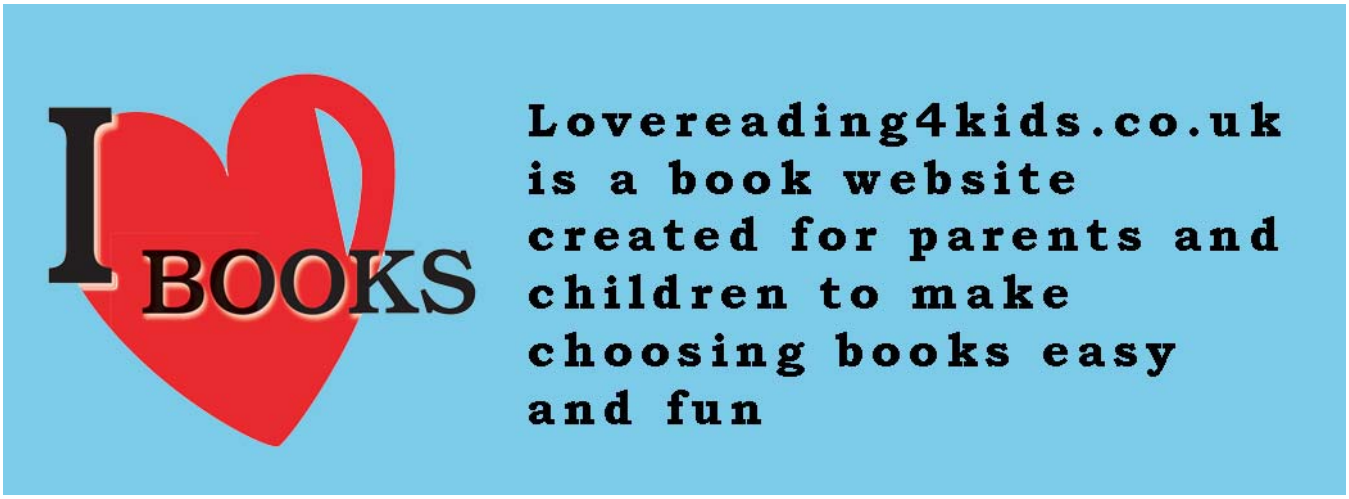



Opening extract from

# Nathalia Buttface and the Embarrassing Camp Catastrophe

Written by

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Illustrated by

**Sarah Horne**

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# Nathalia BUTTFACE and the Embarrassing CAMP Catastrophe

BY

Nigel Smith

Illustrated by Sarah Horne



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*To all the children who continue to share their embarrassing dad stories with me, especially their embarrassing names. To all the poor Milly Moo-Cows, the Katie Potatoes and the Tommy Blueberrys. To the Piglets, the Widgets, the Teabags.*

*Thank you for sharing, thank you for making me laugh, thank you for giving me stories I can totally nick.*



# CHAPTER ONE

"AND THE WINNER IS... DARIUS BAGLEY!"

THE Darius Bagley?

There was a stunned silence as the Head read out the shocking result to the whole school at assembly. It didn't just shock the school; it shocked her too.

The Head frowned and rubbed her glasses, peering at the envelope she had just opened. She *must* have read it wrong. But no – there it was in black and white.

Darius Bagley a *winner*? In an essay-writing competition?

"Essays? I didn't even know he could write," Miss Eyre whispered nastily to her equally nasty pal

Miss Austen, standing at the back of the hall. She made sure that she whispered it just loud enough for everyone to hear.

"He can't, much," said Nat to Penny Posnitch. "I wrote it for him. In fact, I spent so long writing HIS rubbish essay, I didn't have time to finish MY rubbish essay. The little cheaty chimp."

"You only wrote his essay because you owed him loads of favours – he's done every single one of your maths tests," giggled Penny. "You're just as big a cheat."

"That's different," muttered Nat, kicking at the floor.

"AND you told me you wrote it as a big joke," added Penny.

"It was a big joke. But, as usual, the joke's on me," said Nat sulkily. "I should be getting MY name read out on stage, not that tiny monster."

"He's won a prize," shouted the Head, continuing to read her letter, "an actual prize!"

"SO not fair," said Nat.

"Where is Darius Bagley anyway?" said the Head. "Come up here now and collect your prize so we can get this over with."

"He can't come up, Miss," shouted Nat. "He's sitting outside your office."

"Oh, surely he can't be in detention already," said the Head. "It's not even nine o'clock yet."

"He says it saves time, Miss," said Nat.

"I'll get him," said his 8H form teacher, Miss Hunny, chuckling.

A minute or so later, Darius trotted in, wearing his usual ripped blazer, torn jumper, grey-collared shirt, and egg-stained tie. He hopped on to the stage.

"HELLOOO, LOSERS!" he yelled, like a rock star saying hello to ten thousand fans.

*Unlike* a rock star in front of ten thousand fans, he got a lot of booing. A few scrunched-up crisp packets and a plastic pop-bottle whizzed towards him.

"What's my prize?" Darius asked the Head. "Is it sweets, a dog or an air rifle?"

"It's better than any of those," said the Head. "It's a book token."

"You keep it," said Darius, walking away without the token.

The school – including the teachers – burst out laughing.

The Head shouted crossly for silence. She grabbed Darius and thrust the token into his hands.

Darius turned away, skilfully making the token into a paper aeroplane as he went.

"Wait. I haven't finished with you yet," she said.

Darius stopped walking, plonked himself down on the edge of the stage and dangled his legs over it.

"This is a very important prize you've won," said the Head.

"Yes, but *I* won it," said Nat through gritted teeth.

"As you may know, children, this was an essay-writing competition organised by a charity that looks after our countryside. Their motto is: 'A tidy country is a happy country'."

Nat looked around at the litter-strewn school hall and sniggered.

The Head looked at it too, but just sniffed. She carried on: "Darius's prize-winning essay was called..." She frowned down at the letter. "Erm, his essay was called: 'Let's have less trees and rubbish flowers, more theme parks and oil wells'."

Nat chortled, remembering the fun she had writing it. All she'd done one night was scribble

down the stuff Darius always said about the countryside. There was a naughty little part of her that had thought it might be funny to watch him getting told off yet again. But how on Earth did it win?

The Head continued, in a voice which suggested she'd rather be Head at a different school, "According to this letter, the judges said it was a hilarious but chilling satire on what would happen if a lunatic was in charge of the country."

Satire? *Satire?* Nat suddenly understood why Darius's essay had won.

"What's a satire?" Penny asked Nat.

"It means you're being ridiculous to be funny," said Nat.

"Like being sarcastic?" asked Penny.

"No," said Nat sarcastically. She frowned crossly. "But I wasn't being sarcastic – I just wrote down what Darius actually WANTS TO DO! He hates trees and flowers but he likes theme parks and oil wells. AND high-speed trains, quarries, and places where they test tanks."

She looked at Darius hogging all the attention and stamped her foot.

"None of this is fair," she shouted. "I want that book token. I like books – to read, and not just to make into paper aeroplanes."

"Can pupils please stop shouting out," demanded the Head. "I've got a coffee going cold in the staffroom and I'd like to get back to it."

By now everyone was a bit bored and restless so the Head raced through the next part as quickly as possible.

"Anyway, thanks to clever little Darius, his whole class, 8H, has won a super week at a special 'back to nature' campsite thing next month."

"Is HE coming?" shouted Julia Pryde, a girl from 8H, pointing to Darius and making a "yuk" face.

"Of course he is," said the Head, who was looking forward to a Bagley-free week. "After all, you wouldn't even be going if it wasn't for him. Now get to class – our exam results have been so bad recently I'm surprised we haven't been turned into a shopping centre."

Nat wondered how a campsite could be super. Super uncomfortable, maybe. Super damp, super bug-ridden, super grotty, yes.

But she was too busy getting swept up in the sea

of kids heading back to class to worry about it too much.

Anyway, a school trip, even if it was rubbish, meant no schoolwork so that was good news, woo!

"That is the worst news I've ever heard," yelled Nat that night.

She was in the kitchen with Dad, who was preparing his favourite meal, pork pie and chips.

"You don't mean that," said Dad, smiling. "Now, do you want any veg? I'm thinking baked beans."

"I'm thinking you *can't* come with us to the campsite for the week," said Nat. "I'm thinking it'll be rubbish anyway, but it'll be extra, super, luxury rubbish if you come too."

"Don't be daft. It's almost as if you think I'll embarrass you or something!"

"I do think that. I totally think that."

"You make me laugh when you get cross," said Dad, ruffling her hair. Which made Nat even crosser.

"When Dolores – Miss Hunny to you…" began Dad.

Nat groaned.

Her form teacher Miss Hunny and Dad were

old mates and that often led to mega-embarrassing times, like when she'd come home to find her teacher IN HER HOUSE, drinking red wine in her kitchen. Fortunately Dad was such a rotten cook that Miss Hunny didn't visit much. Nat started thinking about how terrible her life was…

"Pay attention," said Dad. "When Miss Hunny rang and told me Darius had won you that camping trip, I said that's great news because I need to get my Approved for Kids certificate."

Dad put on his patient face. "You know I've applied for a job – I told you, remember?"

"Oh yeah, Mum told me. She said she was fed up with going out to work all hours while you sat around in your pants writing Christmas-cracker jokes and eating pork pies all day."

"I don't think she put it quite like that," said Dad with a mouthful of pork pie.

"No, when Mum said it there were loads more rude words."

"Anyway," continued Dad, putting beans in the microwave, "I've got a job offer."

"A job? Like normal people? You? Doing what?"

"Teaching comedy skills to young criminals who

want to turn over a new leaf."

"What comedy skills? Your jokes were voted the worst Christmas-cracker jokes of all time by that website last year. You even got a prize – look."

On a shelf by the cookbooks stood a little plastic figure of a man holding his nose.

"You won a Stinker."

"A prize is a prize," said Dad proudly. "It makes me a prize-winning joke writer. At least that's what I tell everyone."

Nat stamped her foot. "But I still don't understand why you want to come on our school camping trip."

"Because the people who lock up the young criminals said that I need to have an Approved for Kids certificate to get the job."

"Find some other kids," said Nat. "There are loads of us – every town has them."

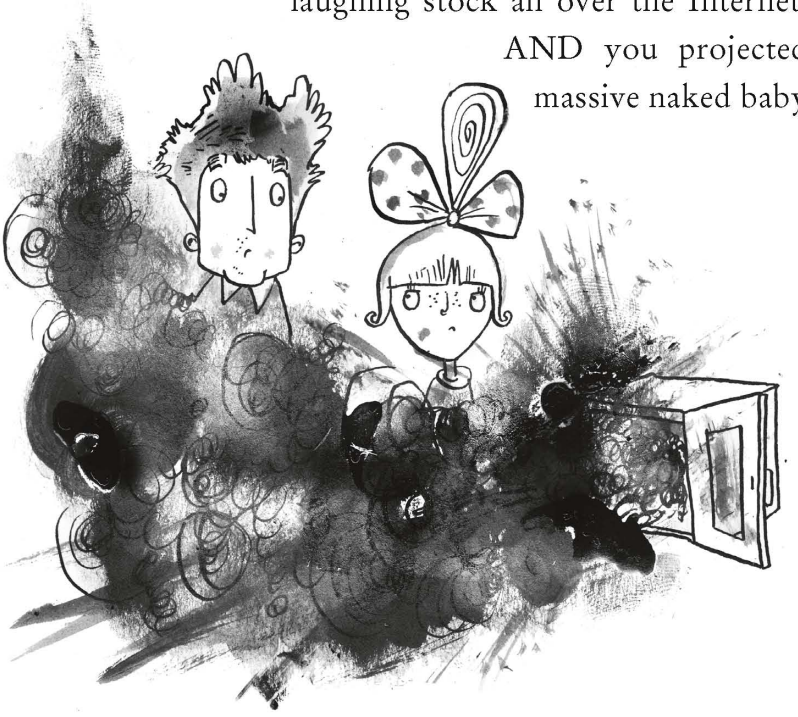
"No time," said Dad. "Plus the Head at your school knows me because I've done plenty of things there before. You know, until you banned me from doing them."

"Can you blame me, Dad?" said Nat, as the beans *pinged* in the microwave. Smoke poured out of the door. "Everything you do ends in total disaster.

You took my class to a boring cathedral and got us chucked out, and that was even *before* Darius went up on the roof and mooned the whole town. You put on a school quiz night that ended in a riot. You've sunk priceless sailing boats. You've got me arrested by real police. You've blown up houses—"

"Just one house," corrected Dad. "One tiny house."

"You've electrocuted the world's most precious ducks, you've ruined weddings, you've made me a laughing stock all over the Internet, AND you projected massive naked baby



pictures of me on a wall at the school disco."

"I was hoping you might have forgotten that one."

"How can I forget my bare baby bum, ten feet high on the gym wall at school? I can't forget it, and neither can the five hundred other people who saw it."

Dad made that noise which Nat recognised as his 'trying not to laugh because my daughter will get even crosser' noise. Which just made her crosser.

"AND you stuck me with the world's most embarrassing surname," she said.

"It's pronounced Bew-mow-lay."

"It's spelled B-U-M-O-L-E though, isn't it? I'm getting married at sixteen just to change it."

Before Dad could reply, Mum came bustling through the kitchen door, still in her coat and, as ever, texting on her mobile.

"Mum, Dad's trying to ruin my life again," said Nat, "and he's had loads of practice so he's got ever so good at it."

"I didn't know you were home for dinner tonight," said Dad, trying to hide his rubbish meal.

"Obviously," Mum said, kissing him fondly on

the cheek. She hugged Nat, still texting, and sniffed the beany smoke.

"Bin it. I'm taking you out for Chinese," she said. "Tell me all about it over crispy duck. I think you'll find it makes everything better. Even your daft dad."