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For Freddie Batie
(and his big sister Immy)
From your pals,
Danny & Jamie

WARNING FROM THE AUTHOR:

The following opening chapter contains deeply disgusting details of a horrific nature.

If you are a sensitive child, prone to vomiting, please immediately fetch a bin.

If you don't have a bin, fetch a smaller child with large pockets.

If no smaller children are available, use a grown-up's shoes.

1 The Small Wee hours

It was a minute after your bedtime, and in the small town of Frinkley Nurse Pickernose was checking on all the new babies at the hospital.

There were twenty-two of them in the nursery that evening, each one gently sleeping in his or her own little cot, and all lined up in a perfectly lovely circle.

There was tiny Ringo Togs.



And little Bottletop Baxter.

And cute, wee Orangina Sniffle.

This roomful of babies was a particularly good roomful of babies. Each one was incredibly sweet and well behaved.

'Aw,' smiled Nurse Pickernose to herself. 'Night-night, my Frinkley wrinklies.'

This was a woman who loved babies almost as much as she loved kebabs, and this was a woman who loved kebabs. She loved their little whimpers and their little sighs.

The sighs of the babies, I mean. Not the kebabs.

She loved their baby yawns too, and the way they'd do those very fast little baby bottom burps. 'Just some love escaping!' she'd joke.

Nurse Pickernose adored her job and she'd been at the hospital forever. She'd even been born there. Her whole life was at this place and there was nowhere she'd rather work. She would skate to Frinkley Hospital every day on her medical skateboard, thinking that this was a job she would cherish always.

Nurse Pickernose decided that she would let the babies sleep, but, just as she began to close the door to the nursery, she heard a very quiet noise.

FSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS.

Her eyes blinked in the darkness. She crumpled them up, as if that would help her see better.

The noise began to get louder.

FSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS.

It sounded like someone had left a small garden hose on.

She blinked again, and stepped back into the room and turned on a light.

What she saw shocked her.

A little baby boy was lying on his back. Peeing.

But not just peeing.

Really peeing.

He was peeing so quickly and so powerfully that a jet of pure baby pee was shooting straight up into the air through his blanket and down onto the floor!

Nurse Pickernose just stood and stared for a second. She'd

never seen anything like it. It formed a perfect curve in the air and looked like some kind of weird liquid rainbow.

She sprang into action, grabbing a towel and pounding towards the baby to stop the fountain of pee.

'There!' she said, pressing the towel down with both hands, the way a plumber might quickly stop a leak. The baby smiled a satisfied smile, then opened its eyes and stared straight at Nurse Pickernose.

And, a second later, from right behind her . . .

FSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS.

Nurse Pickernose turned to see a *new* jet of wee shooting through the air, from a *totally different* baby!

Up, up in the air it went.

Down, down on the floor it spittered and spattered.

'No, Julio!' she said, sternly, and with wide eyes.

She lunged to cover the second baby's wet jet with a towel. But as she did so – oh, no! – something warm and wet struck her on the back of the head.

PEE!

She whirled round. The first baby was still going! And he was still staring straight at her . . .

Nurse Pickernose needed new towels and she needed them now!

She ran for the door but was stopped in her tracks. A third baby had started peeing right where she wanted to go and this little guy was a brute! The pee was raining down in front of her like he was using a Super Soaker!

The floor was really wet now and, as Nurse Pickernose tried to dodge and weave her way through the golden arches, she slipped head over heels onto the floor.

THWACK!

She slid about, her sensible shoes skidding around on the slick tiles, then looked up.

NO!

Four babies were peeing!

Five!

NOW SIX!

Short bursts of wee, starting and stopping, shooting through the air like some kind of fountain display you'd see in a fancy shopping centre.

First the ones on the left would shoot a burst!

Then the ones on the right!

'THERE ARE BABIES PEEING EVERYWHERE!' she yelled, but there was no one there to listen. Her words hung in the air, getting **wetter** and **wetter** from the **plippering** and **sloppering** that now drowned them out.

She knew it was down to her to sort this mess out. So, with renewed determination and putting all her training to good use, Nurse Philately Pickernose ran and slid across the floor, grabbed three fresh towels and flapped them out, like a bullfighter with a cape.

She strode towards the centre of the circle of cots and, like lightning, covered one baby.

She quickly turned and flung a towel over another.

She whipped a new towel round and– **THWACK** – flicked it at a third baby.

It was working!

But more baby boys had started peeing now – she couldn't count how many – and now it was like they were AIMING FOR HER!

Fast, sharp jets of pee started randomly shooting out of all the baby boys, arcing through the air straight at Nurse Pickernose.

'AAAARGH!' she yelled, as the baby girls blew giant raspberries and flung great whips of drool from their cots.

What had she done to deserve this?

Every time she flapped out another towel to stop one jet, another would drench her from a different angle!

If she threw a towel at one baby, the baby behind her would shoot a burst!

If she threw a towel at a baby behind her, pee would whizz from a totally different one!

This was like **Whack-a-Mole . . .**

'HELP!' she shouted. **'SOMEONE HELP ME!'**

But no one could hear poor Nurse Pickernose as she ran out of towels and began to scream. She was alone. At the worst baby shower ever.

Then, as if someone had pressed an accelerator button, every single baby boy started peeing quicker and more powerfully in unpredictable bursts.

It was too much for Nurse Pickernose to deal with. All she could do was retreat to a cupboard, where she would spend the rest of the night, huddled in a corner, termbling.

And that was the night Nurse Philately Pickernose decided to retire.

If you've been affected by any of the issues raised in this chapter, best keep it to yourself, it's embarrassing.



Oh, Hi, Hamish!

Hamish Ellerby arrived at FRINKLEY HOSPITAL and immediately wanted to turn back again.

Hamish did *not* like hospitals. And he wasn't particularly keen on Frinkley. So I think you can guess what he thought about FRINKLEY HOSPITAL.

It was a large, long building painted perfectly white, apart from hundreds of little red crosses on every brick in the walls.

'We'll be straight in and out!' said Hamish's mum, and she was right, because she'd never been very good at revolving doors. Before they knew it, they were out on the street again.

When they finally made it inside, they stopped at the kiosk near the entrance and Mum started looking at the flowers.

They were here in Frinkley because Hamish's mum wanted to visit a lady called Mrs Quip. They'd become great friends recently. Mum said she liked Mrs Quip because she



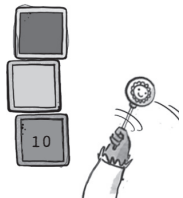
was someone who would listen to her complaining without . . . well . . . complaining. Mrs Ellerby worked at Starkley Council in the Complaints Department, you see, meaning she normally spent all day listening to other people complaining. Once, so many people complained that she actually filed a complaint herself about all the complaints she was getting. But she wouldn't need to do that again, because Mrs Quip loved listening to her.

Mrs Julie Quip worked in the Paper Cup Department, ordering paper cups for places that needed paper cups. As a result, anything that didn't involve paper cups was immediately very interesting to her, and Mum's work seemed oh-so glamorous and exciting in comparison.

The Quips lived just round the corner from the Ellerbys, on Diablo Close, and had recently welcomed into the world a bouncing baby boy called Boffo.

Starkley didn't have its own hospital any more so all new babies were born in Frinkley. Starkley just had a school nurse called Blind Mary, and she wasn't really someone you wanted to give you stitches and so on. But Hamish never felt very comfortable coming to Frinkley these days.

I don't know if you've ever noticed, but sometimes towns that are very close together don't seem to get on that well.



I mean, did you hear about Great Nordic and Peppermill?

They got on so badly one Christmas that they all turned their houses away from each other in a huff!



Or how about Thack and Lower Stumpy?

All the inhabitants of Thack had paid other people to vote for a very unusual mayor in Lower Stumpy. Which is why Lower Stumpy's new mayor was a very powerful earthworm named Bonbon.

I suppose these bickering towns are a bit like siblings. That's definitely what it felt like with Starkley and Frinkley.

And Frinkley was very much the flashier big sister. It had a **bowling alley** and a **Laser Quest arena** and you could buy hot dogs almost anywhere – even in the shoe shop. *And* there was a rumour they were getting a **popcorn fountain!** Also, unlike in Starkley, the funfair came to Frinkley *twice* a year. Once because it had to and a second time because it missed everyone so much.

The problem was, all these roller discos and rock concerts had gone to the their heads. They walked a bit differently in Frinkley. More confidently. Frinklings held their heads a little higher, which was why it was easier for them to look down on people.

It didn't used to be this way. Once, the two towns had got along perfectly well. But in the last few months in particular, it really seemed as if Frinkley had it in for Starkley.

'Right!' said Mum. 'These are the perfect flowers!'

It was a beautiful bouquet in the shape of a hot dog. Frinkley was so cool.

As Hamish and his mum walked through the foyer towards Mrs Quip's room, he couldn't help but notice that the hospital didn't seem quite as tidy as it should've been. A fire extinguisher had been knocked over. There were magazines all over the floor too.

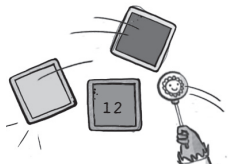
And, as Mum forged onwards, Hamish was shocked when a man nearby suddenly screamed.

'Ow!' he shrieked. 'Who did that?!'

A few people turned round to see what all the fuss was about.

'Come on!' he shouted. 'Own up! Who just flicked my bottom?! Because someone just flicked me on the bottom!'

A few people shrugged and shook their heads, as if to say, 'It definitely wasn't me who flicked you on the bottom!'





But the man thought he knew exactly who'd flicked him on the bottom.

'I bet it was YOU!' he said, pointing at another man, and he moved a pram out of the way so he could stride over and tell him off.

'My wallet's gone!' shouted a different man. **'I had it right here!'**

He was standing next to his wife, looking incredibly confused. He was wearing his infant son on his chest in one of those baby carriers, and frantically checking all his pockets.

'Thief! There's a thief in our midst!' cried his wife, as they turned round to check the floor.

A moment later . . .

BANG!

'Help!' yelled a lady in a tiny hat. **'I'm stuck in the revolving door!'**

She began to **THUMP, THUMP, THUMP** on the glass.

How had she managed that? A few people dashed over to help, but soon found themselves slipping and sliding on nuts and bolts that had somehow come loose.

'Come on, chicken!' said Mum. 'The room's just down here!'

Hamish would normally have followed her straight away. But something made him turn and look back once more.

People were squabbling.

Checking their pockets.

Wagging angry fingers in each other's faces.

But if you ignored all of that and looked a little closer . . .

You could see babies smiling and smirking.

You could see a baby slapping the head of an old man, asleep in a chair, like it was a bongo.

But more importantly . . .

You could hear a tiny baby chuckling to himself in the pram next to the man with the flicked bottom . . .

You could see a little baby boy sucking on something square and leathery and wallet-like close to his dad's chest . . .

And you could see a tiny baby girl with short hair in stumpy pigtails sitting, giggling, on the floor by the revolving door. A giggle that stopped the instant she laid eyes on Hamish Ellerby.

She seemed to stare straight through him.

Hamish felt himself shiver. He was almost relieved when

his mum grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and pulled him quickly down the corridor towards Mrs Quip's room.

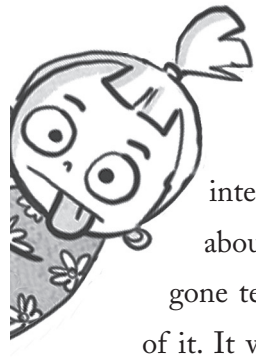
He couldn't be sure, but had that baby been holding . . . a baby blue *spanner*?



What's a Tummy Chicken?

Hamish had seen some pretty weird stuff in his ten years on Earth, but he'd never seen a baby with a spanner, or another play the bongos on a pensioner's head.

But then Hamish didn't know that much about babies. Perhaps they were super into DIY and world music. He wouldn't know; he'd never been a big brother. Jimmy was five years older than him. And, to be honest, Hamish didn't find babies that interesting. Once, he had had to do a school project about babies. He'd tried interviewing one and it had gone terribly. He just couldn't get a straight answer out of it. It wouldn't even say if it was a boy or a girl!



In the end – because Hamish loves a list – all he could come up with was this:



