

Part 1

YOU 2.0 (THE RE-BOOT)

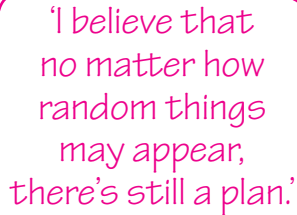
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A Word about Threesomes

Three authors? That's weird.

Three's a crowd, not a team. And the modern world has introduced us to the 'threesome'. We're good friends but we're not *that* good!

We're buoyed by the fact there were 3 Musketeers, 3 Wise Men and 3 Stooges. Charlie had 3 Angels. And a single Bananarama would just be ... *well* ... a banana.



*'I believe that
no matter how
random things
may appear,
there's still a plan.'*

*Col. John 'Hannibal' Smith
(The A-Team)*

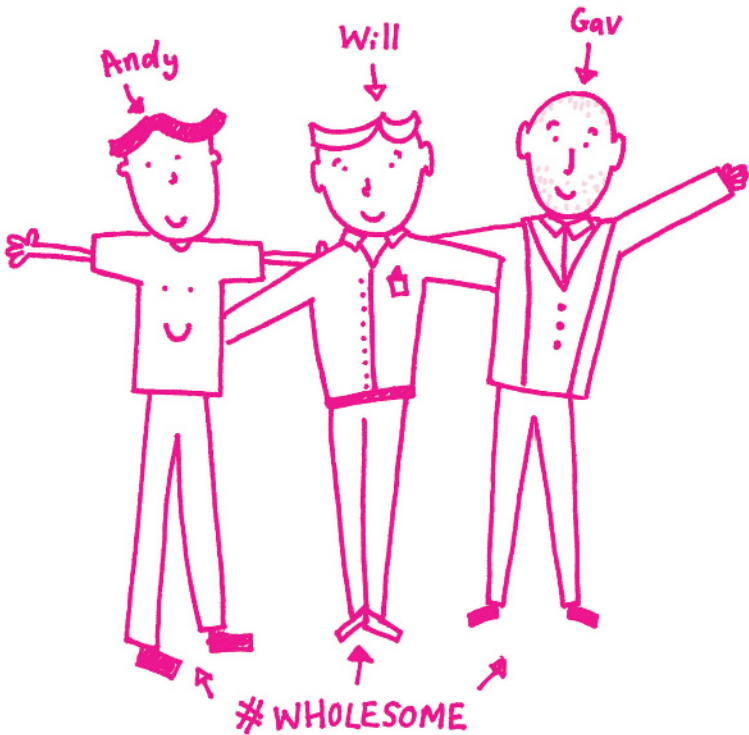
So although 3 can be a crowd, it can also be Amigos, and that's us. Yes, dear reader, we are your Harry, Ron and Hermione; Snap, Crackle and Pop, and your blind mice.

We all bring different things to the table. Dr Andy's an established author. A proper old timer with serious literary miles on his clock. If you're a loyal reader of his fabled back catalogue, guess what, those themes will reappear. Unrelenting and unapologetic, this is no house built on sand. Andy's science gives Zest a solid foundation – 15 years of rock solid academia – for Gav and Will to build on. Think 'same but different'.

Will? He was a teacher and now champions learning. Anywhere and everywhere. With everyone and anyone. He's the best writer of the three by a million miles. His prose is silky, almost to the point of sensual. Will waxes (lyrically, not Brazilianally). You'll know when Will's writing cos you'll be feeling a tinge of arousal.

And that leaves Gav. He's an original. A comic first and foremost but there's a difference between being stand-up funny and

page-turningly funny. He writes in short sharp bursts. He's a bit swearsy so there's a balance between letting him loose and reining him in – just a smidge. Gav doesn't wax. He just tells it as it is in all its hairy glory. This book is peppered with #Gavisms. Think of them as short sharp no-nonsense wake-up calls, the literary equivalent of an ECG.



Electrodes attached, power charged, stand back – BZZZZZT.

So that's us. The good, the bad and the ugly, here to prove that threesomes can be wholesome.

But Zest isn't about us. So it's over to you ...

Are you sitting comfortably?

Before we begin properly, we thought we'd set the scene. So here's a story that sums up the entire book. It's a story about a story. A story about a story, that happens to be a *true* story.

Rewind to Gav's teacher training days. He's 20 years old, knows next to nothing and is doing a placement at a primary school. He's sitting in the staffroom, fish out of water, waiting to be allocated a class to go and observe ...

My mentor gave me the nod. 'Nursery,' she said. 'And rather than just watching, wouldn't it be great if we got you involved.' She must have seen the panic in my eyes. 'It's the very best way to learn,' she reassured, before turning on her heels and flouncing down the corridor.

I had no choice but to fall in line and flounce behind, hoping she couldn't hear the screaming in my head. *The bloody nursery? I wanna be a teacher not a Lego builder.* I didn't know much but I knew this much – nurseries are just big rooms full of 3 and 4-year-olds, mini Oompa Loompas, running and eating. They eat when they're running and run while they're eating. Even when they're not running and eating, in their minds they're running and eating. *And 'get involved'? What does she mean, 'get involved'?*

The nursery was as imagined, a seething mass of hyperactivity, Lego and dinosaurs. The teacher turned to me and told me that she would like me to pick a book and read it to the class. I did a double take. *What? Me? Reading a story? To 40 Oompa Loompas?*

My heart raced as she herded the tiny human beings into the reading corner. *Gulp! My first test!* Thankfully, on the top shelf was my favourite book of all time, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. I realized this was my big chance to win the kids over.

I sat on the big chair, you know the one.

The children were sitting wide-eyed and waiting, their excitement piqued by never having seen a male teacher before. They were cross-legged, except for the ones who couldn't. You might be one of those ones. The ones who can't cross their legs. But we're still made to cross our legs. I am one of those ones. I used to have to snap my legs into place.

Every child sat and looked at me with their best face – do it now for me please, so you can remember the face I'm talking about – a mix of anticipation, love, Christmas Eve and awe. If you're reading this book in bed or on the train, tap the person next to you on the shoulder and show them your 'best face'. Your '4-year-old-about-to-be-read-a-story-to face'.

I took a deep breath and began to read the book. After the first couple of pages I thought I'd have a quick look up just to make sure the kids were okay. As I lifted my head I realized something strange had happened. Every single child appeared to have moved closer.

I carried on reading. Another couple of pages and again I looked up, every single child was even closer. Or were they? Was I imagining things or were they Dr Who's weeping angels?

Don't blink Gavin. DO. NOT. BLINK!

I decided to try and catch them out. I looked down but immediately looked back up again. I caught them! Every single one of them on their bums moving forward like a wee army of ants – they were killer ants, coming to attack me.

Keep reading the book, keep reading the book, I told myself.

One tiny boy began to take my shoe off.

I was aware that my mentor was watching. Her tick sheet was out. She was grading me! *Keep reading the book, keep reading the book*.

From the corner of my eye I could see my shoe being passed all the way to the back of the class.

Keep reading the book, keep reading the book.

In my peripheral vision I could see my shoe being passed along the back row. One little boy was flying my shoe, the next was chatting into it like a phone and one even licked my shoe. *WHY? Why would you lick a shoe?* All I could think was *keep reading the book, keep reading the book*, that's what I had been asked to do. 'On Thursday he ate through *fouuuur* strawberries, but he was *stiiill* hungry ...'

My shoe was now on its way back. From the corner of my eye, I could see it being passed forward from child to child. It finally reached the front row, made its way back to the same child who removed it in the first place and like Cinderella's prince, he simply popped my shoe back onto my foot and loudly stated for all to hear, 'I'VE GOT TWO SHOES!'

I learned in that moment exactly what happens when a 4-year-old publicly announces how many shoes he/she has.

EVERYONE publicly announces how many shoes they have! And guess what? All forty of them also have two shoes!

All of a sudden, amidst the global announcement of how many shoes everyone is wearing, things moved up a gear. Another small child began to climb my leg. Now, when I say 'climb', I mean climbing, actual climbing. I'm certain this kid was wearing a rucksack. And carried a map. And a compass (I'm not sure if this part is true or if I made it up but I hope it is).

So, picture the scene. I'm now sitting in front of the whole class and there's a small boy sitting on my leg just staring at my face. I tried to ignore him, I'm a professional, right? But we were almost nose-to-nose. So I turned and said, 'Can I help you?'

'I just really wanna see the pictures,' he replied.

And that's when I absolutely knew I wanted to be a teacher. I did that teachery thing where I took control. I batted the little boy off, turned the book around so the kids could see the pictures, and read the rest of the pages upside down.

Small human beings, 40 of them, were totally engrossed. 40 pairs of wide eyes, 40 slack jaws, 40 ramrod straight backs. Not a murmur.

Our point?

Remember your 'best face' – the one Gav asked you to pull half way through the story about the story? That's you at your best.

It's you in 'immersion mode'. It's the wide-eyed, oh-my-gosh-I-can't-wait-for-whatever's-coming-next face. Scientists call it 'flow' – the version of you that is totally absorbed in life, where time passes quickly and everything seems easy.

You did 'that face' a lot when you were 4 and, if you're honest, those wide-eyed moments are tailing off. You still have moments of excitement, where life is unmissable, but the gaps between them are getting longer. Being totally engaged with life – that's worth aiming for. Inching forward towards adventure – that's a wonderful feeling. Enjoying the roller-coaster thrill of life – that's a good way to be.

So after reading our story about a true story about someone telling a story, our actual story begins. Back ramrod straight, legs snapped into place, 'that face' fixed on ...

Let's crack on ...

Next up, an actual poem.

