Books by David Baddiel

ANIMALCOLM

BIRTHDAY BOY

(THE BOY WHO GOT) ACCIDENTALLY FAMOUS

FUTURE FRIENDS

HEAD KID

THE PARENT AGENCY

THE PERSON CONTROLLER

THE TAYLOR TURBOCHASER

(THE BOY WHO GOT) ACCIDENTALLY FAMOUS

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Illustrated by Steven Lenton



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David Baddiel and Steven Lenton assert the moral right to be identified as the author and illustrator of the work respectively.

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For Suz Gautier-Smith


WELCOME TO
BW
BW
HEADMASTER - MR CART
MPhil.
PART ONE
DATE
SCENE
1
TAKE
2
E.T
E.T
PFFT!



Billy Smith was ordinary. He was *really* ordinary. For a start, he was called Billy Smith. It couldn't have been a more ordinary name. Unless maybe it was his dad's name, which was *John S*mith.

But Billy, an eleven-year-old boy, wasn't the only ordinary one in his family. Everyone in his family was ordinary. His parents were perfectly nice people with perfectly nice jobs, and Billy loved them, but there was no getting round the ordinary thing. His

dad worked in an office. He was a clerk. Billy didn't really know what that meant, but his dad never explained it to him as what it actually involved was just too un-exciting. Too, let's face it, ordinary.

His mum – *Jane* Smith – was a manager at a packing company. Billy wasn't entirely sure what they packed. Some sort of fish. Frozen fish. Or maybe just fish, in general. Once again, she had the good grace to know that talking in depth about her career was not going to set her son's pulse racing. Which was why he remained unsure of the exact temperature or type of fish her company packaged.

Billy's mum wasn't actually working at the moment, though, because she had a baby to look after. Billy's ten-month-old sister, Lisa. You might expect her to be ordinary too. And you'd be right. To be fair, it's quite hard for babies to be out of the ordinary. Babies-wise, in non-ordinary life, there's Jack-Jack in *The Incredibles*, and Boss Baby in *Boss Baby*. Two. That's not very many:

most of the time, even on film and TV, babies just lie around, cry, eat, poo and wee. Which frankly are the *most ordinary* things human beings can do.

Billy was ordinary in every other way too. He wasn't top of his class, or bottom. He wasn't very good at sport, or very bad at it either. He wasn't popular or



unpopular: he had two really good friends, named Bo and Rinor, and went to a very ordinary school called Bracket Wood . . . OK – full disclosure (which may not be that much of a disclosure to anyone who's read any of my previous books). Actually, while Bracket Wood *was* a very ordinary school indeed, some of the pupils were not so ordinary. Or, at least, some not-very-ordinary stuff had happened to them. A lot of magical, or at least semi-magical, things seemed to have gone on in the lives of other pupils. Which, from Billy's point of view, made it worse. Because, although he had heard tell of all these extraordinary experiences (even if he was never sure whether to believe them or not), the school didn't feel at all extraordinary.

Certainly *his* life there didn't. Because nothing like that had ever happened to him.

And then something did happen to Billy Smith. Something extraordinary.



'Right! Everybody! Please be quiet!' said Dan.

Dan was a man in his thirties, who wore a T-shirt with a logo on it from a very famous 1980s science-fiction film.

Billy, who was sitting in the middle of the Bracket Wood assembly hall, remembered his dad had begun showing that film to him once, and he'd tried to like it so his dad would be pleased, but it was really long and he'd fallen asleep.

'YES! EVERYONE! BE QUIET! OR ELSE!' said Mr Carter. 'I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY TALKING FOR THE REST OF THIS MORNING.'

'Um . . . actually, Mr Carter,' said Dan, going up to him and speaking quietly, 'that might be a problem. We *want* to hear the pupils talking. We're going to do interviews with some of them for a start.'

Mr Carter looked cross. 'But you told them to be quiet. So I was making sure they were quiet. I'm the head teacher and they do what I say.'

'I know. But I only wanted them to be quiet for a *bit*, long enough for me to explain what we were going to do. Not for the whole morning.'

Mr Carter thought about this for a second. Then he turned to the school, who were looking up at him from the Bracket Wood assembly hall.

'BE QUIET. FOR NOW, I MEANT!' He glared at them. And then threw in an: 'OR ELSE!'

Mr Carter nodded at Dan, meaning: *Job done!*,

and went to sit at the back of the stage.

Dan smiled a thank-you smile at him, and turned to the children, who were sitting and looking up at him expectantly.

'OK, thanks, everyone. So, I'm Dan. I'm a director. Of documentaries, for TV. And as you – and your parents, who have been sent letters – should all know by now, our company, TOTALTV TV—'

'Pardon?' said Mr Barrington, another teacher who was sitting at the back of the stage. Mr Barrington was quite old – no one at Bracket Wood was entirely sure how old – and wore very thick lenses in his glasses.

'TOTALTV TV.'

'It sounded like you said "TV" twice.'

'I did. The company is called TOTALTV TV.'

Mr Barrington continued to look confused.

'Anyway, yes,' Dan continued, 'our company is making a show called *School Daze*, and—'

'Sorry, pardon?'

Dan looked round again.

'Yes, Mr Barrington?'

'It sounded like you said "Days" with a Z.'

Dan blinked. 'I did.'

Mr Barrington smiled and frowned at the same time. 'Well, you're a little old to be in my English class, Dan, but you definitely don't spell "Days" with a Z.'

'IT'S A PUN, BARRINGTON!' said Mr Carter.

'Is it?'

'YES. ON "DAZE" AND "DAYS"!'

Mr Barrington blinked. 'Sorry, Headmaster, but didn't you just say the word "days" twice?'

'OH MY DAZE,' said Mr Carter. 'DAN. JUST CARRY ON. IGNORE HIM! IGNORE ANYTHING HE SAYS FROM NOW ON!'

'Right,' said Dan. He turned back to the children. Some of them had started talking among themselves during this bit.

'SHUT UP!' shouted Mr Carter.



They shut up.

'Um. Yeah. So we're making a TV show called *School Daze*. About life in an ordinary school! So all

we need you to do is . . . be yourselves!'

All the teachers looked a bit worried when he said this. Dan continued:

'Just carry on going to your lessons and to games, and going out in the playground during break and everything, and forget about the cameras!'

'Headmaster,' whispered Mr Barrington, 'why are we doing this again?'

'Look around you, Barrington,' Mr Carter whispered back.

Mr Barrington did. 'Um . . . as you may know, Headmaster, my eyesight isn't very good. What am I meant to be looking at, exactly?'

'Oh my days. What you might notice, if you could see anything out of those glasses from 1973, Barrington, is that all the windows are cracked, all the floorboards are splintered, and all the radiators are broken. Beyond this hall, in the classrooms, you might observe that we do not have enough whiteboards, or computers, or even chairs. The school is almost completely broke. But TOTALTV TV have promised us a large donation for the privilege of filming here. So stop interrupting and just try and help them along, please! Or else you, my friend, will be looking at a new job at Geary Road.'

Geary Road was a school nearby which had an even worse reputation than Bracket Wood's.

Mr Barrington went white.

'But at Geary Road,' he said, 'they have a machine at the gate that checks for weapons!'

'Yes,' said Mr Carter. 'And if you don't have one, they give you one. For your own safety!'

While they were whispering, another man had walked on to the stage. He was dressed more smartly than Dan, although not in a suit. He wore a very soft-looking blue V-neck jumper, and



very tight, uncomfortable-looking jeans. He was older than Dan, but his hair for some reason was much blacker. It sat on his head like a big black brick. He made a small hand-wave gesture towards Dan, who moved aside immediately to let him speak.

The man smiled at the children. His teeth were so white that a number of the pupils put their hands up to shield their eyes.

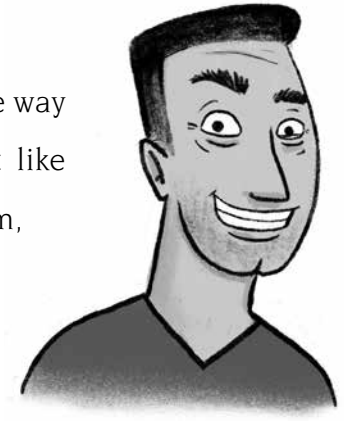
'*Hiiiiiii*,' he said. It was a very breathy 'Hi'. It seemed to go on for some time. As did the smile. 'I'm Stuart,' he said eventually.

There was another long pause. No one seemed to quite know what to say. Eventually, Mr Carter shouted from the back of the stage:

'SAY, "HELLO, STUART!"'

'Hello . . . Stuart . . .' said the school, although less together than writing it that way would suggest.

'Thanks,' said Stuart, smiling again. 'So, on this show, I'm what's called . . . The Producer.' (I've added



capital letters here because the way Stuart said 'the producer' felt like they should have them.) 'I'm, let's face it . . .' he continued, adding a little chuckle, 'the boss. I mean, I own TOTALTV TV. Totally. So. Y'know. The buck stops –' he pointed to himself – 'here.' He looked out and smiled again, possibly expecting laughs. There weren't any. He carried on smiling. 'And *School Daze* . . .' He raised a finger without turning round, towards Mr Barrington behind him. 'With a Z! Is my idea. My baby, if you will. And I've chosen to give my baby –' he put both his palms out, towards the children, as if he was giving them a very special invisible gift – 'to you.'

'Seems like it's the other way round!' shouted a child's voice from the back of the room. Billy, and most of the rest of the children, turned round. It was

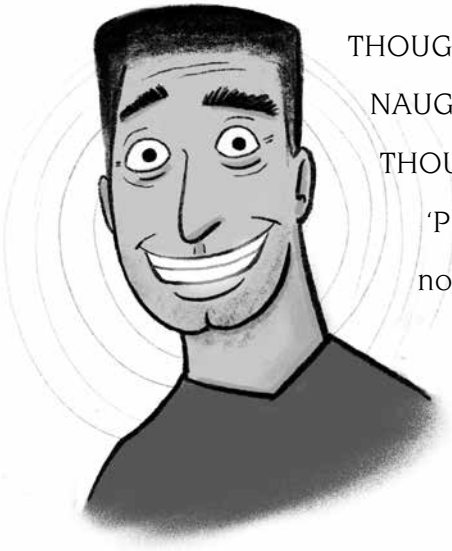
the naughtiest boy in the school: Ryan Ward.

Stuart looked out at the crowd of kids, putting a hand up (palm down, fingers straight) to his – quite bushy – eyebrows, as if that might help him see across this distance. The gesture wasn't necessary as it was only about thirty feet.

'Sorry?' he said, his smile refusing to fade.

'Well, you want to make a documentary about school. So you need a school. You need us. Which makes *us*, I would say, *our* gift –' Ryan held both his palms out in front like Stuart had done, mirroring him – 'to you.'

'RYAN WARD!' shouted Mr Carter. 'I THOUGHT YOU'D STOPPED BEING NAUGHTY SINCE . . . ANYWAY, I THOUGHT YOU'D STOPPED!'



'Please,' said Stuart, his smile now starting to look like a very white force field. 'It's no problem. So, some of you are a bit feisty. Great! Our viewers will love that!' He looked back out across the hall. 'And, hey: maybe as *School Daze* goes out, and becomes the big, big hit I think we all know it's going to be, one of *you* out there . . .'

He pointed a finger, out into the crowd. It moved along the width of the hall.

Then it stopped. It seemed to be pointing directly at . . . Billy Smith. A few children looked round at him.

' . . . is gonna become a *star*,' finished Stuart.

There was a pause. Stuart continued to point towards Billy. But Billy just shrugged. The children who had looked round at him laughed.

Because, although it might be true that one of the kids at Bracket Wood was going to become famous because of this TV show, Billy – and everyone else – knew it *wasn't* going to be him.