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Opening extract from

Dog Ears

Written by

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To Helen Neame
Thank you for listening.

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Chapter One

It's nice having breakfast with you, Timmy, even if you do slurp yours down too fast. And then eye up my toast when I'm eating mine.

But yes, you're sitting really well, even though I didn't actually ask you to. And I wish you wouldn't keep drooling. It's a bit off-putting. Here – have one of your biscuits if you're still hungry. They're better for you than toast.

Good boy.

I need to find my pencil case and my planner. I've decided I'm coming back from the break MUCH more organised. This is a new me. A New Anna Taylor. Can you believe I've been in Year 7 for a whole half term now? St Faith's seems like fifty million years ago.

Remember Year 6, Tim?

You were brilliant when I was worried that

Emma liked the new girl Mohona more than me.

And then when I thought I might like Mohona more than Emma. Because she was really nice and she wanted to come to tea and visit Mum's shop. And she wasn't as bossy as Emma.

And when Emma cried about it.

Which was awful. Emma never cries.

And then when Emma, Mohona and I decided we were all best friends forever and three is a perfect number for a girl gang.

You didn't panic. You knew it was going to be okay.

I can't imagine it not being the three of us. Emma and Mohona are the best friends ever.

The best human friends, of course. Don't look at me like that with your big brown eyes. Hey – I'd better hurry up and make my sandwiches or I'll be late for school. Don't eat that envelope! I know it's junk mail, but that doesn't mean you can chew it. Or is junk mail like junk food for dogs?

Remember when the letter about secondary school came last year, Timmy? I got to the mat just before you grabbed it. Dad told Gran that if it arrived when he was at the hospital with Mum then I didn't have to wait to open it. And it said *Bekesbourne High*

and it was so good to have you to hug. Because Gran isn't really a hugger. Do you remember – we did this mad dance in the kitchen and you got really excited and knocked a mug off the side and it broke? Gran got a bit cross but I swept up the pieces and then I rang Emma and Mohona to make sure they were going there too. But I told you first.

Hey – get out of the fridge.

I told you when Mum was rushed into hospital early to have Jack, and you stayed with me when Gran came over.

I told you when Gran said Jack had been born. You wagged your tail so much. We were so happy. Our summer holiday baby. He wasn't even supposed to come until the middle of September. He came just after my birthday. So he was nearly my birthday present. My baby brother. Though I'm glad I got my new phone as well!

I told you when I came back from the hospital after seeing Jack. I told you how tiny he was and how many tubes and wires there were on him in his little glass box, and how I didn't really know what to feel. He was tiny, like you when you were a puppy, Tim, but he wasn't sweet at all.

You were the only one I told that to.

You wiggled your eyebrows and let me hug you and you didn't tell me I was a horrible sister and I shouldn't think that about my baby brother.

And I told you about my first day at Bekesbourne High and getting the bus and how I nearly got the wrong one home until Mohona noticed and yelled 'Anna – get off the bus!' and I had to run down the stairs really quickly and I nearly dropped my bag and the driver shouted 'Make up your mind, girly!' and it was all REALLY EMBARRASSING.

Okay. I know what that nudge means. You can have a bit of cheese. Not too much, though. Sit properly. Don't bounce.

We should have called you Tigger.

I need to get the Sellotape and get your dog hair off my jumper. It's the one I was wearing before the holidays, but it's the only one that's ready. Mum must be doing the washing today.

Oh no – look at my tights. They're AWFUL. Dog hair all over them. And now a ladder too.

I told you about Emma's AMAZING discovery that if you freeze your tights before you wear them, they don't ladder as much. You have to defrost them first, obviously. She read it on this website her cousin told her about.

She says it really works.

Though she doesn't have a mad dog jumping up at her for cheese

I hope you haven't run off with the hairbrush again.

Did I tell you Mohona read on the internet about putting bicarbonate of soda in your hair if it is greasy?

I haven't tried that yet, but I'm going to. Gran probably has bicarbonate of soda. I'll ask her.

Why do bananas go black so quickly, Tim? I'll just have to skip fruit today. You don't eat fruit and you're fine. You don't even have to wear clothes. You're so lucky. I wish my uniform fitted better. Or I could just wear a big golden onesie to school.

I'll tell that to Dad later on Skype. He'll laugh. I know. I'll draw him a picture.

You and me have got to look after Mum and Jack for Dad while he is away.

'*Anna, Anna – could you come and sit with Jack for a moment?*'

Mum is calling. I have to go. Look after Mum. See you after school.

Chapter Two

Down, Timmy! SIT! Good boy. Come on. I'm glad to see you too and I'll take you out soon, but I've got to eat something. Okay, yes, I don't see why you can't share a bit of my sandwich. Here you go. I didn't have time to finish my lunch because we were so busy planning for the most amazing thing ever. This has been a fantastic Monday!

I've got to tell someone, and you're the best listener there is. Mum is asleep with Jack upstairs and Gran hasn't arrived yet, and even if she had, you know that Gran never listens anyway.

Basically, the whole school has gone mad.

'I've just met Mr Parsons in the corridor and he played me a tune on his tie,' said Mohona, looking shocked as she came and sat next to me for morning registration. 'I didn't know what to do.'

'What tune was it?' said Emma from behind us.

The place next to her was empty as usual. Lauren is hardly ever on time, when she does come in, and then she hardly ever talks. It's so annoying. We wish we could just sit in a three, like at primary school. I'm lucky they put me with Mohona for form period, but poor Emma is stuck with Lauren. She didn't go to our primary school so Emma doesn't know her AT ALL.

'I think it was from James Bond,' said Mohona.

'He played that one to me,' said Emma. 'Did he pretend to have a gun and say "Mr Parsons – Licensed to Teach"?'

'No.'

'You're lucky, then.'

'Mr Parsons has another really cool tie with a Tardis. It plays the Doctor Who theme,' said Rhys Thomas, interrupting from across the aisle.

'Yeah, and tomorrow he says he is going to wear his Star Wars one,' said Adam Douglas next to him.

Emma rolled her eyes.

Though I actually think a Tardis tie sounds okay.

Lauren arrived and sat down next to Emma, not talking to anyone as usual. Emma pulled a face at us. Poor Emma. Lauren must be the most boring person at Bekesbourne High.

Mrs Berlinski took the register and rushed us off to the hall. She seemed really excited, and she was wearing lipstick, which she normally only does at school concerts.

At assembly Mr Parsons bounded on to the stage. His shirt was very pink and his shoes were EXTREMELY shiny. I don't think I've ever noticed them being that shiny before. Gran would have been very impressed. She's always going on about how people don't polish their shoes enough.

'Good morning, Bekesbourne High!' boomed Mr Parsons. Emma says he always sounds like he is at some rock concert. I quite like it. 'Welcome back! I trust you had a good half-term? And you return to some very exciting news! As you know, the international pop star Frankie Santoro is one of our old girls. Now, Frankie is launching a new charity. She's recording a fundraising song and the big news is . . . she wants *our* school to get involved!'

You could hear 'wows' all over the hall. Even the teachers looked interested.

Frankie Santoro! I can't believe it, Timmy. You're right to wag your tail. Frankie went to Bekesbourne High. She used to go out with Matt from Mum's

shop, and she was always coming in to buy vintage clothes there. Do you remember when we saw her on TV wearing them, and Gran said she couldn't understand why a pop star wanted to wear old clothes, and Dad said it would be great publicity for the shop and Mum should write and ask Frankie to mention Buttons and Bows when she was on TV, and Mum got upset and stressed with them both? That was just before Jack was born.

Anyway. Then Mr Parsons said, 'I'm going to let Kaz Baker, who is a television producer, tell you more . . .'

At the words 'television producer' you could feel the excitement mount. Even the teachers sat up straighter.

A woman with long earrings and a scarf smiled at Mr Parsons and stepped forward to talk into a microphone.

'Thank you. We are very excited about Frankie's new charity, which is going to fund music projects for young people, and I want to thank your Head, Mr Parsons, for being so very welcoming and helpful.'

Mr Parsons beamed. If he had looked any more welcoming and helpful he would have burst!

'Frankie has often said how important her school was to her,' continued Kaz Baker, 'and so we thought that it would be fun to film her launching her charity here. We'd like to film the school choir and interview students from across the school, but we've also got a special thing we need to ask. We're going to film Frankie singing her new single – and she wants to be supported by a band from her old school.'

We all got a bit excited, and the teachers had to do some shushing before Kaz Baker could go on. She looked very calm, though. She just waited until we were quiet, smiled and continued.

'We'll be doing the auditions all day next Thursday and will narrow it down to two bands – then when Frankie comes to launch the charity on Friday she will pick the winner. Mr Parsons has also agreed that we can come film the auditions on Thursday and do some interviews – we'll try to meet as many of you as possible!'

Mr Parsons came up next to her at the microphone, took it from its stand and started striding around the stage. Kaz Baker sat down. There wasn't much else she could do, to be honest. Matt told us that when he and Frankie were at school, Mr Parsons used to do

Elvis Presley impressions every Christmas. I thought he might do one then. It was like he had forgotten he was a head teacher and thought he was a pop star. It was so embarrassing.

'Thank you, Mrs Baker. Now, students, a world-class pop star is going to be here, in our midst, and we've got just under two weeks to prepare. So let's show the world how creative and talented ALL Bekesbourne High students are!'

Everyone clapped and drummed their feet for ages. Mr Parsons came back and sat next to Kaz Baker and there was a lot of smiling and nodding going on between them. She didn't seem to be put off by him being a bit weird. The teachers were still shushing as we left the hall, but you could tell they were pretty pleased too.

'I bet that's why he is wearing those ties. He just wants to be on TV,' said Emma as we walked down the corridor after assembly. She's very clever.

'So do I,' said Mohona. She's very honest.

'Me too,' I said.

In maths we noticed that Mr Hawkins had put quite a lot of gel in his hair and was looking very cheered up. He let us have five minutes to talk about

Frankie Santoro and then he made us work. I hope he gets on TV. He's always nice, even to Lauren – most of the teachers get cross with her because she can't be bothered to do their homework.

Mr Peterson gave us LOADS of homework and didn't want to talk about Frankie Santoro AT ALL. He seemed to think that him setting up an inter-form physics challenge was the most exciting thing that has ever happened to this school. Mr Peterson is really strange.

And then it was break, and time for an emergency 'how to get the TV people to notice us' meeting.

'They'll only interview really special pupils across the school,' said Mohona. 'It's not like we can do break-dancing or anything.'

We looked at each other.

'No – we'd never learn in time,' said Emma.

'I bet Jed Reubens will be doing his card tricks,' I said.

He's in Year 10, Timmy, and someone said he is going to be in the Magic Circle or something. Anyway, he's really good at magic, so we couldn't compete.

'Well, we're in the choir,' said Mohona. 'They're definitely going to listen to the choir.'

'But we won't stand out. We're just going to have to form a band and audition,' Emma said. 'It can't be that hard. Suzi Lyons has got one.'

'That's a good idea,' I said. 'You can play guitar, Emma. I can do violin and Mohona can sing.'

'I couldn't sing on my own, you'd have to sing with me,' said Mohona.

So I wrote down:

1. Form a band.
2. Learn how to play violin and sing at same time. (Anna)

Typically, Suzi Lyons overheard our plans.

'You're not thinking of auditioning are you?' she said, coming up to our desk. 'You haven't got a chance. Caitlin and Tanesha and I formed our band practically as soon as we started Year 7.'

It's true. Every lunchtime Suzi sits in the music room and plays piano really loudly and she and Caitlin and Tanesha sing whatever is the latest big hit. I'd like to say they're rubbish but they're not. They are annoyingly good. They've always been like that – even at St Faith's they always got the best parts in things.

But they sort of use up all the air in a room.

'You're only doing it to be on TV,' said Suzi.

That was also true, but Emma didn't let that bother her.

'So you're doing it purely for the love of music, then?' said Emma, glaring at her. 'You can't just ban anyone else from forming a band.'

True again. Rishi and Sam were already playing air guitars in the corner.

'You'll be rubbish, anyway,' said Suzi, which was mean AND untrue, so that made our true bit slightly better than hers. She stomped off to find Caitlin and Tanesha.

Emma says she already knows three chords on guitar and thinks she can learn a couple more by the time the film crew come. I can play the violin a little bit now. I've been learning since the start of Year 7, which is practically two months. Miss Green said in my lesson today that if I practised I could be good.

So the plan is we will sound amazing and we will win the competition.

I really want this term to go well. First of all, I've already sorted out the ingredients for food tech on

Wednesday. I don't want another situation like the fish pie.

'*Anna, I'm so sorry. I've been so busy. Tell them what's been happening at home. They'll understand.*'

'What do you mean, you forgot the *fish*?' Mrs White said. 'It's not exactly difficult. You've remembered the flour and margarine. What did you think we were making – air pie?'

It was awful, Tim. Everyone laughed.

I hate Mrs White.

Mohona said I could have some of her fish, and Mrs White said, 'That's very good of you, Mohona, are you sure? It hardly seems fair that you should have less fish in *your* pie because someone else can't be bothered to remember the obvious.'

Which was true. But Mohona did have an awful lot of fish.

'Mum always gives me too much. I'm glad I can share it. And I don't like fish pie anyway,' said Mohona.

Thank goodness for Mohona.

Chapter Three

Do dogs have grandmothers? I suppose you must, Tim. But I bet your gran wouldn't take over the way mine does.

I'm so sorry she made you leave the dining room this evening. It's just she's got a thing about dog hair and babies, and you do moult loads. If I had time I could knit a jumper just from your hair. Frankie Santoro might even wear it. I haven't seen any other pop star wearing a golden-retriever-hair jumper. It'd be like cashmere or something. Only I can't spin or knit. If Aunty Helen was here she could teach me. She's so good at making things, like that lovely driftwood statue of you she gave me. But Aunty Helen isn't here – she's teaching in Spain and won't be back till next week – and anyway I haven't got time to learn to knit before Frankie arrives.

So I'll tell you what you missed while you were banished.

I told Gran and Mum about Frankie Santoro over dinner, and Gran was really interested.

'She's that girl who nursed her mother, isn't she?' she said. Gran had brought over one of her homemade shepherd's pies and was serving it out. 'And when she was in the *Songbird* final, her mother was really ill? Lovely girl.'

Gran knows everything there is to know about TV talent shows. Which is funny as Mum won't let me watch them. Mum says they exploit people who don't realise they haven't got any talent. Gran says it's their own fault for going on the shows in the first place, and it's just a bit of fun, and anyway some of them are very talented and have hard lives and it is wonderful to see them succeed after all they have suffered.

Mum used to get really cross about it, but she doesn't get into those arguments any more with Gran. It makes dinner much quieter, but I miss Mum caring so much. All she cares about now is Jack.

I know Mum is right about feeling sorry for people who are rubbish, but it's tricky at school if you never watch any talent shows because everyone

keeps talking about them. That's why it's handy having Gran. Sometimes I even manage to be at Gran's when one is on and see it properly. I don't tell Mum, though.

'Yes, that Frankie Santoro is a good girl,' Gran went on, serving a *huge* dollop of shepherd's pie on to my plate.

Mum used to care about that too. She always complained that Gran behaved as if we were being starved. Now she just lets Gran bring over whatever food she wants. Which is usually shepherd's pie. It's nice but you can have a bit too much of it after a while. A bit like Gran. Is that really mean, Timmy?

I'm just fed up with Gran sending you out of the room. It's your home, not hers. Anyway, Gran did a whole speech about Frankie.

'That girl has a beautiful singing voice and she gave up her teenage years to help her mother when she was ill. She deserved to win. I'll never forget the words she said when she won. Do you know what they were?'

Mum and I didn't bother answering as we knew she was going to tell us anyway.

'She said she dedicated her win to her mother, who had done everything for her, and nothing she

could do would ever be enough to thank her.'

Gran put a spoonful of shepherd's pie on to her own plate and sat down. I know she would like more than anything in the world for her son to say something like that about her on TV. She'd love Dad to be at a posh award ceremony for amazing journalists. She wouldn't want to be actually there because she doesn't like posh things or fuss, but she'd like her son to be there and say how he couldn't have done it without her.

And it would be true if he said it. Gran didn't get a chance to go to college or anything, even though her teacher said she was very clever and could do anything she liked. She had to bring up Dad and Aunty Helen on her own because their dad died when they were young, and she had to go out to work to clean other people's houses and she didn't get help from anyone.

It's all true, but it's hard to know what to reply when she starts saying it, because she normally talks about no one ever helping her at the same time that she is helping us.

Jack started crying upstairs and Mum got up.

'I'm sure he'll be fine. It's good for him to cry. It will exercise his lungs,' said Gran.

'No. I'll go. Please . . . just stay here . . .' said Mum, and she was off upstairs as if she couldn't get away from us quickly enough.

Your ears are so soft, Timmy.

Where was I? Oh yeah – then Gran started the 'what are you going to do when you grow up?' conversation. You're so lucky nobody asks you anything like that, Timmy.

I don't know why Gran asks me every time she comes over. You'd think she'd be bored.

'So what are you going to be when you grow up, Anna?'

'I don't know, Gran,' I said, for the millionth time. I know she wants me to be a doctor. One day I'm going to tell her I want to be an international jewel thief.

'Well, you'll need to work hard at school whatever you do,' said Gran. 'What's your homework tonight?'

'I've got some geography for tomorrow and I have to write a piece for RS about someone I admire.' Oh no, I suddenly saw Gran look very pleased and hopeful. Hopeful that I might choose her. And I really didn't want to. It would just look weird – everyone is going to write about Frankie Santoro or football

players. I love Gran but I don't want to grow up to be like her. Nobody would.

'I think it's got to be someone from history?' I lied. 'I think I'll do Prince Rupert of the Rhine.'

'Prince who of the what?' said Gran, interested. I knew she couldn't mind if I chose someone royal. She has lots of mugs with pictures of the royal family on them.

'Prince Rupert of the Rhine. We learnt about him at primary school. He was a Cavalier in the English Civil War and he had a dog.'

I didn't tell Gran that Prince Rupert got his dog to wee whenever he said the name Oliver Cromwell. I remember telling Mum when we learnt about it in Year 6, and Mum laughed for ages. And don't get any ideas, Timmy. I do NOT want you to learn that trick. Not even if it's when I mention Mrs White. Though that would be funny.

I love it when you roll over like that, you big soppy dog.

You've never been very good at tricks. Not normal ones, anyway. Or even bringing balls back. In fact, you are *rubbish* at retrieving. You are a golden 'please will you retrieve the ball for me while I wag my tail' dog.

But you are good at wiggling your eyebrows. First one, then the other.

That's a talent too.

Gran has finished hoovering. I'll do a bit of violin practice. Miss Green says I have made a very good start and that everyone has problems with tuning at the beginning. The important thing is to practice.

That's not fair. Gran made LOADS of noise hoovering. I don't see why she thinks Jack will wake up and get upset if I play the violin.



Good. Gran's gone.

I'll go online and look up Prince Rupert. I'm not sure I should say the bit about his dog and I don't have many other things to say. I don't want Tanesha and Caitlin and Suzi rolling their eyes and saying I'm so immature.

Though it is funny.

Mum's been looking up a lot of clinics. Why's she doing that?

I suppose I shouldn't have looked at her search

history. Or clicked on the links. But it's really awful. There are all these babies born early like Jack, and they can't walk, and they have to be treated at special clinics in America. Is that what is going to happen to Jack? I don't want to think about it. Mum's probably just checking things. Jack's too small to walk, anyway.

I'll look up Prince Rupert. His dog was called Boye, and Boye cocked his leg when he heard the name John Pym, not Oliver Cromwell. He was a white hunting poodle, not a retriever like you, Timmy.

Timmy? Hey – what have you got? Where did you find that? I thought I heard a clatter. You've got to stop raiding the bin. It's no good just wagging your tail like that. Oh, it's okay, soppy dog. You don't have to lick me to death.

Good night, Timberoni macaroni, pasta-eating superhero, anything-eating superhero. Good night, Tim the bin.

Tuesday



Chapter Four

You really like dental sticks, don't you? Basically, you're brushing your teeth AND eating the toothbrush afterwards. Actually, I don't want to think about that too much.

Sorry it was such a rush this morning. We all overslept. Mum and Jack were up most of the night. I forgot to set my alarm and I didn't wake up until eight and then I had to run for the bus. I was quite pleased I was so fast.

Mrs Berlinski took the register and then turned into Mad Music Teacher. She is *really* excited about Frankie Santoro coming.

Right, 7B!' she announced. 'We want *all* of Year 7 to be involved with Frankie Santoro's visit. So, from now until she arrives we're going to spend music lessons and form periods working on the bands.'

That showed Suzi Lyons. I could see her and

Tanesha and Caitlin really scowling. So much for them being the only Year 7 band.

Mrs Berlinski said that we would be making the bands in groups of four. She gave Caitlin, Suzi and Tanesha Brendan O'Donoghue because he sits near them. They looked really pleased, because according to them he is the best-looking boy in the class, but he looked really fed up. I think he wanted to be with Alex Black and Wesley Douglas and Oliver Sheppard. Alex was at St Faith's with us, Brendan came from Ireland and Wesley and Oliver were at Bekesbourne Primary, but they're always together now. They play football every break. That's all they ever talk about. If Suzi and the others don't choose a football song I bet Brendan won't sing.

We were lucky we were sitting together already – but guess who we are stuck with just because she sits next to Emma? Lauren. AND we have been given M1 practice room, which Emma says smells of wet socks. Wesley Douglas said it's haunted and the smell of wet socks only shows there has been poltergeist activity. He watches a lot of TV programmes about ghosts. Emma says it's because Wesley dries his football kit on the radiator in there (though Mrs Berlinski would go mad if she found out) but Wesley

says that has nothing to do with it and his socks don't smell. I wouldn't know because I can't smell very well anyway. That reminds me of one of Mum's jokes:

My dog's got no nose.

How does he smell?

Terrible.

I suppose it's quite a useful gift. I could be a secret agent and be sent into smelly areas where others could not go.

'It's not fair Lauren is in our group,' muttered Emma as we carried our chairs out to M1. 'She's going to spoil everything.'

'What can you do?' she asked Lauren, straight out, when we had got our chairs in a circle. It was the first time any of us had spoken to Lauren for ages.

'I can sing,' said Lauren.

'That's no good,' said Emma. 'Mohona is the singer in the band.'

'I don't mind, honestly,' said Mohona. 'Let Lauren do it.'

'No. We have to rely on the singer, and Lauren's hardly ever here,' said Emma. 'I'm playing guitar and Anna is playing violin. You'll just have to play the tambourine or something, Lauren. That way if you don't turn up it won't ruin everything.'

That seems a bit mean, but Emma knows what she is talking about. Lauren was Emma's partner for lasagne back in September, and she turned up without the minced meat so Emma, who had brought in all the pasta and milk and cheese, had to borrow some frozen vegetables from the food tech freezer and Mrs White helped her make a vegetable lasagne instead, and Emma said her dad was really disappointed when she brought it home. And Lauren didn't even say sorry when she came into school the next day. So I can see why Emma didn't trust her. At least I said sorry about the fish.

Lauren didn't argue with Emma, but she looked a bit fed up. Mrs Berlinski said we could use Emma's phone to look up songs, so we looked up 'Loving You' by Dylan Williams because I remembered he sang it as a guest on *X-Factor*. Gran's a big fan. I think his grandad was in a home or something and when Dylan got rich he took him on holiday. Gran read about it in the hairdresser's. She likes stories like that. She doesn't like him quite as much as Frankie because looking after your mum is a bit better than taking your grandad on holiday, but he's definitely up there.

We found the guitar chords for Emma online and I got my violin to work out the tune. It's quite difficult, actually. Lauren didn't join in. She just sat on the chair leafing through music, ignoring us. She couldn't even be bothered to look for a tambourine. Mohona kept singing very quietly and looking over at her, worried she wasn't joining in, but Emma just said, 'Leave her, Mohona. She won't turn up anyway,' and Lauren went on blanking us so we just carried on until the bell went.

'I think we need a bit of practice,' said Emma as we packed up. 'We'll meet up at lunchtime tomorrow. Let's see if M2 is free. I can't stand Wesley's socks any more.'

I got a merit in geography. I was a bit worried as I forgot to do my homework about ways to save the planet, but I remembered Mum's shop and I said one way we could care for the earth was to not buy so many new clothes, but wear vintage clothes, which were better for the environment, and Mr Cassidy said, 'Excellent, Anna,' which was pretty amazing as normally he just says things like, 'I can't believe you've forgotten your work again' or something about my writing being too messy. It's the first time really he's ever been nice to me. Of course Suzi Lyons tried to

spoil it and muttered loudly, 'Who wants to wear old clothes?' but Emma said, 'Frankie Santoro for one' and it was brilliant. Suzi Lyons just glared at us.

We had double French then. It was fun. I told Madame Saulnier I had '*un chien et un petit frère*'. I also learnt that 'I have a golden retriever' is '*J'ai un golden retriever*'. So it's easy to talk about you in two languages, Tim!

The next thing the bell was ringing and we were charging downstairs to lunch and choir practice. Mrs Berlinski has chosen 'He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother' as the song we will sing to Frankie, which is a bit odd, I think. She says it's because Frankie is founding a charity about helping people, but it's a bit slow and gloomy, not like Frankie's songs. I really like them because you can dance to them. I'll play you some later, Timmy.

I've just had a fantastic idea! If you were in our band we could get you to dance with us at the audition, Timmy. I wish I'd trained you by now. When we got you they said your mum and dad were in a golden retriever dance display team. Mum and I were going to find out if there were classes near us. But then Jack came along and stuff so we didn't get round to it.

Anyway, maybe we don't need classes. Maybe you're just naturally talented. Maybe there will be something on YouTube about dog dancing and I can teach you in secret and then bring you to school for the video and you'll be brilliant and they will choose us for Frankie's video. That would be AMAZING.

I suppose I'd better take you out for a walk. Mum's upstairs with Jack so that should cheer her up. She worries we don't take you out enough.



You were AWFUL, Timmy. How am I going to teach you to dance if you won't even walk to heel? You used to be so much better at puppy class. It was only a squirrel. You nearly pulled my arm off. And then how would I play violin for the audition?

I'll go and check on Mum and Jack. Have a dog biscuit. Though you don't really deserve it.

Mum says she doesn't want any dinner. I'll just do some pasta, then. Luckily I found a jar of pesto in the cupboard.

I'm feeling quite good about cooking suddenly.

We are making pizza in food tech tomorrow. I'm completely sorted. Dad and I went into town on Saturday before he went away and I bought the cheese myself. I wrapped it up and I wrote 'Anna's cheese for Wednesday' on it and put it in the fridge. I bought a packet of herbs too. I should have bought some bicarbonate of soda, but I didn't know what aisle it was in. I didn't want to ask in case they knew it was for greasy hair. Anyway, Mohona is bringing the flour and the margarine and the yeast and the tomatoes. I feel really sorry for Emma having Lauren as a partner again, but she says she's just going to bring in everything, just in case.

YOUNG CARERS

A young carer is someone 18 or younger who provides care and emotional support for a relative with a condition, such as a disability, physical or mental illness, or an addiction.

A BBC report in 2010 estimated that there are around 700,000 young carers in the UK.

Research suggests that 1 in 12 of children at school are young carers – that's roughly two in every class.

Children as young as 5 have been identified as young carers.

Charities such as *The Children's Society* and *The Carers' Trust* provide support to young carers and to schools and communities in identifying and helping young carers.

Links to these organisations and information on how you can get in touch are on the page opposite.

Information and Support

The Children's Society:
www.youngcarer.com
www.childrenssociety.org.uk
Contact the supporter care team:
TEL: 0300 303 7000
EMAIL: supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk

The Carer's Trust:
www.carers.org
Carer's Trust online chat website for young carers:
https://babble.carers.org

Childline:
www.childline.org.uk
TEL: 0800 1111

Statistics from the Children's Society
'Hidden from View: The experience of Young Carers in England', 2013
www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/report_hidden-from-view_young-carers_final.pdf
and The Carer's Trust website
www.carers.org/what-young-carer