



## The Maasai are Massive

**T**om forced himself to keep smiling as the chief handed him a bowl of steaming blood and milk.

Circled around him, on the hard red earth, in the shade of a thorny African tree, sat ten tall Maasai warriors, dressed in red robes and dangling earrings. In their hands they held long, sharp spears. They were looking at Tom with dark, shining eyes. Tom's blue eyes looked back at them. He was wearing shorts and a T-shirt. His clothes had faded in the African sun and were very dirty. The spears glinted in the hot sunshine.

Tom looked away from the men and down at the carved wooden bowl. The mixture of cow's blood and milk was warm and, as the disgusting smell of the blood reached Tom's nose, he had to fight his stomach not to be sick.

"Pretend it's strawberry milkshake!" he pleaded silently to his stomach with his smile super-glued to his face. "Just pretend it's milkshake...."

And with that he gulped down the whole pink bowlful in one go. The men raised their spears in the air and cheered. Tom put down the bowl and wiped his chin.

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As the grinning chief patted Tom on the back, Tom sighed with relief. This short ceremony meant that Tom was now welcome in the Maasai village. He would be safe here and everyone would look after him and make him feel welcome.

“That wasn’t so bad after all!” he thought to himself. “Still, I should be used to swallowing weird food and drink by now.”

The welcome ceremony was over. “That’s a funny sort of welcome,” thought Tom. “Remind me never to be unwelcome here!” The men stood up and guided Tom back through the village. Their bare arms rippled with muscles. They walked together past huts built with branches, twigs, grass, and mud. Chickens scratched the dusty earth, searching for food. Tiny children stared in amazement at Tom, the strange new visitor to their village. The sun beat down. The men were all laughing and chattering together about Tom’s performance drinking the traditional bowl of milk and blood. Tom could not understand their language but he saw that they were happy.

They led Tom to a flat piece of ground where he could set up his tent for the night. He felt happy. He was tired after another long day’s ride. But he had made new friends in this village, and he had a good place to put his tent for the night. Plus, he was having a *real* adventure.

Tom thought of his friends back home, wondering what they were doing right now. What would they think if they knew that Tom had ridden his bicycle all the way to Africa?

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He didn’t think that they would believe him. Would you believe that someone could ride their bike all the way to Africa? But it was true, all true. Tom finished putting up his tent and unrolled his sleeping bag. Then he thought back to how all this began....



## Daydreams of Adventure

**S**itting at his desk at school Tom always used to stare out of the window and dream of adventure. He didn't want to be at school. He wanted to be an explorer! He daydreamed about the wonderful places in the world that he had read about in books or seen on TV or on the Internet. How exciting it would be to stand on the Great Wall of China and stare out towards the wilds of Mongolia. It would be brilliant to watch grizzly bears fishing for salmon in Alaskan rivers. He wanted to eat Chinese food in China, noisily slurping noodles with chopsticks. Think of a country in the world – any country – and you can be sure that Tom had dreamed about it. Tom wanted to go to every single country in the world. And as there are around 200 countries in the world he knew that he had to get started soon.

Tom was gazing out of the classroom window. He could hear birds singing. He could not hear the teacher any more. How lovely! Undisturbed dreaming.... Gradually, though, Tom noticed that the room had gone quiet. Too quiet. With a burst of embarrassment he suddenly realised that the whole class was looking at him. He jumped in his seat. No

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longer was he battling through the rainforest. He was back in his Maths lesson. And the teacher was waiting for an answer. Oh dear! Tom didn't even know what the question was. So he definitely did not know the answer.

"Erm... I don't know." Tom mumbled, blushing.

"You don't even know what the question was, Tom, do you?" demanded Tom's teacher. He was fed up with Tom's daydreaming.

"No, I don't know what the question was. Sorry!" apologised Tom.

He liked Mr Field and didn't want to make him angry. It wasn't Mr Field's fault that Tom was a daydreamer.

"So, where in the world were you dreaming of this time?" asked Mr Field, his voice rising and his face turning pink with annoyance. "Timbuktu? The North Pole?"

Some of the class sniggered.

Mr Field continued, waving his hands in the air in frustration.

"I am **sick** and **tired** of having to repeat **everything** I say to you because you are **thousands of miles away** in the **Amazon jungle**. You're on long distance quests when you should be doing your long division questions!"

The kids at the front of the classroom were enjoying this. Watching the teacher turn as red as a beetroot was more fun than doing their work. Every minute that Mr Field spent shouting at Tom was one minute closer to the end of the lesson as well.

And then it happened. He had certainly not planned it,

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he didn't know what made him do it, but suddenly Tom heard himself saying out loud,

"I am going to be an explorer! I am going to go round the world."

And everyone laughed.

Even old Mr Field laughed.

At that moment the lunch bell rang, saving Tom from further embarrassment.

## TOM'S JOURNAL

### WHERE I WANT TO GO AND WHY:

RUSSIA: **biggest** country in the world

VATICAN: smallest country in the world

MT EVEREST: highest mountain  
in the world

DEAD SEA: lowest place in the world  
(except for under the sea)

TIMBUKTU: because it sounds cool

ARCTIC: to see a polar bear

ANTARCTIC: to see a penguin

ANGEL FALLS: tallest waterfall in the  
~~MAMMOTH CAVE~~ **biggest** cave world

AUSTRALIA: to see kangaroos &  
koalas

CHINA: to see the famous Great Wall

It is really difficult to write a list of  
places I want to go and why.

I want to go everywhere!  
I want to see everything!

I want to swing on vines through the  
rainforest with monkeys in the Amazon.

I want to ride a camel through the  
desert in Egypt. I want to feed the  
llamas at Machu Picchu.

Mum and Dad always tell me that  
anything is possible and I believe it !!!

I can cycle round the world. I can see  
all of these places. It will be hard, it will  
be scary, but I'm ready. I know that  
whatever happens, it will be worth it to  
~~see~~ see all that the world has to see ....

- Eiffel Tower
- Mayan Ruins
- Pyramids of Giza
- Statue of Liberty
- Taj Mahal
- Grand Canyon

I'm starting to think that my journey  
will be easier than writing this list.

I should write a list of places I  
don't want to go: it would be a lot  
easier!

Tom



## I am Going to Cycle Round the World

Circled around Tom, in the school playground, were a group of boys and girls from Tom's class. Other children, noticing the crowd, had gathered as well to see what all the excitement was about. They were looking at Tom with teasing, bullying eyes. Everyone was laughing. Everyone except for Tom.

Tom looked away from them all and down at the ground. He didn't like being in the middle of this crowd. He wanted to be left alone.

"How will you travel round the world? You haven't even got a car!" laughed one girl, Helen. She was always trying to annoy Tom.

Ever since Tom had told Mr Field that he was going to be an explorer, everyone had been laughing at Tom. He didn't like it. Nobody believed that he was really going to go round the world. Of course they didn't, it was a crazy idea. But now Tom was too embarrassed to say that he



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hadn't really meant it. He had just been having a good old daydream and the words had just popped out. So he began defending himself instead.

"I've got a bike. I'll go on that! It will be the best bike ride ever!" replied Tom. "I'm going to cycle round the world."

"Yeah, but what about the sea? You can't ride your bike over the water!" teased Toby.

"I'll cross the seas on a sailing boat."

"You haven't got enough money to cycle round the world!" said someone else.

"I'll sleep in my tent and eat the cheapest food," replied Tom. "That way the trip won't be expensive."

"It's too far!"

"The mountains will be too high!"

"The deserts will be too hot!"

"The winters will be too cold!"

Everyone in the crowd shouted their reasons why it was impossible to cycle round the world.

It was a funny thing, but the more that people told him it was impossible, the more Tom found himself wanting to prove them wrong.

Nobody ever thought that Tom could do anything.

He was a shy and quiet boy. He wasn't the strongest or the fastest or the cleverest boy in his class. He was just normal. A lot of the teachers in the school didn't even know his name. But that did not mean he couldn't do amazing things as well. He began to believe that maybe it

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was possible to cycle round the world, that anything was possible. Tom had always wanted to see the world, and now he had the reason to do it. He would prove everyone wrong. He would dare to live his dreams, and he would have a lot of fun at the same time!



After school Tom ran all the way home and burst through the front door, completely out of breath.

"Hi Dad!" he yelled with excitement, "I'm going to ride my bike round the whole world!"

"That's nice, son," replied his Dad, who was peeling carrots at the sink. "I'll make you some sandwiches to take with you."

Still panting, and without even stopping to take off his coat, Tom ran upstairs to find his Mum.

"Mum, Mum! Where do we keep the tent?"

"You don't need the tent, Tom," she replied. "You need to do your homework."

So for what felt like the hundredth time that day Tom had to explain his plan to cycle all the way around the world – setting off from their front door and pedalling on, on, on in an enormous circle until he arrived back home again.

"Well in that case, you will certainly need the tent," replied his Mum. "Why don't you write down a list of everything you need to take, and then I will help you pack."

Tom felt happy for the first time that day. At least his

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Mum and Dad hadn't laughed at his big plan. He ran to his bedroom.

Tom took out his diary and wrote neatly along the top of a new page, 'Things I need to take on my trip round the world'.

He looked around his room and saw his computer on the desk. He would definitely need that. His Mum and Dad would appreciate an email every now and again.

"Of course!" Tom thought to himself, "I also need clothes."

He listed all of his favourite T-shirts, a few pairs of jeans, and two pairs of trainers; one for cycling, and one for special occasions. Tom didn't know what the special occasion would be, but he was proud to be prepared.

He reached number eight on his list, and looked around his room again. He saw his guitar sitting in the corner. Yes, he would need his guitar.

Tom felt a bit silly for forgetting to include his bike until number nine, and forgetting his tent until number ten. But he was pleased with himself when he remembered his globe to help find his way around the world. He was about to continue with his list when the door flew open and a blur of blond energy burst into the room.

"Don't you ever knock?" shouted Tom angrily at his little sister who had jumped onto his bed.

"Sorry!" grinned Jo. She did not look very sorry at all. "But Mum told me you are going to cycle round the world! That is so cool. Can I help you? Please...."

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Tom was happy that Jo wanted to help him. He would miss her when he was away. He wiped the scowl off his face and shuffled across the bed to make space for his sister.

"Sure," he said, "You can help. Mum told me to make a list of what I want to take with me, but it's hard: I want to take all of my things."

Jo took the list from Tom, read it, and started to laugh.

Everyone was laughing at Tom today and he was sick of it.

"What are you laughing at?" he huffed, snatching the list back.

"Sorry," said Jo, who did look a bit sorry this time. "But your list is crazy. You can't take any of that stuff: how will you carry it all?"

"But I love my computer," grumbled Tom.

"You need to take only what you really, really cannot survive without."

"I can't survive without my DS!"

"Tough," answered Jo, her mouth serious under her curly hair, blue eyes and round cheeks. "You will soon be camping in a desert, visiting the pyramids, whizzing down mountain roads. Don't you think that is even cooler than computer games? Anyway, there's no electricity in the desert."

Tom sighed. His sister was right, as usual.

"Come on," encouraged Jo, "I'll help you. Let's do it together."

And they got to work.



THINGS I NEED TO TAKE  
on my trip round the world  
by Tom (and Jo)

- 1 Bike
- 2 Dad's panniers (special bags for carrying things on a bike)
- 3 Tent
- 4 Sleeping Bag
- 5 Camping stove, pan, ~~fork~~ spoon
- 6 Water bottle
- 7 Two sets of clothes
- 8 Raincoat
- 9 One pair of trainers
- 10 Tools to fix the bike
- 11 Puncture repair kit & pump
- 12 Helmet and bike lights
- 13 Torch
- 14 All the money from my piggy-bank
- 15 Map and compass
- 16 Passport
- 17 Camera
- 18 Diary
- 19 Teddy Bear
- 20 Toothbrush

I printed out a map of the world and drew on the route I've decided to take to get to the end of Africa:



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After they had written the list, the final thing that they needed to do was to work out the route that Tom should take around the world. Using a map of the world printed from the Internet they worked out an exciting route around the world.

Tom knew that he would have to solve lots of problems during his journey (such as trying to find boats to carry him across the oceans), but he thought it best not to worry too much about all those things right now. He didn't want to get so worried that he became too nervous even to begin his adventure!

At that minute Dad shouted up the stairs that their tea was ready.