



# The Runaway Dinner

*Allan Ahlberg , Bruce Ingman (Illustrator)*

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**Talk about fast food! A hilarious, high-speed tale from the inimitable Allan Ahlberg – catch it if you can!**

What happens if someone's dinner decides that, well, it doesn't want to be eaten? For a hungry little boy named Banjo and a savory sausage named Melvin, it's a plight that can only result in a breathless escape – and what a chase it is! Off speeds the sturdy sausage – leading fork, knife, and plate, chair and table, a handful of fries with various French names, and three fat little peas – out the door, down the street, and around the park, with poor Banjo taking up the rear. Will the famished boy ever catch them? And what (gulp) happens to Melvin if he does? Allan Ahlberg is in his element with this fast and funny tale, while Bruce Ingman's kid-friendly illustrations add visual comedy to the chase.

## The Runaway Dinner Details

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# **From Reader Review The Runaway Dinner for online ebook**

## **Jenny says**

When I first heard my husband reading this book aloud to our son I thought it was dumb. Then I read it and looked at the pictures and really liked it. Funny, especially the names of the food. I thought the ending was kind of anticlimactic but the picture on the very last page made up for it pretty well. My three year old thought it was really funny.

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## **Matt Davies says**

A little boy's dinner runs away and he chases it across the road, waiting for the green light of course, and all the way through the park. Actually, that's not quite true. In fact the table and chair and knife and fork and his parents also chase the runaway dinner. And it was the sausage, Melvin by name, that started it all and who finally escapes with the cricket ball. This is a picture book with a lot of text, no really a lot of extremely verbose text, that has a very chatty feel to it, which really lends itself to being read aloud with audience participation. It has a lot of vocabulary and repetition that handily reinforces the over abundance of content. The book could be used for practicing vocabulary, counting, use of adverbs or even punctuation. And it's silly, really silly.

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## **Kate says**

Exceedingly, awesomely silly.

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## **Darcie Saunier says**

This book is SO cute. As I read it to myself, the voice I hear in my head is that of a fast-talking, nasal-sounding, sports announcer! I love how every inanimate thing has a name because in my warped world they DO have names! Lol! Cute book! Fun for a story time.

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## **Holly says**

Hilarious use of rhythm and syntax. It reads as if someone were speaking and not writing the words. The story line is busy and funny. By giving nearly every object a name and gender, they are all personified and appeal to children. There are several clever plays on words, such as the French Fries having French names. I thought this was a very silly story and a lot of fun to read.

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## **Melki says**

It took me several pages to warm up to this one, but I ended up really enjoying the merry chase that ensues when Banjo's sausage, veggies, table, and chair take off out the door. I particularly liked the last painting of Melvin the sausage and his new little friend.

A cute, though somewhat exhausting story.

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## **Abigail says**

An anthropomorphic sausage named Melvin makes a break for his freedom in this rather surreal picture-book adventure from Allan Ahlberg and Bruce Ingman, followed in short order by: the fork, the knife, the plate, the table and chair, three fat peas (named Peter, Percival and Paul), four baby carrots (Caroline, Clara, Camilla and Christabel), and a handful of fries (all French, of course). Pursuing this string of unconventional runaways is a hungry boy named Banjo Cannon, Banjo's cat, Mildred, the neighbor's dog (pursuing Mildred, really), and Banjo's parents. Many mishaps (or not, depending upon one's perspective) ensue. Will Banjo catch his sausage? Will Melvin be eaten? Read and find out...

Like some other reviewers, I had mixed feelings about The Runaway Dinner, which has a zany, madcap sense of fun that will appeal to some, and leave others cold. The acrylic illustrations, done by Bruce Ingman, are also likely to appeal, or not, as the case may be. Truthfully, this was one I appreciated more than enjoyed - the artwork just isn't to my taste, and the story, while hilarious upon occasion, was rather uneven. Still, I think children who enjoy the bizarre and offbeat will like it, particularly if they have a fondness for "pursuit tales" (think *The Gingerbread Man*, and the like).

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## **Kathryn says**

I am so not sure whether this book is just completely random and odd or whether it is some seriously genius imagination--I was amused and bemused all at the same time. Some parts seemed a bit redundant, but a few parts were hilarious (when the boy finds the runaway sausage by the tree in the park and plans to finish what he started... HAHA!) and a few parts were just so... um... well, the fate of the peas!? Then again, I could totally see kids loving this so maybe I'm just being a Big Boring Grown-Up!

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## **Hilary says**

I read this years ago, and found it again today in the library. It's a really fun read about a boy who is eating his dinner when it runs away, followed by the cutlery, chair and table. All the vegetables and just about everything mentioned in the story are given names. We really enjoyed this when my daughter was small, she loves giving names to things, even our extensive collection of Britain's plastic animals are all named, and I've just realised that her musical instruments have names too and she has always had the ability to feel sorry for almost anything, so inanimate objects gaining arms, faces and names really appealed to her. I must see if she remembers this!

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## **Busy Mummy says**

Just read this to my youngest aged 5 for the first time with his brothers aged 9 and 12. Still, my eldest two enjoy the story as much as the first time they heard it.

This is an energetic and fast paced, perfect read aloud book. That matches the fast food chase of the storyline.

My son found it hilarious when the sausage suddenly runs off poor little Banjos plate with the rest of his dinner in pursuit. Also, naming all the carrots, French fries and peas adds to the fun of this enjoyable read.

Would make a great literacy lesson for children to write their own version of what happened next, as a sequel to the book.

Overall, a brilliant book and I highly recommend 'The Pencil' which is another great read by Allan Ahlberg.

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## **Cliff Dyer says**

This book is a hoot. The tale of a boy named Banjo, his mother and father, Mr, and Mrs. (I think his mother is named Mr., but I'm not entirely sure), and a sausage named Melvin, who gets up from the table and runs off.

Most importantly, it is fun to read out loud. It uses language and rhythm in a way that propels the story along, and feels natural, yet completely unexpected in a narrative context.

Example:

"The peas as it happened, were all boys: Peter, Percival, and Paul. And the carrots, all girls: Caroline, Clara, Camilla, and Christabel. As for the fires, well, there really were too many to name all of them, though being French, of course, they had names like Francois, Fifi, and so forth.

So that's it, the absolute truth, the complete picture--see? Here they are, the whole lot of them, not forgetting Mildred the cat and Mr. and Mrs., and Bruce, the next door neighbor's dog--nearly \*did\* forget him, though he was chasing Mildred, actually--all racing down the road."

The asides are interrupted by other asides, the narrator engages the listener, the prose is as fast as the sausage chase, and the only way through the sentences is to keep moving until you are "quite out of puff, and the story settles to its close." It begs to be read energetically and enthusiastically. Our two year old loves it, and so do I.

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## **Tina says**

Hilarious, I loved this story. My son Henry (aged 5) bought it home from the school library.

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## **Cora says**

Per my first grader: good, awesome, funny

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## **Ann says**

Well... huh. I can't decide if this book was absolutely absurd or totally brilliant...

The book is, really, a bunch of nonsense with no "purpose" or "message" that I can find. However, sometimes it's fun to read a book that's just meant to bring a smile and a laugh.

I shan't divulge the ending (which did have me guessing all the way to the very last page!) but I shall say this on the plus side: clever, well illustrated, amusing, unpredictable, funny, and entertaining.

On the negatives: Unfortunately, unhappy fates meet up with a few of the runaway peas... Now, this might seem silly to mention, and while it was amusing, I feel I must mention it. I mean, sure, it's fake, it's a pea, who cares, it's MEANT to be funny. But, kids do take things seriously sometimes (especially when the book starts by saying: this is completely true). More than this, I have to ask the question: is ALL food alive? And does all food get eaten? Who knows, maybe this is a way to introduce kids to the idea of eating meat?

Like I said, I can't tell if it's brilliant or what. Either way though, I DID enjoy it, and if eating food with personalities doesn't bug you or your kid, then go for it :D

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## **Lisa Vegan says**

Completely bizarre.

This story is a complete hoot and both the story and pictures are very amusing. The illustrations work very well with this book, even though they're not my favorite when standing on their own.

I think for children who are particularly empathetic, haven't developed past the normal "psychotic" stage, or are very literal minded, after having this read to them, they might be a tad haunted by all of their food for a long time. It's probably worth the read anyway though.

As a vegan, I'd have been happier if all the runaway foods had been animal in origin, but I could never have expected that to be the case.

A fun read aloud book, especially for kids who don't get overly perturbed.

