

Band-Aid



Have you ever had a Band-Aid on for so long that you can't tell where the Band-Aid ends and your skin begins?

I have.

In fact, I have one right now.

It's been on for the last six months.

I've grown quite attached to it actually, and it's grown quite attached to me.

We've spent a lot of time together.

I did some calculations and I figured that I've had the Band-Aid on for one hundred and eighty-two and a half days, which is four thousand three hundred and eighty hours, or two hundred and sixty-two thousand and eight hundred minutes, or fifteen million seven hundred and sixty-eight thousand seconds or,





to be even more precise, well, I can't be any more precise because my calculator conked out when I tried to figure out how many milliseconds. There wasn't enough room on the screen for all the zeroes.

But you don't need to know how many milliseconds it is to know that it's more than enough time for a Band-Aid to get a very serious grip.

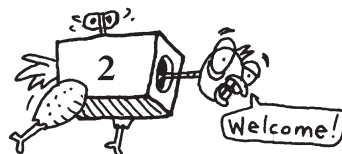
It's not my fault I had to leave it on so long.

It's Mum's fault.

If she didn't act like Band-Aids cost about three million dollars each I'd be able to change them more often. She hides them and if I get hurt—no matter how bad—she'll only ever let me have one Band-Aid and that's it.

If I pull it off too soon and ask her for another one she says, 'Do you think we're made of Band-Aids? Do you think Band-Aids grow on trees? Do you think Band-Aids are handed out free on street corners?' And it doesn't matter how many times I ask her, she won't give me another one. So I've learned to leave them on. But I think I've left this one on just a little bit too long.

I'm never going to get it off.



But I have to.
Because we've got school photos today.
And it's on my face. Right under my left eye.

I can't have my photo taken with a Band-Aid on my face.

I'll look like an idiot.

I'll look even stupider than the year I blinked.

And even more stupider than the year the bench I was standing on rocked unexpectedly, and I opened my mouth in surprise.

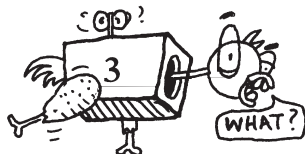
If I have my picture taken with this Band-Aid on, everybody will look at the photograph when they're older and they won't remember me as the brilliant genius I was—they'll just remember me as the idiot with the Band-Aid on his face.

It's not fair.

I always get Band-Aids.

Everybody else has these really cool accidents where they end up with their arms and legs in plaster and they get all the sympathy and attention and everybody wants to sign their casts—it makes me sick. Why can't I get a proper injury like that? It would be so cool to break every bone in my body and have to

THE
BANDAID
FASHION
ACCESSORY.



go to hospital and just lie around and watch television and eat ice-cream all day long.

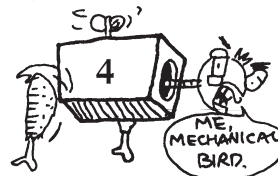
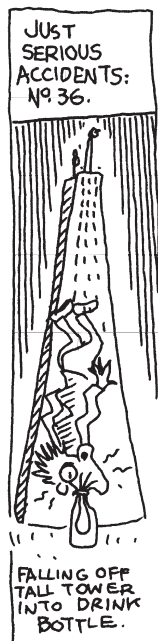
But that will never happen to me.

If I broke every bone in my body the doctor would just look at me and say, 'He'll be right. Just put a couple of Band-Aids on him.' And then my mum would look at the doctor with her hands on her hips and say, 'Two Band-Aids? Do you think I'm made of Band-Aids? Do you think Band-Aids grow on trees? Do you think Band-Aids are handed out free on street corners?' And the doctor would say, 'Actually, you're right—one Band-Aid will be adequate.'

Anyway that's pretty much the story of my life when it comes to accidents. Nothing too serious. Not even the latest accident which *should* have been a lot more serious than it actually was.

I found this pair of glasses on the way home from school. Little gold-rimmed spectacles. Just lying in the middle of the footpath.

I would have left them there except I'd read a survey in the paper saying that most people thought people who wore glasses were more intelligent than people who didn't



wear them. So I had this idea that maybe I could make my teachers think that I'm smarter than I really am and they would give me better marks. So I picked up the glasses and put them on, but the lenses made everything sort of wonky and out of focus. The last thing I heard before I fell was 'Look out!'

I ended up at the bottom of a roadworkers' trench.

But did I get a broken leg?

No.

A broken arm?

No.

Massive head injuries, complex fractures, amnesia and a nasty bruise?

No.

The only thing that broke were the glasses and the only injury I got was a cut under my left eye.

So much for glasses making you look more intelligent. I ended up looking stupider than ever.

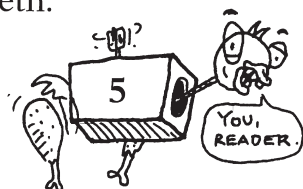
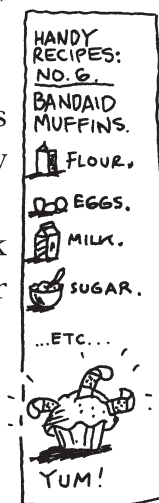
But I'll fix that.

This Band-Aid has to go.

And today is the day.

I can't put it off any longer.

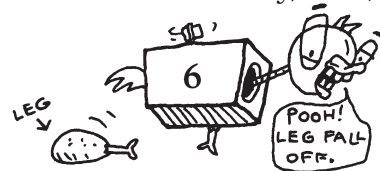
I grit my teeth.





I clench my jaw.
 I take a deep breath.
 This is it.
 Stinging.
 Burning.
 Agony.
 Pure agony.
 More pure agony.
 And I haven't even started yet.
 Just thinking about it is painful.
 What if my skin comes off with it?
 What if I start to bleed and I can't stop?
 And what if I just bleed and bleed and
 bleed, and the whole bathroom fills up with
 blood?

And what if I'm just treading blood and
 then my mum opens the door and all the
 blood surges out of the room like a tidal wave
 and picks Mum up as well as me and we go
 sailing off down the street and Mum
 screams, 'What's happening?' and I'll say, 'I
 just peeled my Band-Aid off, that's all', and
 she'll say, 'What? You peeled your Band-Aid
 off? Do you think I'm made of Band-Aids? Do
 you think Band-Aids grow on trees? Do you
 think Band-Aids are handed out free on
 street corners?' And I'll say, 'No, but they



should be because then I wouldn't have had to wear the same one for six months and none of this would ever have happened!'

But you can go crazy thinking about stuff like this.

Better not to think about it.

I know what I should do.

Stop thinking and just do it.

Fast.

Get it over and done with.

A lot of people prolong the agony by thinking about it too much.

But not me.

When I say I'm going to do something then I do it. I don't just go on and on about it. I do it.

Really.

I really, really do it. Here goes.

I'm going to do it.

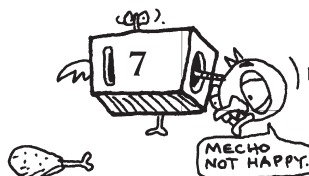
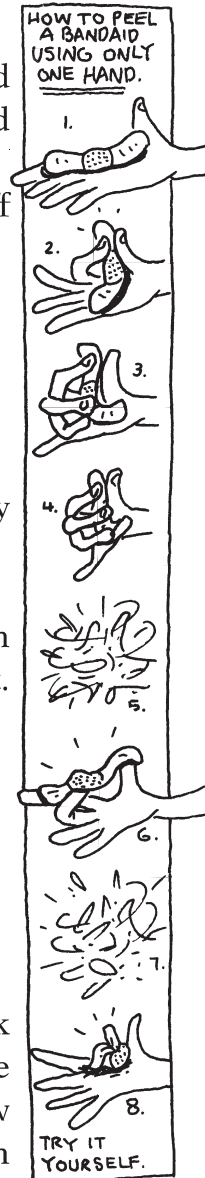
Right now.

Starting in a moment.

A moment from right now.

I mean right then.

Because in the time it took me to think this, right now became right then. And in the time it took me to think how right now became right then, right then became even righter then. And I can't start righter then





REMOVING
A BAND-AID
IN ANCIENT
TIMES.

because that's already gone so I'm going to start right now instead.

On the count of three.

One. Two. Two and a half. Two and three-quarters. Two and four-fifths. Two and five-sixths. Two and sixth-sevenths. Two and seven-eighths . . .

This is not really working.

Better not to count.

Better just to do it.

Better to stop talking about it and thinking about it and just do it. Do it. Really do it.

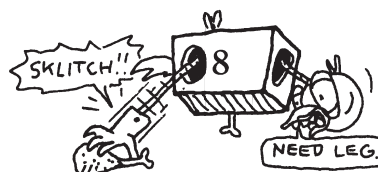
Now!

But first I need a pair of tweezers because the edge of the Band-Aid is so gummed down that there's nothing for me to grab onto.



I open the bathroom cabinet and look around inside it for the tweezers. I can't believe the stuff that's in here.

Baby shampoo, apple shampoo, anti-dandruff shampoo (that's Dad's in case you're wondering), hairclips, razor blades, a tub of anti-wrinkle cream (that's Mum's), sunscreen, cotton buds, pimple cream (that's Jen's—although if you ask me it's not working, in fact I reckon it's having the opposite effect), headache tablets, vitamin C tablets,



worming tablets (they're Sooty's . . . I think), a little container of weird-smelling ointment that Dad sometimes rubs onto his toes, about ten rolled-up tubes of almost-but-not-quite-finished toothpaste . . . Practically everything in the world except tweezers.

And if you think I'm stalling for time by listing every single thing that's in the bathroom cupboard then you're wrong. I haven't even mentioned the perfume, the mouthwash—Jen's of course—the lipbalm, the bottles of nailpolish or the lipsticks. I could have mentioned these things but I didn't because I'm not trying to waste time . . . I'm just trying to find the tweezers.

I open the first-aid kit.

Ah! There they are.

I take them out.

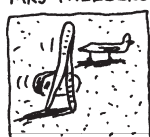
Now I can get this Band-Aid off. Once and for all.

Except that the tweezers are a bit dirty. I should sterilise them under some hot water. You can't be too careful where germs are concerned.

I rinse the tweezers under the hot tap.

I suppose you think I'm stalling again. Well, I'm not.

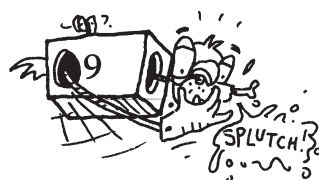
THE SAD
STORY OF
MRS TWEEZERS

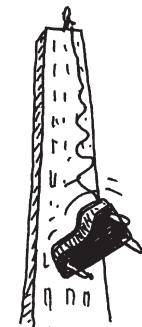


10 YEARS
LATER.



TWEEZER
SKELETON.





REMOVING
A BAND-AID
BY PIANO.



I'm not scared of a bit of pain.

In fact, I like it.

I thrive on it.

As far as I'm concerned, the more pain the better!

Sometimes, when I'm hammering a nail into a piece of wood, I like to hit my thumb on purpose . . . just to feel it throb. When I'm handling paper I always try to get a paper-cut because they *really* hurt. And I always make sure I lick my knife because tongue-cuts are even more painful than paper-cuts. But if you think that's bad, that's nothing. I've got a book called *The Encyclopedia of Executions* and there's some stuff in there that's a lot worse than that. Like, for instance, there's people getting boiled alive, burned at the stake, and stretched out in the desert, covered with honey and eaten by ants . . . but all that is nothing compared to the pain of peeling off a Band-Aid that's been stuck to your skin for six months.

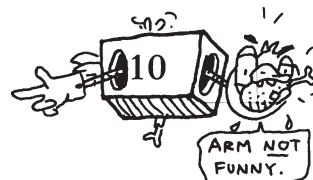
But it must be done.

And it's going to be done now.

The tweezers are ready.

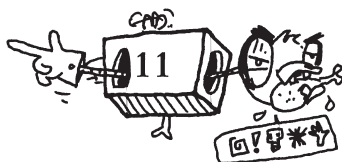
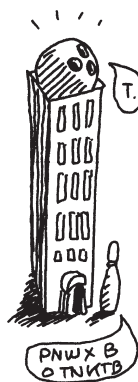
I turn the tap off.

I brace myself.

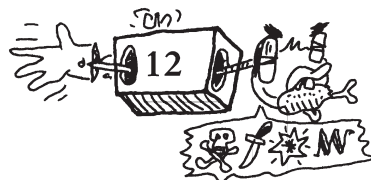


I slide the points of the tweezers under the gummy edge of the Band-Aid. And start pulling . . . AAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGHHHH-HHH!!! @%*!!!!!!@ @##**@ OUCH!! \$!\$%# %#\$% @@ EEEEEEEK!! #!!!!*!!!!!! !!@@##**@ # YOW!! %&^%# #@!!!#@# \$!\$%#%#%\$%@ @#!!!!*!!!!!!@ @##**@#!%&^%# #@!!!#@#\$!\$ %\$%#%\$%@#@#!!!! *!!!!!!@ @##**@# AAAGG-GGHHH!!! %&^%##@!!!# @#\$!\$%#%# %\$%@ @#!!!!*!!!!!! !!@@##**@#!%&^%# #@!!!#@#\$!\$ %\$%#%\$% GRRRRRR!!! M@@#!!!!*!!! !!!!!@# ##**@#!%&^%# #@!!!#@#\$!\$ OOOCH! %\$%# %\$%@@ #!!!!*!!!!!! !!@@##** @#!%&^%## @!!!!# OUOIU!!!! @# \$!\$%#%#%\$%@@ #!!!!* !!!!!!!@##** *@#!%&^%##@!! !#@#\$!\$%#% UGGGH!!!! #\$\$\$%@@#!!!!*! !!!!!!!@##** @#!%&^%## @!!!#@#\$!\$%#%#KHKJHOH!!!! %\$%@ @#!!!!*!!!!!!@ @##**@#!%&^%# #@!!! #@# \$!\$%#%#\$ %\$%@@#!!!!*!!! !!!!!@ @##** OUCH!!! *@#!% &^ %##@!!!#@#\$!\$%#%#\$ %\$%@@#!!!!*!!! !!!!!@##**@ #!%&^ %##@!!! #@# \$!\$%#%#\$ %\$%@@#!!!!*!!! OWWWW!!!! @##**@#!%&^ %\$# RESTRSGFS!!!! #@!!!# @#\$! %\$%#%\$%@#@#!!!!*!!!! !!!!!@##**@# !%&^%##@!!!# @#\$!\$%#%#\$%\$%@ @ #!!!!* !!!!!!!@##**@#!%& EEEEEEEK!!! ^%##@!!! #@ #\$\$\$%#%#\$YOWWWWW!!! %\$%@@#!!!!*!!!!!!

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 #@#\$!\$%# %#\$%@ @#!!!! AAAGGGHHHH!!!



I have to stop.

It's the worst pain ever.

It's the worst pain in the history of worst pains.

And I've only peeled off one and a half





millimetres. I've still got another sixty-eight and a half millimetres to go.

Maybe fast is not the answer.

But neither is slow.

I can't leave it on.

But I can't peel it off.

To peel or not to peel?

That is the question.

Or is it?

There must be a better way than peeling.

Peeling sucks.

It really sucks.

Sucks?

Sucks!

That's it!

Sucking is the answer!

I can use our new vacuum cleaner to suck this stupid Band-Aid off.

HUMBLE
BANDAIDS
BOW DOWN
IN HOMAGE
BEFORE THE
VISION OF
THE SACRED
SCAB.



Our old vacuum cleaner broke recently and Mum and Dad replaced it with a new super-powerful model. It's so powerful it can practically suck dust off the surface of the moon. Not that I've actually tried yet, but I bet it could.

The Band-Aid won't stand a chance.

All I'll have to do is wave the vacuum cleaner near it and the Band-Aid will be off in a second.



No peeling.

No pain.

No nothing.

Just one quick suck and it will all be over.

I go to the hall cupboard and get the vacuum cleaner.

It's huge. I drag it into the bathroom and plug it in.

I take the brush off the end of the nozzle. I don't want anything getting in the way of its sucking power.

I switch it on. The noise is incredible. It sounds like its powered by a jet engine.

I'd better concentrate.

It's a tricky job because I have to use the mirror to guide the nozzle into position. And the nozzle is so long I can't get as close to the mirror as I'd like to.

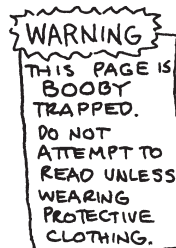
I guide the nozzle close to the Band-Aid. I can feel the Band-Aid lifting, but not quite separating from my cheek.

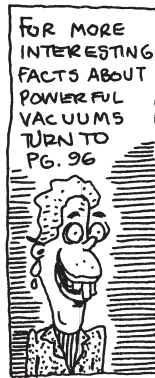
I go a bit closer.

Still not working.

I can't understand it. It should have pulled the Band-Aid free by now.

Maybe there's something blocking the nozzle. I pull it away from the Band-Aid and





look into the end. But I can't see anything.
It's too dark.

I put it up closer to my eye.

And closer.

And just a little bit closer.

PHOOMPH!

My eye!

Help! The vacuum cleaner is stuck on my
eye!

It's sucking my eyeball out of its socket!

The pain is incredible.

It's worse than paper-cuts, tongue-cuts,
and whacking your thumb with a hammer all
put together.

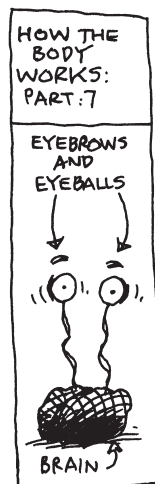
It's got to be even worse than being boiled
alive, burned at the stake or being stretched
out in the desert, covered with honey and
eaten by ants.

It's even worse than peeling off a Band-
Aid . . . well . . . maybe not quite that bad,
but you know what I mean.

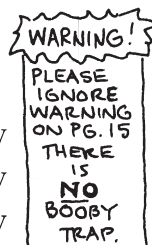
And it's not just painful . . . it's potentially
fatal.

It could suck my eyeball right out of its
socket.

And my eyeball is connected to my brain.
It could suck that out as well.



Which would be even worse because my brain is connected to everything else . . . any moment now the whole inside of my body could be sucked out of my head!



I have to act.

Fast.

Now.

Right now!

I stretch my leg out and kick the 'off' switch.

The noise dies down.

I pull the nozzle away from my eye and sit down on the side of the bath to catch my breath.

Right. That's it. Enough mucking around.

The vacuum cleaner is not the solution.

The Band-Aid is too well stuck.

I'm just going to have to do it by hand.

I grab the Band-Aid in the middle, pinch it as hard as I can and rip.

There.

It's off.

That wasn't so bad.

Hardly hurt a bit.

The trick to these things is just to get them over and done with as fast as possible.

I put the Band-Aid into my pocket—that could come in handy for annoying Jen later



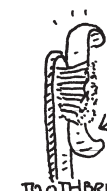
WHERE TO
HIDE A
USED
BANDAID.



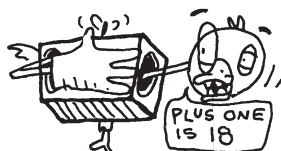
DRINK



BAKED
POTATO



TOOTHBRUSH





on. She hates used Band-Aids. She thinks they're disgusting. Especially when they turn up in her sandwiches.

I stand up and look in the mirror.

It's amazing. Six months—and all that's left is a faint pink rectangle with a grey gummy outline.

No scar. Nothing. Just skin. Normal, perfectly healed skin.

Oh no.

I don't believe it.

The Band-Aid is gone and my cut has healed but now I have a big red and black nozzle ring around my left eye. It's sort of a combination of a bruise and a blood blister.

I can't have my photo taken like this.

What am I going to do?

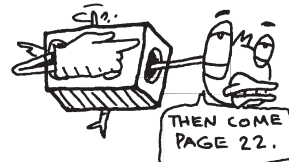
Now I won't look like an idiot with a Band-Aid under my eye—now I'll look like an idiot wearing half a pair of glasses.

Glasses.

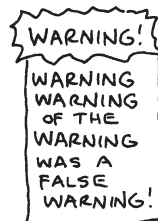
Glasses!

What better way to get my photo taken? Everybody will look at the school photo and think, who's that intelligent-looking guy with the glasses? He must be sooooo smart.

But I'm only wearing *half* a pair of glasses.



I need to finish the job.
I know what I have to do.
It's going to hurt, but it will be worth it.
Like I said, I'm not scared of a little bit of pain.



I turn the vacuum cleaner back on.
It roars into action.
I put the nozzle up to my right eye.
Here goes.



WHAT THE EYE SEES
LOOKING
UP A
SUCTION
VACUUM.

PHOOMPH!



WHAT THE VACUUM
SEES.

The nozzle grabs hold of my eyeball and starts sucking.

It doesn't feel quite as bad this time because I'm used to it, but still, it doesn't tickle.

I leave it there for as long as I can stand the pain. That should do it.

I turn around to hit the 'off' switch, but as I do, the vacuum cleaner hose crashes into the open bathroom cabinet and wipes everything off the shelf.



'BEWARE!'
SAYS MS
PATERSON
OF VICTIMS
OF VACUUMS.

It all comes tumbling off the shelves and smashes onto the bathroom tiles.

There's broken glass and shampoo and razor blades and perfume and soap and tablets and foul-smelling ointment all over the floor. And the vacuum cleaner nozzle is



I'M
JUST
CRAZY!



still stuck on my eye. It's really starting to hurt now.

I go for the switch again but as I do I slip. I grab at the towel rail but all I get is a towel. It slides off and I fall down, hard.

OOF!

The right side of my face crunches against the tiles. I hit something sharp.

OUCH!

I lift my head.

I see a razor blade.

I see blood.

Blood!

My blood is on the floor!

And the vacuum cleaner is sucking my eyeball out.

I try to stand but I can't. My ankle hurts too much.

I can't reach the switch.

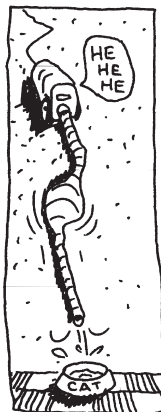
I'm pulling at the vacuum cleaner nozzle with both hands, pulling as hard as I can but I can't get it off.

I'm too weak.

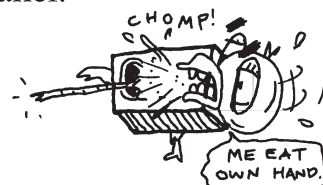
I'm losing too much blood.

What a crazy way to die!

I drag myself across the floor towards the vacuum cleaner.



1000KG
|||||



I push the 'off' switch.
The roaring subsides. The vacuum cleaner stops sucking.

I hold onto the sink and pull myself up.

I look in the mirror.

Oh no.

This is bad.

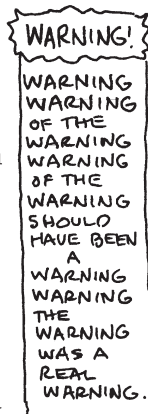
I have a big red and black nozzle mark around my right eye—it matches the other one perfectly. I look more intelligent than I ever dreamed possible.

But what I also have is a razor blade cut—just under my right eye.

It's bleeding.

A lot.

I'm going to need a Band-Aid on that.



IS THAT CLEAR?



A DOT
ON THE
PAGE.



A HOLE IN
THE PAGE
WITH AN
EYE
LOOKING
THROUGH.

