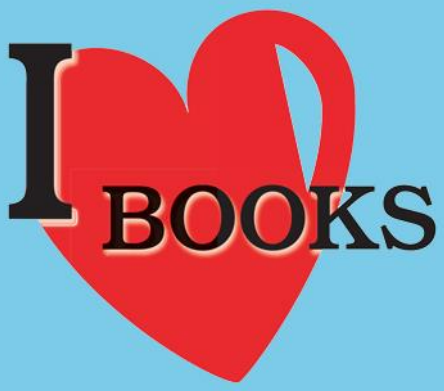


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Opening extract from

St Grizzles School for Girls, Goats and Random Boys

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FOR GIRLS,
GOATS AND
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Kindly on loan to

NAME	YEAR
Bertha Huggit	1926
Trinny Winterbottom	1953
Flossie Fitzgibble	1962
Arabella Crump	1998

Dani

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Chapter 1

Too Many Bums for One Girl





I've been staring at penguins' bums for quite a long time now.

On the TV, I mean – we don't have any real, live, fishy-breathed ones flip-flapping about in the living room or anything.

I know staring at penguins' bums might sound kind of fun, but fun things turn into boring things when you do them too often. And we stare at penguins' bums A LOT in our house.

It's cos my mum's a zoologist. You'd THINK that'd mean exciting stuff, like she'd take me to hang out with pygmy hippos or stroke jaguars or stingrays or ocelots or something.

But no. It's all about endless film clips of penguins, penguins, penguins and their bums, bums, bums, just cos Mum's doing this important project thingammee about how they waddle or something.

"...so, Dani, that's when my boss told me..."

Mum is saying as she kneels in front of the TV, her eyes glued to the widdle-waddling birds, "...I mean, it's always so difficult to get funding..."

I know this sounds bad, but I sort of switch off when Mum's talking about her work. Especially right now, since my best friend Arch will be here any minute and I've been daydreaming about what we've got planned for the afternoon.

"...such an amazing opportunity..." Mum carries on, though I think I might have missed a bit. OK, a lot. "...it'll mean big changes, of course, but..."

I sit fidgeting on the sofa, twisting the head of my Tyrannosaurus rex (plastic one, not real – duh!). The thing is, I'm not that interested in any big changes happening at Mum's work. I don't mean to sound rude – I bet Mum wouldn't exactly find it fascinating if I told her they're laying new

floor-tiles in the smelly boys' toilets at school.

And it's not just me – my dog Downboy is fidgety, too. Normally he loves "**ARF! ARF! ARF!**"ing at any random animals that pop up on telly, but today he's had enough of penguins and is entertaining himself by licking my knees through the holes in my skinny jeans instead.

I wonder how much longer Arch'll be, I think to myself, as I stop nibbling the end of one of my messy plaits long enough to shove Downboy away. (He comes straight back and starts eating the laces on my beat-up trainers.)

Then all of a sudden – right in the middle of a waddle – Mum finally presses pause on the remote control.

The penguins on screen freeze like they're playing a game of big-bummed Statues.


INTO THE WILD

"So?" says Mum, turning and looking at me expectantly.

"So … that was great," I reply, flashing Mum my best pretend ooh-that-was-interesting! smile as I scramble up off the sofa.

"Er, glad you enjoyed it," says Mum, sounding a bit confused. "But more importantly, what do you reckon, Dani?"

"Huh?" I mumble vaguely, hovering halfway to standing.

What is Mum on about? Whatever it is, she'd better tell me quick, cos Arch is arriving any minute to make our latest mini-movie. It's our thing. We got into doing mini-movies after we found these totally funny clips on YouTube. Some little kid's parents got hold of his toy dinosaur collection and made films with them when he was asleep. They had the dinos doing stuff like watching *Toy Story* with teeny bowls of popcorn

or all piling on his blue plastic scooter and zooming across the dining-room floor.

The clips were so cool, we decided to make our OWN films with a bunch of random ex-toys we didn't play with any more, plus some extras from the local charity shop. Between us we have forty-six. They are:



- 9 Beanie Boos
- 8 dinosaurs
  (all kinds, but my favourite is the T rex)
- 8 teddies (various sizes)
- 7 LEGO figures
- 5 Barbies
- 4 Star Wars characters
  (Chewbacca, Yoda, R2-D2 and a one-armed Stormtrooper)
- 2 Furbys (broken/silent)
- 2 Elmers
- 1 unicorn (tiddly)

