

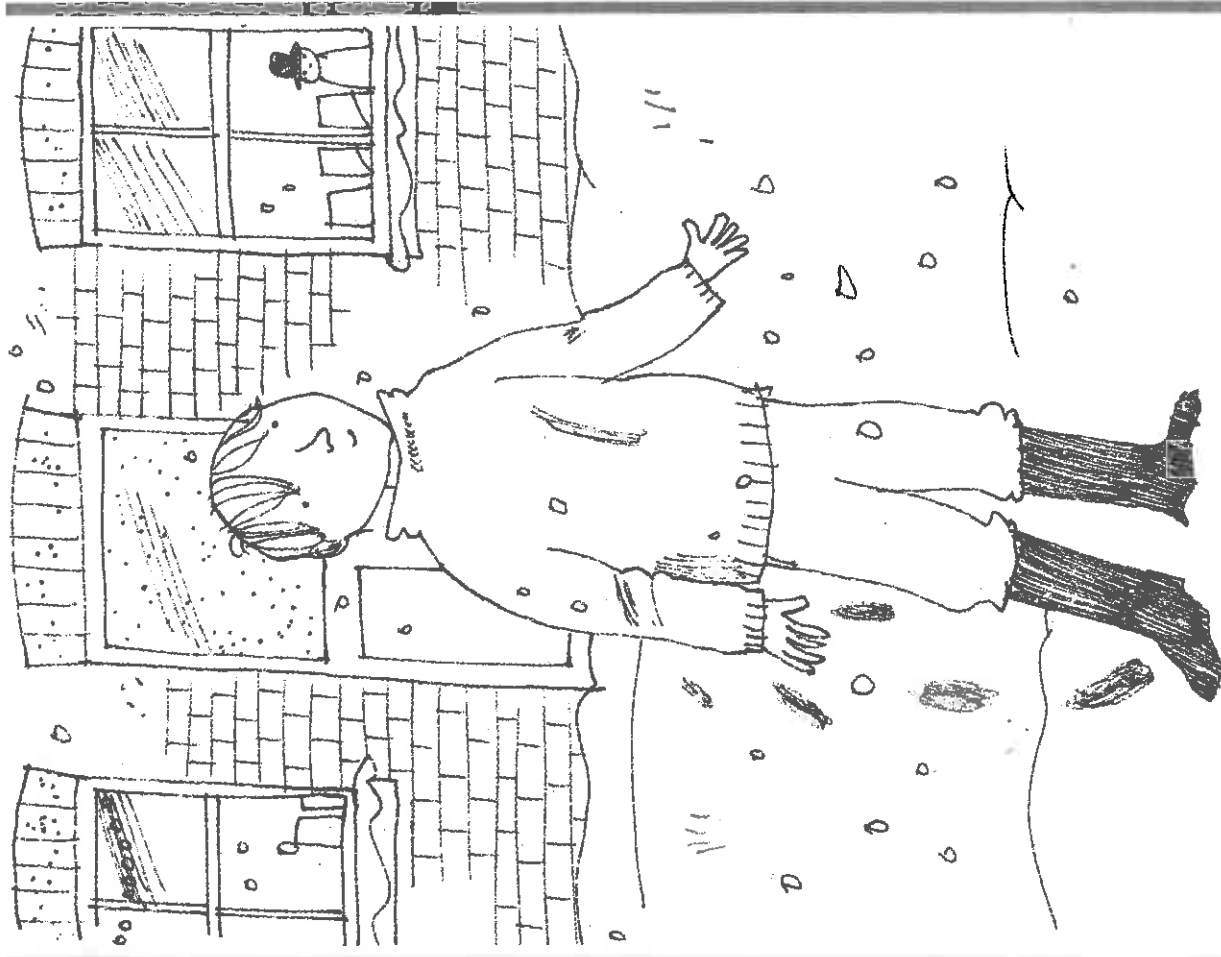
Chapter One

It was the best snowfall Tom had ever seen. Sometimes, there had been a dusty sprinkling that melted into the roads and made them black and shiny. Sometimes there was a thick frost overnight that left a white fur on trees and walls and car windcreens.

Sometimes there were curly patterns on the window, like ferns, that faded away when Tom breathed on them. But never before had he seen so much clean, sparkling, new, *deep* snow, that made him want to run in it and roll in it and scoop it up and throw it.

He went out in front of the house to look. Still the flakes came down, big and soft, as if someone had emptied out a huge sack of feathers and shaken them free.

Tom felt dizzy when he looked up at the sky and saw the white feathery flakes whirling. He could catch them on his tongue and taste the crystal coldness of them. The tracks his feet made filled quickly with soft new snow.

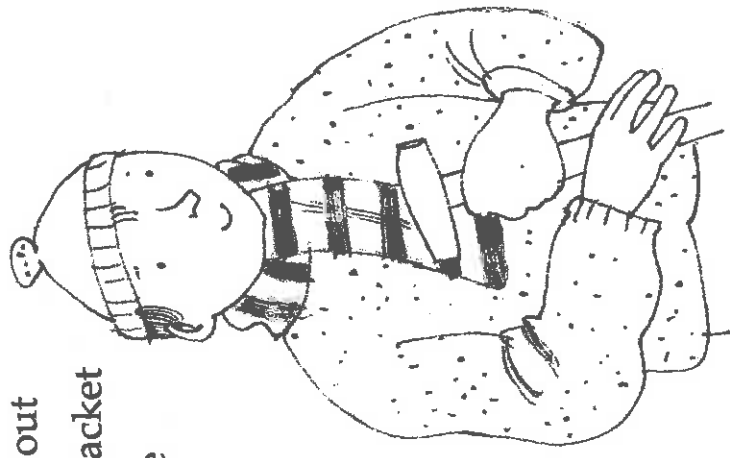


Next door, Gary and his dad were getting ready to come out, pulling on their wellingtons in the porch. "We're going to build a snowman!" Gary shouted, leaping out, landing splat, then staggering forward, leaving two deep footmarks where he'd stood. "You can help if you want."



10

Gary's dad came out too, in a red fleece jacket and bobble hat. The small front garden was shared by the two houses. There was no fence between and usually the front garden was just a thin strip of green – usually.



Now, it was a strip of white, dazzling and untouched, like a fresh page that made you want to write on it. Gary's dad had shovelled and swept the snow away from the path to their front door, but Tom's front path was still as

11

the snowfall had left it, with two sets of footprints up to the door and back, left by the milkman and the postman.

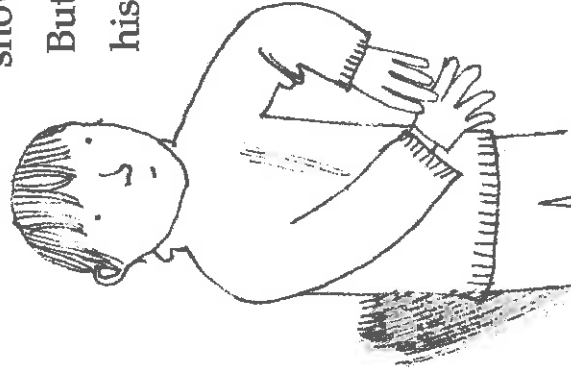
"No, thanks. I'm going to build my own," Tom shouted back.

If Gary's dad hadn't been there, Tom would have said yes straight away. It would have been fun to build a

snowman with Gary.

But not with Gary and his dad.

He went indoors for his gloves, and to tell Mum he was staying outside. When he came back out,

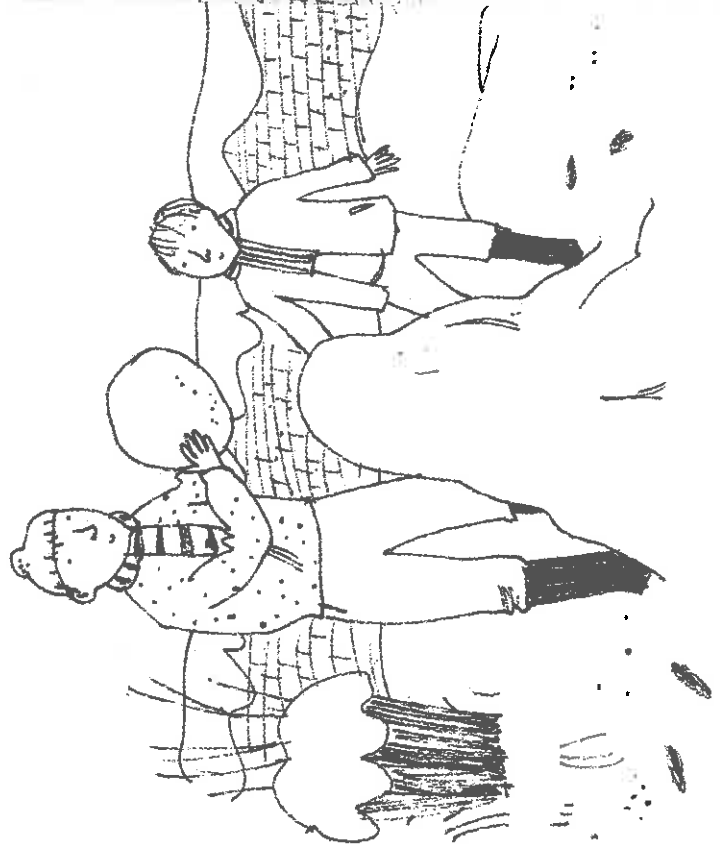


they'd already started, Gary and his dad: rolling a ball of snow that was getting bigger and bigger.



a big flattened track around their part of the garden. Tom had the feeling they were making it a competition. And because Gary's dad was there, he wanted to win. He had to make a better snowman than theirs.

He didn't want to copy, so instead of rolling a big snowball for the body he



collected snow in his hands, scooping it up, piling it into a heap, shaping and patting it. *His* snowman was going to be different.

Different and better.

When they'd made a big round ball for the body, Gary and his dad rolled a second, smaller ball for the head, and set it on top.

