

Stewley was lost in a dry and sunburnt land. He had ventured out of his home only three days earlier, seething with discontent and contrariness, and had launched himself into an adventure. Thus far he had outrun a hare, outwitted a jackal, and tried to befriend some gorillas. Unfortunately, the gorillas had sensed the trouble that Stewley's attitude and general personality would invariably bring them, and they had gently steered him away from their home and left him with some good advice: "Stop being so stubborn, and go away."

Regrettably, Stewley had brought very little along with him when storming out of the house that fateful day; only what had happened to be in his pockets at the time: a slightly-used tissue, an allen key, some pocket-fluff, and a fancy pen he'd been given for his birthday. None of these things had been of any help over the last three days.

He was now in an introspective mood, so found a place to sit with a rock upon which to lean, took out his pen, smoothed out the mildly-soiled tissue and began to write a letter to his parents.

Deer mom and dad.

I'm still angry about what you did.

It's not fare. I'm going to keep walking til i fall off the edge of the world.

Then you'll be sorry.

He attached the note to a passing tortoise, assuming that it would know the way to his house, and walked on.

The edge of the world was much further than Stewley had expected. Another thing he hadn't expected was that the sea would get in the way. After reaching the end of the desert at last, he forced his way through a thick mass of jungly foliage. But Stewley's feet were not pleased to - once again - greet burning hot sand; this time that of the unexpected beach. A less contrary person may have been pleased to see the splashing heaps of cool water, but Stanley was annoyed. This was yet another hurdle, inconveniencing him in his attempt to reach the edge of the world.

While he stood there, toes in the water, a honey-badger and a goat approached him with some tests and riddles, promising great prizes such as fortunes, princesses, and kingdoms. He didn't care for such things, nor did he like being tested, so he gave them his parent's address and laughed spitefully to himself as they trotted inland. He knew how his parents loathed cold-callers.

Stewley decided to follow the coast, in the hope of finding another edge of the world from which to fall. Instead, after meeting a slew of talking animals all urging him to turn back because of the danger, he came face-to-face with an enormous cliff - a sheer rockscape stretching up as far as he could see, reaching almost to the sun, he surmised. The face opened its craggy eyes and looked at Stewley with an expression that made its maliciousness very clear. For the first time, Stewley felt a little uneasy. This feeling grew considerably when the cliff-face began to rise, unfolding multiple enormous legs and reaching out an assortment of rather terrifying arms, all while maintaining eye-contact with Stewley.

The rock-being raised one of it's mountainous feet and swiftly brought it down upon Stewly himself, who had been a little distracted and therefore had not had the presence of mind to make any attempt to save himself. Although, if he had thought about it, he would have realised the utter futility of any such attempt. Thus Stewley was plunged into the darkness of death.

Or so Stewley assumed. What he had not realised was that the ground upon which he had been standing was merely a thin layer of shale, and beneath this was a house. The house was a multistory underground mansion belonging to an aristocratic family of aardvarks. However, it currently had no roof, due to the rock-being's foot. Thanks to it's many legs, the rock-being had maintained its balance and therefore not fallen though and demolished the entire mansion. Instead, it merely looked confused, sat down again and waited with evil intent for Stewley to reappear.

Stewley, meanwhile, decided to explore this unexpected haven and soon encountered the bewildered owners. Bewildered and surprised, but not at all annoyed at the inconvenience, Lord and Lady Aardvark (or Jebinkly and Tips to their friends) merely called a repairman and invited Stewley to join them for dinner.

It was at the resplendent dinner table that Stewley told his companions the reason for his sudden departure from his home and family:

It had all happened last Wednesday. His birthday. He had awoken to the aroma of freshly baked cinnamon loaf. It was this, plus the anticipation of opening his presents, that had caused him to leap out of bed and stub his toe on the bedside table. Things went downhill from there. After being told off by his father for the mess he had left in the living room the night before, Stewley had kicked the table in righteous indignation, only to hurt his toe again, and knock his mother's favourite vase onto the floor. He'd been made to clean everything up and had lost the chance to open his presents before leaving for school. To make matters worse, it had been a terrible school-day, but his parents had shown no sympathy for his detentions. And worst of all, when he finally opened his presents, he found that he had received only half of the items on his list.

By the time Stewley had finished with his story, tears were trundling down his cheeks. Lady Aardvark patted his hand and Lord Aardvark passed him a tissue. Unexpectedly, Stewley realised that he was not crying about the events themselves, but rather about the deep regret at how he had reacted to each event. He was sure now that, had he responded with patience and kindness, it would have been a very different day altogether. And he was a little annoyed too, because he had never intended for this to be such a didactic story.

Jebinkly and Tips shared a knowing glance. They had a rather clever way of potentially making it all better. They let Stewley in on the secret: deep underground, about three metres west of their drawing room, a magical trinket lay buried. This seemingly unremarkable little thing had the power to transport people back in time, but only once, and since they had both already used it, they were happy to pass it on to Stewley as long as he promised to bury it again when he was finished (the Aardvarks liked all things to be neatly buried). They soon unearthed the trinket and placed it in Stewley's pocket. Now all he had to do was wish himself back to that birthday morning. Stewley took a deep breath... and smelled cinnamon.

Stewley opened his eyes and saw the ceiling of his very own room - the damp patch in the corner was unmistakable because it looked like a lady with a parasol. He got up slowly, carefully avoiding the bedside table, and made his way to the living room to tidy it up before his father noticed the mess. Unfortunately, his father was already there, looking angry amidst a sea of building blocks, train tracks, and open books with breaking spines. Stewley took another deep cinnamon breath and gave an apology and warm hug to his surprised father. And after the clean-up, but before the long-awaited breakfast, Stewley quickly wrote a letter to Lord and Lady Aardvark:

Dear Jebinkly and Tips

Thank you for the time-travelling trinket thingy, thow you probably dont remember me. I have berried it now like you told me to.

And thank you for the yummy dinner you gave me after i crashed throo your roof.

That reminds me: in case you dont know, theres a enormis inermouse really big rock giant living right above your house and your ceiling is very thin. Also he seems really evil.

Ok, that's all.

Thanks again.

Lots of love from Stewley

P.S. Please come visit me soon. We can have a sleep over.