NO.1 BOY DETECTIVE

Under Cover



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To the children of St Dominic's Priory School, Stone, who have a beautiful new library

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Chapter 1

It was the Friday before half term.

'Guess what?' said Mum as if she was really pleased. 'We're going to spend the week at Green Park Holiday Village.'

'Do we have to?' I said. 'I want to stay at home and solve crimes. I was thinking of checking out the local bank for robbers.'



Mum didn't listen. 'The chef has been rushed into hospital, Damian, and they've asked me to do the cooking.'

'Hospital?' I said. 'What kind of excuse is that? My half term will be ruined.'

She couldn't see it. 'Treat it as a holiday,' she said. 'It'll be fun. There are lots of chalets built in a wood. And there's even a small swimming pool.'

It wasn't exactly Disney World but I suppose I could put up with it.

'OK, Mum. I'll go,' I said. 'I'll take my bike.'

But she shook her head. 'There won't be room in the van, Damian. I've got cakes and gateaux and quiches to bake tonight. It'll be packed full.'

She went on and on about how much work she had to do. And whenever I slipped the word 'bike' into the conversation, she just shouted, 'NO! NO! NO!'

The next morning, Mum was not in a good mood.

'WILL YOU PLEASE GET UP, DAMIAN!' she yelled from the kitchen.

'We've got to go in five minutes!'

Anyway, just to please her, I got dressed and went downstairs.

The van was in the drive with the back doors wide open. Mum had loaded it already and I noticed that there was still plenty of room for my bike. All I had to do was push the pies and cakes and quiches to one side.



I looked over my shoulder. Mum was busy locking up the house. There was time to sneak over to the shed and find my bike. Quick as I could, I wheeled it across to the van and lifted it into the back. With only a bit of shoving, it fitted snugly between the steak pies and the chocolate gateaux.

The deed was done. I slammed the doors shut knowing that Mum would never notice.



Chapter 2

By the time Mum came back, I was sitting in the passenger seat. As she climbed in, I smiled my Angel Smile. (I practise smiling in the mirror. It can be very useful with grown-ups.)

'Everything all right, Mum?' I asked in my kindly voice.

She didn't say anything. But she frowned as she turned on the engine. I think she was feeling sad. So, to make her feel better, I sang her a song called *Bad Boys on the Beat. Yeah! Yeah!*



'Thank you, Damian,' she snapped. 'Please be quiet. I've got a headache.'

'Just once more, Mum, and your headache will be gone. I promise.'

'NO, THANK YOU,' she said.

After that, I hummed ever so quietly under my breath and Mum gritted her teeth. I could see she was feeling better already.

It was bad luck that, halfway to the Holiday Village, we had to go up a hill. It was really, really steep and suddenly I heard a noise in the back of the van. A sort of sliding sound. Then a crashing like breaking china.

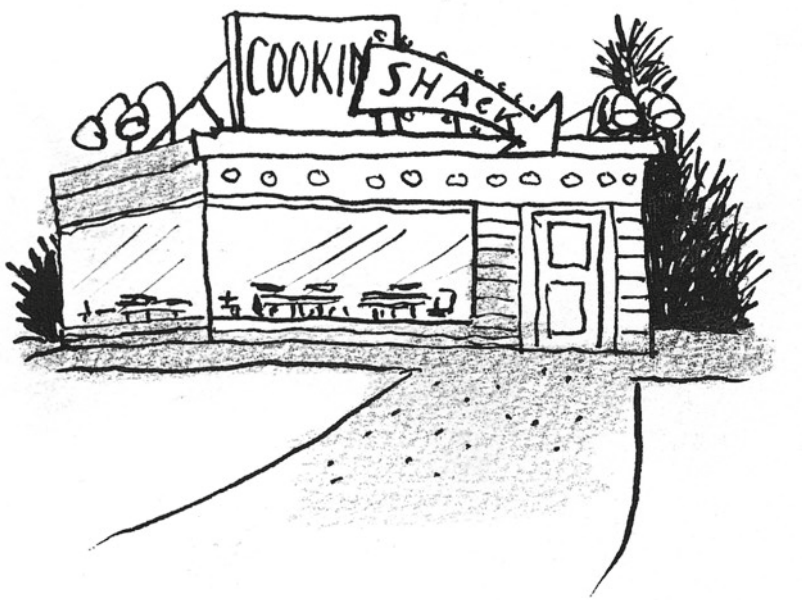
'What's that?' said Mum, slamming her foot on the brake. That was the worst thing she could have done 'cos everything slid the other way and crashed for the second time.

She jumped out, raced to the back of the van and flung open the doors. Well, she practically blew her top. Just

because my bike had fallen over and a few chocolate cakes were an intsy-wintsy bit squashed. I ask you! I even pointed out that they would taste just as good as they would in one piece. But she couldn't see it. She was in one of her big strops.



She didn't say another word all the way to Green Park. When we arrived, we drove through some iron gates, up a long drive and stopped outside a big wooden hut called the Cookin' Shack. This was the dining room where the holiday-makers ate and the kitchen where Mum was going to cook.



I have to say that Mum's mood didn't get any better that day. Even while I was helping to empty the van, she kept shouting, 'Be careful, Damian,' as I carried things through. 'Don't do that! Now look what you've done!' That kind of thing. I was doing my best.

According to Mr Grimethorpe, our teacher, child labour was abolished hundreds of years ago – but I don't think Mum knows this fact.

I was soon exhausted and I slipped outside for a break. I was sitting under a tree opening a bag of prawn cocktail crisps when I saw a boy riding a bike down the path. I couldn't believe my eyes.





It was none other than Calvin Baggington, known as Baggy-Pants. He was a new boy in our class and *not popular*! He was the boy who had everything – money, sweets, mobile phone and his own computer.

I couldn't stand him. He was always bragging. Saying how rich his dad was. Just my luck he'd come to the Holiday Village for half term.