

JEST

THE FUNNY BITS



BILL CONDON

Jest the Funny Bits

A collection of poems, stories, and plays
for children aged 9 to 12 years

Bill Condon



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Brisbane

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Treetop Studio • 9 Kuhler Court
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sales@ipoz.biz
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Many of these pieces were first published in the NSW School Magazine. Some of the poems are from the author's poetry collection, *Rock and Roll Elephants*.

This book is dedicated to my wife and best friend, Di, who deserves a medal for listening to my corny jokes for so many years.

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POEMS

Maurice Mouse

In the Made-Up world of Maurice Mouse
he is the ruler of the house.

Cats fetch him cheese and call him Sir,
and ask permission before they purr.

He has two cats to wash his cars –
(one Mouse Mobile, three Rodent Stars)
and cats as well patrol the house –
watchdog cats to guard a mouse!

He lives inside a cattery
where all he hears is flattery,
from loyal feline followers
who think the mouse supreme.

Oh, how Maurice Mouse
hates waking from his dream.

Rock and Roll Elephants

Each year at the Animal Ball,
the hawk and the hummingbird brawl,
the cow is ejected for stepping on toes,
the eagles and beagles are awful to crows,
the skunk and the skink create a great stink,
the bull goes bananas and charges at llamas,
the buzzard and broilga decide that it's vulgar,
the ants try to dance, but miss out on the chance,
when the elephants charge through the door.

They grind and they bump it,
they twist it and trump it –
there goes the unbreakable floor!

Kit-Cat

Fluffy balls of cuteness,
curled up sound asleep.
No miaows,
or late-night howls,
angels aren't as sweet.

Pussy cats grow up to be
big and bold and smug.
I want my cat always to be
no bigger than a bug.

I don't want it to scratch and snarl,
or race a car and die.
I want my cat to stay a kitten,
so I'm practicing
bonsai.

Noah's Park

It's hard to picnic in the park
when lions come to call;
your sandwiches are never safe,
they'll eat them, crusts and all.

And it only takes two elephants
to make a great disaster.
They'll gobble up the peanuts,
and polish off the pasta.

Camels too might bother you
and suck up fizzy drinks.
Your blanket could be crawling
with a pair of brawling minks.

Orang-outangs and caribou,
gazelles and antelope,
all bathe in the duck pond
but never use the soap.

The tiger and the panther
might eat you in the dark –
yes, picnics can be bothersome
when held in Noah's Park.

The Miracle Tree

We bought a tree from the corner shop –
bargain price for being dead.
We took it home and straight away,
stuck an angel on its head.

We tizzed it up with twirly bits,
and one bright shiny star.
Then we turned on the fairy lights
and the Christmas tree went
'Ahhhhh.'

Survival of the Twittest

Wen Prinsess Doris maide it knowne
dat she had tyred of lyfe alowne,
ten Printz Charminks kame ter tee,
one of dem, of corse, wuz me.

We awl set owt ter win her harte,
but good oled Doris, whoo isn't smarte,
at larst chosed mee abuv de rest –
becaws I parst her spellink test.

I wurnt the kutest oar de fittest,
but Doris sed I were the twittest.

The Scary Boy

Professor Pamela McGurk
was famed for Scientific Work.
It was she who proved beyond a doubt,
false teeth look better in, than out.

She also used her science skills
to prove that ducks, don't pay their bills.
As well she made a baked bean car . . .
with the help of wind, it travelled far.

But the thing that gave her greatest joy
was a machine she called, The Scary Boy.

It was shiny and silver and covered in spots.
It was built entirely of pans and pots.
It had eyes and a nose and a mouth and hands,
and a motor that ran on old rubber bands.

It was tall and purry and furry and fat.
It had ears that flapped, like the wings of a bat.
It had buttons and switches and gadgets and plugs –
and the floor was a carpet – of Ladybird Bugs.

It was big, it was bold, it was brash, it was new.
And the whole world wondered, What does it do?
She flicked it on and what did it do?
Nothing at all, except go . . .
BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

Swish Swash!

Up before the elephants
have woken from their sleep,
in and out and all about
through the dozing sheep.

Polishing a kangaroo,
flossing a giraffe,
tick-a-ling hyenas
just to get a laugh.

Swishing and swashing,
in the lion's den.
Swishing and swashing,
do it all again.

Dabbing spot remover
on a leopard's tail,
vacuuming the belly
of a humped-back whale.

Spray-painting toucans,
varnishing the bats,
stop to pat a platypus,
scale the mountain cats.

Swishing and swashing,
fast as you can.
Swishing and swashing,
keep to the plan.

Brush a little harder –
got to get it right,
can't have a crocodile
whose teeth aren't white.

Tidy up the antelope,
manicure the bear,
spring-clean the ceiling
of the old wolf's lair.

With a swish and a swash,
and a golly, golly gosh –
what a great day
for an animal wash!

Spot the Spot

I once had a dog named Spot,
who sometimes thought people were trees.
If you didn't watch out, he'd water your leg,
and attempt to ring-bark your knees.

I sent him off to Obedience School
to learn how a good dog should be,
and when he came home on Christmas Eve
he headed straight for the tree.

He lifted his leg so proudly,
and he wasn't embarrassed at all.
Then the Christmas lights exploded,
and Spot was a spot on the wall.

Family Tree

The mother was a ghost gum,
a really terrific tree-mum.

The father was a noble oak,
a shining prince of tree-dom.

You'd think with a family tree like that
the offshoot would have to be a winner.

Instead, he was a toothpick
who lived in fear of dinner.

Eyesore-osaurus

I've studied all the dinosaurs
that history's unravelled
and found a few new species
on the many roads I've travelled.

There's the arrogant Ignore-osaur
that walks with head on high.
It does not even deign to nod
as it trundles by.

The Badbreath-osaur has germs galore
and needs to brush its teeth.
The Crook-osaur is, for sure,
a crafty little thief.

The Bore-osaur is tedious,
the Brag-osaur's a pain.
If nothing else, Umbrella-saurs
are handy in the rain.

I quite admire the Stutter-saur.
It tries with all its might
to master elocution,
but it never gets it right.

My favourite, though,
I have to say, is bits of this and that.
Part brontosaur, part stegosaur,
part giant pussycat.

I call it Jigsaw-osaur,
Its wonder never ceases.
I have a skeleton of one,
though I'm missing a few pieces ...

Come and See the Dinosaurs

Come and see the dinosaurs
dancing in the street,
with bows upon their shiny claws
and glitter on their feet.

A little liposuction,
lippy here and there,
with plaited tails and painted toes
and roses in their hair.

Dripping with perfumery
and skipping to and fro,
a dozen dainty dinosaurs
putting on a show.

They've visited the beauty shop –
a rare and lovely treat –
and now they're happy dinosaurs,
dancing in the street!

Ode Rage

I push my pen around the page,
it pushes back and sneers.
When I incur a paper cut –
I cry, the paper jeers.
A face appears upon the page –
a horrid, mocking troll.
Now my chair collapses
and I'm truly on a roll.
My pen falls down beside me.
I'm sure I hear it speak.
It mutters, 'Feelin' lucky, punk?'
I answer, 'Feelin' weak.'
Deadlines are sneaking up on me,
like zombies, claws extended.
My brain is full of jellybeans –
the jar has been upended.
My Muse is out to get me,
and I'm filled with angst and fear.
I send regards from Writer's Hell,
be thankful you're not here.

I'm a Pirate, I Am!

I'm pirate, I am, you better watch out.
No one is safe when a pirate's about!
Every weekend I roam the high seas.
I'm a pirate, I am –
I do as I please!
I don't comb my hair.
I don't touch a broom.
I'm a pirate, I am –
I don't clean my room!
But Monday to Friday
I'm quiet as can be.
My teacher's a pirate –
she's bigger than me!

The Abominable Toeman

Inside my bed my toes are kept – especially at night.
That way if monsters come around, there's nothing out to bite.
I sometimes also keep my toes enclosed in football socks.
You can't go wrong with ones that pong – they ward off monster shocks.
Because of these and other tricks my toes are still all mine,
but every day, just to be sure, I count them, one to. . .
NINE!

Top Dog

Life is a question of balance, you see,
and no one at all can balance like me.
I can balance an egg on top of my nose,
while preening my coat and cleaning my toes.
I can dance on a rail in the midst of a gale,
and hop upside-down on the tip of my tail.
But the trick for which I'm most renowned
is a one-leg stand on the head of a hound.
I make him sit there for an hour,
and all the while I purr with power.
Now, please, I beg, excuse the pun,
but when a cat's top dog,
it's lots of fun!

Window Seat

Just outside the window seems to be,
a better place for you and me.
There's sunshine there, and giant slides ...
and don't forget the dragon rides!
There are trees to climb that scrape the moon,
and monsters dance in the lagoon,
and bigfoots bounce on trampolines,
and tigers sneak up unforeseen,
and strike like lightning at their prey –
then lick them 'till they're licked away!
If only classrooms had lagoons,
on sleepy Monday afternoons.

The Knights

One knight one night got a jolly big fright.
He was stuck in his armour,
stuck dead tight.
It turned out well, I'm glad to say –
a trusty can opener saved the day.

Two knights awoke and did a dance –
they'd pitched their tent on a bed of ants.

Three heavyweight knights
on a lightweight steed
rode off to do a knightly deed.
One sang, one laughed, one played the fiddle,
the horse, of course, sagged in the middle.

Four knights with kites
one windy day
were lifted up
and blown away.

Five brave knights,
all yawn, yawn, yawning –
they'd been up since early morning.
Now it's time to dim the light,
and hope the bed bugs do not bite.
Nighty-night, knights!

Uncle Jack

Uncle Jack belongs Outback,
so when he comes to visit
he brings along his kangaroo,
and Bert, his blue-tongue lizard.
He decorates the Christmas tree
with lots of slimy critters,
and when he turns the lights up high
he makes snakeburger fritters.
He also brings his cattle dog –
it bites off postie's limbs –
on Christmas Eve it stays awake,
howling sacred hymns.
Uncle carves the turkey up,
(half for him and half for pup)
and when it's time to have dessert,
he swipes my share to give to Bert!
His kangaroo sits at the table,
on the lap of Auntie Mabel,
it chews away on Christmas cake,
and Auntie's finger (by mistake).
After lunch, Jack tells us that,
he'll show us how to shear the cat.
His presents bring us added gloom –
a gift-wrapped spider's in my room.
His boomerang display is free.
It's always a catastrophe.
He throws it with a cocky leer,
it wedges in old Grannie's ear.
The police are called to have a chat –
they ask about the crew-cut cat ...
At last it's time to say goodbye,
a tear wells up inside his eye –
he gushes like a broken drain –
we have to push him on the train.
So Uncle Jack returns Outback
with dog and roo and lizard
and it only takes us 'til July
to recover from his visit.

All Aboard!

Each week is like a train
rushing down the track.
Each day's another ride –
clicketty clack, clicketty clack.
All aboard for Monday,
climbing up the hill,
Tuesday, Wednesday –
climbing higher still.
Thursday, Friday,
coming down at last –
Saturday, Sunday –
give that horn a blast!
Oo-oo-OOOOOOOO!
All aboard for Monday,
now we're turning back.
Each week is like a train,
rushing down the track.
Clicketty clack,
clicketty clack,
clicketty, clicketty,
clicketty clack ...
Oo-oo-OOOOOOOO!

Epitaphs

1

Stamp hard upon the grave of Hector.
In life he was a stamp collector.

2

Here lies Jonah.
This is his tale:
he died while trying
to swallow a whale.

3

Here lies the cat
that once was Lisa's.
The mower got him.
Rest in pieces.

4

Here lies Larry the Liar.
Burnt to death
when his pants caught fire.

SHORT STORIES

The Elephant's Foot

Mum loved garage sales. I was only tagging along in case there was something amazing for sale that cost no more than five dollars, which is all I had.

What I bought had to be really cool so I could show off to my friend Jack. Me and Jack are always trying to beat each other at whatever we do, but he always wins. Jack is better than me at sport, he's smarter, and he has more muscles. The only thing that I have more of than he does is pimples.

'I win again!' he yells, as loud as he can.

I've never even got close to beating him, at anything.

We were almost ready to leave the garage sale when I saw something I liked.

'What have you got there, Barry?'

'An elephant's foot, Mum.'

'Well, put it back. You don't know where it's been.'

'Yes, I do. It's been on the end of an elephant.'

'You know very well what I mean, Barry. It's dirty and smelly.'

'I promise I'll clean it up. I'll pay for it myself, too. As long as it's no more than five dollars.'

Mum looked at the price tag. It was thirty-five dollars.

She took a twenty dollar note from her purse. 'With your money and mine,' she said, 'we might be able to buy it.'

Mum turned to the lady selling the elephant's foot. 'That's all we've got. Is it enough?'

'Sold,' said the lady.

I couldn't wait to show off my treasure to Jack. This was one thing he'd never be able to beat. I phoned him the first chance I got.

'Come on over, Jack,' I said. 'I've got a little surprise for you.'

Ten minutes later, he arrived. I took him straight out to the shed. Like a magician, I pulled a blanket off the elephant's foot.

'Ta da!' I couldn't stop smiling. 'Pretty cool, eh, Jack?'

He shrugged. 'It's no big deal. Once you've seen one elephant's foot, you've seen them all.'

'It is *so* a big deal! You're just jealous because you haven't got an elephant's foot!'

‘Ha! My Uncle Tommy owns a circus. Yesterday, he tied the elephants up in the vacant block next to our place. You’ve only got one smelly elephant foot. I’ve got six complete elephants!’

Oh no – he’d beaten me again. And then he laughed.

Mum poked her head around the door. ‘If you want to bring that foot into the house, Barry, you’ll have to clean it first.’

‘Okay, Mum.’

After half an hour of cleaning, sweat was rolling down my face, and I was tired.

‘There’s still dirt inside it,’ I said, ‘but it can stay there. That’s as good as I can get it.’

Jack rolled his eyes. ‘I can get it a lot cleaner than that. ‘Watch this.’ He kicked the foot as hard as he could. A huge chunk of dried mud flew across the shed.

I looked inside the foot. ‘There’s still something in there,’ I told him. ‘And it smells worse than ever.’

Jack pushed me out of the way. ‘Get me a hammer and a chisel, Barry. Whatever it is, I’ll get it out.’

Clang! Bang! Crash!

Sparks whizzed from the hammer as Jack belted away. Then, after one huge whack, the thing that was stuck came out in a giant lump. As Jack stared at it, he began to shake.

‘I think I know what it is, Barry.’

‘What?’

He stepped closer and pointed.

‘It’s a really old, squashed-up . . . body!’

‘Yikes! I think you’re right, Jack.’

‘I know I am. But there’s something else, too. Look underneath the body – it’s sitting on a toilet seat!’

‘Erky perky!’

He was right again! What I had on the shed floor was all that was left of some poor guy who’d been sitting on a toilet when an elephant put its foot down and squashed him flat!

No one would ever beat that, not even Jack.

‘What do you think about that?’ I asked him.

‘It’s okay,’ he said, ‘if you like that sort of thing.’

‘You’re joking! Everyone likes that sort of thing, Jack! It’s a squashed guy on a toilet seat! You can’t get anything better than that!’

‘Yes, you can.’

‘No, you can’t! For once in my life, I’ve got something better than you’ve got. Admit it!’

‘No way. My Auntie Ann collects Egyptian mummies.’

‘So what?’

‘Well, if I ask her, she’ll bring a mummy to our house! An Egyptian mummy is better than a squashed guy on a toilet seat any day! Everyone knows that!’

I thought he’d beaten me again, but then I noticed something very strange . . . puffs of white smoke were coming out of the elephant’s foot. And then they all joined together to make a person – a person made of smoke!

Jack hid behind me. ‘Tell me this isn’t happening,’ he said.

‘It isn’t happening, Jack.’

‘I don’t believe you, Barry. I think that’s a g-g-g – ghost!’ And I don’t even believe in g-g-g – ghosts!’

The smoky figure began zipping around the shed, bouncing off the ceiling and the walls.

‘Run!’

We charged from the shed into the house, racing in and out of every room, screaming the whole time. The ghost was right behind us.

‘AAARRRGGGGHH!’

Finally, we reached the toilet and slammed the door shut. The ghost oozed in through the keyhole.

‘Tell it to go away, Barry!’

‘Go away, ghost,’ I said. ‘Please.’

It didn’t go away.

The ghost moved closer until it was right in front of us.

And then it spoke! ‘I have one task to complete on this earth,’ it said, ‘only then will I be free.’

‘What is it?’ I asked.

‘I need to borrow some toilet paper,’ said the ghost, sounding embarrassed.

‘Oh. Okay.’

I handed over a roll of paper and a ghostly hand snatched it away from me. Then instantly the ghost was gone. And so was the horrible smell.

I turned to the trembling blob that was Jack, threw back my head and whooped, ‘Beat that!’

And, for the first time ever, he couldn’t.

The Big Bad Wolf

The Jones' twins – Jodie and Geena – were as cute as fluffy ducks. The warmth from their smiles could almost fry an egg. They were forever doing kindnesses for teachers, such as carrying their books and opening car doors, and just generally being wonderful. Not in a million years would anyone think they were capable of any mischief. So, when the principal sat down on a whoopee cushion, no one suspected the twins were the culprits. And when someone sprinkled itching powder on the seats in the teachers' staff room, all the teachers agreed that it couldn't possibly have been Geena and Jodie. They were far too nice to do anything like that.

Meanwhile, the twins strutted about with smiles that stretched from ear to ear. They had everyone fooled.

About this time, a new librarian came to the school. Her name was Miss Wolf.

Eagerly, the twins watched as she strolled across the playground. They could hardly wait to play a trick on her.

'Excuse me,' they called together.

Miss Wolf spun around. 'Yes, my dears?'

'We're the Jones twins,' they told her.

'I'm Geena.'

'I'm Jodie.'

'I'm Miss Wolf.'

'Welcome to our school.'

'How lovely.'

Geena took a bouquet from behind her back. 'We've got a present, just for you,' she said, beaming angelically.

'Oh, lucky me!' gushed Miss Wolf. 'What a sweet arrangement of Stinging Nettle. How nice of you. I do hope you come to visit me in the library – I'm the new librarian, you know.'

'Really, truly?' Geena pressed a handkerchief to her eyes – a handkerchief containing a peeled onion – and within seconds tears poured down her face. 'Forgive me, Miss,' she spluttered, 'it's just that we both love books so much.'

'To be so close to a real librarian is heaps cool,' added Jodie.

Miss Wolf hopped around like a bird with a brand-new worm. 'How enchanting to meet fellow book lovers!' she chirped. 'Perhaps

you would like to be my very first library monitors?’

‘Yes, please!’ they replied. ‘We’d love to.’

‘There’s only one thing I must tell you about me,’ said Miss Wolf. ‘I don’t handle stress very well. In fact, it makes me quite beastly. But I’m sure you lovely children won’t cause me any stress, will you?’

‘Never, Miss,’ said the twins.

Once they were alone, they slapped their hands together, up high and down low.

‘Sucked in!’ they hooted.

The twins worked quietly during lunchtime, while all around them the library hummed with contentment and happiness. Miss Wolf was so pleased. But then ...

‘Snake!’ howled Timothy as he hurtled from the toilet.

‘Did he say snake?’ Rachael asked.

‘I’m not sure,’ answered Madison.

‘SNAKE!’ Timothy howled again.

Then everyone was sure.

Children moved their feet so fast that their shoes and socks couldn’t keep up with them. They fled barefooted from the library, hollering, ‘Run!’

‘Please don’t go,’ pleaded Miss Wolf.

But the children kept going.

The twins ambled up to Miss Wolf, looking a picture of perfect innocence.

‘Is there a problem?’ asked Geena.

‘No, no, there’s no problem,’ replied Miss Wolf. ‘Just a snake in the toilet.’

‘A snake!’ cried the twins in horror.

‘Don’t be frightened,’ said Miss Wolf. ‘I’ll send it on its merry way.’

‘No, it’s too dangerous for you,’ warned Jodie.

‘We’ll save you!’ roared Geena.

They rushed into the toilet, and in barely a minute they emerged clutching the wriggling reptile.

‘We got him,’ gasped Jodie. ‘He put up a good fight, but we were too strong.’

‘It’s quite a strange specimen, isn’t it?’ Miss Wolf stared in wonder at the snake. ‘Its skin looks almost ... rubbery.’

Thinking fast, Geena replied, ‘That’s because it’s a Red-Bellied Rubbery, Miss. Very rare. Very dangerous.’

The twins bolted towards the door, the snake wrestling them all the way.

‘We have to release it into the wild,’ explained Jodie.

‘Well done,’ said Miss Wolf.

The twins smiled sweetly, which was one of their very best tricks. Once alone, however, they had to concede they were disappointed that their fake snake hadn’t caused Miss Wolf more stress. But they were soon to get another chance ...

At lunchtime a bundle of words drifted from the teacher’s staffroom just as the twins walked past.

‘Yes, you heard me correctly, there was a snake in the library toilet.’

The teachers gasped.

‘How horrible for you,’ they said.

‘It would have been far worse if it had been a mouse,’ replied the first voice, which clearly belonged to Miss Wolf. ‘I can’t stand those awful creatures. They terrify me!’

The twin’s eyes sparkled like tiny golden suns, for their minds were lit up by a brilliant idea. It isn’t unusual for twins to have the same ideas at the same time – sometimes they even have the same dreams.

That night, Jodie and Geena went to bed with a smile on their faces as they thought of the fantastic trick they would play on Miss Wolf . . .

In their dream, early the next morning they crept into the library and put their pet mouse Herby in Miss Wolf’s drawer, just to see what would happen.

The twins ducked behind the poetry bookshelf and hid as Miss Wolf bustled in, said good morning to the books, and sat down at her desk. Soon, she opened her drawer and began groping around inside it.

‘Scissors, scissors,’ she muttered, ‘I know they’re in here somewhere.’ She pulled out numerous objects and placed them in front of her, listing them aloud as she went. ‘Pencil sharpener, pen, note paper, calculator, mouse – but no scissors. Where could they be?’

A startled look fell upon Miss Wolf’s face.

‘Did I say ‘mouse?’ she asked herself.

Hoots of stifled laughter escaped from behind the poetry section.

‘I say she jumps on a chair,’ whispered Geena.

‘Nah,’ said Jodie. ‘I say she faints.’

But Miss Wolf did neither of those things. She watched carefully as Herby scampered across her desk. Then one of her hands shot out

faster than hands can shoot. She snaffled up the mouse and held it by its tail, leaned her head right back, and opened her mouth. Very wide.

‘She can’t do that!’ gasped Geena.

Miss Wolf did exactly that.

‘No! No!’ Jodie jumped up. ‘She’s eating Herby!’

The twins sprang from their hiding place and ran to Herby’s rescue.

‘Miss Wolf! Miss Wolf!’ they cried, but she stared dead ahead, with a mouse tail hanging from her lips.

Geena shook her.

‘Stop!’

Jodie snapped her fingers.

‘You can’t eat our mouse!’

But it was not until Geena slapped her on the back that Miss Wolf opened her mouth and coughed. As she did, out popped Herby, looking like he had just had a tumble in a washing machine.

‘What happened?’ the librarian asked.

‘You ate a mouse,’ replied Geena.

Miss Wolf shivered at the thought and spat out a few bristly hairs.

‘But we got it back,’ said Jodie.

‘It didn’t even need mouth-to-mouse resuscitation,’ added Geena.

Jodie couldn’t stop herself from taking credit for Herby. ‘Tricked you!’ she shouted.

‘What did you say?’ asked a stunned Miss Wolf.

‘We put the mouse in your drawer,’ Geena admitted. ‘It was so funny!’

‘It’s the best trick we ever played!’ added Jodie.

Miss Wolf’s eyes became pools of darkness and mystery. Large pools, for her eyes seemed bigger, as did her mouth, and her teeth, her sharp and pointy teeth. A deep and dangerous snarl oozed from her.

‘Oops,’ murmured Geena. ‘I think we might have gone too far.’

‘Let’s get out of here,’ said Jodie.

And they ran for their lives.

‘Oh no you don’t!’ Miss Wolf caught them with ease. ‘You have made me very stressed!’ she bellowed.

‘It was just a tiny joke,’ squeaked Geena.

‘We’ll never, ever do it again,’ squawked Jodie.

Together they wailed: ‘We’re really sorry!’

‘I become hungry when I’m stressed.’ Miss Wolf licked her lips. ‘I wonder if I’ll need salt and pepper ...’

‘Help!’ yelled the twins.

Effortlessly she swooped up Geena and Jodie with one muscled paw and dangled them above her gaping mouth.

‘Put down those children immediately!’

Miss Wolf looked up to see the principal.

‘I caught them,’ she protested. ‘I should be able to eat them – shouldn’t I?’

‘I’m afraid not.’ He wagged a finger. ‘Librarians are not allowed to eat children. It’s a rule.’

‘But I’m not a librarian!’ She snapped her teeth at the principal. ‘I’m a wolf!’

At the sound of their screams, Jodie and Geena’s mum ran into their room.

‘What’s wrong?’ she asked.

‘Sorry, Mum,’ said Jodie. ‘I had a nightmare.’

‘Me, too,’ said Geena. ‘It was the scariest one I’ve ever had.’

‘Well, it’s all over now.’ Mum opened the curtains. ‘Time to get ready for school. And don’t forget, you said you were going to take Herby for Show and Tell.’

The twins looked at each other, then, at the same time, they shook their heads.

‘Change of plans, Mum,’ said Jodie.

‘Yeah.’ Geena nodded. ‘We’ve decided it might be too stressful . . . for Herby.’

The Lost City!

Welcome, Thrill Seekers! My name is Bradley D. Mented, and I'm the star of *Bradley Does the Impossible!* So, settle back in your favourite chair, strap on your seatbelt, and get set for the scariest, most incredible, MOST EXCITING RIDE OF YOUR LIFE!

In today's amazing episode, I will explore the lost city of Arewethereyet. No one has been to this city for ten thousand years – you can't get any more lost than that! LET'S DO IT!

You will notice that the picture on your TV screen is jet black. Do not be alarmed.

Everything has gone dark because at this very second, I am climbing down a hole in the desert that leads directly to the lost city. Ahead of me there are certain to be strange and fearsome creatures. If I'm lucky, there might even be monsters!

It's dangerous. It's a death trap. In other words, it's perfect! Bradley D. Mented eats danger for breakfast!

Bring it on!

I'm sure everyone watching this is shaking in their shoes right now. But just think how much scarier it is for me. Apart from my director, camera crew, medical team, make-up artists, cook, security guards, and Freddy, my teddy, I am completely alone!

AARRGGHH!

Just testing my scream, folks.

(It's working well.)

Of course, I don't really think I'll need to use my scream today because nothing in the whole world scares Bradley D. Mented!

Except mice.

Oh, how I hate those creepy critters, with their ferocious teeth and their big staring eyes and –

MOUSE!

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

Tremendous news, Thrill Seekers! I have just broken the world record for climbing out of a hole that leads to a lost city!

While my security guards fight off the mouse, let me tell you a little about someone who is really, really fascinating – me!

For those of you who have been living under a rock, long before I started hosting *Bradley Does the Impossible*, I was voted as the star

with the shiniest teeth! I can't wait for smiling to become an Olympic sport!

Righty-ho-ho! I've just been given the all-clear to go back into the hole, folks. So, the adventure begins again.

Down I go, down, down, and down some more. This hole goes on and on. Hmm . . . I think I might have just worked out why the city was called Arewethereyet. How interesting! Meanwhile, I'm still going down, and falling awfully fast – too fast. Something's wrong.

Oh no! My rope has snapped!

I'm zooming down the hole.

My director is cheering. My crew is clapping. This is television gold!

There is no way I could possibly survive a fall like this. Unless . . .

I haven't cut my fingernails in ten years, just so I could use them if my rope snapped as I was climbing down a hole to a lost city.

That's what I call thinking ahead!

Now for the tricky part.

I dig my nails into the sides of the hole.

Ouchie! Errgh! Yikes!

Oh well, who needs fingernails anyway? Not me.

I'm falling faster and faster. But I mustn't panic.

Calmly, I take out my mobile and make a call.

'Hello. Is this Police Rescue?'

'Yes, it is.'

'Lovely! How are you today?'

'Good thanks.'

'Fantastic!'

'How can we help you?'

'Oh yes, I almost forgot. I'm falling to my death, and I'd like to be saved.'

'Please state your nearest cross-street.'

'There isn't one. I'm in a hole.'

'In that case you'll have to ring the Hole Rescue Service.'

'Will do.'

'But leave it for an hour or so. They're having lunch now.'

'Okay. Thanks for your help.'

'It was nothing.'

Click.

Could this be the end of *Bradley Does the Impossible*? Will I plummet to my death? Will a monster jump out and gobble me up?

Will there be more mice! A normal human being would be terrified!
It's a lucky thing I'm not normal!

Tune in next week, Thrill Seekers, for another action-packed episode of *Bradley Does the Impossible!* Until then, let me leave you with this thought – AARRGGHH!

The Fantastic Inflata-Suit!

Welcome, Thrill Seekers! My name is Bradley D. Mented – the D stands for Dashing – and I’m the star of *Bradley Does the Impossible!* It’s the television show that is all GO! GO! GO! So, grab some popcorn, strap on a seatbelt and a crash helmet and come along with me as I throw fear to the wind, and jump out of a plane – without a parachute!

Who needs a parachute when they’re wearing the fantastic Inflata Suit? Never heard of it? No one has! It’s brand new! No one has even tested it! I’m going to be the first because that’s what daredevils do! Yee-ha! Now, without further ado, it’s time to open the hatch! Hold on to your hats, and get ready for an amazing adventure folks, I’m going to jump!

‘Don’t do it, Bradley. I’ll be very cross if you do.’

‘Please let go of my hand, Mummy.’

‘I will not. You’re being a silly boy.’

‘Not so loud. We’re on television.’

‘I don’t care. If you jump, you’ll have to take me with you.’

‘Oh, all right. Here we go . . .’

‘Aaarrgghh!’

‘Don’t be such a wimp, Bradley.’

‘I’m scared of heights, Mummy, and we’re falling so fast.’

‘But don’t forget you’re wearing the Inflata Suit, so there’s nothing to worry about – right?’

‘That’s true. After twenty seconds the suit will fill with air, and we’ll float harmlessly to the ground.’

‘That makes me feel a lot better . . . except that according to my watch we’ve already been falling twenty seconds.’

‘What a coincidence; my watch says the same.’

‘Bradley, the ground is getting awfully close.’

‘I know! Too close for comfort!’

‘Something’s wrong! We’re goners!’

Oh no! Could this be the end of Bradley D Mented? And his mummy?’

It’s terribly terrifying, but we have to look on the bright side. Right this second, the ratings are shooting through the roof! We’re going to go viral with millions of hits!

'Golly gosh!'
'What is it, Mummy?'
'We're not falling anymore!'
'You're right! It's a miracle! The Inflata Suit is filling with air!'
'We're falling up!'
'Hurray! We're soaring to the heavens!'
'But Bradley, how do we stop soaring?'
'Good question. I'm sure there's a simple answer to it. I'll ring the inventor, Professor Oopy.'

'Professor Oopy . . . hmm . . . what's his first name?'
'Larry.'
'L Oopy . . . very interesting.'
'Can't talk now, Mummy. His phone's ringing.'
'Hello.'
'Professor Oopy?'
'The one and only.'
'Right . . . I'm testing your Inflata Suit, and I've run into a small problem.'
'Really? I was told by the television station they were going to use a dummy to test it.'
'Are you sure?'
'Yes. I have the email they sent me right here. It says: "We're going to use Bradley – he's a dummy."'

'I see . . . anyway, the problem, Professor, is that the suit keeps going up, and I don't know how to make it drop. Any ideas?'
'Of course. It's very simple. You just press the Down Button.'
'Easy peasy. Thanks for your help.'
'Anytime. Have a nice day.'
'Um, hold on, Professor – I can't find the Down Button.'
'You can't? That's odd. Wait a second . . . well how about that. It's in my drawer.'
'So how do I get down?'
'Is there a big red button that says HELP?'
'No, I can't see it.'
'Oh, bother. There's someone at the front door. Don't go away. I'll be right back.'
'Is he going to help us, Bradley?'
'Yes, Mummy. It won't be long now.'

Two hours later . . .

‘Professor! Professor! Where are you?’
‘I’m right here. Sorry. I forgot you were there. I had to make tea for my guests. Now what was this about again?’
‘The big red button that says HELP.’
‘Oh yes, you’ll be pleased to know I found it in my filing cabinet.’
‘That’s great, but what about me? I’m going higher and higher!’
‘Don’t worry. I’ve got some good news for you.’
‘Cool! Tell me!’
‘What goes up, must come down. Maybe not today or tomorrow, or even next week, but eventually. Okay?’
‘Um, okay.’
‘Glad I could help. Bye!’
Click.
‘Did he tell you how to get down, Bradley?’
‘Not exactly, Mummy. We might have to stay up here for a little while.’
‘How long?’
‘Put it this way. You know how my show is usually made up of short episodes?’
‘Yes.’
‘Well, I think this week’s episode looks like being a mini-series.’
‘Oh, dearie me.’
‘Didn’t I tell you this would be an amazing adventure, folks? And it isn’t over yet! Will we make it out of this alive?’
‘I don’t think so, Bradley.’
‘Neither do I, but there’s only one way to find out.’
Tune in next week, *Thrill Seekers*, for another action-packed episode of *Bradley Does the Impossible!*

Everest, Here I Come!

‘Buckle up, Thrill Seekers and get ready for another heart-stopping episode of *Bradley Does the Impossible!* My name is Bradley D Mented (D for Dazzling!) and I’m standing at the base of Mount Everest, where in just a few moments I will begin my journey to the summit! Not by walking! No, walking is far too pedestrian! And boring! Not only will I reach the top, but I’ll do so in record time! To be precise, three minutes and thirty-five seconds! (Four minutes if there’s a blizzard.)

How is this possible you ask? It’s very simple. I’m going to be shot out of a cannon! But that’s not all! I’ll be blindfolded, and my hands will be tied behind my back! Wait, there’s more! I’ll be wearing a straitjacket! And there’s still more! Wrapped around the straitjacket will be chains and a deadlock! I know, it seems impossible! It seems like there’s a very good chance I’ll be deadibones! To that I say Ha! Ha! Ha! I love a challenge and I’m not afraid of anything in the whole wide world!’

‘Except mice, Bradley.’

‘Not so loud. This show is going out to millions of my fans.’

‘Oh, is it? Hello, fans. I’m Bradley’s mum. Lovely to meet you.’

‘Fans, in case you’re wondering why my mother’s here, she’s my lucky charm.’

‘No, Bradley. Your lucky charm is your teddy bear. I’m only here to hold your hand if you get scared.’

‘She’s such a joker! I never get scared!’

‘Spiders scare you – the big furry ones. Oh, and sudden noises, especially in the dark.’

‘But I’m not scared of anything else!’

‘Don’t forget bananas.’

‘Nonsense. No one is scared of bananas, Mummy.’

‘You are. Ever since you had that dream about being chased by one.’

‘Okay. Mice, spiders, noises, and bananas – I’m a tiny bit scared of them. But that’s all.’

‘What about yetis? You’re terrified of them.’

‘Don’t be silly, Mummy. Yetis don’t exist, and if they did, they certainly wouldn’t be here.’

‘Oh yes, they would. Everyone knows yetis live on Mount Everest.’
‘They do?! Why wasn’t I told?!’
‘Look on the bright side, darling. If the yetis tear you apart on live television, your ratings will skyrocket!’
‘Thanks, Mummy, that has really cheered me up.’
‘I’m so glad.’
‘No more talk! It’s time to climb into the cannon. Here I go!’
‘Is there room in there for two?’
‘Definitely not. It’s a one-person cannon.’
‘I’m sure I can squeeze in.’
‘Mummy, no!’
‘Oh, look what I found – a spider – a big furry one’
‘Where?! Where?!’
‘Calm down, Bradley, the mouse chased it off.’
‘Mouse!’
‘It ran away, darling. You can relax now.’
‘No, I can’t! You must get out of the cannon, Mummy! We’re going to blast off in ten seconds!’
‘I’ll be very quiet. I’ve brought my knitting. You won’t even know I’m here.’
10, 9, 8, 7....
‘Mummy!’
‘Bradley!’
BOOM!!!!
‘Oh my! It’s lovely scenery.’
‘Can’t talk now, Mummy! I’ve lost the keys to my chains!’
‘Ah, I was wondering whose keys they were.’
‘Have you seen them?’
‘Yes, dear. I found them in your pocket when I was washing your pants, so I took them out and put them in a safe place. I wish I could remember where.’
‘Aarrgghh!’
‘You sound upset, Bradley. Is there anything wrong?’
‘Yes, everything is wrong! I’m hurtling through space in chains and a straitjacket, and I’m about to smash into the side of Mount Everest!’
‘You’re such a worrywart. I’m sure you’ll be all right, but whatever happens, you’ll need to keep your strength up. I’ve brought a picnic lunch. Here, have a nice healthy sandwich.’
‘Thanks, Mummy . . . oh no!! Banana sandwiches!’

‘Oopsie.’

‘Is this the end of Bradley D Mented? Will he freeze to death on Mount Everest? Will he be torn apart by a wild pack of killer yetis?’

‘Of course, it’s not the end, Bradley. You’ll be fine. Unless you slip on a banana skin and fall all the way down the mountain.’

To find out what happens, tune in next time, Thrill Seekers, for another jaw-dropping episode of *Bradley Does the Impossible!*

A Whale of an Adventure!

Calling all Thrill Seekers! My name is Bradley D. Mented (D for Dangerous!) – and I’m the star of *Bradley Does the Impossible!* the television show in which I risk my life to bring you the most mind-boggling feats you will ever see! In today’s action-packed extravaganza I’m going to swim 2000 kilometres, from Australia to New Zealand! There will be snapping turtles! There will be killer clown fish! There will be freezing cold water! But, most of all, there will be sharks! Am I afraid? NEVER!

Normal people run from fear. But no one has ever called me normal! I run *to* fear, my arms open wide. Bring it on! I love it!

But I am not just your everyday superhuman daredevil. I am also a test pilot for new and amazing inventions! In this death-defying episode I will be testing the world’s first shark-proof wetsuit! It was designed by that brilliant inventor, Professor L Oopy, who is on the phone with me right now.

‘Greetings, Bradley.’

‘Hi, Professor! Can you tell the viewers a little about your wetsuit?’

‘It’s pretty much like every other wetsuit.’

‘No difference at all?’

‘None whatsoever . . . except that mine is made of cheese.’

‘Wow! But why cheese?’

‘My research has shown that sharks are allergic to cheese. They won’t go anywhere near it.’

‘That’s incredible!’

‘They’re not too keen on mushrooms either, so as an added safety feature, the cheese has a thin coating of mushroom sauce.’

‘So, I’m completely safe in this wetsuit?’

‘Oh, yes. Not a worry in the world. We’ve tested it under every condition possible.’

‘Fantastic!’

‘Except in water.’

‘What?!’

‘Well, we didn’t think anyone would be silly enough to wear it in the water. There are sharks in there, you know.’

‘But I’m going to swim from Australia to New Zealand!’

‘Ooh, risky. Do you have life insurance?’

'It's too late to change my mind now! Wish me luck, Thrillseekers!
I'm going in!'

SPLASH!

So far, so good! I'm in the icy water all alone. It's so dark, so cold!
Oh, I wish I had my mum.

SPLASH!

'Hello, Bradley.'

'Mummy! What are you doing here?'

'I had a feeling that you were wishing for me.'

'Ha! Wishing for my mother! I'm a big bold adventurer, Mummy.
No offence, but I don't need you to hold my hand.'

'All right, if I'm not needed, I'll go.'

'No, wait! You can stay.'

'Oh goody.'

'Actually, I'm glad you're here because I feel like I've forgotten
something. I thought you might know what it is.'

'I think I do.'

'Freddy, my teddy?'

'No.'

'My floaties?'

'You're getting warm.'

'I give up, Mummy. What is it?'

'You can't swim.'

'Ah! That must be why I'm sinking!'

'Don't worry, Bradley. I'll save you.'

Bubble, bubble...

'Here. Watch this waterproof instructional video on how-to-
swim.'

Bubble, bubble, bubble...

'You're a fast learner, Bradley. You can do it.'

Bubble, bubble, bub...

I've got it! I can swim!

'I never doubted you for a moment, darling.'

'Well, Mummy, you can go now. I'm off for a little swim – a mere
two thousand kilometres – a piece of cake!'

'Wouldn't you like me to keep you company, dear?'

'No, thank you. There's nothing down here to fear. Not a single
thing.'

'You're so brave, Bradley.'

'I know.'

'I'm sure not even that huge whale that's coming this way with its mouth open scares you.'

'Not a bit. Whales are very friendly creatures.'

GULP.

'Oh no! I've been swallowed by a whale!'

'So have I.'

'Mummy! Are you okay?'

'Oh yes. And I'm so excited, are you?'

'Not really. I think I might be about to blubber.'

'Is there someone you can ask for help?'

'Good thinking, Mummy! I'll ring Professor Oopy. He'll know what to do!'

'Professor?'

'Ah, young Bradley. I've been watching you on TV.'

'Are you enjoying the show so far?'

'Yes, I am, and I'm glad you called, because I happen to be an expert on escaping from whales.'

'That's amazing! I knew you wouldn't let me down!'

'All you need to do is make the whale sneeze. The sneeze will carry you and your mother to safety.'

'But how do I make a whale sneeze?'

'A little pepper should do the trick.'

'Do we have any pepper, Mummy?'

'I'll check my handbag. Let's see . . . tomato sauce, mustard, garlic, salt, a watermelon – and pepper!'

'Now what, Professor?'

'Just cover your noses and throw the pepper up and down and all around. Then count to five and be prepared for an absolutely monstrous sneeze.'

'Okay. Throwing the pepper now – up and down and all around, and counting – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 . . . nothing's happening, Professor.'

'Hmm. That can only mean one thing.'

'What's that?'

'You've been swallowed by a very rare species of whale – the Spotted Snurple! Scientists spend their whole lives looking for these creatures, and you've found one! How lucky are you?!

'What makes them so rare?'

'They don't have any sense of smell. Time for my nap. zzzzzzzz.'

'Oh, no!'

'Is anything wrong, darling?'

‘Professor Oopy went to sleep! He was our last hope! We’re trapped in a whale, Mummy! We might never get out!’

‘It’s just as well I brought some sandwiches, and I’ve got plenty of knitting for both of us.’

‘But I can’t knit.’

‘You’ll pick it up, dear. Just watch this how-to-knit video.’

‘Will this be the end of the world’s most daring daredevil?’

‘Oh, my goodness! I’ve just had an idea!’

‘What is it, Mummy?’

‘I’ve worked out how we can escape!’

‘Tell me! Tell me!’

‘We’ll knit a raft!’

‘Of course! Why didn’t I think of that? It’s wild! It’s woolly! It’s our only chance! To find out if we survive, tune in next time for another gob-smacking episode of *Bradley Does the Impossible!*

Jack and the Magic Beans

This story is about a poor mum and her son. They were too poor to have names, but because the son often earned a little money by helping fix flat tyres, he was known as Jack.

The only thing that Jack and his mother owned was a cow named Daisy. They loved Daisy, but one day they both agreed, they had to sell her so they could pay their bills and buy food.

They spent all morning washing the cow's coat and polishing her hoofs. By the time they'd finished, Daisy was a contented cow.

'Take her to the markets, Jack,' his mum said. 'You should get at least a hundred dollars for her, maybe more. This is a fine cow, so be sure to get the very best price you can.'

'I'll do my best,' said Jack, and with that he put a rope around Daisy's neck, and she trotted obediently beside him as he walked to the markets.

He was almost there when a tall thin man with bulgy eyes tapped him on the shoulder.

'I'm looking for a new pet,' he said. 'How much do you want for your cow?'

'Make me an offer,' replied Jack.

'Do you mean money?' asked the man.

'Yes, of course.'

'Oh, I haven't got any of that,' said the man. 'I'm a wizard. I trade with magic, not money.'

Jack was interested. He'd never met a wizard before, and he loved magic tricks.

'What kind of magic would you give me for my cow?' he asked.

The wizard took off his hat, turned it upside down, and tapped it on his open palm. Six round green beans fell out.

'What do you see?' he asked Jack.

'Beans.' Jack leant in for a closer look. 'Just ordinary beans.'

'No, not ordinary at all,' said the man, shaking his head. 'These are magic beans. Be brave enough, and smart enough, to take them in exchange for your cow, and I promise they will help you find your fortune.'

'I'm not silly,' said Jack. 'Six beans for a beautiful cow, that hardly seems fair.'

‘Just as I feared,’ replied the man. ‘You are not brave enough, nor smart enough. Goodbye.’

The man turned to leave, but Jack just couldn’t let him go.

‘Wait,’ he said. ‘How can I be sure these beans are magic?’

‘You can’t,’ said the man. ‘Just as you can’t be sure they *aren’t* magic. The question is: do you trust me, or do you not?’

Jack stared into his bulgy eyes. One was blue. One was green. The man stared back, unblinking.

‘All right,’ said Jack. ‘I trust you. I’ll trade my cow for your beans.’

The man smiled. ‘Don’t worry,’ he said. ‘I’ll take good care of Daisy.’

‘How did you know her name?’ Jack asked.

‘Wizards know.’ The man rubbed the side of his nose, winked, and walked away with Daisy.

Jack’s mum was not at all happy when he told her about selling Daisy for six beans.

‘How could you fall for a trick like that?’ she asked him.

‘But what if it’s not a trick, Mum?’ He tried to sound strong and confident, even though he wasn’t. ‘What if they really are magic beans?’

‘There’s nothing magic about them, Jack.’ She took the beans off him and threw them out the window. ‘You made a big mistake, and I’m very disappointed in you.’

A tear fell down Jack’s cheek. He hated disappointing his mum. And she hated to see how upset he was. She pulled a handkerchief from her pocket and wiped the tear away. ‘Enough of that,’ she said. ‘We all make mistakes – even me. Now off to bed with you. Tomorrow we’ll work out a way to get out of this mess.’

In the morning Jack peered through his bedroom window to see that a giant beanstalk had shot up overnight. It stretched far into the sky, then disappeared among the clouds.

He ran through the house, calling, ‘Mum! Mum! Look what’s happened!’

But Mum already knew. She was in the front yard, gazing up at the beanstalk.

‘You were right, and I was wrong,’ she said. ‘Those beans really were magical.’

‘Yes.’ Jack nodded. ‘But the wizard said the beans would help me find my fortune. What good to me is a giant beanstalk?’

‘Perhaps,’ said his mum, ‘your fortune is to be found up there in the sky.’

Jack craned his neck and shielded his eyes as he looked skyward. The beanstalk was awfully high, but that wasn’t going to stop him.

‘I’ll climb it,’ he said. ‘And if there’s a fortune to be found at the top, I’ll bring it home!’

‘Good luck, son,’ his mum said.

Jack took off, clambering up the beanstalk like a monkey. He was making great progress when a sudden gust of wind whacked him so hard, he was tossed into the air. He was tumbling to the ground and certain death, when he made a desperate grab at a vine, and managed to hang on. Then, without even a moment to catch his breath, he was climbing again; higher, ever higher. And soon he reached the very top.

There, he followed a path leading to a towering doorway. He knocked on the door. The tallest man he’d ever seen opened it. The tall man crouched over, as if examining an insect, then he stood up straight, and in a voice like rolling thunder, he roared, ‘FEE, FI, FO, FUM!’

‘Pardon?’ said Jack, in a tiny, tinkly little voice.

‘Pay attention,’ snarled the man. ‘I said FEE, FI, FO, FUM!’

‘I thought that’s what you said,’ replied Jack, ‘but I don’t know what it means.’

‘It doesn’t mean anything, boy. It’s just what giants say to scare people off.’

‘Oh.’ Jack thought very hard before adding: ‘I didn’t know if you were a giant, or just really tall.’

‘I’m both,’ said the man, ‘a really tall giant, I am.’

‘Okay, but there’s something I don’t understand. Why do you want to scare people off?’

‘Because people think I’m mean and ferocious if I roar, FEE, FI, FO, FUM!’ said the giant, ‘and they don’t pick on me.’

‘Pick on you?’ That hardly seemed possible to Jack. ‘Who would pick on a giant?’

‘Nearly everyone who knocks on my door.’ The giant hung his head sadly. ‘They jump up and down on my toes or kick me in the shins. Then they brag to their friends about how they beat up a giant – and then their friends come here and do the same thing.’

‘I’m really sorry to hear that,’ said Jack.

‘Then you’re not here to pick on me, boy?’

‘No. I’d never do that.’ Jack held out his hand. ‘My name’s Jack.’

What's yours?'

The giant wrapped his huge paw around Jack's, and, as they shook hands, he said, 'Biggun, I be called. Biggun.'

For the next several hours, Jack and Biggun drank glass after glass of Giant's Drop – by far the best lemonade Jack had ever tasted – while they played Scrabble, watched cartoons, and told each other about their lives.

At six o'clock, Jack said he had to go. 'Mum will be expecting me home for dinner,' he explained. 'But this has been heaps fun. Thanks, Biggun.'

'No,' said Biggun. '*Thank you*, Jack. To tell you the truth, I've been awful lonely, and you've given me the happiest day of my life.

'A nice giant like you should never be lonely,' said Jack.

'That be a kind thing to say,' said Biggun. 'And now I'd like to give you something in return for all your kindness.' He handed him a piece of paper. 'It be very special.'

'What is it?' asked Jack.

'The secret recipe for Giant's Drop. Mark my words, boy – this will make you a fortune.'

'You mean I'd have to make the lemonade myself?' asked Jack.

'You and your mum,' said Biggun. 'I make it all time. It not be very hard.'

'Hmm . . . when I was telling you about my life, there was something I left out,' Jack said.

'What?'

'I'm the second worst cook in the world, Biggun.'

'Really?'

'Yes, and guess who the worst cook in the world is.'

'I give up.'

'My mum. We're really, really, bad. Thanks for offering me the secret recipe, but we could never make Giant's Drop.'

'That be a shame,' said Biggun. 'I wish there was something I could do to help.'

And that is how Biggun the Giant came to live with Jack and his mum. He set up a lemonade factory in their garage, and in no time at all Giant's Drop was the most popular drink in the country.

Just as the wizard had promised, Jack made his fortune, while Biggun found many new friends, and was never lonely again.

Waggy's Tale

When I was only a few months old, I saw a bird outside on the roof. I could hardly believe my eyes when it flapped its wings and flew away. If a tiny bird could do that, so could I. So, I climbed out onto the roof, flapped my arms, and jumped!

'Oh, no, you don't,' Dad said as he grabbed me in mid-air and pulled me back to safety.

Dad bared his teeth as though he was really angry, but only for a moment. Then I saw the usual kind look come back into his eyes.

'Only birds can fly, Waggy,' he said. 'You're not a bird.'

I wasn't a bird. Okay. Good to know. But Dad didn't say what I was. That would have been helpful.

A few weeks later I saw my first tennis ball. It landed on the road outside. I was amazed the way it bounced around, so amazed that I climbed over the fence and chased after it. Next minute Mum raced out and scooped me up.

'You almost got run over by a car, Waggy!'

'Sorry, Mum. I only wanted the ball so I could play tennis. I've watched a few games on TV, and I think I could be very good at it.'

She shook her head sadly. 'I think we need to have a little talk,' she said.

Soon afterwards, Mum and Dad gathered all the family around to tell them something 'really important'.

'I've heard you talking about what you want to do when you grow up,' Mum said.

My seven brothers and sisters nodded happily. We all had big plans.

'I want to be a dancer,' said Gypsy, jumping high and spinning in the air, just to show off.

'And I want to be a great and famous tennis player,' I said.

'Very nice,' said Mum. 'However, there is one small problem... She glanced over to Dad, who shook his head. 'You tell them,' he said.

'Okay.' Mum took a deep breath. 'There's no easy way to break this to you – you're all . . . dogs.'

We were shocked – none more than me. The four legs and tail should have been a hint, but I'd had no idea.

'Yikes!' gasped Jasper. 'I was going to be Prime Minister!'
'No! No!' cried Carmen. 'I was going to be a dentist!'
'That's not fair!' snapped Tulip, 'how can I be an opera singer now?'

'Sorry, kids,' Dad said. 'But you have to face it.'

Oscar rolled over and played dead.

Minnie looked the most worried of all. 'Does this mean I can't be an actor?' she asked.

'Not at all,' Mum said. 'There have been many famous dog actors.'

'They can earn lots of money,' added Dad.

'Woo-hoo!' Minnie howled with joy. 'I can still be a star!'

I felt a twinge of hope. 'Has a dog ever won Wimbledon?' I asked.

'No, Waggy,' Dad patted my back. 'Most dogs love chasing balls, but they don't play tennis.'

OH NO! I didn't think anything could be as bad as learning I was a dog, but I was wrong.

Two weeks later, Mum and Dad gathered us together once again.

'Unfortunately,' Mum began, 'our humans, Wendy and David, told us this morning that they can't afford to keep nine dogs.'

'We were expecting this,' Dad said. 'It happens all the time to big dog families.'

'Expecting what?' asked Gypsy.

'Wendy and David want me and your dad to stay with them,' Mum said. 'They can also keep Oscar and Carmen. But I'm afraid the rest of you puppies will have to find new homes.'

We couldn't speak. All we could do was cry.

'That's enough,' Dad told us. 'You're behaving like a bunch of kittens.'

'Everything will be fine,' Mum said, 'just fine.'

The next day a small blue van came to pick us up. It had the words DOG POUND written on it.

'What's Dog Pound mean?' asked Minnie.

'It's a place where really special dogs go,' Mum said. 'They'll look after you there – I promise.'

Hearing that made us all feel a lot better. We were special!

Wendy and David were sorry to see us go. 'Are you sure they'll all find good homes?' Wendy asked the van driver.

'Pretty sure,' she said. 'They're all nice-looking puppies.'

Dad puffed his chest out proudly.

'I think they got their good looks from me,' he told Mum.

‘No, dear,’ she replied, ‘they got their fleas from you – the good looks were from me.’

We all laughed, even Dad. And then it was time to leave.

Mum and Dad gave us a mushy lick and Carmen and Oscar barked their goodbyes. We were sad, but at the same time we also knew we were about to start a great adventure. It was exciting!

Everyone was friendly at the dog pound. We were washed and brushed until not a single hair was out of place.

‘Why are they making such a fuss over us?’ Minnie wanted to know.

Jasper knew. ‘It’s because humans are coming to look at us today. The better we look, the more chance of them giving us a new home.’

Just then a gate squeaked open, and a group of humans walked into the yard to look us over.

‘Good luck!’ said Tulip.

My siblings stood up close to the gate, doing their best to look cute as the humans came close.

Gypsy danced.

Tulip climbed on top of her kennel.

Minnie rolled over on her back so her belly could be tickled.

And Jasper did his favourite trick of walking on his two back legs.

I was too shy to do any of those things. Instead, I stayed inside the kennel.

‘I’ll take this one, please,’ said a lady as she picked up Gypsy and cuddled her.

‘This one’s for me,’ said the man who’d been tickling Minnie’s tummy.

‘I think I’ll take two of them,’ said a lady.

I put my head outside the kennel so she could see me. ‘I’m over here,’ I said. ‘Take me!’ But I don’t think she heard me because she chose Jasper and Tulip.

One by one my brothers and sisters licked me goodbye.

For the first time I was a little bit worried.

Over the next two weeks, people came to look at me nearly every day. I knew it wasn’t smart to hide myself inside the kennel, so I came out and pressed myself up close to the gate so they could pat me. I even rolled onto my back so they could tickle my tummy.

Each time, another dog would push me out of the way, and they’d be chosen instead of me. I took a good hard look at my reflection in a puddle. I wasn’t good-looking, after all. I looked ordinary.

‘Who would choose me?’ I mumbled aloud.

‘Plenty would! If you take a few tips from me.’

It was the voice of Tiger, the cocker spaniel in the kennel next to me. Tiger was only in the kennel as a visitor. He liked to wriggle under his owner’s fence and go for long walks. Every time he escaped, the dogcatcher brought him to the dog pound, and every time his faithful owner took him back home. He was very popular with all the other dogs because he told cool jokes, and he was an expert about humans.

‘I’d really appreciate any advice you could give me, Tiger,’ I said.

‘Okay, Waggy. First thing you do is look lively. Humans want a dog, not a turtle.’

‘You mean I should hop about and bark?’

‘Hop, yes. Bark, no! Only bark *after* they’ve fallen in love with you.’

‘Do you really think they’ll fall in love with me?’

‘I guarantee it. But first you must be chosen. Here come some humans now.’

‘I’m scared, Tiger.’

‘Humans don’t like scared dogs. Be frisky. Be happy. And here’s a tip that never fails . . .’

I leaned in closer.

‘Chase your tail!’

‘My tail? But that’s silly.’

Tiger winked. ‘Trust me.’

Next moment, two humans were patting me and making baby noises. ‘I’m not so sure,’ said the one named Daisy. ‘This guy is a bit too quiet.’

‘There’s plenty of others to choose from,’ said the human called Ben.

‘The tail! The tail!’ whispered Tiger.

I felt ridiculous, but I did it. Around and around, I circled, chasing my tail.

‘Oh, look!’ said Ben, with a chuckle.

‘How cute!’ gushed Daisy. Then she swooped me up and hugged me. ‘On second thoughts,’ she said. ‘I like this little puppy.’

‘Yes!’

I love my new home. It has lots of grass for me to romp around in. A warm kennel. Plenty of toys. And three meals a day.

Now life is so good.
And Daisy and Ben are happy because they have a perfect pup.
Hey, that's me!
Mum said everything would be fine, and she was right. I really do
have a family again.

Connecting the Dots

Dot and Dottie are twin puppies. Super cute puppies! Ask Kelly and Mia. They tickle them. Ask Mr and Mrs Trang. They throw the ball for them. Ask Miss Jacobs. The pups wag their tails when they see her.

About the only person they don't like is Chris the postman.

Every day, Chris rides his bike down Creek Street. He pulls up at nearly every house and drops off their letters.

People smile and wave hello. Dogs rush up to greet him.

But at Number 29, Dot and Dotty wait!

Dot yaps. Dotty snarls.

'Go away!' Chris cries.

Dot chomps his mailbag. Letters fall onto the road. The wind picks them up. They blow all the way down Creek Street.

Chris chases after the letters, shouting, 'Come back!'

Dot and Dotty chase after Chris, growling like lions!

Chris has terrible twin trouble every day.

On Monday Dot nips at the tyres on his bike.

On Tuesday Dotty snaps at his feet.

And on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the pups try to take a piece out of his bottom!

After work, he goes to see his Aunt Rosie.

'Those pups on Creek Street want to eat me,' he says. 'I don't know what to do.'

'It's simple.' Aunt Rosie smiles. 'Just be nice to them. Then they'll be nice to you.'

The next day, Chris rides his bike to Number 29, tiptoes up the path, opens a paper bag, and takes out a yummy doggy dinner.

Chris puts two fingers to his mouth and blows hard. Out comes a long and curly whistle.

'Dot, Dotty,' he croons. 'It's dinner time.'

The twins come running.

They go straight past the food.

The only thing they want to eat is Chris the postman!

GRRRR!

Chris runs for his life.

Once more, Chris visits Aunt Rosie.

‘Being nice to the pups didn’t work.’ He sighs. ‘They still don’t like me.’

‘Well, in that case,’ she says, ‘I’ll build you a better bike, to make you safe.’

Aunt Rosie is an inventor. She’s always building things, and they’re always very clever.

With Chris’s help, she hammers and cuts, and drills and welds.

For hours and hours.

Until it’s all finished.

And then they both gasp, ‘AWESOME!’

‘If the pups bite this bike,’ says Aunt Rosie, ‘it will bite them back!’

It has a high-powered motor, so Chris can zoom away much faster than the twins can run. Its fat black tyres are as strong as steel. Not even a shark could bite through them.

Best of all, it has a cockpit – for Chris to hide in if he needs to.

As quick as can be, Chris rides to Number 29. He presses a big red button. A shiny metal arm reaches into the mailbag. Out comes a letter. Into the letterbox it goes.

Chris doesn’t even have to get off his bike. The pups rush up to him, barking furiously.

‘Ha, ha.’ Chris grins. ‘You can’t touch me now, you silly dogs.’

As if to prove him wrong, the pups charge at the bike. Chris swerves to miss them.

The bike wobbles. Chris wobbles, too.

Oops!

He topples into Mr Blake at Number 27, who is painting his fence. Chris puts his foot in the paint tin.

Splat!

Now he’s the only postman in town with a green foot.

Chris trudges back to Aunt Rosie.

‘It was a disaster,’ he says. ‘Your bike was no match for those pesky pups.’

‘That’s too bad.’ She puts on her thinking face. ‘Looks like we just need to build an even better bike.’

Chris and Aunt Rosie hammer and cut, and drill and weld.

For hours and hours.

Until it's all finished.
And then they both gasp, 'AWESOME!'
The new bike is super strong.
Not even an elephant could tip it over.
And it has one fantastic feature that any dog would love.
A cannon that fires dog biscuits!

Chris rides his bike down Creek Street.

When he reaches Number 29, he fires off a round of dog biscuits towards Dot and Dotty.

'These will make you happy,' he says.

He's wrong.

The pups think Chris is throwing stones. They stand near the letterbox, teeth bared.

Ignoring them, Chris presses the red button, and the shiny metal arm reaches into the mailbag. Dot leaps up and bites the handle. She shakes it as hard as she can. When she lets go, the handle spins out of control. Then, instead of picking up letters, it picks up the front of the bike and turns it upside down.

Chris goes flying through the air.

'Oh nooooo!' he wails.

Luckily, he lands on Mr Blake's hedge. Chris is happy because the hedge is nice and soft, but Mr Blake isn't happy.

'I've spent all year cutting that hedge into the shape of a giraffe,' he fumes. 'But now you've squashed it – it looks like a caterpillar!'

'Sorry,' says Chris.

Once more, he goes to see Aunt Rosie to tell her what happened.

'Oh, dearie me,' she says. 'There's only one thing to do. We'll build the best bike that's ever been built!'

She and Chris hammer and cut, and drill and weld.

For hours and hours.

And days and days!

Until it's all finished.

And then they both gasp, 'AWESOME!'

It's a flying bike!

'You'll need to fill it up with petrol before you go too far,' says Aunt Rosie. 'You won't forget, will you?'

'Not a chance,' replies Chris.

Soon, Chris flies high above Creek Street.

He aims the mail at letterboxes – but misses. Mail falls into the trees and bushes. It flutters down the gutters.

People shout and boo.

‘We’re losing our letters!’ they scream.

‘Sorry,’ yells Chris.

He flies on his way to Number 29.

The twins are below, barking angrily.

‘I’ve beaten you this time!’ Chris roars.

Splutter! Splutter!

The motor stops.

Uh-oh!

He forgot to get petrol!

The bike falls. It heads straight for Dot and Dotty!

Chris desperately spins the steering wheel. The bike misses the pups, but lands in Mr Blake’s backyard.

This time Chris is in BIG, BIG trouble.

‘The Council Garden Show is on today!’ Mr Blake’s eyeballs look ready to pop right out of his head. ‘And I’ve got a plane on top of my pumpkin patch!’

‘Sorry.’ Chris bows his head as low as it will go.

Again, he plods back to see Aunt Rosie.

‘I give up,’ he says. ‘No invention will ever stop those pups hating me!’

Much to his surprise, she says, ‘I agree.’

‘You do?’

‘That’s right. A little while ago I spoke to Mrs Finnegan, the owner of the pups. I told her about the problems you’re having. And now I’ve worked it all out!’

‘Really?’

‘Yes. Mrs Finnegan said the pups don’t hate you. They hate beards.’

‘I don’t understand. Chris rubs his beard. ‘I thought everyone liked beards.’

‘Not always. The pup’s first owner was cruel to them. And he had a beard. Dogs never forget.’

‘Ah! It all makes sense now.’

‘But don’t worry.’ Aunt Rosie takes out a pair of scissors. ‘I know exactly what to do.’

Snip! Snip! Snip!

Chris doesn't have a beard anymore.

His new bike doesn't fly.

It doesn't shoot out dog biscuits.

It's not an amazing, super-duper bike at all.

Everyone likes Chris now, especially Mr Blake. He won the Council Garden Show by having the most unusual hedge, and the most unusual backyard decoration – an aeroplane!

But no one likes him more than Dot and Dotty!

In Camelgrot

This story starts a long, long time ago. Long before your grandmother or your grandfather were born. Long before television! How long I can't say, because even I wasn't around then, and I'm really old! But I do know this: it was an age of magic. An age of knights in shiny armour, and of fire-breathing dragons. And it all happened in an enchanted kingdom called Camelgrot!

The rulers of Camelgrot were King Arthur and Queen Martha. They had been married fifty-nine years and were looking forward to holding a grand party for their sixtieth anniversary. Everyone liked them because they sold their crown jewels and used the money to buy food for the poor, mostly healthy food like fruit and vegetables, but sometimes goodies like popcorn and chocolate.

Another star attraction in Camelgrot was the Jolly Knight Quartet; a singing foursome made up of Sir Prised, Sir Rounded, Sir Loin, and Sir Cumference.

Camelgrot was also the home of Fluffy the Fiery Dragon. Every weekend Fluffy gave fire-breathing displays for the tourists. For only two dollars they could hold up a piece of bread while Fluffy toasted it for them.

Tourists also flocked to Camelgrot to see the world's greatest magician, Ernesto Presto. Ernesto could make people disappear, simply with a click of his fingers. His own mum volunteered to let him saw her in half, just to prove how great he was. It didn't work out very well, but she was a good sport about it. 'I'm twice the woman I was before!' his mum chirped.

Everything was perfect, as it always had been in Camelgrot. But the good times were about to end, for a dark and mysterious figure named Freddy Treacle had snuck into the kingdom. Only one thought was on his mind. Freddy was determined to be king of Camelgrot!

By moonlight, he crept about in Camelgrot, creating mischief at every turn. His first stop was Ernesto Presto's bedroom. While Ernesto slept, Freddy sprayed the room with Forgetsy Dust. For one day, Ernesto wouldn't remember any of his magic, but that would be long enough. And to make him completely powerless, Freddy also stole his book of magic spells!

That night the Jolly Knight Quartet planned to sing for the royal family at the palace. But Freddy had other ideas. He slipped into the quartet's dressing room, and added a single, magical ingredient to their tea. A dash of wild mouse milk!

Later, when the knights opened their mouths to sing, all that could be heard was, '*Squeakkkkk! Squeakkkkk! Squeakkkkk!*' They sounded exactly like mice!

'Oh, dearie me,' Queen Martha moaned. 'There is foul play about in Camelgrot. And whenever foul play is about, you can be sure that the dreaded Freddy Treacle is close by! If anyone can save the day it's Ernesto,' she said. 'We must summon him at once.'

But when the magician reached the palace, he had only bad news to tell. 'On my way here, I got hungry and tried to pull a baked rabbit out of my hat,' he said, 'but I couldn't remember how to do it. And though I've looked low and high, nowhere can I find my book of magic spells.'

Suddenly, the friendly face of Bertie the cleaner appeared at the palace window. Bertie wanted to be a knight, but he was far too clumsy for that. Camelgrot couldn't have a knight who was always tripping over his own feet. He tapped on the window, and shouted, 'I've got something really important to tell you, Your Highnesses. Please open the window.'

Queen Martha pushed open the window. 'What is it?' she asked.

Unfortunately, Bertie's ladder was resting against the window. When it opened, the ladder tipped back and back . . .

Crash went the ladder. *Crash* went Bertie, right onto the royal rose garden. King Arthur looked down at the flattened flowers and muttered, 'What a clot.'

Meanwhile, the tourists who had travelled half-way around the world to see Fluffy the Fiery Dragon's famous fire-breathing display, were angry. No matter how much super-hot Camelgrot chilli Fluffy ate, she couldn't make fire zoom out of her nose.

'Boo!' growled the crowd as they pelted Fluffy with pieces of untoasted bread.

'This is only the beginning!' Freddy roared as he barged into the king's chamber. 'I will destroy Camelgrot! Unless you step aside and make me king!'

Suddenly there was a knock on the chamber door.

'Come in,' said the king.

It was Bertie the cleaner. 'I beg you,' Your Majesty,' he said, 'please don't give Freddy your answer before you've heard my extremely urgent news.'

'Very well, said the king. 'What is it?'

Unfortunately, as Bertie approached, he tripped on a rug, pitched forward, and crashed head-first into a table.

'Are you okay?' asked King Arthur.

Bertie smiled, and then passed out.

'What a clot,' muttered the king.

'Make up your mind!' urged Freddy.

'Give me an hour to think it over,' pleaded King Arthur.

'An hour it is.' Freddy nodded. 'But you won't be able to wriggle out of this, Artie. In one hour, I will be king of Camelgrot!'

Immediately a Royal Meeting was called.

'There is only one thing to do,' said King Arthur. 'Ernesto, you must challenge Freddy to a duel. A duel of magic! If you can make bigger and better magic than he can, than Camelgrot will be saved.'

Ernesto knew that without his book of magic spells he could never match Freddy, but bravely he said, 'Arrange the duel, Your Majesty. I'll out-magic Freddy Treacle if it's the last thing I do.'

The very next moment the palace door swung open and in swaggered Freddy, who'd heard every word. 'You're right,' he said. 'It *will* be the last thing you do!'

Instantly Ernesto swung into action. Twirling his magic wand between his fingers, he chanted, 'Abra cadabra, bippity bop. Make this evil Freddy stop! Send him over hill and dale, running away with a curly tail!'

A rumble of thunder shook the palace. Lightning bolts zig-zagged the sky. Next second, King Arthur cried, 'Oh my gosh! I've grown a tail!'

'So have I!' said Queen Martha.

'*Squeakkkkk!*' said the knights as they too waggled their tails.

'Sorry,' said Ernesto, his face flushed with embarrassment.

Now it was Freddy's turn for magic mayhem. Pointing at King Arthur he rasped, 'Give the king a beard of cheese, and fill it up with hopping fleas!'

A long, yellow cheese beard appeared on Arthur's face. In and out of the cheese scampered a horde of hopping fleas!

'Hey, Presto,' yelled the king, 'do something!'

'I can't, Your Majesty,' Ernesto replied sadly. 'Freddy's magic is far

greater than mine.’

Faced with the truth, there was only one thing King Arthur could do.

‘I surrender!’ he said. ‘Here’s my crown, Treacle. You are the new king of Camelgrot.’

‘Yes!’ Freddy’s lips curled like two strips of half-cooked bacon. ‘About time!’ he said as the crown was placed on his head.

‘Will you be a nice king?’ asked Queen Martha.

‘Of course!’ howled Freddy. ‘Nice to me! Ha! Ha! Ha!’ Then his eyes narrowed into tiny peepholes. ‘Everyone in Camelgrot will have to pay me fifty gold bars a year. I’ll have Fluffy the Fiery Dragon for dinner. Your precious singing knights will become my slaves. And I haven’t forgotten you, Ernesto. You will have a nice new home to live in. At the bottom of a well!

‘What about us?’ asked King Arthur, holding Queen Martha’s hand.

‘You will both help me in my quest to become a great archer,’ Freddy answered.

‘How can we help?’ they asked.

Freddy grinned. ‘By providing me with lots of target practice!’

Just when all seemed lost, Bertie came stumbling into the room. ‘Don’t try to stop me!’ he called as he reached into his coat and pulled out a tatty book. ‘I found this in the swamp – where Freddy Treacle tossed it!’

‘It’s my book of magic spells!’ said Ernesto. ‘Now we’ll see who’s the top magician around here!’

Freddy lunged for the book, but Ernesto got to it first. Glancing at a special magic spell, he chanted, ‘Hocus pocus, double egg yolkers! We don’t want this rotter here. Away with you, Treacle – disappear!’

Whoosh!

And just like that, Freddy was gone.

At last, everything was perfect again in Camelgrot. Fluffy the Fiery Dragon went back to cooking toast for tourists; the king and queen held a grand party for their sixtieth anniversary, and all the kingdom was invited; the Jolly Knight Quartet once more sang happy songs, without sounding even a little bit like mice; and no one (except Fluffy) had a tail.

There was really only one thing different. Bertie was no longer a cleaner. As a reward for saving the kingdom, he was made a knight. Of course, the brand-new knight had a brand-new name – Sir Whataclot!

African Itching Ants

I can see inside the famous author's nose. It is really hairy.

His name is D K Brown, but we can call him Duncan. I told him he could call me Daisy, but he didn't hear me.

The whole school is here to see Duncan. Melody asks him to sign her cap. Kent wants the cast on his broken arm signed.

I'm probably the only one who has a proper autograph book for Duncan to sign, but he doesn't see it.

Miss Maloney hurries over. 'Back to your seats, children.'

I sit up extra-straight as she walks past. I'm trying to get a Gold Star like my big sister Martha did once, but it's not easy.

Duncan walks to the microphone.

'Hello, kids!'

'HELLO, DUNCAN!'

He tells us jokes.

And poems.

It's all good, but we laugh the most when he makes rabbit ears behind Miss Maloney's head without her knowing.

When the laughing stops, Duncan reads a story from his book, *Barney, The Flying Dog*.

'I'll give this book to the boy or girl with the very best smile,' he tells us.

I smile so hard my face feels like it's going to break in half.

He heads towards me.

But he keeps going, straight past.

'Congratulations,' he tells Milla. 'The book is yours.'

Duncan takes a camera from his pocket.

'I always take a souvenir photo when I visit schools,' he says.

He stands on the tips of his toes and looks around the hall.

'Who wants to be in the photo?'

'ME! ME! ME!'

'Okay. But first I'll take a photo of your teachers.'

'Come on,' says Miss Maloney.

'Do we have to?' asks Mister Ruben.

'I'm not wearing any make-up,' moans Mrs James.

'I love having my photo taken,' says Ms Ali.

Mrs Zerba and Mister Delahunty try to hide, but Miss Maloney

sees them.

‘You, too.’

‘I like the people in my photos to be in special poses,’ Duncan says. ‘Can we do that?’

Miss Maloney nods. ‘We’ll do exactly as you say.’

‘Great! Today’s special pose is called The Awful Opera Singer. Are you ready?’

All the teachers – except for Ms Ali – mumble and grumble, but they’re ready.

Duncan asks Mrs Zerba, Mister Delahunty and Mister Ruben to close their eyes and block their ears.

Ms Ali has to look shocked.

Mrs James has to look sick.

‘What should I do?’ asks Miss Maloney.

‘You’re the awful opera singer.’

Miss Maloney’s eyes almost pop out of her head.

‘But I’ve got a beautiful voice.’

‘Not today,’ says Duncan. ‘Today you’re the awful opera singer.’

All the kids laugh.

‘Oh, all right,’ says Miss Maloney.’

‘Do as I do,’ Duncan tells her.

He flings his arms far apart and opens his mouth as if he’s at the dentist.

Miss Maloney copies him.

‘Now sing the highest note you can – like this.
LAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!’

Miss Maloney sings the same note, but much louder.

‘LAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!’

‘Now it’s your turn, kids,’ Duncan says. ‘Start booing.’

‘BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!’

Duncan aims the camera.

‘BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!’

Click!

And water sprays over the teachers!

It’s a water pistol camera!

They all get soooooo wet. And they don’t look very happy.

Kids go bananas!

‘SQUIRT ME!’ they yell.

Duncan runs around the hall, squirting them. The more he squirts, the more everyone squeals.

When the squeals finally stop Duncan bounds over to his bag and takes out a long thin bottle. He holds the bottle up high so the kids at the back of the hall can see it better.

Inside the bottle there are tiny black things.

‘Can anyone guess what’s in here?’

‘Beetles,’ says Nini.

‘Grubs,’ says Patrick.

Duncan shakes his head.

‘Any other guesses?’

I’m right in front of him with my hand waving but he doesn’t ask me.

Instead, he asks Matilda.

‘Yes?’

‘Flies!’

‘No.’

Assad is sure he knows. He bounces about, waving both hands at once.

‘Ants!’ he yells.

‘Correct!’

Kids high-five Assad and slap him on the back.

‘But not ordinary ants,’ adds Duncan.

‘What kind of ants are they?’ Jason asks.

‘That’s a big secret. I’m not sure if I should tell you.’

‘TELL US! TELL US!’

‘Okay.’ Duncan folds his arms. ‘But not until you’re really still.’

No one moves. Or blinks.

Even Nadja is quiet. And Nadja is never quiet.

Duncan leans forward. He puts one hand over the side of his mouth. It’s as if he’s whispering into our ears.

‘I have in my hand a bottle of ... African Itching Ants!’

Kids all call out the same thing:

‘WHAT ARE AFRICAN ITCHING ANTS?’

Miss Maloney wants to know, too.

‘I’ve never heard of them,’ she says.

‘African Itching Ants are very rare,’ Duncan answers. ‘You have to be careful with them because they make you itch, and once you start itching, you can never stop!’

Just the thought of those ants makes everyone start itching.

‘I need the ants,’ Duncan continues, ‘because they are the only thing that my pet spider will eat. Oh, did I tell you about my pet

spider?’

‘NO!’

‘Well, his name is Selby. He’s really big and hairy! And he sure loves those ants!’

Some kids pretend to be scared of Selby.

Jason chews his fingernails.

Petra hugs her sister Merlina.

I’m scared, too, but I set a good example by acting brave.

Miss Maloney probably needs new glasses because she still doesn’t notice me.

‘Do you want to meet Selby?’ asks Duncan.

‘YES!’

Duncan digs into his coat pocket. He looks surprised when he only finds a handkerchief.

‘Oh dear, oh dear. Selby must have gone for a walk.’

Jason pretends he’s found Selby.

‘I’ve got him!’

He drops the pretend spider in Melissa Jane’s hair.

‘Eeeeekkkk!’

Kids think they see Selby here, there, and everywhere!

It gets very noisy again.

Miss Maloney claps her hands into the microphone.

‘Are you all ready to pay attention again?’ she asks.

‘YES, MISS MALONEY.’

She steps away from the microphone.

Duncan takes over.

‘Hey kids, help me find Selby. You can’t miss him – he’s so big he has to wear a dog collar!’

There are squeals and shrieks.

‘Let’s look for him,’ he says.

Duncan gets down on his hands and knees.

‘Here, Selby. Come to Daddy.’

We all copy him, but no one can see the spider.

‘There’s only one way to get him back,’ says Duncan. ‘I have to feed Selby some African Itching Ants!’

Duncan unscrews the lid of the bottle.

Everyone watches him very closely.

‘I’m going to throw these ants around now so Selby can have his lunch. Because we must feed our pets – right, kids?’

‘YES!’

‘Okay, but remember, these are African Itching Ants, so whatever you do, don’t touch them. If you do, you’ll never stop itching for the rest of your life! When you’re a hundred years old, you’ll still be itching ... so, last chance now, do you still want me to take the lid off?’

‘YES!’

‘Are you really, really sure?’

‘YES!’

‘Okay, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.’

There’s not a single sound in the hall as Duncan takes the lid off and holds the bottle above his head.

‘Here they come, kids!’

He throws the ants out of the bottle, up high in the air.

They land right on top of us!

‘AAARRGGH!’

‘Ants!’

Itchy! Itchy!

‘Yuck!’

Duncan runs down the aisle, tipping out more ants everywhere he goes.

‘Here, Selby!’ he shouts. ‘Lunch time!’

Screams.

Giggles.

Squeals.

‘Ants!’

Miss Maloney dives to the microphone.

‘Children! Children! Stop, this instant!’

No one hears her, except me.

Kids run in circles.

They roll on the floor.

They take off their shirts.

I stay in my place, sitting up as straight as I can.

Everyone else is going crazy.

Milla stomps up and down the hall, squashing African Itching Ants. Damon picks up African Itching Ants and puts them down Jody’s back.

‘I’m going to tell on you!’ yells Jodie.

Itchy! Itchy!

‘Then have some more!’

‘Help!’

Stomp!

Squash!

'Aarrgghh!'

'It was a joke!' Duncan shouts. 'They're not ants. They're only tea leaves! They don't make you itch! I was kidding!'

His words are drowned out by the screams.

Antonia throws open the door of the hall.

'Follow me!'

Kids rush to the door.

'Come back!' begs Miss Maloney.

The other teachers chase the children, pleading, 'Come back!'

They keep going.

But I know exactly what to do.

I run to the microphone, put two fingers into my mouth, and blow as hard as I can, just like my Dad taught me.

A mighty, giant whistle flies out of me.

The kids stop and turn around.

They look at me.

Duncan looks at me, too. So do all the teachers, even Miss Maloney.

In a very calm voice I say, 'They're not really African Itching Ants. They're only tea leaves. It's a joke.'

There are a few seconds when no one knows quite what to do, then Fatima laughs. Jason joins in. Soon everyone is laughing. Kids aren't scared any more. They don't want to run away now.

In front of me I see a wave of smiling faces as they pour back into the hall.

'Well done,' Daisy,' says Miss Maloney. 'I think that deserves a gold star. Would you like that?'

'Yes, please,' I say. 'Very much.'

Duncan gives me his brand-new book, *Emily, The Flying Cat*. Inside it he writes: 'To Daisy, the best whistler I know.'

Miss Maloney goes back to the microphone.

'Did you have a good time?' she asks.

'YES!'

'In that case, let's hear a big round of applause for Duncan.'

Everyone claps and stamps their feet.

'Thank you,' Duncan says into the microphone. Then suddenly he yells, 'Don't move!'

He leaps behind Miss Maloney and plucks something out of her hair.

'I found Selby!'

Duncan holds up a huge hairy black spider.

Even I can see that it's made of rubber, but Miss Maloney pretends to be scared and jumps back as if it's about to bite her.

'He looks hungry,' she says.

Duncan nods. 'He's starving, but now I don't have any ants left to feed him, so what can he eat?'

He looks all around him, then he says, 'I know! Selby will just have to eat some children!'

He rushes down the aisle, trying to scare kids by letting Selby bite their necks.

'Lunch time!' he yells.

We can't stop giggling.

Duncan keeps on running until he reaches the door, where he stops and waves.

'Goodbye, kids!'

'GOODBYE, DUNCAN!'

I pick up a handful of African Itching Ants to remind me of the great time I had – to me they'll never be just tea leaves.

The Hunt for Herbie

‘He’s gone! My little Herbie has disappeared!’

I was on my way home from school when I heard those words. Mrs Turner stood at her front gate. She looked sad.

‘My cat disappears all the time,’ I said, ‘but she always comes back.’

‘Herbie isn’t a cat, Davey.’

‘Is he a dog?’

From behind me I heard the voice of Steve Jones. ‘Don’t you know anything, Davey? Herbie is a garden gnome.’

‘Not just any gnome,’ said Mrs Turner. ‘My grandfather carved Herbie out of a piece of wood. He’s been in my family for a hundred years.’

‘Leave it to me,’ I said. ‘I’ll find Herbie for you, Mrs Turner.’

Steve pushed in front of me. ‘No, you won’t. I’ll find Herbie.’

‘I said it first, Steve!’

‘I was thinking it first, Davey!’

Mrs Turner stepped between us. ‘Boys, this is no time to argue. I’ll have much more chance of getting Herbie back if you work as a team. Now shake hands and be friends.’

I didn’t want to be on the same team as Steve, but I knew she was right. ‘All right, then,’ I said, and we shook hands.

Before we started looking for Herbie, Mrs Turner showed us his photo.

‘We’ll need to borrow this,’ I told her. ‘If that’s all right.’

Mrs Turner agreed.

‘The first thing we’ll do,’ Steve said, ‘is go to every house in the street and find out if anyone saw Herbie being taken.’

‘That sounds like a good plan,’ I said.

We went to Mr and Mrs Costa’s house first.

‘Did you see anyone steal Herbie?’ I asked.

‘He’s Mrs Turner’s favourite gnome,’ added Steve, holding up Herbie’s photo.

‘No,’ said Mr Costa. ‘We didn’t see a thing.’

‘But I heard something,’ Mrs Costa added.

‘What?’

‘It was a loud noise – like something breaking – about an hour ago. It came from Mrs Turner’s front garden.’

This was an important clue. I’d seen a broken flowerpot in Mrs Turner’s garden.

Steve had seen it, too. The person who took the gnome, probably also knocked over the flowerpot.

‘Aha!’ I said. ‘That means that Herbie was stolen about an hour ago.’

Steve was impressed. ‘Good thinking, Davey.’

It was the first time that Steve had ever been nice to me.

We thanked the Costas and moved on to the home of the Green family.

Mr and Mrs Green have seven sons. Sometimes they get into trouble at school. Maybe one of them took Herbie.

The Greens’ youngest son, Noah, opened the door.

Steve showed him Herbie’s photo. ‘This gnome has been stolen. Did you take it?’

‘Mum!’ he yelled.

His mother came running. ‘What’s going on?’

‘They think I stole a home,’ said Noah.

I shook my head. ‘A gnome, not a home.’

‘What’s this all about?’ Mrs Green sounded cross.

‘We’re looking for Herbie,’ I said as Steve showed her the photo. ‘He was stolen.’

‘How interesting,’ Mrs Green said. ‘We were robbed today, too.’

‘Did they steal a gnome?’ asked Steve.

‘No,’ she said. ‘They stole one of Noah’s new shoes.’

‘I left them outside last night,’ explained Noah. ‘This morning there was one missing.’

Just then, Mr Chin, the Green family’s next-door neighbour, poked his head over the fence.

‘I saw a stranger in your yard this morning,’ he said.

‘Did he have my shoe?’ Noah asked.

‘No. He seemed to be looking for something.’

Steve stared at me. His eyes were wide. We both knew that this was the best clue of all. An eyewitness.

I asked Mr Chin what the stranger looked like.

‘He was a tall thin man with curly ginger hair.’

I slapped my hands together. ‘I think I know who he is.’

‘So do I,’ said Steve.

‘Who is it?’ asked Mrs Green.

We both started to answer at once, but Steve let me go first.

‘He lives about three blocks from here – at 32 Maple Street. His name is Jeremy Benson. And guess what?’

‘What?’ said Mrs Green, Mr Chin, and Noah.

I let Steve answer. ‘He’s our new teacher!’

‘Are you sure?’ asked Mr Chin.

‘Almost,’ I said. ‘He’s tall and thin and he has curly ginger hair.’

‘Come on, Davey,’ said Steve.

We started jogging towards Mr Benson’s house.

‘Be careful,’ called Mrs Green.

Jeremy Benson’s front gate creaked as we opened it. I felt scared. I’m sure Steve did too, but he pretended to be brave.

‘Maybe we should call the police,’ I said.

Steve shook his head. ‘Not yet. Let’s ask Mr Benson a few questions first.’

Together we tiptoed along the path and up the front steps.

Suddenly, Steve grabbed my arm. ‘Look!’

There, in front of the door, was Herbie and the missing shoes.

Steve picked up Herbie. As he did, the gate creaked open. It was Mr Benson!

‘Hi, kids. What are you doing here?’

I could hear Steve’s knees knocking together. ‘Don’t worry,’ I whispered. ‘I’ve got a plan.’

‘What is it?’ Steve whispered back.

‘Run!’

And away we went, as fast as we could.

‘Stop!’ cried Mr Benson.

I jumped the fence. Steve tried to jump it, too. But he fell.

Mr Benson caught up and knelt beside Steve. I couldn’t leave him all alone, so I ran back.

‘We know everything!’ Mr Benson,’ I shouted.

He seemed surprised. ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about, Davey.’

‘Are you sure about that?’ asked Steve.

‘Yes,’ said Mr Benson.

‘Then how come you’ve got Mrs Turner’s gnome and Noah Green’s shoes?’

Mr Benson smiled. 'Ah! Now I understand. It wasn't me who took those things, kids. It was Shorty.'

'Who's Shorty?' Steve and I asked together.

'He's my puppy. He dug a hole under the fence while I was at work. I've been looking for him for an hour.'

It sounded true. He might have been searching for his pup when Mr Chin saw him. But was Mr Benson telling the truth?

The gate creaked again. I looked up to see a group of people standing there.

In the group were Mrs Turner, Mr Chin, The Elliotts, Mrs Green, and Noah. Mrs Turner held a cute puppy in her arms.

'I found this little bundle in my garden,' she said. 'He was about to run off with my newspaper.'

I laughed. So did Steve. We'd found our robber!

Mrs Turner cried again when she saw Herbie. But this time she was crying because she was happy. Noah was glad to get his shoes back, too.

Mr Benson didn't know how to keep Shorty from getting into trouble when he was at work. But Mrs Turner had a great idea.

'Shorty can stay with me during the day,' she said. 'I like puppies – even more than I like gnomes.'

Steve smiled at me. 'You make a good detective, Davey.'

'So do you,' I said. And the next thing I said surprised him just as much as it surprised me. 'We make a good team.'

Pop's List

'Just up ahead of us. I'm positive this time, Sean. Right-hand side, third tree from the road. See it?'

This is Pop's second *positive* sighting this morning, and, once again, I don't know what he's looking at, but it's sure not a koala.

'No, Pop,' I say. 'I can't see anything.'

As he puts down his binoculars I see his shoulders droop, just a little.

'Could have sworn that was a koala,' he says, with a shrug. 'Oh, well, they must be up there in the trees somewhere, mustn't they?'

'I suppose so, Pop.'

'There's no *suppose*, lad. They'd *have* to be around here for someone to put up that sign.'

His eyes go to a sign on a tree that says, *Caution – koalas crossing*.

'Maybe they were here once,' I reply, 'but now they've moved on.'

'Moved on? Nah.' He shakes his head. 'If a sign says *koalas*, and there are no koalas, then that's false advertising. Right?'

'Right, Pop.'

Seeing a koala in the wild is the last thing on Pop's bucket list. He's been working on the list for years. He did a lot of things with my dad when they were both much younger; they jumped out of a plane together, got matching tattoos, went white-water rafting, and even swam with sharks.

Eventually, Dad said, 'That's enough for me'. He didn't have time for adventures, but Pop just kept on finding new things for his list. He climbed a mountain, learnt how to ice skate, and did a stand-up comedy routine on stage. Pop had heaps of other adventures, too, until there were only three things left to tick off the list.

We tackled the first of the three a couple of weeks ago. When Pop asked me to help him, I thought we'd be doing something daring, like abseiling, or maybe hang-gilding. I've never been so wrong.

'We're making scones,' he said. 'I've always wanted to try it. Are you up for the challenge, Sean?'

'Yep.'

Making scones? How boring!

'Now, I know what you're thinking,' he said, as he took out a bowl and placed flour and milk and butter around it.

'You do?'

'Yes.' He nodded. 'You think this is going to be boring. Am I right?'

'Well, maybe a little bit, Pop.'

'I agree, it could be. So, to make sure it isn't boring, we're doing it blindfolded.'

'Huh? How will we know what we're doing?'

'Trial and error,' he said as he put on a blindfold and handed one to me. 'Can you see anything?'

'Not a thing, Pop.'

'Good.'

Straightaway, I felt something being sprinkled in my hair. I put a bit of it into my mouth. Flour!

'You missed the bowl, Pop! You put the flour over me!'

'My bad,' he said. 'Let's see how I go with the butter.'

Something cold and smooth landed on my nose. I tasted it. Butter!

'Pop! You missed again!'

'Oops! Sorry, Sean.' I was sure I heard him giggle. 'Hope I don't have a problem with the milk.'

I ripped my blindfold off, and just as I thought, Pop was about to pour milk onto my head, and he wasn't wearing a blindfold!

'You tricked me!' I said.

'I sure did,' he grinned. 'But at least you weren't bored, were you?'

'No.'

'Good. Now let's make scones for real. And then we'll do something very, very risky!'

'What's that, Pop?'

'We'll eat our own cooking!'

One week later we moved onto the second-last thing on Pop's bucket list.

'We'll go out into the bush,' he said in a low husky voice. 'The deepest, darkest, most dangerous bush we can find.' His eyes were very wide. 'And you know what we'll do, Sean?'

'Go camping?'

'No! We'll go snake hunting!'

'But I'm scared of snakes, Pop.'

'Me, too, lad. That's why we must face our fear head-on and conquer it!'

Just then, Mum walked in. 'I heard that,' she said. 'It's not a good idea, Dad,' she told Pop, 'You shouldn't mess with snakes. One of you might get bitten.'

'You're right,' Pop said. 'We won't go into the deepest, darkest, most dangerous part of the bush. We'll just go for a hike on the *outskirts*.'

'That sounds more sensible.' Mum rubbed Pop's back. 'You and Sean will still have fun together, but you'll be safe.'

The moment Mum left the room, Pop said, 'Come on, lad. Let's do this! With a bit of luck, we still might find a snake!'

Pop drove for about half an hour before he spotted a walking track.

'This looks like snake territory,' he said as he pulled off the road. When he got out of the car, he took a deep breath and said, 'I can smell snakes, Sean. Can you?'

I took a deep breath, too. 'No, Pop, I don't think I can.'

'Really?' He crinkled his nose as he sniffed up high, and down low. Finally, he said, 'This nose knows, Sean. Take it from me, we'll find a snake today!'

We took off, walking at a brisk pace. I had to hurry to keep up with Pop. Now and then, he would stop and point into the long grass. 'Did you see something move in there, Sean?' he'd ask.

Every time, I had to disappoint him with a 'No'. His eyes aren't very good.

Then, suddenly, his arm shot out in front of me. 'Snake!' he cried.

I took a good hard look at what he was looking at, but then I had to disappoint him again.

'Sorry,' I said. 'That isn't a snake. It's a snake-skin.'

'Hmm . . . that's almost the same as finding a snake, don't you reckon, Sean?'

'It's not *quite* the same, Pop.'

Pop checked his watch. We'd been walking for nearly an hour. I was getting tired. He must have been, too.

'It's close enough for me,' he said. 'I'm ticking it off the list! Let's go home.'

And now, here we are today, on the hunt for a koala.

'All my life,' he says to me, 'I've wanted to see a koala in the wild. I've seen them in zoos plenty of times, but it's not the same.'

'I hope you see one today, Pop.'

‘So do I,’ he says. ‘It’ll be good to cross the last thing off my list.’
A feeling of sadness sweeps over me. I can’t hide it from Pop.

‘What’s wrong?’ His big blue eyes search mine.

‘Um, well . . . if this is the last thing on your list,’ I mutter, ‘that means we won’t be able to go off on adventures together anymore.’

‘No way!’ He throws back his head and laughs. ‘This is the last thing on *this* list. But there’ll be another one, and one after that! Don’t you worry, Sean, we’ve got plenty more adventures ahead of us!’

That is so good to hear. More than ever now, I want Pop to see a koala, but we’ve been sitting here in his car for ages, and we haven’t seen a thing.

‘It’ll be dark in a couple of hours,’ I tell him. ‘Maybe we should go home and come back another day.’

‘We’ll stay just a bit longer,’ he says. ‘Late afternoon’s probably the best time for seeing koalas. That’s when they’re out and about, looking for some juicy eucalyptus leaves for dinner.’ He yawns. ‘Only thing is, I’m a little weary. If I have a sleep for ten minutes or so, will you keep a lookout for me?’

‘Sure will.’

‘Good lad.’

Only moments after he shuts his eyes, Pop is snoring. Ten minutes later, high up in a tree set back from the road, I see two kookaburras. I aim my mobile and snap away. Smile kookas! I get my photos just in time before the kookaburras fly away. But then, I gasp. I see a koala!

I nudge Pop, and he’s instantly awake.

‘Koala?’ He grabs my arm. ‘Did you see one?’

‘I think so, Pop.’

‘Where? Where?’

I point to where I saw it, only seconds ago.

‘Can’t see anything,’ Pop says.

He’s right. I can’t see anything, either.

‘Are you sure that’s the right place, Sean?’

‘Yes.’

It’s definitely the right place. But where did it go? Or am I seeing things that aren’t really there?

‘Have a look through these.’ Pop gives me his binoculars. I train them on all the trees around me, checking every branch.

No koala.

‘There really was a koala, Pop,’ I say. ‘I’m not making it up. It was just behind the branch the kookaburras were sitting on.’

'Kookaburras?' says Pop.

'There were two of them – I took photos. I'll show you.'

I flick through the photos on my mobile.

'Stop!' says Pop.

There it is, on a tree behind the kookaburras, just where I said I saw it, a koala!

'You beauty!' Pop gives me a high-five. 'I've seen a koala in the wild at last! Good on you, Sean! I'm ticking it off the list!'

Plays

HAIR TODAY, GONE
TOMORROW

CAST:

NEWSREADER

DAN DRUFF (A REPORTER)

VICTIM (A BALD MAN)

NARRATOR

POLICE CHIEF

SERGEANT

BOSS (HEAD MOBSTER)

LOUIE (MOBSTER)

LEFTY (MOBSTER)

BUGSY (MOBSTER)

NEWSREADER

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE NEWSREADER MIGHT BE WEARING A SUIT
POLICE CHIEF & SERGEANT IN UNIFORM.

PROPS:

A MICROPHONE

FAKE GUNS

POLICE BADGES

GOLF CLUBS

SCENE 1

(IN A TELEVISION STUDIO)

NEWSREADER

Newsflash! In a daring raid across the country a gang has stolen thousands of wigs, in a very unusual way. For the latest news, we cross now to our wig reporter, Dan Druff.

DAN

I'm with a stunned victim who was playing golf when . . .

VICTIM

A bird swooped down and stole my wig!

DAN

How did that make you feel?

VICTIM

Like a real turkey! I'd just had it repainted and dry-cleaned!

DAN

We're on a golf course, so I suppose it was an albatross or an eagle. Or maybe it was just an ordinary birdy.

VICTIM

No! It was a mechanical bird! It had a motor! I heard it!

DAN

A mechanical bird? That's cuckoo!

VICTIM

I'm not really surprised. A lot of golfers have had their wigs stolen lately.

DAN

Really?

VICTIM

Yes, I guess it was just my tern.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, at police headquarters . . .

(DAN AND THE VICTIM
EXIT. A POLICE CHIEF AND
SERGEANT ENTER, BOTH
WEARING HATS.)

CHIEF

What do we know about the wignappers,
Sergeant?

SERGEANT

They have a flock of radio-controlled
mechanical birds that are programmed to
steal wigs.

CHIEF

I find that hard to swallow.

SERGEANT

It's true, Chief. I'm not a dodo. The birds
are robbin' us.

CHIEF

How do you know this?

SERGEANT

We found a stool pigeon.

CHIEF

And he talked?

SERGEANT

Sang like a canary.

CHIEF

We must catch these buzzards and throw them
in gaol!

SERGEANT

Do you think they're a flight risk, Chief?

CHIEF

Yes, but we're going to clip their wings!

SERGEANT

You seem to be taking this very personally.

CHIEF

I sure am. This isn't a mynah offence. They stole my wig!

SERGEANT

They stole mine, too.

CHIEF

But mine was special! I inherited it from my grandmother, and when I die it's to be divided equally between my wife and nine children, and my fifteen grandchildren!

SERGEANT

Are you going to leave them anything else?

CHIEF

No, I don't want to spoil them.

SERGEANT

It seems your wig was a family hairloom.

CHIEF

It was indeed. And now I feel bare without my hair. It's so unfair!

SERGEANT

Don't worry, Chief. We'll comb the streets and find their lair. We'll catch the coots who stole your hair!

CHIEF

You had better because we can't have them making geoses out of us. Can we?

SERGEANT

No, sir.

CHIEF

You can bet right now those vultures are crowing about this.

SERGEANT

Yes, they'll be swanning around like peacocks.

CHIEF

When really they're just—

BOTH

Chickens!

— LIGHTS OFF

SCENE 2

(LIGHTS ON)

NARRATOR

One month later . . .

(CURTAIN OPENS. THE CHIEF AND THE SERGEANT ARE ON STAGE. THE SERGEANT STILL HAS A HAT ON, BUT THE CHIEF DOESN'T. HE HAS LOTS OF HAIR.)

SERGEANT

Bad news, Chief, those wig-nappers have flown the coop.

CHIEF

That's okay, I've got my wig back now, so the case is closed.

SERGEANT

I don't understand, Chief. How did you get your wig back?

CHIEF

Don't tell anyone, but I paid the ransom.

SERGEANT

You negotiated with a hairorist?

CHIEF

I had to - I was very attached to my wig.

SERGEANT

But what about my wig?

CHIEF

Get over it, Sergeant. You know what they say - hair today, gone tomorrow.

SERGEANT

True, but are you sure you got your own wig back?

CHIEF

I'm positive. It's exactly the same. I just wish it wasn't so itchy...

(THE SERGEANT AND THE
CHIEF EXIT. THE MOBSTERS
ENTER.)

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, in a secret hideout...

BOSS

Great news, gang! Our second-head wig business is doing tremendous business. We're rich!

LOUIE

Fantastic, Boss!

LEFTY

We've got away with the perfect crime!

BOSS

The best part was getting that cop to pay out big to get his wig back.

BUGSY

When all he got was a handful of glued clippings from my Labrador!

LOUIE

Three cheers for us!

ALL

Hurray!

— The End

HEADING HOME

CAST:

CAPTAIN

DORA

BELLA

GREENBEARD

LANCE

BOIL

KYLIE

ROD

WOLF

MUMSY (VOICE HEARD OFF STAGE)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE CAST ARE ALL PIRATES AND ARE DRESSED ACCORDINGLY.

PROPS:

EYEPATCHES

BANDANNAS

FAKE SWORDS, ETC

SCENE

(ON BOARD A PIRATE SHIP.
A FEW BARRELS CAN BE
DISPLAYED, PERHAPS A
JOLLY ROGER FLAG.)

CAPT

Hi, ho, pirates!

CREW

Hi, ho, Captain!

CAPT

I think it must be time for a song. Don't
you?

CREW

No!

CAPT

What kidders you are! Let's do it!

(SINGS CHEERFULLY)

Oh, what a happy ship is this!

CREW

(SUNG RELUCTANTLY)

Every day is simply bliss -

CAPT

There's no other life that we would chooose -

CREW

(RELUCTANTLY)

because we love our ocean views.

CAPT

Well done, me hearties! Now would you like
to hear some good news?

CREW

Yes, please!

CAPT

Very well. It is exactly 730 days since we left home!

DORA

But it was only supposed to be for a three-hour cruise.

CAPT

That's right— we've set a record!

(THE CREW GROAN)

CAPT

I knew you'd be excited. And there's more good news, too.

CREW

Tell us!

CAPT

I'm writing a book about our great voyage.

KYLIE

Will we be in it?

CAPT

Indeed! Every single one of you will be mentioned!

CREW

Yay!

CAPT

Not by name, of course — but when it says 'crew', you'll know who I'm talking about.

BELLA

When will we be going home, Captain?

CAPT

So soon? Why would you want to go home?

BELLA

I think I left the kettle on.

CAPT

Very odd. Does anyone else want to go home?

(THE CREW ALL RAISE
THEIR HANDS)

CAPT

I'm shocked! I thought you liked being pirates.

G'BEARD

We do, Captain. It's jolly good fun . . .
but...

CAPT

Out with it, Greenbeard!

G'BEARD

I'm seasick.

CAPT

Ha!

LANCE

And I'm homesick.

CAPT

Double ha!

BOIL

I'm catsick.

CAPT

What's catsick?

BOIL

It's when you miss your cat.

CAPT

Fiddlesticks! Do any of you have a really serious reason for going home?

KYLIE

I have to help my granny out of the bath.
She's been waiting for me for two years.

CAPT

You're doing her a favour, Kylie. Old people
love a good soak.

ROD

I'm sick of the food. I've eaten so much fish
I'm starting to look like a fish.

CAPT

Nonsense, Cod – I mean Rod.

WOLF

I need to go home to see a doctor.

CAPT

Whatever it is, Wolf, I can treat you.

WOLF

Are you a doctor, Captain?

CAPT

Very nearly. I dated a nurse for two and a
half weeks.

WOLF

That's close enough for me.

CAPT

Good. Tell me your symptoms.

WOLF

Every night I dream I'm being cut in half
with an axe.

CAPT

Hmm... poke out your tongue and say ahhhh.

WOLF

Ahhhh.

CAPT

No wonder you dream of being cut in half by an axe. You silly, silly sailor. You've been sleeping like a log!

WOLF

Amazing . . . I feel better already.

CAPT

Right then! Everyone's all fixed up and happy. Now we'll have no more of this rubbish about going home. Will we?

CREW

No, Captain.

CAPT

Because anyone who wants to go home is a big wussy wimp! What are they?

CREW

A big wussy wimp.

(A VOICE FROM OFF STAGE)

MUMSY

LEROY! LEROY!

CREW

Who's that?

CAPT

Oh no!

MUMSY

LEROY! LEROY!

BELLA

Do you know who it is, Captain?

CAPT

It's my mother.

G'BEARD

But that's not possible – she's thousands of miles away!

CAPT

Oh, it's possible all right. She has fantastic hearing and a very loud voice.

MUMSY

SPEAK TO ME, LEROY!

CAPT

Hello, Mumsy. Is there something I can do for you?

MUMSY

YES! COME HOME AT ONCE!

CAPT

Why?

MUMSY

BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO CLEAN YOUR ROOM! IT'S A DISGRACE! AND SO ARE YOU!

CAPT

I'm on my way, Mumsy. Won't be long!

MUMSY

YOU'D BETTER NOT BE! COME ON NOW, BOY – MOVE IT!

CAPT

You heard her, crew! Hoist the sails! Turn this ship around!

DORA

You mean we're really going home?

CAPT

Yes – and as fast as we can!

CREW

YAY!

(THEY SING
ENTHUSIASTICALLY)

Oh, what a happy ship is this! Every day is simply bliss – we all love the ocean foam – especially when we're heading home!

– The End

HOT TEETH

CAST:

NEWSREADER
FLOSS DAILY
MISS GUMM
NARRATOR
POLICE CHIEF
SERGEANT
CONSTABLE
BOSS
BIG JULIE
LITTLE JULIE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE NEWSREADER MIGHT BE WEARING A SUIT.
MISS GUMM IS DISTRAUGHT AS SHE HAS JUST HAD
HER TEETH STOLEN.

PROPS:

THE THREE POLICE OFFICERS COULD BE WEARING
UNIFORMS OR HAVE BADGES.
FLOSS DAILY IS A REPORTER, SO SHE MIGHT HAVE
A MICROPHONE.
THE GANGSTERS MIGHT HAVE FAKE GUNS.

SCENE 1

(A TELEVISION STUDIO.
A SIGN MIGHT HAVE THE
STATION NAME.)

NEWSREADER

In breaking news, police say a gang has stolen hundreds of sets of false teeth! For a live update, we cross now to our dental reporter, Floss Daily...

FLOSS

I have with me Miss Gumm, who is wearing her gardening teeth because—

GUMM

My going-out teeth were stolen.

FLOSS

How did it happen?

GUMM

Mouthpickers.

FLOSS

I haven't heard that word before. What are Mouthpickers?

GUMM

They're like pickpockets, only they pick mouths. They're so quick, so smooth. One moment I had teeth and the next they were gone!

FLOSS

How do you feel now?

(SHE WAILS, LOUDLY)

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, at police headquarters...

(A POLICE CHIEF AND
SERGEANT ENTER)

CHIEF

We have to catch those rotters who stole the choppers!

SERGEANT

But, Chief, it's not really worth worrying about. After all, they only stole silly old false teeth.

CHIEF

They stole my silly old false teeth, Sergeant! I don't have choppers. Now I can't chew any meat. Do you know what that means?

SERGEANT

You become a vegetarian?

CHIEF

No! I become very angry!

SERGEANT

Never fear. I'll catch the thief who stole your teeth.

CHIEF

I want my teeth as well as the thief. I can't eat beef without my teeth.

SERGEANT

Chief, you'll have your teeth to eat your beef – I'll catch the thief who caused you grief!

CHIEF

What a relief!

SERGEANT

I agree. I was running out of rhyme.

(THE CHIEF EXITS AND
CONSTABLE ENTERS)

CONSTABLE

What are your orders, Sarge?

SERGEANT

Arrest anyone with two sets of teeth in their mouth. If we're lucky there's a remote chance that one of them might be stolen.

CONSTABLE

Yes, Sarge.

SERGEANT

Until this case is solved, no police officer sleeps!

SCENE 2

NARRATOR

Three months later...

(THE CHIEF AND THE
SERGEANT ARE ON STAGE.
THE CHIEF WEARS AN APRON
AND A CHEF'S HAT.)

SERGEANT

Having a barbecue, Chief?

CHIEF

No, I was just grilling a suspect. What can I do for you?

SERGEANT

I'm afraid we can't crack the chopper case. We haven't slept a wink in months, and there still isn't a single lead.

CHIEF

Never mind. I forgot to tell you that I've got a good set of teeth now, so we can close the case.

SERGEANT

Did you get them from a dentist, Chief?

CHIEF

No, no. I found a wonderful shop that sold nothing else but pre-loved choppers. It was quite a coincidence, really; the shop opened shortly after all the teeth were stolen.

SERGEANT

What was the name of the shop, Chief?

CHIEF

Hot Teeth.

SERGEANT

That's very unusual.

CHIEF

Yes, but they're lovely people – just lovely. I bought a set of teeth off them for only \$500 – so cheap. They fit perfectly, too. In fact, they feel exactly like the ones that were stolen. I'm so happy!

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, in a hideout, far, far away...

BOSS

Good news, gang. We're now the leading seller of false teeth in the country!

BIG JULIE

And we did it with a painless extraction, too. Good mouthpicking, guys!

LITTLE JULIE

That's great, Boss. But stocks are low. What happens when we run out of teeth?

BOSS

No problem. On the day we sell our last set of false teeth, we'll steal them all back again!

GANG

Hurray!

– The End

IT'S PIRATE DAY

CAST:

CAPTAIN SCURVY

HANNA

BOB

POLLY

RUFUS

SAM

KYLIE

MUMMSIE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

EXCEPT FOR MUMMSIE, THE CHARACTERS ARE ALL
PIRATES AND ARE DRESSED ACCORDINGLY.

PROPS:

EYEPATCHES

BANDANNAS

FAKE SWORDS

A PIRATE FLAG, ETC

A BASKET

SEVERAL PIES

SCENE

(THE PIRATES ARE
ASSEMBLED ON THE DECK OF
A SHIP)

CAPTAIN

Ahoy there, me hearties!

PIRATES

Ahoy there, Captain Scurvy!

CAPTAIN

We're here to celebrate the best day of the
year! It's Pirate Day!

PIRATES

Hurray!

CAPTAIN

Let's sing The Pirate Song!

PIRATES

Pirates we are and pirates we'll be,
whether on land or whether on sea.
We're terribly bad, oh golly and gosh —
we don't eat greens and we never ever wash.

HEY!

CAPTAIN

This will be the best Pirate Day we've ever
had! There'll be sword fights and walk the
plank games, and we'll even play pin the
tail on the parrot!

POLLY

I can hardly wait, Captain. But first we need
to have a serious talk.

CAPTAIN

About what?

POLLY

We need to change.

CAPTAIN

Hogwash! Pirates never change! It's been ten years since I even changed my socks!

(ALL THE PIRATES COUGH
AND SPLUTTER AND COVER
THEIR NOSES)

PIRATES

We know, Captain.

BOB

But we still need to change the way we advertise for new recruits. If we don't get them soon there'll be no pirates left.

CAPTAIN

Are you saying there's something wrong with the advertising slogan I slaved over for weeks and weeks?

SAM

Of course not, Captain – Be a Pirate – or else! is great, but...

CAPTAIN

But what?

KYLIE

We need to attract recruits by offering some little bonus, a gimmick. Something they can't get anywhere else.

CAPTAIN

I know just the thing. Buried treasure! There'll always be pirates because everyone loves buried treasure!

RUFUS

That's true.

CAPTAIN

And I just happen to have some here today.
Best of all, I'm going to give it to you!

PIRATES

Three cheers for Captain Scurvy!

(THE PIRATES CHEER)

CAPTAIN

Today we celebrate all the great times we've
had together.

KYLIE

Attacked by cannibals.

HANNA

Being seasick every day for a year.

BOB

Swallowed by a whale.

POLLY

Eating the cook's porridge.

CAPTAIN

Such fun! And now at last I can give you
something back to thank you for being so loyal.

CAPTAIN

(HOLDS UP A BASKET)

This buried treasure is all yours!

PIRATES

Yay!

(SAM OPENS THE BASKET
AND PEERS INSIDE)

BOB

Are there rubies and diamonds?

RUFUS

Are there millions of lovely jubbly dollars?

SAM

There's nothing in here – but pies!

KYLIE

Gold pies?

SAM

I don't think so.

CAPTAIN

That's impossible! My own mother promised me this basket was full of buried treasure!

HANNA

They're just ordinary pies.

CAPTAIN

Oh, Mummsie! How could you lie to me?

(MUMMSIE ENTERS)

MUMMSIE

I didn't lie to you, sonny. Taste them.

(EACH PIRATE TASTES A
PIE)

SAM

Strawberries.

KYLIE

Blueberries.

BOB

Boysenberries.

POLLY

And girlsenberries.

MUMMSIE

Yes. Each one is a berried treasure!

CAPTAIN

Yummsie, Mummsie! These are the best pies in the world!

MUMMSIE

Now about this little problem you have in getting new recruits – I might be able to help.

CAPTAIN

How, Mummsie?

MUMMSIE

From now on everyone who joins up as a pirate will be given an eye patch, a build-your-own wooden leg kit, a hot water bottle...

BOB

I love it so far.

MUMMSIE

And a gift-wrapped box of berried treasures!

HANNA

Amazing!

RUFUS

We'll have people queuing up to be pirates!

MUMMSIE

One more thing. Our new slogan will be:
Become a pirate and sail the seven seas.
Become a pirate – pretty please!

(THE PIRATES ALL CHEER
AND CLAP)

CAPTAIN

Thanks, Mummsie. That sounds wonderful, but do we still get to keep The Pirate Song?

MUMMSIE

Oh yes, sonny. I love that song.

CAPTAIN

Then let's sing it!

PIRATES

Pirates we are and pirates we'll be,
whether on land or whether on sea.
We're terribly bad, oh golly and gosh —
we don't eat greens and we never ever wash.

HEY!

— The End

KING ARTHUR'S SPECIAL
DELIVERY

CAST:

KING ARTHUR

LANCE CLOT

NANCE CLOT

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

LANCE AND NANCE ARE DRESSED CASUALLY.

PROPS:

A REGAL CROWN AND ROBE

A THRONE

A LARGE BOX

SCENE

(LANCE AND NANCE CARRY
A LARGE CARDBOARD BOX
ONTO THE STAGE. KING
ARTHUR IS ON HIS THRONE,
WAITING FOR THEM.)

LANCE

Special delivery for Mr King!

ARTHUR

I think you mean me.

NANCE

Pleased to meet you, sir. I'm Nance.

LANCE

And I'm Lance.

BOTH

Nance and Lance Clot at your service!

ARTHUR

So, you're both clots?

LANCE

Oh yes! There are other Clots around...

NANCE

But we're the biggest Clots in Camelot!

ARTHUR

Enough of this. I'm a busy king. Just what
have you brought me?

LANCE

It's the table you ordered.

ARTHUR

But this isn't a table - it's a box.

NANCE

The table's inside. You have to put it together yourself.

LANCE

It'll only take you five minutes.

ARTHUR

Can you do it for me?

LANCE

You're joking! We'd be here all day.

ARTHUR

I'm going to complain about you pair. What's the name of your company?

NANCE

Shifty, Shoddy, Cheap and Son.

ARTHUR

That's disgusting!

LANCE

No, Disgusting is our accountant — Joan Disgusting.

ARTHUR

I'm not a very happy king.

LANCE

Just sign on the dotted line, please, and we'll be on our way.

ARTHUR

Wait a minute... it says here that this is a round table.

NANCE

Yes, just as you ordered.

ARTHUR

I didn't order a round table.

LANCE

I heard you myself. You said you wanted a round table for seven.

ARTHUR

I said, 'Please bring the table around by seven.'

NANCE

Oh, very sorry about that, but we can't change it now – because of the guarantee.

ARTHUR

What guarantee?

NANCE

Our store gives a No Money Back Guarantee.

ARTHUR

A No Money Back Guarantee?

LANCE

That's right, and it's good for ten years!

ARTHUR

Oh, very well ... but I hope you brought the sword that I ordered – the right sword.

NANCE

Of course – it's outside in the truck.

ARTHUR

Why did you leave it there?

LANCE

Well, we weren't going to lug a stone block up three flights of stairs, were we?

ARTHUR

What's this about a stone block?

NANCE

It's an accessory.

LANCE

That's right. When you buy the Excalibur XL Special – a lovely sword – it comes with a stone block!

ARTHUR

(LOOKS OFFSTAGE)

Good Heavens! My sword is stuck in an enormous stone block on the back of a truck!

NANCE

Yes, that's one of the unique features of the XL.

ARTHUR

It didn't look like that in the catalogue.

LANCE

You could have had an old catalogue. This is the new improved XL.

ARTHUR

How can I use a sword that's in a stone block?

WAIN

You might need to visit our service department.

ARTHUR

Where's that?

WAIN

In the middle of the lake. You just row out and a lady will pop up to help you.

ARTHUR

A lady in a lake?

WAIN

Yes. She pops up every ten minutes, so there's no waiting.

LANCE

Or you could call our Uncle Merlin. He's a magician.

WAIN

He usually only does children's parties, but he might be able to help.

ARTHUR

Look, I don't care about the table or the sword – they're not important, but please, please tell me that you've brought the last thing I ordered.

LANCE

Of course! We're not silly, you know.

ARTHUR

Thank goodness! The Holy Grail is so important to me!

WAIN

Oops.

LANCE

Oh dear.

ARTHUR

What's wrong now?

WAIN

Nothing really ... but the writing on the order wasn't very clear.

LANCE

True. And it took us a long time to find a whale with holes in it – but we did it, just for you!

ARTHUR

A whale?

WAIN

Yes. A holey whale. We parked it in your swimming pool. Shall we bring it in?

ARTHUR

Aargghh!

— The End

NICE PIRATES

CAST:

CAPTAIN SCURVY
HORRIBLE-HEAD HANNA
BATBREATH BOB
POOPDECK POLLY
RATFACE RUFUS
STINKYPANTS SAM
KYLIE COWFACE

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THIS PLAY IS SET IN A PIRATE SCHOOL, SO THE CLASS CAN BE SEATED IN FRONT OF THE TEACHER. THE CAST WEAR PIRATE COSTUMES.

PROPS:

EYEPATCHES
BANDANNAS
FAKE SWORDS
A PIRATE FLAG, ETC.

SCENE

(THE CAPTAIN ENTERS THE
'CLASSROOM' WITH THE
STUDENTS SEATED)

CAPTAIN

Bad morning, boys and girls.

CLASS

Bad morning, Captain Scurvy.

CAPTAIN

Let's start the lesson by singing the
Pirate's Song. All together now!

CLASS

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
we're all pirates,
yes, we AARRGGGHHH!

CAPTAIN

Well done, me hearties. Now who did their
homework last night?

(ALL HANDS GO UP)

CAPTAIN

No, no, no, no, NO! How many times do I
have to tell you? Pirates never do their
homework!

CLASS

Sorry, Captain.

CAPTAIN

That's even worse! Pirates never, ever say
sorry!

HANNA

We're not really sorry. We're just
pretending.

CAPTAIN

Very well. Let's hear the pirate's alphabet.

CLASS

AARRGGGHHH!

BARRGGGHHH!

CARRGGGHHH!

DARRGGGHHH!

CAPTAIN

Good work. Now as you know, today is the last day of Pirate School.

(CLASS CHEERS)

CAPTAIN

Those who graduate will receive a treasure map, an I'm A Pirate. And You're Not t-shirt, an eye patch, and their very own parrot!

(CLASS CHEERS)

CAPTAIN

Unfortunately, the failure rate has been a little high this year.

BOB

How many failed, Captain?

CAPTAIN

All of you!

POLLY

What did we do wrong?

CAPTAIN

Nearly all of you got seasick.

POLLY

Is that so bad?

CAPTAIN

It is when you get sick from just looking at the water!

POLLY

Oops.

RUFUS

I didn't get seasick, Captain.

CAPTAIN

True, Ratface, but you failed the Walk the Plank test.

RUFUS

Is that because I helped a few people across the plank?

CAPTAIN

No. It's because you helped everyone across the plank. And then you jumped into the water with them!

RUFUS

I was only trying to be nice.

CAPTAIN

Shiver me timbers and boil me barnacles!

HANNA

Are you feeling okay, Captain?

CAPTAIN

No! All this talk of helping people and being nice is making me go all wobbly-bobbly! Pirates aren't nice! We're mean and horrible!

SAM

I don't want to be mean and horrible.

HANNA

Neither do I. I want to be nice.

CAPTAIN

But there's no such thing as a nice pirate!

KYLIE

Not yet, Captain, but we could be the first.

CAPTAIN

What do you mean?

KYLIE

Well, instead of attacking other ships, we could come to their rescue.

POLLY

Yes! And we could give them gold instead of stealing it from them.

CAPTAIN

This is madness!

RUFUS

Maybe – but it would make you the most famous pirate ever.

CAPTAIN

That's cool.

POLLY

People would write books and songs about you.

CAPTAIN

Even cooler.

KYLIE

You would be a hero!

CAPTAIN

Hmm, what else would you change?

ALL

Our pirate names.

CAPTAIN

That's mutiny! I picked those names out myself – I slaved over them for minutes.

HANNA

Sorry, Captain. But I don't like being called Horrible-Head Hanna.

SAM

Stinkypants Sam is pretty bad, too.

RUFUS

Ratface Rufus sucks.

POLLY

So does Poopdeck Polly.

BOB

And Batbreath Bob.

KYLIE

Kylie Cowface isn't good either.

CAPTAIN

Well, I suppose I could make a few changes here and there.

ALL

Be brave!

CAPTAIN

And in twenty years or so I could almost get used to being nice.

ALL

You can do it!

CAPTAIN

But before I make my decision, there's one thing I must know.

POLLY

What is it, Captain?

CAPTAIN

If I went along with you and became a nice pirate, would I have to change my name, too?

POLLY

What was it before you became Captain Scurvy?

CAPTAIN

Tobias Picknose.

POLLY

I think you should stick with Captain Scurvy.

CAPTAIN

Very well, then. I've decided! I'll sail with you my hearties, but our ship is no longer called the Grumpy Roger, from now on, it's the Jolly Roger!

(ALL CHEER)

CAPTAIN

Let's sing the Pirate's Song!

ALL

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
we're all pirates,
yes, we AARRGGGHHH!

— The End

ROBOT SCHOOL

CAST:

MISS ROBO (A TEACHER)

TTYL

ECO

BTW

FYI

ASAP

ROFL

PRINCIPAL BOLO

SCENE

MISS R

Good morning, Bots.

ALL

Good morning, Miss Robo.

MISS R

Let's hear the school song!

ALL

Robots, robots, that's who we are.

Robots, robots, each of us a star!

MISS R

Excellent! Except for you, TTYL. Why weren't you singing?

TTYL

I don't like the school song.

MISS R

That's outrageous, TTYL! I'll talk to you later.

(ECO'S HAND GOES UP)

MISS R

Yes, Eco?

ECO

I didn't do last night's homework.

MISS R

That's very honest, but what's your excuse?

ECO

My head fell off.

MISS R

Let me guess – you nodded too enthusiastically again. Am I right?

ECO

Yes, but I can't help if I'm friendly.

MISS R

ECO, friendly is good, but please try to be more careful in future.

ECO

I'll have to, Miss. It took me all day to find a new head that fitted.

MISS R

You should always keep a spare head at home, ECO. Why is that a good idea, Class?

ALL

Two heads are better than one.

MISS R

Correct.

BTW

And three heads are even better!

MISS R

No, BTW, having three heads is just showing off.

BTW

Oh.

MISS R

There's no need to look so disappointed, by the way. You were wrong, but at least you tried.

FYI

I have a question about last night's homework, Miss.

MISS R

What is it, FYI?

FYI

The manual said we had to laugh when humans tell a joke, but it didn't explain what a joke was.

MISS R

Okay. FYI, for your information, here is an example of a joke: Why did the chicken cross the road?

(THE CLASS LAUGHS)

MISS R

No, no, that wasn't the joke. That was only the start of the joke.

ECO

Can you explain it a bit more, Miss?

MISS R

Certainly. It starts with a question: Why did the chicken cross the road? And then comes the answer: To get to the other side.

ASAP

When do we laugh?

MISS R

As soon as possible, ASAP.

(THE CLASS LAUGHS)

MISS R

It wasn't that funny, ROFL. There's no need to be rolling on the floor laughing.

ROFL

Sorry.

MISS R

Well, as you know, this is our final class. From tomorrow, you will go to work for a human. Just to make sure you know what

you're doing, who can tell me how to make a human happy?

FYI

Run in her bath every morning.

BTW

Scramble her legs for breakfast.

ASAP

Laugh when his chicken crosses the road.

ROFL

Repair his dinner.

TTYL

But only if it's broken.

MISS R

Oh dear.

(PRINCIPAL BOLO ENTERS)

BOLO

Good morning, Bots!

ALL

Good morning, Principal Bolo!

BOLO

How are they, Miss Robo?

MISS R

Good, Principal, but I think perhaps they should stay in school for another week. That will make them really great robots.

BOLO

No, no, no! They already look like well-oiled machines to me! Am I right, Bots?

ALL

Yes, Principal!

BOLO

So, get out there and join the human race!
Just do your very best! Can you do that?

ALL

Yes!

BOLO

And you won't be alone, Bots.

ALL

We won't?

BOLO

Never!

MISS R

That's right. Principal Bolo will always be
on the lookout for you.

ALL

Yay!

MISS R

And so will I!

The End

THE VERY BAD PIRATES

CAST:

CAPTAIN SCURVY
CAPTAIN LIV DANGEROUSLY
RAY-RAY
BARRA
CATFISH
MULLET
GUPPY
DORY
ROUGHY
SHARKO
SNAPPER
FANGTOOTH

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

SET ABOARD A PIRATE SHIP WITH THE CAST
WEARING PIRATE COSTUMES.

PROPS:

EYEPATCHES
BANDANNAS
FAKE SWORDS
A PIRATE FLAG, ETC

SCENE

(A LOUD WHISTLE IS HEARD. TEN PIRATES SCRAMBLE ONTO THE STAGE AND FORM A RAMSHACKLE LINE. CAPTAIN SCURVY ENTERS.)

CAP

Hey, ho, pirates.

PIRATES

(SALUTING)

Hey, ho, Captain Scurvy.

CAP

I have something horrible to tell you. This is really bad, so prepare yourselves.

(THEY ALL START CRYING, VERY LOUDLY. THE CAPTAIN WAITS PATIENTLY FOR A FEW SECONDS, AND THEN...)

CAP

Are you prepared yet?

ALL

Almost.

(CRYING LOUDLY)

We're prepared now.

CAP

Good. I've just had some terrible news from POOP.

RAY-RAY

What's POOP?

CAPS

The Professional Organisation of Pirates.

RAY-RAY

Ah – of course.

BARRA

Tell us the terrible news, Captain.

CAP

One thousand pirate crews have been surveyed to find the most good-for-nothing pirates in the world – and guess where we came?

ALL

(SHRUG AND MUMBLE)

We give up – where did we come?

CAP

One thousandth!

ALL

Cool!

CATFISH

Full marks!

MULLET

A perfect score!

ALL

Go, us!

CAP

It isn't good, shipmates.

GUPPY

It isn't?

CAP

No! It means we're at the very bottom of the pile! We're hopeless!

ALL

Ohhhhh nooooo!

CAP

Ohhhhh yesssss!

FANGTOOTH

I can't understand what we're doing wrong.

CAP

Well, for a start, we don't make people walk the plank.

CATFISH

That's because the plank's unsafe. Someone might fall off.

CAP

I think falling off is the whole idea, Catfish.

CATFISH

Oh.

BASS

Here's something good we did – we found buried treasure.

CAP

Yes, and then someone, who shall remain nameless – Snapper – handed it in!

SNAPPER

It seemed like the right thing to do.

CAP

Pirates don't do the right thing, Snapper. The wrong thing was invented just for us – that's what we do!

SNAPPER

I forgot.

CAP

And now, because of all our silly mistakes, we're in big trouble.

DORY

Will we have to turn in our pirate's badges, Captain?

ROUGHY

And our 'I'm a pirate and you're not'
t-shirts?

CAP

Not just yet. We have one last chance to
prove ourselves.

ALL

How?

CAP

Captain Dangerously herself is coming to
test us.

SHARKO

Yikes! I've heard she's mean.

CAPS

You've heard right, Sharko. Captain Liv
Dangerously is the roughest, toughest pirate
in the world.

SNAPPER

She'll tear us apart.

CAP

Perhaps, but we must take that risk. If
we can impress her, we might get another
chance, if we don't, our pirate days are
over.

FANGTOOTH

Here she comes!

(CAPTAIN DANGEROUSLY
ENTERS)

CAP

Welcome aboard, Captain Dangerously. May I
say you're looking lovely today?

CAP D

No, you may not! And don't try to get on my good side, Scurvy – I haven't got one!

CAP

Okay.

CAP D

Now let's get started. I'm going to ask some easy questions that any pirate should be able to answer. If you get them wrong, you're finished as pirates! Understood?

ALL

Understood.

CAP D

Very well... what is a ketch?

RAY-RAY

It's what you get when you go fishing. Like the ketch of the day.

CAP D

Hmm... what is a sloop?

BARRA

That's when you spill your tea – and you sloop it everywhere.

CAP D

Who knows what 'anchors aweigh' means?

CATFISH

That's when someone's stolen the anchor and taken it away.

CAP

Keep up the good work, Sailors. You've got this!

CAP D

What does 'All hands on deck' mean?

MULLET

That's when it's time to play cards.

CAP

Yes!

CAP D

No! I've heard enough! You are the most useless pirates who ever sailed the Seven Seas!

GUPPY

Beggin' your pardon, Captain Dangerously, but that can't be right.

CAP D

What makes you say that?

GUPPY

Well, there aint seven cees, there's only one.

CAP D

What are you talking about?

GUPPY

I knows me alphabet, Captain. It goes A-B-C - and there aint no more cees after that.

CAP D

Great jumping jumbucks! I expected this crew to be bad, but it's beyond bad. It's awful! It's appalling! It's atrocious!

CAP

Don't sugar-coat, it, Captain. Tell us what you really think.

CAP D

I think you're a bunch of good-for-nothing numbskulls!

CAP

Wait. There is something we're good at.

CAP D

I find that hard to believe.

CAP

No one sings a sea shanty like my crew.

CAP D

Then let's hear it.

CAP

Sing away, me hearties! And make it the best sea shanty you've ever sung!

PIRATES

(ALL SING)

For she's a jolly good fellow, for she's a jolly good fellowwww – and so say all of us! Hip-hip–

CAP

Stop! Stop! That's not a sea shanty!

ALL

It isn't?

CAP D

No, he's right, it's not a sea shanty, but it *is* my birthday. No one else remembered. Please continue.

ALL

Hip-hip hurray! Hurray for Captain Dangerously!

CAP D

How sweet. How kind.

ALL

Aw, shucks.

CAP D

And, because you remembered my birthday, I've changed my mind. I won't take away your pirate badges.

ALL

Fantastic!

CAP D

Instead, this will become a teaching ship.

CAP

But what can we teach?

CAP D

Pirates from around the world will come here to learn all the things a pirate shouldn't do.

CAP

This is such an honour!

CAP D

You deserve it, Scurvy. When it comes to being the worst, you and your crew are the absolute best!

CAP

This is the proudest day of my life!

ALL

Three cheers for us! Yay! Yay! YAY!

— The End

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S
NOT

CAST:

ANNOUNCER 1

ANNOUNCER 2

EXPERT 1

EXPERT 2

EXPERT 3

EXPERT 4

ROCKY LEDGE

POLLY PALEO

GRACE GRANITE

NEIL NEANDERTHAL

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

SET IN THE STONE AGE, SO COSTUMES SHOULD
REFLECT THIS, WHERE POSSIBLE.

PROPS:

A WHEEL

LIGHTER OR MATCHES

A LONG THIN STICK

A SMALL ROCK WITH A PIECE OF STRING TIED
AROUND IT

SCENE

(TWO ANNOUNCERS ARE
ON STAGE AS THE PLAY
BEGINS. FOUR EXPERTS
FOLLOW.)

ANNOUNCER 1

Welcome to the world's first Stone Age
Invention Convention.

ANNOUNCER 2

Listen and learn as our panel of experts
tell you what's hot...

ANNOUNCER 1

And what's not.

ANNOUNCER 2

Come on out, experts.

(FOUR EXPERTS ENTER AND
SING)

Hello, to us, hello to you,
we are a very brainy crew.
We're good at everything there is -
each one of us is quite a whiz.
Yay!

ANNOUNCER 2

Come on out, inventors.

(FOUR INVENTORS ENTER
AND SING)

Hello to us, hello to you,
you'll be amazed by what we do.
We've worked so hard for years and years,
to come up with these great ideas.

ANNOUNCER 1

Your names, please.

ROCKY

Rocky Ledge.

POLLY

Polly Paleo.

GRACE

Grace Granite.

NEIL

Neil Neanderthal.

ANNOUNCER 2

What's your invention, Rocky?

ROCKY

A little something I call the wheel.

ANNOUNCER 2

Interesting... sum it up in five words.

ROCKY

It goes round and round.

ANNOUNCER 1

Sounds revolutionary.

ROCKY

Oh, it is.

ANNOUNCER 2

What's it good for?

ROCKY

Three months.

ANNOUNCER 2

What do you mean?

ROCKY

I give a three-month guarantee on every wheel I make — so it's good for three months. At least.

ANNOUNCER 2

Yes, yes, but what does it do?

ROCKY

Um... it rolls.

ANNOUNCER 2

That's it?

ROCKY

Pretty much.

ANNOUNCER 2

Experts?

EXPERT 1

It'll never catch on. I give it two out of ten.

EXPERT 2

I can sum it up in one word – boring! One out of ten.

EXPERT 3

Back to the workshop, Rocky, and next time, come up with something original! None out of ten.

EXPERT 4

They're all being generous – I give you minus one.

ANNOUNCER 1

Next.

POLLY

I guess that's me.

ANNOUNCER 1

What's your invention, Polly?

POLLY

Fire.

ANNOUNCER 2

What does it do?

POLLY

It keeps you warm.

ANNOUNCER 2

Anything else?

POLLY

You can also use it to cook food.

ANNOUNCER 1

Okay. I've heard enough – over to you, experts.

EXPERT 1

Newsflash, Polly – we've already got something to keep us warm. It's called the sun.

EXPERT 2

And as for cooking food?! That's the craziest thing I've ever heard!

EXPERT 3

I agree. You can't beat a raw egg.

POLLY

Yes, you can. Just use my other invention – it's called the eggbeater.

EXPERT 4

Eggbeater? Now you're being ridiculous!

ANNOUNCER 2

Let's have the scores for Polly.

EXPERT 1

It's been a tough decision.

EXPERT 2

But we give Polly...

EXPERT 3

A total of...

EXPERT 4

Minus ten.

ANNOUNCER 1

Oh dear. Let's hope the next inventor has come up with something special.

ANNOUNCER 2

Is it special, Grace?

GRACE

Very special, and I think it's cool.

ANNOUNCER 1

What is it?

GRACE

A thin hollow stick.

ANNOUNCER 1

Does it come with instructions?

GRACE

Yes. You put your lips around it, put it in water, breathe in deeply, and the water magically comes up through the stick!

ANNOUNCER 2

You think that's cool?

GRACE

Very cool. And if you don't like it, I give up - this is the last straw.

ANNOUNCER 1

What do you think, experts?

EXPERT 1

We couldn't agree on a score.

EXPERT 2

But we could agree on one thing.

ALL EXPERTS

It sucks!

ANNOUNCER 2

And now for the final inventor. What have you got for us, Neil?

NEIL

The yo-yo. I named it after my uncle.

ANNOUNCER 2

Tell us about it.

NEIL

It's a rock with a long piece of stringy bark tied around it.

ANNOUNCER 2

I like it so far. Go on . . .

NEIL

You let the rock almost touch the ground, and then you flick it back up again.

ANNOUNCER 1

Wow!

NEIL

And you can keep doing that all day long.

ANNOUNCER 1

Uncle Yo-Yo would be very proud.

ANNOUNCER 2

What do you think, experts?

EXPERT 1

Now that's what I call an invention!

EXPERT 2

So clever!

EXPERT 3

Hours of fun for the whole family!

EXPERT 4

Genius!

ANNOUNCER 1

Well, it looks like we've found out what's hot.

NEIL

Me and my yo-yo.

ANNOUNCER 2

And what's not.

THE OTHER INVENTORS

Our inventions, and us.

ANNOUNCER 1

Experts, do you have any advice for our failed inventors?

EXPERTS

We sure do.

(ALL SING)

You've bombed out bad,
but don't be sad,
tomorrow's a brand new day.
If you keep on tryin',
you never know -
success might come your way.

INVENTORS

Yay!

- The End

THE SALES PITCH

CAST:

DINGO DAVE

BB BELL

GRACIE

MACY

TRACY

STACY

BUSHY BOB

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

DAVE IS A LAIDBACK AUSSIE, SO PERHAPS WEARS SHORTS, THONGS, AND A COLOURFUL SHIRT. IN CONTRAST, THE MODERN MISSES ARE ALL VERY PRIM AND PROPER.

PROPS:

A SIGN ON A DESK SAYS 'BUSHY BOB'S ADVENTURE TOURS'.

SCENE

(DAVE IS SEATED AT A
DESK WHEN HIS CLIENTS
ARRIVE)

DAVE

Welcome to Bushy Bob's Adventure Tours!

BB

Hello. I'm BB Bell, the owner of Bell's
Boutique for Modern Misses.

DAVE

Pleased to meet you, BB.

BB

I'm not sure if I'm pleased to meet you. Do
you bathe regularly?

DAVE:

Yep! Once a month.

BB

Hmm . . . you're Bushy Bob, are you?

DAVE

Nah, Dingo Dave's the name. I'm in charge of
drumming up sales.

BB

Have you always done this kind of work?

DAVE

No way. I used to be a concert violinist,
but I had to give it up because my head got
stuck in a door.

BB

Why did that affect your violin playing?

DAVE

I played by ear.

BB

How odd. You may introduce yourselves,
Ladies, but don't stand too close to him.

GRACIE

I'm Gracie – and these are my sisters.

MACY

Macy.

TRACY

Tracy.

STACY

And I'm Stacy.

DAVE

Cool! That will be \$200 each for the whole
day, or \$400 each for a half day.

GRACIE

Why is it dearer for half the day?

DAVE

There's more chance of survival.

BB

Are you saying we might be in danger?

DAVE

Too right, I am!

MACY

Will we see crocodiles?

DAVE

You better believe it! They're so big that
it takes all day to walk around them.

TRACY

Are there really bunyips?

DAVE

Of course! They're lurking behind every bush.

STACEY

What do bunyips look like?

DAVE

Exactly like other bunyips.

GRACIE

Are the spiders big?

DAVE

Monsters! They're so huge they drag down kangaroos and eat them whole!

BB

I'm having second thoughts about this tour.

MACY

Give him a chance, BB.

BB

Very well. But I'd like a written guarantee that we'll be safe.

DAVE

I can do better than that. I'll give you a verbal contract!

GIRLS

Wonderful!

BB

That doesn't sound right to me, but, we'll take the tour.

DAVE

Great!

BB

But before I pay, is there anything else we need to know?

DAVE

I don't think so...

BB

Good.

DAVE

Did I mention the Drop Bears?

BB

Drop Bears aren't real. Are they?

DAVE

Absolutely. You should see the teeth on them! And the claws!

GRACIE

They sound very scary.

DAVE

There's nothing to worry about, unless they're hungry, or they're in a bad mood, or they just don't like the look of you. Or it's a Monday. They hate Mondays.

MACY

Today's Monday!

BB

Perhaps we should go, Ladies.

DAVE

I don't think I told you about the snakes.

TRACY

Are there snakes?

DAVE

Millions of them!

STACY

Poisonous?

DAVE

Oh, no, not all of them.

GRACIE

That's a relief.

DAVE

Some of them will just swallow you.

GIRLS

Aaarrgghh!

DAVE

But never fear. If that happens, you'll get a full refund of half your payment.

BB

That's it! I've heard enough! We're going! Goodbye!

(BB AND THE GIRLS EXIT,
AND BUSHY BOB ENTERS)

BOB

G'day, Dingo Dave.

DAVE

G'day, Bushy Bob.

BOB

Have you sold any tickets for the adventure tour?

DAVE

Nah. I thought I had some customers, but for some reason they changed their mind.

BOB

Did you give them the sales pitch?

DAVE

Sure did. You would have been proud of me.

BOB

I wonder why they didn't take the tour?

DAVE

Who knows, Bushy. Some people are really strange.

The End

A JOLLY GOOD PHARAOH

CAST:

PHAROAH HIP-HIP

HOTPOT

12 FANS

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THIS PLAY IS SET IN ANCIENT EGYPT, SO COSTUMES SHOULD REFLECT THIS. HIP-HIP IS A PHAROAH SO HIS/HER COSTUME SHOULD BE MORE ELABORATE.

PROPS:

A PHAROAH'S CROWN AND THRONE

SCENE

(THE PHAROAH IS ON
STAGE. HOTPOT ENTERS
SOON AFTER.)

HOTPOT

Hi ho, Pharaoh! How goes it?

HIP-HIP

I'm in a spot, Hotpot.

HOTPOT

Why?

HIP-HIP

This is the most terrible day of my life.

HOTPOT

Don't be so sure. Tomorrow could be worse.

HIP-HIP

Thanks for cheering me up.

HOTPOT

Anytime, Pharaoh. Now what seems to be the trouble?

HIP-HIP

It's my birthday, and no one's remembered.

HOTPOT

They probably had other important things to remember.

HIP-HIP

Like what?

HOTPOT

Putting out the garbage.

HIP-HIP

I'm Hip-Hip the Great. A pharaoh! Everyone should know my birthday. But they don't know anything about me!

HOTPOT

Yes, they do – and I can prove it. Come on down, Peeps.

(THE 12 FANS ENTER)

HIP-HIP

I don't know any of you.

FAN 1

We know you, oh, great Hip-Hip.

FAN 2

We're your fan club!

HIP-HIP

Don't tease me. I haven't got any fans.

FAN 3

You sure have.

FAN 4

We've even written a song about you.

HIP-HIP

Really?

FAN 5

Let's sing.

(ALL FANS SING)

FAN 6

Who's the greatest pharaoh in the land?

ALL

Hip-Hip!

FAN 7

Who's a pharaoh that is simply grand?

ALL

Hip-Hip!

FAN 8

And finally we simply have to say...

ALL

Hippity-Hip, Hip-Hip-Hip – hurray!

HIP-HIP

That's really nice, but why do you like me when I've made so many silly mistakes?

FAN 9

You mean when you built a pyramid out of paper instead of stone?

HIP-HIP

Yes.

FAN 10

We thought it was a great idea.

HIP-HIP

But it blew away.

FAN 11

True, but the people picked it up.

FAN 12

And it solved the Great Toilet Paper Shortage.

HIP-HIP

What about when I gave everyone in my kingdom a free locust?

FAN 1

You were being kind.

FAN 2

Who knew it would start a plague of locusts?

HIP-HIP

Then I gave everyone a free frog, and it started a plague of frogs!

FAN 3

It all worked out in the end.

FAN 4

The frogs ate the locusts.

FAN 5

And the people ate the frogs. Yum!

FAN 6

So, you see, you've been a very good pharaoh.

HIP-HIP

Maybe. But still, no one has remembered my birthday.

HOT TOP

Don't be so sure – it's party time!

ALL

(SHOUTING)

Surprise!

HIP-HIP

Wow. A surprise party – for me!

ALL

(SINGING)

For he's a jolly good pharaoh,
for he's a jolly good pharaoh,
for he's a jolly good pharaoh –
and so say all of us.

Hip-Hip – hurray!

– The End

BOIL MY BARNACLES!

CAST:

CAPTAIN SCURVY

TOM

JERRY

LANCE

BOIL

BANGERS

MASH

KERMIT

PIGGY

FRED

GINGER

SWEET

SOUR

POLLY

CRACKER

TAR

FEATHER

SALT

PEPPER

FRENCH

FRIES

HOOK

LINE

SINKER

INDI

GESTION

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PIRATES ARE ASSEMBLED 'ON DECK' AS THE CAPTAIN ADDRESSES THEM.

PROPS:

A STRUCTURE RESEMBLING A PIRATES' SHIP
EYEPATCHES

BANDANNAS
FAKE SWORDS
A PIRATE FLAG, ETC

SCENE

(ON A PIRATE SHIP)

CAPT

Pirates, I have some really rotten news for you.

CREW

Oh no!

CAPT

It will rattle your false teeth.

CREW

Arrggh!

CAPT

It will send your hearts to Davy Jones' locker.

CREW

Tell us, tell us!

CAPT

Very well. Brace yourselves... it's my birthday.

CREW

Happy birthday!

TOM

How old are you, Captain Scurvy? Ninety? Ninety-five?

CAPT

I beg your pardon! I'm 65.

JERRY

(SINGING)

For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a-

CAPT

Stop! It's not a happy day. When pirates
turn 65, they have to retire.

CREW

Yay! Woo-hoo! Yee-ha!

CAPT

Hmm... I knew you'd be brave about it, but
maybe that's too brave.

LANCE

(SINGING)

We're sorry to see you go, Cap,
we're sorry to see you go.

BOIL

(SINGING)

Have no fear, we'll shed a tear,
it's really quite a blow.

CAPT

That's very nice.

LANCE/BOIL

(SPOKEN)

But there is something that we simply have
to say...

CREW

(SINGING)

Hurray, hurray, the captain goes today!
HURRAY!

CAPT

That's a bit harsh, shipmates.

BANGERS

Don't get us wrong, Captain. We love you,
but you have no idea of how to sail a ship.

CAPT

We haven't crashed into anything, have we?

MASH

An iceberg.

KERMIT

A lighthouse.

PIGGY

A herd of elephants.

CAPT

Yes, I have to admit that was a bad time to run aground.

FRED

And that was just yesterday.

CAPT

Okay, sailing isn't my strongpoint, but think of all the fun times we've had.

GINGER

Marooned on a desert island.

CAPT

I thought it was a dessert island. I wanted you to eat yummy sweets!

SWEET

Swallowed by a whale.

CAPT

Oh, come on now, let's not nit-pick. We were only in there for a few days.

SOUR

And we've been voted World's Worst Pirates ten years in a row.

CAPT

Yes! That's a record! We're famous!

POLLY

But not in a good way.

CAPT

Think of the treasure we've taken while I've been in charge. I've made you all millionaires!

CRACKER

The only loot we ever took was paid in Monopoly money.

CAPT

That's right — from the Royal Kingdom of Monopoly.

TAR

It's a game, Captain, not a country.

CAPT

Really? Who would have guessed that?

FEATHER

Everyone!

CREW

Except you!

CAPT

But the deeds for all those railway stations are still worth a fortune, aren't they?

SALT

Not a cent, Captain. They're part of the game.

CAPT

Well, boil my barnacles! I'm just a silly old sausage. I'm sure you'll be much happier when Captain HH takes my place.

PEPPER

What does HH stand for?

CAPT

Hideously Horrid.

FRENCH

I've heard of him. He made his own mother
walk the plank!

CAPT

Only because she broke one of his golden rules.

FRIES

What rule was that?

CAPT

She was laughing.

HOOK

He won't let you laugh?

CAPT

Or smile, or dance, and he just hates
singing.

(THE CREW GROAN)

CAPT

But he's a very good sailor. No more going
around in circles.

LINE

Who cares if we can't sing?

CAPT

Look on the bright side, me hearties. At
least you'll have a clean ship. HH will have
you scrubbing the decks with your toothbrush
every minute of the day.

SINKER

Captain Scurvy, do you really have to
retire?

CAPT

Oh, yes, it's a rule.

INDI

But we're pirates. We don't follow rules.

GESTION

We break them!

CREW

Please don't go!

CAPT

You'll have to do more than that to convince me.

(CREW SING)

We want you a lot,
even though you're a clot,
and you mostly get everything wrong.
But we'll say this at least,
you're never a beast,
and you don't mind us singing a song!

CAPT

(SINGS)

Yes, I love a song,
you are not wrong,
I love to laugh and play.

CREW

So do we!

CAPT

Okay - I'll stay.

CREW

HURRAY!

- The End

KIMBERELLA

CAST:

NEWSREADER

PRINCE CHARMING

THE DUCHESS OF CORNBALL

KIMBERELLA

THREE SISTERS: GRACE, SERENITY AND HARMONY

TWO POLICE OFFICERS

PROPS:

FAKE MICROPHONE

AN ORNATE SLIPPER

A TIARA

FAKE JEWELRY SUCH AS A NECKLACE

SCENE 1

(A NEWSREADER ENTERS
HOLDING A MICROPHONE)

NEWSREADER

Last night a thief stole precious jewels from the Palace, right under the nose of Prince Salami Charming. We cross now to our Royal Reporter, the Duchess of Cornball.

DUCHESS

I have with me His Highness. Tell us what happened, Prince.

PRINCE

A young maiden came to the Royal Ball. She told me her wicked sisters, Ferocious, Atrocious, and Halitosis, treated her awfully, so I took pity on her.

DUCHESS

In what way?

PRINCE

I said I'd read her one of my poems.

DUCHESS

How lucky for her.

PRINCE

I know, but just thirty minutes into the poem she pushed me out of the way, grabbed a jewellery box – and ran!

DUCHESS

Did she tell you her name?

PRINCE

Yes, Betsy Bogus.

DUCHESS

Hmm... have you given the police a description of her?

PRINCE

No, unfortunately she was wearing a cunning disguise so I couldn't see her face.

DUCHESS

What was it?

PRINCE

A motorbike helmet.

DUCHESS

What a pity.

PRINCE

But in her haste to get away she left behind one of her slippers.

DUCHESS

Are you going to give it to police sniffer dogs to help track her down?

PRINCE

I've got a better idea. I'm knocking on the door of every house in the kingdom. The maiden who fits into the slipper is the thief!

DUCHESS

But Prince, thousands of maidens will have the same shoe size.

PRINCE

Oh, right . . . but they won't have sisters named Ferocious, Atrocious, and Halitosis!

SCENE 2

(THE DUCHESS AND
THE PRINCE EXIT AND
KIMBERELLA ENTERS)

KIMBERELLA

He'll never find me. Ha, ha, ha!

(THERE'S A KNOCK ON THE
DOOR)

KIMBERELLA

Go away!

PRINCE

This is Prince Charming. Open up!

KIMBERELLA

Coming, Prince.

(SHE OPENS THE DOOR AND
THE PRINCE ENTERS)

KIMBERELLA

Charming to meet you, Prince Charming.

PRINCE

Hmm... that tiara you're wearing looks
familiar. Where did you get it?

KIMBERELLA

It fell off the back of a truck.

PRINCE

That's all right then. You seem to be a very
honest person, but, just in case, while I'm
here, would you mind trying on a slipper?

KIMBERELLA

I can tell that it wouldn't fit me. You'd be
wasting your time.

PRINCE

It'll only take a second.

KIMBERELLA

Oh, all right.

(SHE TRIES IT ON, AND IT
FITS)

What a surprise.

PRINCE

Have you got three sisters?

KIMBERELLA

No. Sorry.

PRINCE

Then I'll be on my way... wait, to pay you
back for your time I'd like to read you one
of my poems.

KIMBERELLA

No, thanks.

PRINCE

It's just a short one – it won't take more
than an hour.

(THE SISTERS ENTER)

SISTER 1

Excuse us. We couldn't help overhearing.

SISTER 2

We're Kimberella's sisters.

KIMBERELLA

I've never seen these people before in my
life!

SISTER 3

Don't be silly. Kimmy. We see each other
every day.

SISTER 1

You haven't been making up stories about us again, have you?

KIMBERELLA

Of course not.

PRINCE

What kind of stories?

SISTER 2

She tells people our names are Ferocious, Atrocious and Halitosis.

PRINCE

What a coincidence. That's what the thief told me her sisters names were.

SISTER 1

Our names are really... Grace.

SISTER 2

Serenity.

SISTER 3

And Harmony.

PRINCE

I'd almost think Kimberella was the jewel thief, but her name was Betsy Bogus.

SISTER 1

That sounds like a phony name, Prince.

PRINCE

It does?

SISTER 2

For sure.

PRINCE

In that case, you, Kimberella, are the thief! And the jewels you're wearing are mine!

KIMBERELLA

Okay, you've got me. You can have the jewels back – every single one.

(HE BLOWS A WHISTLE AND
TWO POLICE RUSH IN)

PRINCE

Arrest this woman!

(THE POLICE ARREST HER)

SISTER 1

Have mercy on her, Prince!

PRINCE

After all the mean things she's done?

SISTER 2

Kimmy isn't really bad.

SISTER 3

And she's our sister.

PRINCE

Well... I suppose I do have the jewels again.

KIMBERELLA

And I'm really, really sorry.

PRINCE

All right. No gaol.

KIMBERELLA

Hurray!

PRINCE

But you'll still have to pay for your crime.

KIMBERELLA

Doing what?

PRINCE

I'll think of something. Leave us for a moment.

(ALL EXIT EXCEPT FOR
KIMBERELLA AND THE
PRINCE)

PRINCE

I've got it! Congratulations, Kimberella.
You have a job for life!

KIMBERELLA

Cool. What's the job?

PRINCE

Lucky, lucky you. You're going to listen to
my poems – every single day!

KIMBERELLA

If I have to.

PRINCE

Here's the first one:
Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
I'm so handsome -
Lucky you!

KIMBERELLA

Aaarrrgghh!

– The End

TREASURE!

CAST:

THE CAPTAIN
JENKINS, A SAILOR

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE TWO CAST MEMBERS ARE PIRATES SO THEY
SHOULD WEAR PIRATE'S COSTUMES.

PROPS:

EYEPATCHES
BANDANNAS
SWORDS ETC
ROLLED UP PAPER, RESEMBLING A TREASURE MAP

SCENE

(THE CAPTAIN AND JENKINS
STUMBLE ONTO THE STAGE,
LOOKING BEDRAGGLED AFTER
A LONG SEA VOYAGE)

CAPTAIN

At last, we've made it! Ah, good old Walnut
Island, I was starting think we'd never get
here.

JENKINS

Begging your pardon, Captain.

CAPT

Yes, Jenkins?

JENKINS

It's Bignut Island.

CAPT

Here we are on Bignut Island on this
glorious Sunday morning.

JENKINS

Tuesday night.

CAPT

You do like your little details, don't you,
Jenkins?

JENKINS

Aye, Captain.

CAPT

As I was saying, on this glorious Tuesday
night in... April?

JENKINS

July.

CAPT

Indeed. Here we are on this beautiful sandy beach...

JENKINS

Er, Captain.

CAPT

What is it now?

JENKINS

It's a swamp.

CAPT

Yes, this beautiful swamp. And in a few moments we'll have in our hands fifty thousand gold balloons!

JENKINS

Dubloons, Captain.

CAPT

Quite right. Now before we dig up our treasure, I'd like to say a few words to the crew... as you all know, we started on our journey ten long years ago —

JENKINS

Fifteen.

CAPT

Give or take a year — aboard the good ship... um...

JENKINS

The Golden Skull.

CAPT

That was the one! We had some rough old times; cannibals, headhunters, hurricanes, shipwrecks, plagues — and I regret we had one or two casualties.

JENKINS

Two hundred and ninety-eight, Captain.

CAPT

But thankfully there are still so many of us left today.

JENKINS

It's just the two of us.

CAPT

Well, that's not bad going, is it, Jenkins? Not bad at all.

JENKINS

At least we've still got the treasure, Captain.

CAPT

Ah yes, the treasure!

(HE TAKES THE 'MAP' FROM HIS POCKET)

CAPT

This is my most precious possession: the treasure map. It means more to me than life itself — and now it shall lead us directly to the gold!

JENKINS

I can hardly wait.

CAPT

The map says we must first find a shady spot.

JENKINS

Will under this tree do?

CAPT

That looks good.

JENKINS

What now, Captain?

CAPT

(READING)

Next you must take the plant from the pot,
making sure not to dislodge too much soil.

JENKINS

Captain, are you sure that's a treasure map?

CAPT

Of course, it is! It says so right here
in black and white. Read it for yourself,
Jenkins.

(HE HANDS THE 'MAP' OVER
TO JENKINS, WHO READS IT
OUT LOUD)

JENKINS

Instructions for planting a rose bush.

CAPT

Instructions for planting a tree?

JENKINS

Yes, Captain.

CAPT

Oh, dear. It seems someone has made a slight
mistake. He'll be in very big trouble when
we find out who he is.

JENKINS

It's you, Captain!

CAPT

Really?

JENKINS

Yes! How could you do this to me?

CAPT

Go easy, Jenkins. I'm only human, you know —
I can't be right all the time.

JENKINS

You big bossy blithering buffoon!

CAPT

I'm going to look those words up later, and they better be compliments.

JENKINS

They're not!

CAPT

Oh.

JENKINS

You've ruined my life!

CAPT

Just think of all the fun you'll have in the garden – once I sell you this piece of paper... Jenkins, what are you looking at me like that for? Jenkins!

JENKINS

AARRGGGHH!

(JENKINS CHASES HIM OFF
STAGE)

– The End

ALL ABOUT AESOP

CAST:

PROFESSOR NOAH LOTT

A SOPP (THE PROFESSOR'S INTERVIEW SUBJECT)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PROFESSOR IS AN ECCENTRIC CHARACTER, SO HIS CLOTHES MIGHT REFLECT THIS. PERHAPS HE COULD HAVE A BEARD OR MOUSTACHE. A SOPP IS VERY OLD, SO PERHAPS HE TOO COULD HAVE A BEARD, A VERY LONG GREY ONE.

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS

A SIGN THAT SAYS 'STRANGE BUT (ALMOST) TRUE'

A FAKE MICROPHONE.

SCENE

(PROFESSOR LOTT IS
SEATED ON STAGE AS THE
PLAY BEGINS}

PROF

Welcome! I'm Professor Noah Lott and this is Strange but (Almost) True, the programme which brings you some of the greatest names in history! Today's guest is someone we haven't heard from for quite a while. Let's give a big welcome to... Aesop!

(A SOPP ENTERS, WAVING
TO THE FANS)

PROF

Welcome, Aesop!

A SOPP

Nice to be here!

PROF

A lot of people are probably surprised to see you.

A SOPP

Really?

PROF

Yes, to be honest, I think they thought you were dead.

A SOPP

Dead?! Why would they think that?

PROF

Because you lived about 1500 years ago.

A SOPP

So?

PROF

Well, to be honest, it's a little unusual to live that long.

A SOPP

But I've always been healthy – and I do twenty push-ups every year.

PROF

It's still unusual.

A SOPP

I suppose you're right, but you don't know my secret.

PROF

A secret! Wow! What is it?

A SOPP

A very long time ago I was working in a pickle factory. Suddenly a bolt of lightning struck the factory, destroying it and trapping me inside, with nothing to eat but pickles.

PROF

How long were you there for?

A SOPP

Until last week.

PROF

You were trapped for 1500 years?

A SOPP

No, come on now, let's not exaggerate – it was only fourteen hundred and ninety-nine years.

PROF

That's still incredible! How did you survive?

A SOPP

I had a jigsaw to do. Ten thousand pieces – time flew.

PROF

Did someone dig you out?

A SOPP

No, I tunnelled my way out. With a toothpick.

PROF

You're amazing!

A SOPP

I know.

PROF

What really surprises me is that you don't seem to have aged. Why do you think that is?

A SOPP

I was pickled.

PROF

I see. And was it there, in the pickle factory, that you wrote the fables?

A SOPP

You mean stories like The Tortoise and the Hare, The Boy Who Cried Wolf, and The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?

PROF

Yes! Aesop's Fables.

A SOPP

I cannot lie. That was the other A Sopp – Archie. My uncle. I'm Andy Sopp. By the way, that's spelt S-O-P-P.

PROF

Oh? Then what about Aesop – A-E-S-O-P?

A SOPP

Spelling mistake.

PROF

I'm learning so much!

A SOPP

Ask me anything.

PROF

Well, let me get this straight – am I right in saying you didn't play any part in writing the fables?

A SOPP

No, you're wrong! My uncle and I were co-writers.

PROF

That's fascinating. Can you remember what part of The Tortoise and the Hare you wrote?

A SOPP

The End.

PROF

You mean you told your uncle how to finish the story?

A SOPP

No, I just wrote The End.

PROF

Then you didn't have a very big role in the writing?

A SOPP

Are you kidding?! Uncle Archie never knew when to finish a story! If I hadn't written The End he would have kept going until it was a mini-series!

PROF

Did you write any other parts of the fables?

A SOPP

Oh, sure! I played a big part in writing the titles.

PROF

Some examples?

A SOPP

One that comes to mind is The Ant and the Grasscatcher.

PROF

I've never heard of it.

A SOPP

That's because I changed it to The Ant and the Grasshopper.

PROF

Much better!

A SOPP

Thank you.

PROF

Did you work on anything else?

A SOPP

Sure — The Boy Who Cried Wolfgang.

PROF

Who's Wolfgang?

A SOPP

My thoughts exactly! I said, 'Uncle Archie, what's this with Wolfgang?'

PROF

What did he say?

A SOPP

He said, 'Wolfgang is my pet rabbit.'

PROF

What did you say?

A SOPP

I said, 'Rabbits can't read, Unc - he'll never know. Please change it to Wolf'.

PROF

What did he say?

A SOPP

He said, 'I'll get back to you, Asap.'

PROF

Did he mean 'as soon as possible'?

A SOPP

No, he just mispronounced my name.

PROF

Ah, but did he change it?

A SOPP

Eventually, but he never told Wolfgang.

PROF

Interesting . . . are there any others?

A SOPP

The Moose with the Golden Legs was the big one.

PROF

I haven't heard of that.

A SOPP

But you've heard of The Goose with the Golden Eggs.

PROF

You wrote that title?

A SOPP

Every word!

PROF

I'm impressed.

A SOPP

Me, too.

PROF

Well, it's been great chatting with you, Andy, but we've run out of time. Just one last question... what are your plans for the future?

A SOPP

I'm going to finish that jigsaw.

PROF

The same one you were doing in the pickle factory?

A SOPP

Yes.

PROF

You haven't finished it yet, after fourteen hundred and ninety-nine years?

A SOPP

Too slow?

PROF

A little bit.

A SOPP

Well, you know what Uncle Archie used to say?

PROF

No, what?

A SOPP

Slow and steady wins the race.

— The End

CALL ME PATSY

CAST:

PROFESSOR NOAH LOTT

CLEOPATRA (THE PROFESSOR'S INTERVIEW
SUBJECT)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PROFESSOR IS AN ECCENTRIC CHARACTER, SO
HIS CLOTHES MIGHT REFLECT THIS. PERHAPS HE
COULD HAVE A BEARD OR MOUSTACHE. CLEOPATRA
COULD WEAR A BLACK WIG, SOME FAKE JEWELRY,
AND BE DRESSED IN EGYPTIAN-STYLE CLOTHING

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS

A SIGN THAT SAYS 'STRANGE BUT (ALMOST) TRUE'

A FAKE MICROPHONE

SCENE

(PROFESSOR LOTT IS
SEATED ON STAGE)

PROF

Hello again. I'm Professor Noah Lott, and this is Strange but (Almost) True, the programme in which I interview the world's most incredible people. Today's special guest is none other than the great and mysterious, Cleopatra!

(CLEOPATRA ENTERS,
WAVING TO THE AUDIENCE)

PROF

Welcome, Cleopatra!

CLEO

You can call me Patsy.

PROF

Thank you. Now, let's get straight into it. What can you tell me about ancient Egypt?

CLEO

Ancient Egypt? Are you trying to say I'm old?

PROF

A little bit.

CLEO

How dare you! You scoundrel!

PROF

Oh, come on, Patsy. If you don't think you're old, you must be in denial.

CLEO

I take a dip in the Nile every morning, but what's that got to do with my age?

PROF

Okay, I apologise. Now back to the interview
– did you know Julius Caesar?

CLEO

Yeah. Jules and I go way back. I knew him in
his chariot days.

PROF

He drove chariots?

CLEO

No, he washed them.

PROF

Wow! Julius Caesar washed chariots.

CLEO

Everyone has to start somewhere.

PROF

What about Mark Anthony?

CLEO

Wash chariots? Never! He hardly ever washed
himself!

PROF

I meant; did you know Mark Anthony?

CLEO

Of course, I did. He used to be my gardener.

PROF

That isn't in the history books.

CLEO

That's because he was a lousy gardener.

PROF

Can you explain what you mean by that?

CLEO

Sure. He'd come to my house to trim a hedge and he'd find he'd forgotten to bring cutters. So forgetful. Happened every time. Then I'd hear him yelling out to my neighbours, 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your shears!' It was embarrassing.

PROF

What other things can you tell me that might not be in the history books?

CLEO

Let's see... did you know Julius Caesar changed his name?

PROF

No.

CLEO

Oh yes. You see, in my day you took the name of your profession. Washing chariots was just a part-time job for Jules. If it had been full-time, he would have been called Soapy, which, by the way, was what his mother called him. But most of the time he worked in a cheese shop, so his name was Julius Cheeser.

PROF

How interesting. So, names like Cook, Fisher and Barber, came from people's jobs?

CLEO

Correct.

PROF

But what if you had an unusual job, like an archaeologist?

CLEO

That's easy. If you were an archaeologist, you'd be called Digger.

PROF

Makes sense.

CLEO

And if you were a retired archaeologist, you'd be called Doug.

PROF

Hmm... getting back to Julius Caesar, do you know why he changed his name?

CLEO

It's a long story. One day I said, 'Jules, you're getting too fat, you should have salads.' He was reluctant at first, but after a while that's all he would eat. He told his friends, and soon the owner of the deli was selling so many salads he decided to name them after Jules, but he spelt his name wrong. Instead of Cheeser, he wrote on the menu 'Caesar Salad'. Jules loved it! That very day he changed his name.

PROF

Well, this has been fascinating.

CLEO

Not too shabby for someone who's ancient – right?

PROF

No, not shabby at all. Now one last question, if I may.

CLEO

Go ahead.

PROF

What are your future plans? Will you write your autobiography? Become a reality TV star? The whole world is waiting – what's next for Cleopatra?

CLEO

I'm going to be an optometrist.

PROF

Really? That surprises me.

CLEO

What's so surprising?

PROF

Well, I didn't think you'd have the qualifications.

CLEO

Qualifications! Such nonsense! I have my own methods of testing people's eyesight.

PROF

Would you care to give me an example?

CLEO

Certainly. Describe yourself in four words.

PROF

Tall dark and handsome.

CLEO

You need glasses.

— The End

CAPTAIN THUNDERCLOT

CAST:

PROFESSOR NOAH LOTT

CAPTAIN THUNDERCLOT (PROFESSOR'S INTERVIEW
SUBJECT)

ANDY BANDICOOT

DINGO DAN

KOOKY BURRA

MULGA MOLLY

SALTBUSH SALLY

SPOTTY GUMM

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PROFESSOR IS AN ECCENTRIC CHARACTER,
SO HIS CLOTHES MIGHT REFLECT THIS. PERHAPS
HE COULD HAVE A BEARD OR MOUSTACHE. THE
BUSHRANGERS HAVE BUSHY HATS AND CLOTHES, AND
MOUSTACHES AND BEARDS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS

A SIGN THAT SAYS 'STRANGE BUT (ALMOST) TRUE'

A FAKE MICROPHONE

SCENE

(PROFESSOR LOTT IS
SEATED ON STAGE)

PROF

Hello again! I'm Professor Noah Lott, and this is Strange but (Almost) True, the show in which I interview some of the world's most incredible people. Our special guest today is a bushranger! It's none other than the famous, Captain Thunderclot!

(THE CAPTAIN ENTERS,
TO MUCH CHEERING AND
APPLAUSE)

CAPT

Hello, fans!

PROF

Captain, is it true that you were the very first bushranger?

CAPT

Sure is. I was also the first person to use the word bushranger.

PROF

Were you a wordsmith?

CAPT

No, I was a florist.

PROF

I don't quite understand.

CAPT

My shop was called BUSH ARRANGER.

PROF

Right.

CAPT

One day during some wild weather a couple of letters fell off the sign – an A and an R – and what was left said, BUSH RANGER.

PROF

Oh, I see.

CAPT

I thought, "that's a good word, I'll keep it".

PROF

So, what made you go from being a florist to an outlaw?

CAPT

An outlaw? Steady on! I never broke any laws!

PROF

You were a bushranger. You rode up to coaches and robbed them. Admit it!

CAPT

No, no. You've got it all wrong. I didn't ride horses – they make me sneeze.

PROF

So, what part of bushranging did you do?

CAPT

The singing part.

PROF

Bushrangers didn't sing... did they?

CAPT

Oh yes. I had a singing group: Captain Thunderclot and the Bushrangers.

PROF

Ah! I would love to have met your group.

CAPT

You can — come on out, guys!

(THE BUSHRANGERS ENTER)

AB

I'm Andy Bandicoot.

DD

Dingo Dan.

KB

Kooky Burra.

MM

Mulga Molly.

SS

Saltbush Sally.

SG

And I'm Spotty Gumm.

ALL

G'day!

PROF

Are they your real names?

ALL

Of course.

CAPT

I'm the only one who changed his name.

PROF

What was your name before you were Captain Thunderclot?

CAPT

Private Thunderclot. I gave myself a promotion.

PROF

And what are some of the songs you sang?

SS

Bail Up: that was our first hit.

PROF

Bail Up. Amazing! That's what bushrangers said when they robbed coaches.

KB

They stole it from us. The crooks!

PROF

Could you sing a little of it?

CAPT

If we can remember the lyrics. They're a bit tricky.

PROF

Do your best.

CAPT

A one, and a two, and a three...

(THE BUSHRANGERS SING,
WITH THE CAPTAIN
CONDUCTING)

ALL

Bail up. Bail up.
Bail up. Bail up. Bail up.

CAPT

Big finish!

ALL

(DEEPLY)

Baillll uppppp!

PROF

Very... different. Do you have any others?

MM

Stand and Deliver was huge for us.

PROF

What a coincidence. When bushrangers robbed coaches they'd say, 'Stand and Deliver.'

DD

They stole it from us!

KB

That's highway robbery!

PROF

How very interesting. Before you go, could you sing a little of Stand and Deliver?

CAPT

Sure. A one and a two and a three...

AB

You broke my heart...

DD

and I cried like a river.

KB

When I think of you now...

MM

I start to shiver.

SS

Yes, you cut me in two...

SG

and I'm all a-quiver.

AB

But we're the posties...

DD

with the mosties...

ALL

So, we stand and deliver,
we stand and deliver.

CAPT

Big finish!

ALL

(DEEPLY)

Ohhh yeahhh!

— The End

COUNT DRAC IS BACK!

CAST:

PROFESSOR NOAH LOTT

COUNT DRACULA

SIX SINGING GHOULS — THE TRANSYVANIAN
GHOULS' CHOIR

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PROFESSOR IS AN ECCENTRIC CHARACTER,
SO HIS CLOTHES MIGHT REFLECT THIS. PERHAPS
HE COULD HAVE A BEARD OR MOUSTACHE. COUNT
DRACULA COULD BE DRESSED IN BLACK, WITH A
FLOWING BLACK CAPE.

THE GHOUL'S CHOIR ARE ALL DRESSED IN SIMILAR
ATTIRE.

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS

A SIGN THAT SAYS 'STRANGE BUT (ALMOST) TRUE'
A FAKE MICROPHONE

SCENE

(PROFESSOR LOTT IS
SEATED ON STAGE)

PROF

Hello again! I'm Professor Noah Lott, and this is Strange but True, the programme in which I interview the world's most incredible people, including my special guest today, Count Dracula!

(COUNT DRACULA ENTERS)

PROF

Welcome, Count. How are you?

DRACULA

I'm okay, but I've got jetlag. I just flew in from Transylvania.

PROF

Was it a good flight?

DRACULA

Not really. A couple of times I almost fell off.

PROF

You almost fell off the plane?

DRACULA

Those wings can get slippery.

PROF

Wings? I don't understand.

DRACULA

Well, I wasn't going to fly all that way. I'm not as young as I used to be – so I just sat on the wing. I've been doing it for years.

PROF

Are you saying you can actually fly?

DRACULA

Of course. You make it sound like a big deal.

PROF

It is!

DRACULA

Nah. In my family, if you can flap your arms, you can fly.

PROF

So, it's true, then – you're really a vampire?

DRACULA

I used to be in the good old days, but I retired.

PROF

Does that mean you don't bite people on the neck and suck out their blood?

DRACULA

Errgghh! That's mostly in the movies. I was in a few, so I should know. Personally, I faint at the sight of blood. I can't even handle a squirt of tomato sauce. But I love garlic!

PROF

Vampires are supposed to hate garlic.

DRACULA

I know – Hollywood's got it all wrong.

PROF

I'm learning so much!

DRACULA

Be my guest.

PROF

Do you mind if I ask how old you are?

DRACULA

Six hundred, eight hundred. Who knows? After five hundred years, even Counts don't count.

PROF

Amazing! What's the secret to your long life?

DRACULA

Every morning I get a terrible shock that kick-starts my heart.

PROF

What causes it?

DRACULA

I look in the mirror.

PROF

What do vampires do when they're retired?

DRACULA

Just hang around upside down.

PROF

When you worked in the movies, did you meet anyone famous?

DRACULA

Lots and lots – Wolfman was one.

PROF

Was he really a wolf?

DRACULA

Nah – he was a dentist. He just looked like a wolf. If you went to him for a tooth problem, you didn't need an anaesthetic. All he had to was growl and you'd be out like a light.

PROF

What about King Kong? Did you know him?

DRACULA

Did I know him?! We went to school together!
He was the teacher's pet!

PROF

The Mummy?

DRACULA

Great guy, but such a hypochondriac!

PROF

What do you mean?

DRACULA

He was always wrapped in bandages.

PROF

Well, Count, it's been great talking to you,
but I think our time is up.

DRACULA

Wait. Don't you want to hear about the ghouls?

PROF

What ghouls?

DRACULA

The Transylvanian Ghoul's Choir. I'm their
singing teacher.

PROF

I'd love to hear them. Are they here today?

DRACULA

They sure are. Come on out, ghouls!

(SIX GHOULS ENTER)

PROF

Hi there.

GHOULS

(SINGING)

Haaaallloo.

DRACULA

And now for our big number — hit it!

ALL

We will not bite your neck tonight,
not even for a thrill.
We've just come from the blood bank,
and for sure we've had our fill!

DRACULA

Had our fill, had our fill!

ALL

We will not fly around the room,
or act in manners rude or rough.
We've just come from the blood bank,
and for sure we've had enough!

DRACULA

Had enough, had enough!

ALL

You do not need to worry,
we are nicer than you think.
We've just come from the blood bank,
and we've had enough to drink!

DRACULA

Had enough to drink!

ALL

Hey!

— The End

MAGIC MERLIN

CAST:

PROFESSOR NOAH LOTT
MERLIN THE MAGICIAN
GHOULS' CHOIR

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PROFESSOR IS AN ECCENTRIC CHARACTER,
SO HIS CLOTHES MIGHT REFLECT THIS. PERHAPS
HE COULD HAVE A BEARD OR MOUSTACHE. MERLIN
COULD BE DRESSED IN A COLOURFUL COSTUME,
WITH A FLOWING CAPE.

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS
A SIGN THAT SAYS 'STRANGE BUT (ALMOST) TRUE'
A FAKE MICROPHONE

SCENE

(PROFESSOR LOTT IS
SEATED ON STAGE)

PROF

Hello again! I'm Professor Noah Lott, and this is Strange but (Almost) True, the programme in which I interview some of the world's most incredible people. Now, on with the show!

My guest tonight is famed magician, Merlin!

(MERLIN ENTERS, WAVING
TO THE AUDIENCE)

PROF

So, you're the original Merlin – from King Arthur's Court?

MERLIN

That's me! We used to play every Sunday after jousting.

PROF

Play what?

MERLIN

Tennis, of course – at King Arthur's court.

PROF

Oh, I see.

MERLIN

Try to keep up.

PROF

Right. Before we go any further, is it okay if I call you Merlin?

MERLIN

That's fine, but if I don't answer, it's only because I haven't got a phone.

PROF

No, no, I meant your name. May I address you as Merlin?

MERLIN

Hey! I might look old, but I don't need anyone to dress me – apart from helping me get my pants on.

PROF

I'm glad you mentioned age. You must be very, very old.

MERLIN

How dare you! I'm just a boy.

PROF

But the story of King Arthur and Merlin and the knights goes back many thousands of years.

MERLIN

True, but I was a good six months younger than them.

PROF

Are you still performing magic?

MERLIN

Oh yes. I do children's parties.

PROF

Do you cut people in half?

MERLIN

No, no, no. Definitely not! Unless they don't pay for the party.

PROF

And what about King Arthur and the knights? I suppose they're long gone?

MERLIN

Bite your tongue! They haven't gone anywhere! They help at my kid's parties.

PROF

What do they do?

MERLIN

Lancelot juggles, Lady Guinevere cracks jokes, and Arthur dresses up as a clown. Kids love it!

PROF

What about Galahad and Gawain? Are they there?

MERLIN

Indeed. They carry the brown table. That's what I do my card tricks on.

PROF

Do you mean the Round Table?

MERLIN

No, but I do remember a round table.

PROF

What parts do you remember?

MERLIN

The parts we couldn't put together – we ended up throwing it out.

PROF

We're almost out of time, Merlin. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

MERLIN

Just one thing – if you book for your kid's party, you get me, Lady G, King Arty, the knights, and a special appearance by Camelot!

PROF

Really? The famous castle?

MERLIN

Yes. These days it's a jumping castle!

— The End

ROBIN HOOD, THE SECOND

CAST:

PROFESSOR NOAH LOTT

ROBIN HOOD, THE SECOND

THE CHOIR (THREE BOYS AND THREE GIRLS)

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE PROFESSOR IS AN ECCENTRIC CHARACTER, SO HIS CLOTHES MIGHT REFLECT THIS. PERHAPS HE COULD HAVE A BEARD OR MOUSTACHE. ROBIN HOOD, THE SECOND MIGHT BE WEARING GREEN OUTFIT AND CARRYING A BOW AND ARROW. THE CHOIR SHOULD ALL BE DRESSED IN A SIMILAR STYLE

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS

A SIGN THAT SAYS 'STRANGE BUT (ALMOST) TRUE'

A FAKE MICROPHONE

SOME ARCHERY GEAR

SCENE

(PROFESSOR LOTT IS
SEATED ON STAGE)

PROF

Hello again! I'm Professor Noah Lott, and this is Strange but (Almost) True, the programme in which I interview some of the world's most incredible people. Now, on with the show!

Our special guest today is Robin Hood!

(ROBIN, WHO IS DRESSED
IN GREEN, ENTERS TO MUCH
CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

ROBIN

Thank you, fans.

PROF

For those who don't know your story you're a famous archer. Correct?

ROBIN

No, Scrabble is my game.

PROF

You live in Sherwood Forest?

ROBIN

Are you kidding? I hate the forest! It's full of trees!

PROF

Little John? Maid Marian? Do those names ring a bell?

ROBIN

Oh, now I understand. You're confusing me with the legendary Robin Hood. The one they make movies about.

PROF

Yes. Isn't that you?

ROBIN

Don't be ridiculous! He lived hundreds of years ago!

PROF

How silly of me. You couldn't be him.

ROBIN

Of course not. That would be impossible.

PROF

Are you some distant relative?

ROBIN

Yes, I'm his son.

PROF

Ah... so is your name Robin Hood, too?

ROBIN

You can call me Two if you like, but I prefer Robin Hood the Second.

PROF

Did you know any of those people I mentioned?

ROBIN

Indeed, I did. Maid Marian used to do deliveries.

PROF

She delivered babies?

ROBIN

Groceries.

PROF

And Little John? Nice fellow, was he?

ROBIN

You're being silly again.

PROF

Am I?

ROBIN

You are. He wasn't a fellow. Little John was what we called our toilet.

PROF

What about Friar Tuck?

ROBIN

He was a cook. He fried everything – even our porridge. That's why we called him Fryer Tuck.

PROF

Okay... the Sheriff of Nottingham was in all the Robin Hood movies. What can you tell me about him?

ROBIN

He got annoyed when people mispronounced his name.

PROF

You mean it wasn't Nottingham?

ROBIN

No! It was Nothing-Ham. He was a vegetarian.

PROF

How interesting... what about the merry men?

ROBIN

Another mistake!

PROF

What's wrong this time?

ROBIN

It was the Merry Maids and the Bratty Boys.

PROF

Sorry.

ROBIN

They were our choir.

PROF

There was a choir?

ROBIN

An amazing choir! They came runner-up in the Great Sherwood Forest Singalong Spectacular. Three years in a row!

PROF

That's impressive. How many choirs took part in the Spectacular?

ROBIN

Just one.

PROF

They were the only choir, and they still came runner-up?

ROBIN

Yes! I told you they were amazing!

PROF

I wish I could meet them.

ROBIN

Your wish is granted. They're here today.

PROF

Oh, goody!

ROBIN

(CALLING)

Come on out, gang!

(THE CHOIR ENTERS, TO MUCH APPLAUSE. CHOIR SINGS.)

GIRLS

Oh, merry maids are we.

BOYS

And we are bratty boys.

BOTH

We cannot sing a single note –
but we make lots of noise!

PROF

Bravo! Bravo! Could we have another song
before we go?

ROBIN

I thought you'd never ask. Take it away, gang!

BOYS

Oh, we're tough, so tough.

GIRLS

So loud you can't ignore us.

BOYS

When we sing, we sound just like...

GIRLS

a wounded brontosaurus!

BOTH

And deep in the forest,
we are the law,
for we take from the rich,
and we give to the poor!

ROBIN

One more time!

ALL

(SINGING)

For we take from the rich,
and we give to the poor!

– The End

SIR ARTHUR AIRHEAD

CAST:

INTERVIEWER
ARTHUR

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

ARTHUR IS AN OVER-THE TOP BRAGGER. HE SHOULD BE PLAYED WITH CONFIDENCE AND A SENSE OF SELF-IMPORTANCE. PERHAPS HE HAS A GREAT MANY WAR MEDALS PINNED TO HIS COAT.

PROPS:

TWO CHAIRS
SOME FAKE WAR MEDALS

SCENE

(THE INTERVIEWER AND
ARTHUR ARE SEATED ON
STAGE)

INTERVIEWER

My guest tonight is well known adventurer,
war hero, author, movie star, humanitarian,
and bull fighter. Please welcome, Sir Arthur
Airhead!

ARTHUR

Thank you. It's wonderful of me to be here.

INTERVIEWER

Sir Arthur, just last week you were voted
The Most Egotistical Man of the Century.
Congratulations!

ARTHUR

Oh, I don't want to talk about that — some
people might think I'm bragging.

INTERVIEWER

Very well, I'll move on to another subject.

ARTHUR

I'll just touch on it briefly, then, since
you've twisted my arm. Yes, I'm the Man of
the Century.

INTERVIEWER

Most egotistical man of the century.

ARTHUR

That too. Think about it — not in a hundred
years has there been anyone like me. I'm
special. I'm unique. Mister Wonderful,
that's me!

INTERVIEWER

There are a few other questions I'd like to ask you.

ARTHUR

You should see the trophy they gave me – huge, it is! It's a statue of me, but of course it's not as good-looking as me. I think the head's a bit too big – I don't know how they could make such a mistake.

INTERVIEWER

Have you always been egotistical?

ARTHUR

Good heavens, no. Not at all. Quite the opposite. No, no, no. Absolutely not.

INTERVIEWER

So when did you notice the first signs?

ARTHUR

It took me a long, long time... I was nearly two.

INTERVIEWER

Did something unusual happen to you at that age?

ARTHUR

Yes. I looked in a mirror for the first time.

INTERVIEWER

Sir Arthur, could I ask you about your war record?

ARTHUR

Shoot! Hahahaha – that's a little joke of mine. War record – shoot. Get it? I have a fabulous sense of humour. I've got a few trophies for that, too.

INTERVIEWER

If we could be serious for a moment, I'd really like to ask you about the war.

ARTHUR

Yes, of course. I'll be very serious. Blast away! Oops! Sorry. Fire when ready! Hahahahaha...

INTERVIEWER

I've heard you say that you won the war all on your own.

ARTHUR

That's true. I did.

INTERVIEWER

But Sir Arthur, there were many thousands of people fighting in the war. Millions.

ARTHUR

They weren't fighting as well as me. Ask anyone. I was the best. You should see the trophies! Best Hand-to-Hand Combat, Best and Fairest Sniper, Most Improved Salute - I've got a stack of them.

INTERVIEWER

Sir Arthur, I've done some research and I've discovered that you didn't go to the war at all.

ARTHUR

That's impossible! It says I did in the book and books don't lie!

INTERVIEWER

What book is that?

ARTHUR

My autobiography. On the best seller list for a year. It's in the running for the Nobel Prize for Literature. They make the film next month. I'm playing myself, of course. These Hollywood actors don't have the physique, the good looks, the intellect – but most of all they lack the one thing that makes me stand out from the pack.

INTERVIEWER

What is that one thing that makes you stand out, Sir Arthur?

ARTHUR

Humility! I'm the most humble person you'll ever meet! Hate talking about myself! Just hate it!

INTERVIEWER

I'm afraid we've run out of time, so I have to say good night, Sir Arthur.

ARTHUR

Oh, what a pity. I was just about to ask you something about yourself.

INTERVIEWER

Really? You wanted to ask about me?

ARTHUR

Yes, of course. I can't stand talking about myself all the time.

INTERVIEWER

All right then. Ask me anything you like.

ARTHUR

Very well ... what do you think of me?

– The End

THE PERFECT CAR

CAST:

OLD LADY

SALESPERSON

DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

THE SALESPERSON IS A FAST-TALKING CON
ARTIST, SO SHOULD BE PLAYED ACCORDINGLY. THE
OLD LADY IS TRUSTING AND VERY NAIVE.

PROPS:

A SIGN THAT SAYS 'HONEST AL'S USED CARS'
CUT-OUTS OF CARS (OPTIONAL)

SCENE

(THE OLD LADY WALKS
ON STAGE TO MEET THE
SALESPERSON)

LADY

I'd like to buy a car.

SALESPERSON

You've come to the right place for that —
this is the best car yard in town!

LADY

The trouble is I don't know what kind of car
I want.

SALESPERSON

No problem. I've worked out a scientific
formula that tells you the ideal car to buy.

LADY

Oh, goody.

SALESPERSON

You just need to answer a few simple
questions.

LADY

All right then.

SALESPERSON

How old are you?

LADY

Ninety-six.

SALESPERSON

And how many people do you think will use
this car?

LADY

Just me.

SALESPERSON

Do you plan to take it on any long trips?

LADY

No – just to church on Sunday. It's about one kilometre there and back.

SALESPERSON

Is it a rough road where you live? Are there potholes?

LADY

Oh no. It's a beautiful road. Not a bump in it.

SALESPERSON

Good. That's all there is to it. Now, according to the information you've given me, your perfect car is actually not a car at all.

LADY

It isn't?

SALESPERSON

No, it's a good thing you came to me first, otherwise you might have been saddled with a car – when what you really need is a bus!

LADY

I need a bus?

SALESPERSON

I'm glad you agree. And it just so happens we have one for sale. It's called The Colossus. Holds eighty people in comfort and simply flies over rough roads. You'll love it!

LADY

But I was thinking that perhaps a little car would be all right.

SALESPERSON

No, no, no, a bus is the perfect thing for you – it's safe, reliable, and you'll always find a seat. Now what colour did you have in mind?

LADY

I like plain colours.

SALESPERSON

Canary yellow! With pink upholstery! How does that sound?

LADY

It sounds a little bit bright.

SALESPERSON

I'm so glad you're happy. Now is there anything else you'd like? Perhaps a motorbike in case the bus breaks down? Or a boat in case there's a flood?

LADY

It's all a little bit confusing.

SALESPERSON

I can fix that. Just give me your cheque book and I'll fill out all the nasty details for you – this is a completely free service.

LADY

Oh, thank you. That's very kind.

SALESPERSON

Think nothing of it. What sort of person would I be if I couldn't help out my own grandmother?

– The End

ABOUT BILL CONDON



Bill has written more than 100 children's books which have been published by companies such as Allen & Unwin, Random House, and Queensland University Press. His writing includes novels, short stories, non-fiction, plays and poetry.

Three of his young adult novels, *Dogs*, *No Worries*, and *A Straight Line to My Heart*, were shortlisted in the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards. *Dogs* won the CBCA Honour Book of the Year (2001), *No Worries* won the CBCA Honour Book of the Year (2006), *A Straight Line to My Heart* was CBCA Honour Book of the Year (2008), *Daredevils* was a CBCA Notable Book (2007). His junior novel, *The Simple Things*, (Allen & Unwin) was CBCA short-listed in 2015.

No Worries and *A Straight Line to My Heart* were also shortlisted for the NSW Premier Awards.

Bill was the winner of the inaugural Prime Minister's Literary Award in 2010 for Young Adult Fiction. He was also short-listed for the PM's Literary Award in 2012.

In more recent years, his plays, poems, comedic sketches, and short stories have been published in the New South Wales *School Magazine*.

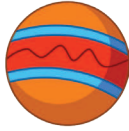
Bill and his wife, the well-known children's author, Dianne (Di) Bates, live on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia. They are both full-time freelance writers.



Jest the Funny Bits is a collection of Bill's comic poems, plays, and short stories. He had a lot of fun writing them and he really hopes you have fun reading them. However, spoiler alert, they're not for everyone. If you're a humourless sour grumpy-pants, whose face



would split in two if you attempted to smile or laugh, then, whatever you do, don't read this book! Also, since it is sure to induce giggles, it is best not to read it out loud. After all, humour is contagious, so if you start laughing, you could cause a charge of chuckles, even a gush of guffaws. We're sure you wouldn't want that on your conscience. By the end of the book, you may think the author must be a very silly person. You'd be right, too, but at least he's not a humourless sour grumpy-pants.



Warning: Open this book at your peril! You are about to enter the untamed wilds of Bill Condon's imagination. Jokes, gags, twisted rhymes, outrageous puns, riotous characters and all the things you least expect lie in wait around every corner. Be prepared to smile, giggle, laugh, groan and guffaw. You might just need a new funny bone when you're done.

– Michael Gerard Bauer



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