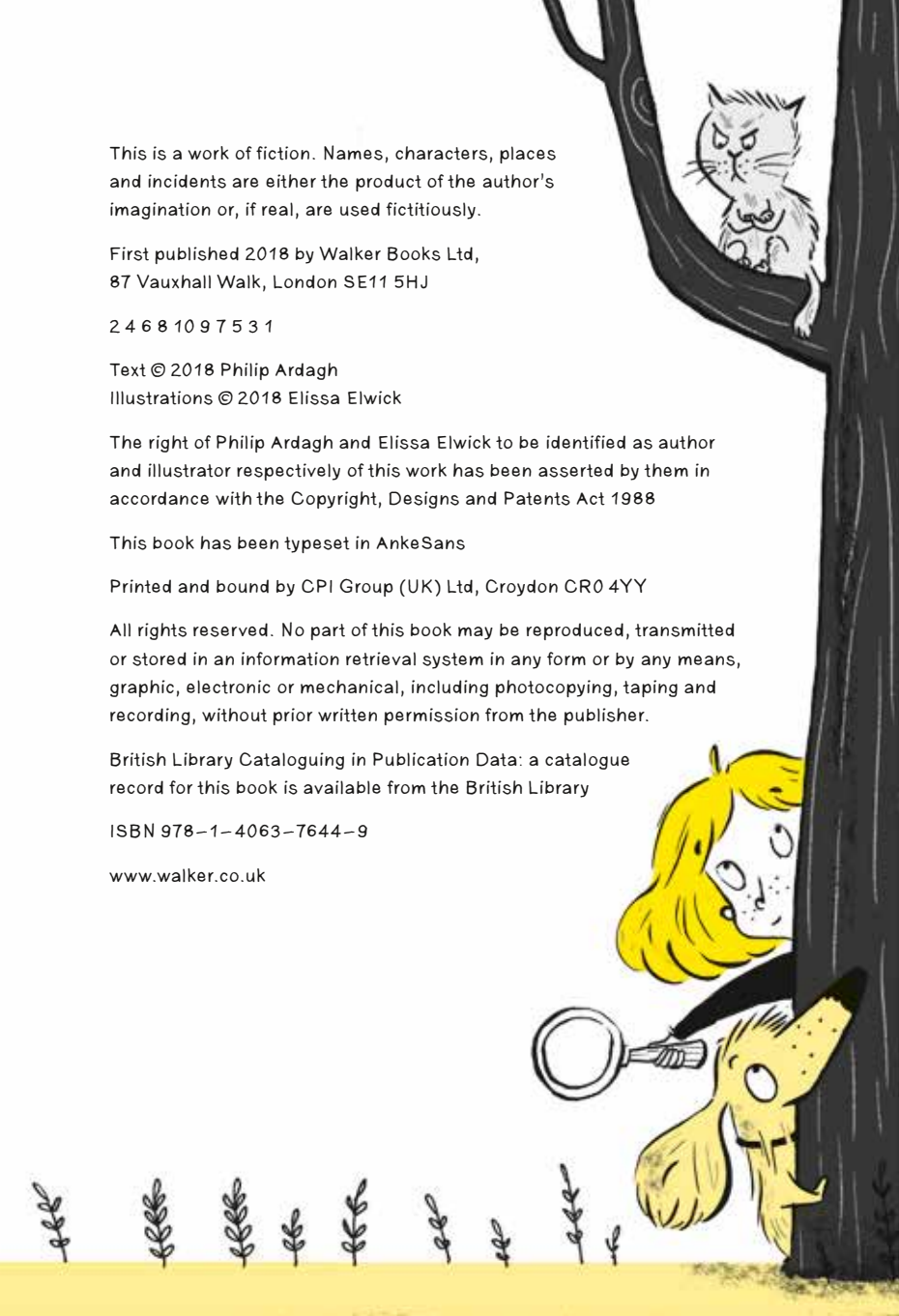
A girl. A dog. A detective agency.



This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or, if real, are used fictitiously.

First published 2018 by Walker Books Ltd,
87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text © 2018 Philip Ardagh
Illustrations © 2018 Elissa Elwick

The right of Philip Ardagh and Elissa Elwick to be identified as author and illustrator respectively of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This book has been typeset in AnkeSans

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in an information retrieval system in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping and recording, without prior written permission from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data: a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978–1–4063–7644–9

www.walker.co.uk

Stick & Fetch INVESTIGATE

BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE

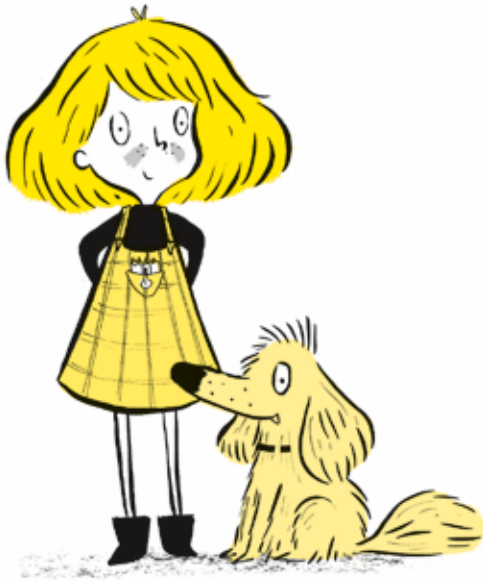
Philip Ardagh

illustrated by

Elissa Elwick

WALKER BOOKS

Meet Sally Stick and her dog (and best friend) Fetch.



Together, they're:

STICK & FETCH Detectives.

Like most famous ***DETECTIVES***, Stick and Fetch have their own special motto:

TRUST NO ONE
BELIEVE EVERYTHING

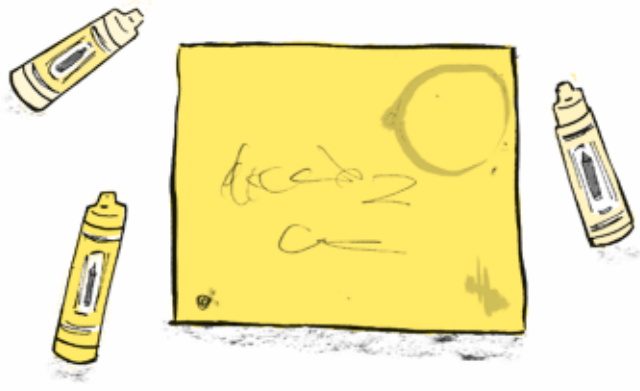
Or it could be:

TRUST EVERYTHING
BELIEVE NO ONE

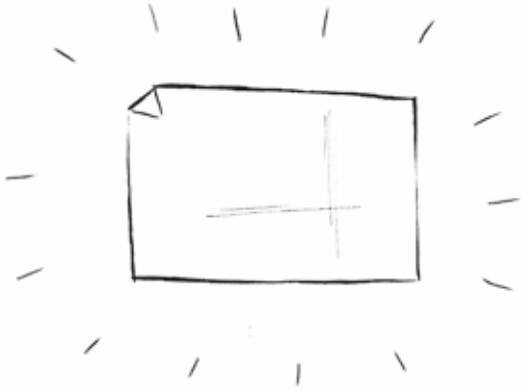
To be honest, it might even be:

TRUST NO ONE
DON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING

Sally got the idea for a motto from something she was watching on TV. She wrote it down quickly on a paper napkin with a crayon, and it ended up looking like this:



After that, Stick and Fetch decided to leave their **STICK & FETCH** business cards blank.



"We can say it's a mystery why they're blank, like the mysteries we solve," Sally told Fetch.

"But don't **DETECTIVES** solve cases, not mysteries?" asked Fetch, sniffing an interesting corner of Granny Stick's fridge. (They live at Granny Stick's.)

Sally thought for a moment. "Stick and Fetch solve MYSTERIOUS cases," she announced.

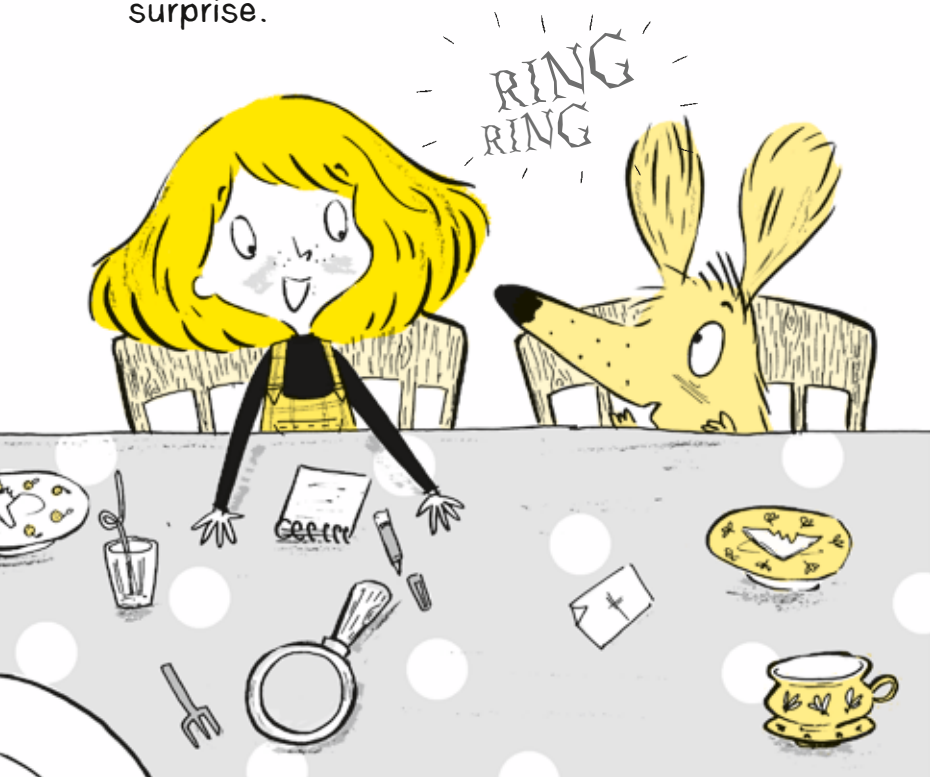
Fetch was impressed. He wagged his tail. Rumour has it that, under all that fuzzy fur, he's a French Poodle who's never had a haircut.

Come to think of it, Sally Stick has never had a haircut either.

But you don't need haircuts to be a top girl-and-dog detective duo, do you?

TELLY TROUBLE

One afternoon after school, the phone rang in the detective office of **STICK & FETCH**. They had hoped it would RING. They had wanted it to RING. But now it had started to RING, it was like a pin popping a balloon. The girl and dog both sat bolt upright in surprise.



The phone is rather an old-fashioned one attached to the wall. It is white, which Fetch rather likes because it makes it look even more like a bone. (Lots of things remind Fetch of bones.)

Sally once asked her granny if she could paint the phone red. (Important telephones are nearly always red.) But Granny Stick said no, and because the STICK & FETCH office is also Granny's kitchen, she makes the rules.

Sally got up from her detective office desk (which is also the kitchen table) and hurried to answer the phone.

"Stick and Fetch," she said in her very best telephone manner. (This is the sort of voice she'd use if she ever ran into a member of the royal family when out shopping).

"This is Mrs Plink," said the voice at the other end. It sounded like a woman with a mouth full of marbles. "Please tell your granny that I'm about to explode —"

"Wh-what?" Sally gasped.

She dropped the phone in surprise,

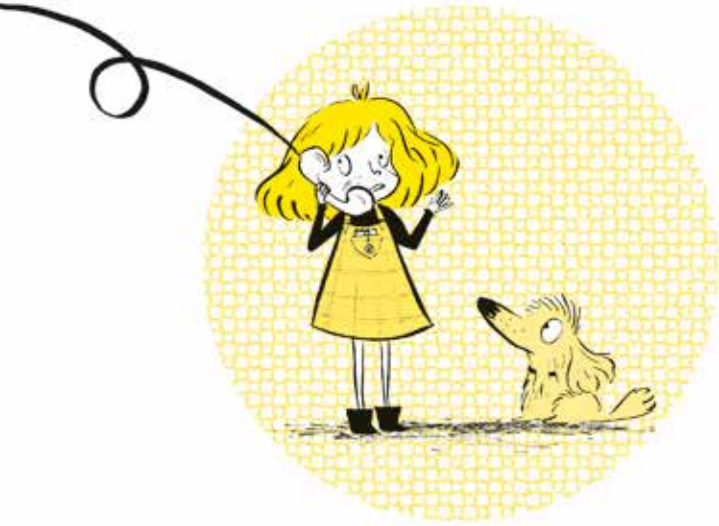
then quickly snatched it up again.

"Hello? Hello?" she said, but there was no one there.

"Who was it?" barked Fetch.

"Someone called Mrs Plink..."

"Sounds like a made-up name to me," woofed Fetch. "I bet she has something to hide."



"Good thinking, Fetch."

"What did she want?"

"She said that she was about to explode."

"On purpose?" Fetch gasped.

"I doubt it," said Sally. "No one explodes on purpose."

"Perhaps she'll blow up **bigger** and **bigger**, ROUNDER and ROUNDER, until she bursts!" said Fetch. "Like a balloon!"

"That would be quite an explosion!" said Sally. "We must use our detective powers to track her down. We must save her!" She leapt to her feet.

"But *how* will we save her?" asked Fetch.

"Let's worry about that once we've **traced** her," Sally suggested.

"Traced?" said Fetch, puzzled. "Like tracing the outline of a picture?"

"**Trace** is detective-speak for found," Sally reminded him. She had done a LOT of research about being a detective. "Like **tracing** a missing relative."

"Of course," said Fetch. "I knew that."

"Our first problem is that we don't know where this Mrs Plink was calling from." said Sally. She put her hands behind her back and paced up and down past the fridge.

Fetch thought this looked very detective-y, so he followed her on all fours.

"Any **CLUES**?" he asked.

CLUES are very important to detectives. **CLUES** are how they find things out. "Any noises in the background?"

"Yes!" said Sally. "Yes, there were! I could hear Tilly Dungwot off the telly."

"The newsreader with the funny haircut?"

"Yes!" said Sally Stick. "*That* Tilly Dungwot."

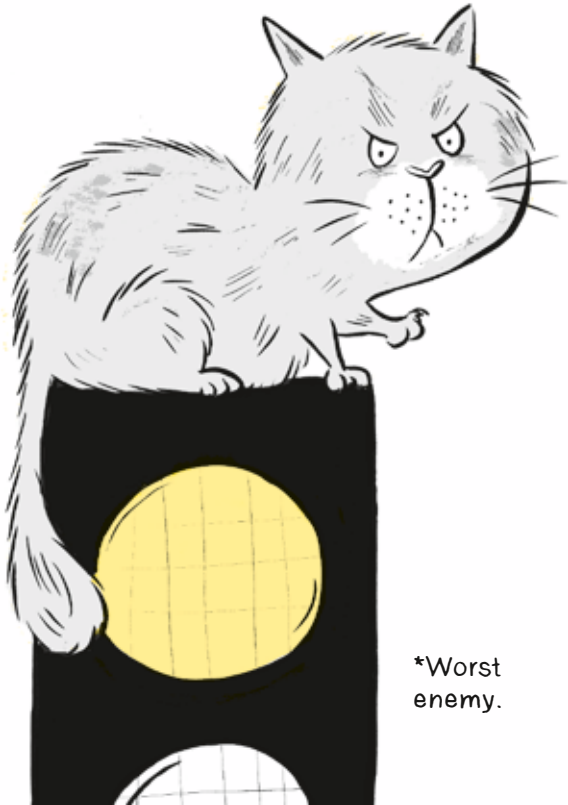
Fetch wagged his tail excitedly.
"Then Mrs Plink must be at the TV studio!" he said. "It's the only explanation."

"You're right," said Sally. "You're so clever, I could kiss you!" And she did, because, although detectives don't usually kiss each other, Fetch is her dog
"Let's go!"

A few minutes later, Sally was pedalling her bicycle frantically, peering around Fetch, who'd taken up his usual position in the basket in front.

To a passing motorist, it probably looked a bit like a large bush riding a bike with a basket full of candyfloss.

It didn't take the pair too long to reach the TV studio. Sally only made a couple of wrong turns and Fetch only jumped out of the basket once, when his arch-nemesis*, a Persian cat called Tofu, taunted him when they were stuck at a red traffic light.



*Worst enemy.

At the studio, Sally chained her bike to the railings then walked up to the security guard at the gate.

"Hello," said Sally.

The security guard was looking down at Fetch.

"Do you like my dog?" asked Sally.

"I am very handsome," Fetch pointed out. All the security guard could hear, though, was **WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!**, because that's all *anyone* can hear when Fetch speaks. Except for Sally, of course. Which is one of the reasons why they make such a great team.