well.

"I really look forward to working with Mrs. Williams..."

"That's not normally like you, Megan. You're usually so enthusiastic, so full of life with loads of things to do."

"Oh, I can find things to do, sure, I could write another article for my blog, but about what? I still have to write one for the S.O.S. Green Party, but that'll only take an hour. I could go for a walk in the Park, but I already know the place so well that I could draw you a pretty accurate map of it from memory.

"I want to do something else, something new, something, dare I say it, different and exciting? Could we go somewhere as a family? Somewhere we haven't been before?"

"Not next weekend, I'm afraid, dear. We've got maintenance too and part of my job is to archive all the old files we no longer need and update office software. I'll barely have time to go to the Mall on Saturday afternoon..."

"I want to go on an adventure... perhaps yachting..."

"I can't help you there either, I'm afraid. I don't know anyone who owns a yacht, at least, I don't think I do. I do know someone who'd take you fishing off the pier in the next town? He goes most Saturdays and catches quite a lot of fish if you listen to him. He's a nice man and would show you what to do... and he'd lend you a rod. He's asked me to go many times."

"Er, no, I don't think so, Dad. I don't fancy the idea of spearing worms on hooks to catch fish and then killing them too, even if it is to eat them. It's not my idea of fun... I've nothing against eating fish, I love it, but, I don't want to be the one to catch them."

"No, fair enough, it was just an idea. Now, let's see, canoeing and rowing, eh? No, there's nowhere around here, love. Nearest place is fifteen miles away. How about clay pigeon shooting or hang-gliding?" Suzanne looked at him disapprovingly. He got the message and modified his suggestions.

"They probably wouldn't allow you to do that without parental supervision anyway and we can't be there, can we, Suz?"

"No, we cannot, not next weekend, not ever!"

"Paintballing, go-kart racing?" He got another one of those looks from his wife. "Too far out of town, I suppose... I'm sorry, love, but you're at that

awkward age, where you want to do things, adult-type things, but you're still too young to do them without one of us present and we can't be there next weekend."

"Yes, OK, I'll go up to my room and do something on my computer."

"OK, love, see you at tea time... perhaps you'll have a brainwave while you're surfing."

"Mmm, pigs may fly too," she mumbled. She had momentarily lost her zing. She trudged up to her room and sat on the bed with Grrr. "Grrr, what's the worst age for a tiger? Is it early teenagehood like it is for us? Whenever that is for kittens... because thirteen is the worst age I've ever been so far.

"When I was a kid, I could play on the swings and slides, run about, laugh and scream and no-one cared, but now that I'm thirteen, I can't go here, I'm not allowed to do this and I'm not allowed to do that. There's absolutely nothing for boys and girls of my age to do.

"Two years older and you can do much more, another year older and you can get married, though I don't want to do that yet, another year and you can join the Forces, and another year older again and you can do whatever you like, but at thirteen, you're at the bottom of the ladder - the lowest of the low. It's downright depressing..."

Grrr licked Megan's right knee and then laid her head in her lap.

"Dad's best suggestion was for me to go out and kill worms and fish with one of his friends, someone I've never even met! I know he means well, but really! I suppose I could write a piece on the subject and post it to my blog... and send it to Mrs. Williams to see if she wants one like it for her Party's web site."

She brought her laptop out of hibernation and checked her emails, while she marshalled her thoughts for her article. The emails were all junk except one from her best friend, Jane. It read, 'Been trying to ring you, but I think your battery's dead again. Pls recharge and phone me later. Nothing important, so no rush. Jane.' She crossed to the bedside table and tried to switch her phone on, but it was lifeless. She was always doing that these days, she thought. She plugged it in and replied to Jane's email, 'Yes, dead, but on charge now. Will phone you after tea. Megan.'

She opened Word and went through the preliminaries, which usually put her in the correct frame of mind to write. She opened a new document and saved it with the title 'Just What Is A Young Teen Supposed to Do?' Then she checked that the formatting and metadata were right. She sat back in her chair like an artist admiring her work. There was nothing holding her back now but a lack of interest. There was also the fact that she would be called down to tea before she could finish it and she didn't want that, so she picked up her notepad and pen, tuned the Internet radio to her favourite station, Radio One, and flopped onto the bed to plan her article and await her mother's inevitable call to announce that tea was ready.

One piece of news that the DJ gave out was that a new version of 'The Hitch-hiker's Guide to The Universe' would be released soon. She had found the first version, with Peter Jones, very funny and so she was interested to find out whether the new one would be any better – she couldn't see how, but she would look out for it and give it a chance. It would be serialized in many parts, like the original and was scheduled to start in two weeks time. She noted the date in the margin of her note book and thought that that was the best news she'd heard all day.

Even Grrr had gone to sleep. She joked with herself that that was a sign of what boring company she was – she was feeling pretty sorry for herself. It came as a surprising relief when her mother did call her, because it gave her something to do. However, the voice didn't come from the foot of the stairs as she had expected, but from under her bedroom window where the garden table stood on the concrete slab by the back kitchen door. Megan went down and out into the garden.

"We decided to eat outside this evening. The weather is so gorgeous, we should do it more often... I really don't know why we don't." Megan had heard her mother complaining about flies, wasps and ants before and thought that that had had something to do with it, but didn't like to say anything.

"I don't know why either, Mam, I think it's a good idea."

"Well, did you come up with any exciting ideas for next weekend?" asked her father.

"No, nothing... I just started writing an article on the boring lives of young teens in Feyton."

"Oh, that bad, is it? I'm sure it's much worse in some other countries," opined Suzanne. "Your trouble is that you don't know how well off you are. If you lived in Africa, you'd be picking rice in the fields at thirteen and in some countries you'd have been already married off to a fifty-year old man by now... pregnant too, like as not! What do you think about that? No computer, no school, no job and no future."

"Yes, I know, Mam..."

"Well, if you know, why don't you stop whingeing? We all get off days but we don't all go around depressing everybody else with our petty problems. So snap out of it and grow up."

It made Megan feel worse, she knew that she was on the point of tears. When her mother went inside for another plate of food, her father patted her shoulder.

"Your mother's right, love, we all have our off days... This isn't like you... anything could happen between now and next Saturday."

"Yes, Dad," she mumbled, "I know," although she wanted to say, 'I know, another five boring days before another boring weekend', but she thought better of it. This was not the time for another example of her razor-sharp wit.

During the meal, the conversation turned to Robert's parents.

“You haven’t called your mother for two weeks now, Robert... you know how she likes to hear from you regularly.”

“Yes, thank you, darling. I’ll phone them as soon as we’re finished here. That’s a good idea. You’ll say hello to Nain and Taid, won’t you, Megan?”

“Sure. I haven’t spoken to them for weeks either.”

When the meal was over and the table had been cleared, Robert asked Megan to fetch his mobile from the living room and the three of them waited as it rang.

“Hello, Mam, how are you? And Dad? Sorry, it’s been a while, time just seems to fly.”

“Oh, you don’t need to tell me, son. We’re both fine, how are you and the family.”

“We’re all well. Megan is here, she wants to speak to you later, and Suzanne too.” Megan tried to follow the conversation her parents were having with her only living grandparents until it was her turn.

“Your father tells me you’re well,” said her grandfather, “but a little bored with the long school summer holidays... that was never a problem in my younger days, nor your father’s. As soon as school finished, we had to help out on the farm... but there is no farm for you, is there, Megan? We sold it off when we retired or you could have come here to work on it. Wait a sec, your Nain is telling me something... Yes, of course! The last time we came down for a visit, we invited you to come and stay with us some time, so why don’t you do that? We’ve got a spare room. The only problem might be that we don’t know anyone of your age around here and there isn’t a lot to do here either. There’s beautiful scenery though, lovely hills and a spectacular coastline. What do you say?”

“Yes, Taid, I’d love to come, but it’s up to Mam and Dad.”

“Yes, of course it is. Well, look, if you want to come and bring a girl friend, we’d both love to have you, as long as you don’t mind sharing a bedroom. You could come Friday by train and we’ll meet you at the station.

“I’ll square it with your parents. Put me back on to your father”. Thirty minutes later, after the phone had been passed between the three of them several times, it was agreed that on Friday, Megan would catch the train to St. David’s in West Wales, the nearest station to where her grandparents lived, and she would take a friend if she could because it was safer than travelling alone

Megan couldn’t wait to tell Jane the news and asked to be excused as soon as they hung up.

“Jane, you’ll never guess! I have the most wonderful news. My grandparents in St. David’s have invited me over there for next weekend and said I could bring a friend! What do you think?”

“I think whoopee! If I’m the friend... but I’ll have to ask my parents first.”

“Yeah, sure, I had to do that just now to, but they’re fine about it. If you need to corroborate anything, get your parents to phone mine. They can give

them the address and phone number... all that kind of stuff. Mam and Dad are downstairs now, so this would be an excellent time to ring. Are your folks in now?"

"Yeah, they're watching some rubbish game show on TV. I'll go and ask them now. I'll phone you back. Thanks, Megs, I need this too."

Twenty minutes later, as she was writing her article in a much happier frame of mind than before tea, she heard the landline ring downstairs and hoped that it was Jane's parents checking the details. Ten minutes later again, Jane phoned, confirmed that it had indeed been them and gave the good news that they had given her permission as well.

It put both girls in a fantastic mood and they would have liked to meet up to talk about it, but that would have to wait, because it was too late. Megan finished her article and then called up St. David's on Wikipedia, read all about it, then checked the train timetable and printed it off, before going down to be with her parents and thank them.

"Sorry I was such a pain earlier. I don't know what came over me and thanks for letting me go to stay with Nain and Taid."



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