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Opening extract from

Wartman

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Chapter 1
Dilly Watson

I wish I'd broken my leg playing football. I'd have had a white plaster that everyone could have written their names on. Or I wish I'd been ill. Then I could have gone to hospital and everyone would have sent me cards and flowers and grapes.

But I didn't break a leg and I didn't go to hospital. I got a wart.

That sort of thing always happens to me.



I'm called Dilly, Dilly Watson. I'm Billy really, but my big brother, Jim – he's five years older than me – called me Dilly when he was little. It stuck. I've been Dilly ever since.

I didn't have warts when I was born. I didn't have warts for the first nine years of my life. My class teacher, Miss Erikson, told my mother that I was "a happy, smiley sort of boy". She didn't mean me to hear that, but I did.

That's what I used to be. A happy, smiley sort of boy. Then things went wrong for me, badly wrong.

Last term everything was still fine. I was in the football team. I got more votes than anyone else in the school election. I told everyone they could have everything they wanted if they voted for me – a swimming pool, free sweets and no more lessons. They didn't believe me, but they still voted for me. Well, Penny Prosser and her lot didn't, but then she's never liked



me. Do you know what she said once? She said that football was stupid.

I've never forgiven her for that, never. But last term Penny Prosser and her lot didn't matter, because everyone else thought I was great.

Miss Erikson liked me best too. I could tell from the way she smiled at me. But all that, as I said, was last term, a long time ago – B.W. – Before the Wart.