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opening extract from

The Legend of Captain Crow's Teeth

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contents

CHAPTER 1

Baby Talk 1

CHAPTER 2

Captain Crow's Teeth 7

CHAPTER 3

The Sprats' Jig 23

CHAPTER 4

On the Rocks 58

CHAPTER 5

Ten Twenty-Nine and Forty-Eight Seconds 84

CHAPTER 1

Baby Talk

My family spend every holiday in a caravan by the sea. All of us get stuffed into a bedroom the size of a car boot. We sleep with the window open. If you have brothers, then you know why.

I myself have four brothers: Marty, Donnie, Bert and HP. Mum says that in ten seconds we can do more damage to the caravan than a hurricane.

You probably think she's exaggerating. You're probably saying to yourself, *they can't be*

that bad. Well, they are. Let me tell you a few stories about my brothers. We'll start with the youngest.

Brother 5: HP (Half Pint). You would think that a five-year-old couldn't cause too much trouble, but what HP lacks in size, he makes up for in brains.

One day, on a visit to our little cousin's, HP realized that babies could do whatever they wanted and never get in trouble, so he decided that he would go back to being a baby. So from that day on, for six whole months, HP only spoke in baby talk. We knew he was faking, but Mum and Dad got an awful shock.

Here is a sample conversation.

Dad: Now come on, little guy. What am I holding in my hand? (A banana.)
HP: Mmmm . . . Poo.
Dad: No. Not poo. Think, HP. It's a fruit. Your favourite. It's a ban –
HP: Nana . . .
Dad: Yes! Excellent. You've got it. Nana. Say the whole word now.
HP: Nananana . . . poo.
(At this point Dad puts his head in his hands

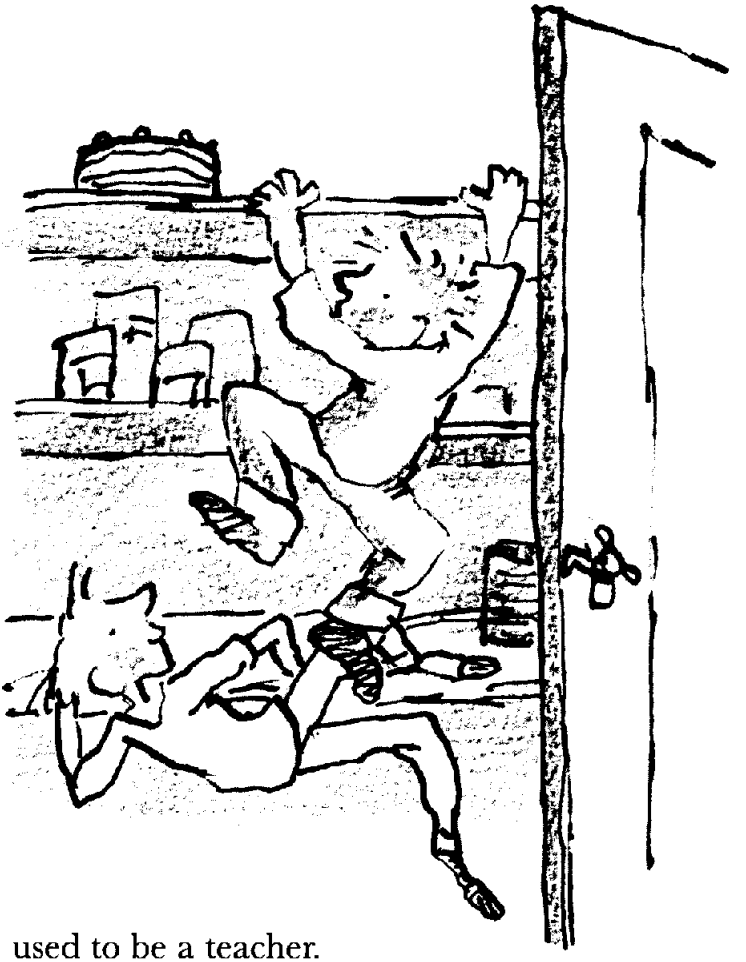
and gives up. Donnie and Bert give HP the thumbs up.)

Brothers 4 and 3: Donnie and Bert. I've put them together because they work as a team. Whenever you see one, you can be sure the other is lurking nearby. Bert acts as lookout while Donnie commits the actual crimes.

Mum used to paste sticky labels on stuff Donnie and Bert weren't supposed to touch.

Hands off was stuck on the ice cream.
Do not touch was pasted on the cocoa powder, and . . .
If you open this, you'd better be wearing gloves because I can take fingerprints and I will track you down read the label on the cake tin.

This last message was meant to be a reading lesson as well as a warning. Mum



used to be a teacher.

Mum tried hiding the cake in the cupboard, but Donnie and Bert simply climbed up the shelves like monkeys. In the end, Mum was forced to wrap the biscuits in

lettuce leaves and store them in the boot of the car.

Brother 2: Will. That's me. A lovely boy and a real asset to any group. And I'm not just saying that; it's on my school report.

Brother 1: Marty. My older brother. Marty knows the punishment for actually touching a younger brother is a week in his bedroom, so he has to invent other ways to torment us.

Marty usually saves his cruellest tortures for me. He knows I am afraid of ghosts and so plays all kinds of spooky tricks on me. I could fill three notebooks with stories of his nasty pranks.