The Wonderer

By Alan Trussell-Cullen

Illustrated by Damien Kakoschke



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Chapter 1

Mandy and Her Daydreams

Everyone said Mandy was a dreamy child.

On fine Saturdays when all the other kids in her street were out playing games or down at the shops with their friends, Mandy would be lying on her back in the middle of the lawn, staring up into the sky. She would watch the clouds as they changed – sometimes into strange cheeky faces, sometimes into large misty monsters ...



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At night in her bath, she liked to lie down deep in the warm sudsy water and daydream about the soap dish as it floated round her feet. "It's a pirate ship," she thought to herself. And when it sank, she thought, "Now it's a submarine ..."



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At meal times, Mandy was always the last one to finish. Instead of eating, she liked to make patterns with her spaghetti, or fancy fork prints with her mashed potatoes, or smiling clown faces with her carrots and peas and tomatoes.

But above all, she liked to draw daydreamy pictures.

Her mum and dad didn't mind her being daydreamy. They didn't mind her drawing either. They bought her a huge pad of paper so she could draw as much as she liked.



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However, at school it was different. She liked her teacher, but he was always trying to hurry her along.

"Stop daydreaming, Mandy!"
"Time to do some work, Mandy!"
"You never finish anything, Mandy!"
"You'll have to concentrate more, Mandy!"



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The teacher was worried about Mandy. He talked to Mandy's mum and dad about her school work. "Mandy is having trouble with her school work," he said.

"What kind of trouble?" said Mandy's dad.

"She's always the last one to finish her work," said the teacher. "And sometimes she seems to be lost in her own daydreamy world."

"I think she likes writing stories," said Mandy's mum.

"Yes, but she doesn't write the stories she's supposed to write," said the teacher. "The other day I asked the children to write a story about what they did in the holidays. In Mandy's story, she said she flew up into the sky in an orange balloon and built a hut in one of the clouds!"

Mandy's dad began to laugh. "Wow! A hut in the clouds. What a great idea for a story!"

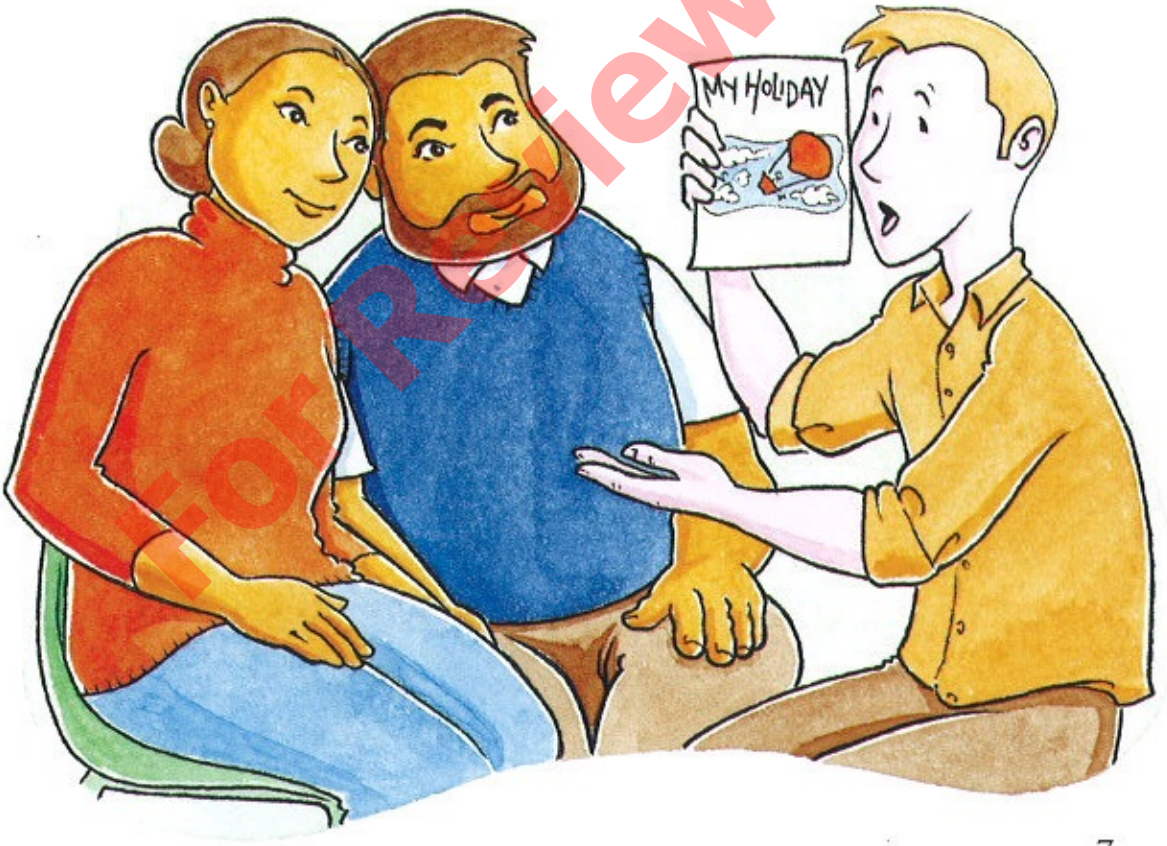


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"She does have a vivid imagination," said Mandy's mum, smiling at the teacher. "And orange is her favourite colour."

The teacher didn't smile back. "That's not the point," he said sternly. "It was supposed to be a true story about a real holiday!"

"Sometimes stories like that feel like they're true, even when they're not," said Mandy's dad.



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