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opening extract from

Nasty Little Beasts

written by

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please print off and read at your leisure.

Hello. You came.

I've had my eye on you ever since you picked up the book. Luckily I've got my eyeballs in today. Some mornings I am in such a hurry to get to work that I forget to put them in. On such days I rely on my nose. It can smell a BAD CHILD at a thousand paces. You're a bit niffy, but I like that in a guest.

Were you worried that I wouldn't have any vacancies? Don't be. There are always vacancies at The Hotchell Darkness. I keep a room for every child in the world. Your name is already on the door.

You'll like your room. I designed it myself. It has fresh crocodile-skin sheets, a mini-bat, scare-conditioning and hot and cold running cockroaches. Very shriek-chic.

You may not know who I am, but I know who you are. I even know where you USED to live. Would you mind if I asked you a few questions? Nothing too hard. I just want to check that you are beastly enough for The Darkness!



ANSWER TRUTHFULLY!

1) Have you ever told a lie? *Answer 'yes', because 'no' will be a lie.*
2) Have you ever laughed at an animal caged at the zoo? *They deserve it. don't they?*
3) Have you ever left food on the side of your plate? *I know I have!*
4) Have you ever slept the wrong way up in your bed? *Naughty. naughty!*
5) Have you ever stayed in a hothell before? *It doesn't matter. You're here now. that's all that counts. Please leave you parents' credit card at the desk.*

Well done! You are BAD and have failed with flying colours! You win an indefinite stay with me in The Darkness for ever.

I just know that you and I are going to have such fun together! Now that you are down here for ever. you must acquaint yourself with your fellow guests/prisoners/torture victims.* To help you get started I have selected a few of their

* delete where applicable

personal stories from our Visitor's Book, or as I prefer to call it The Book of Grizzly Tales. These are their tales as told to me.

Boo hoo! Boo hoo!

Oink! Oink!

Gurgle! Goo-goo!

I wan—I wan—I wan—I w—

Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeelp!



Squeak! Squeak! Splat!



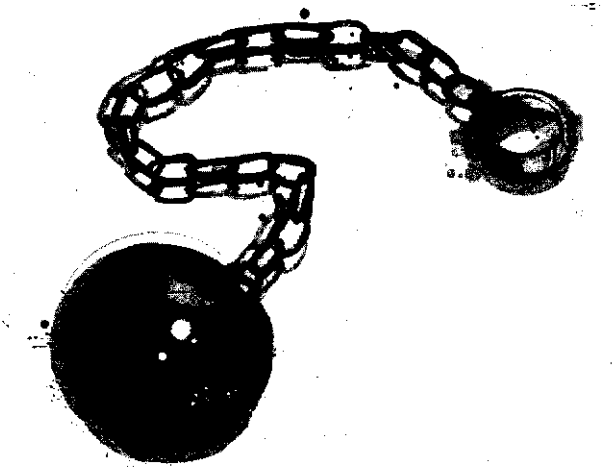
SHUT UP! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU?

Honestly, those guests! Noisy bunch of ingrates. It's not enough that I feed them and change their water every week, they want to be let out as well! What do they think this is, an hotel?

Well, it is, of course. I know it's called a *hotel*. but really that's just an hotel with fiery pits.

And very happy YOU'RE going to be here, too.

Now, the children in these tales live in the ANIMAL WING of the hotel, not because their evil minds are UN-STABLE, but because they all have one thing in common: they are all NASTY LITTLE BEASTS!



THE GRUB A-BLUB-BLUB



In sunny Skegness, in the Museum of Freaks and Oddities, in a glass case marked DO NOT FEED, lives the largest, laziest witchetty grub ever known to man. A witchetty grub, for those of you who've never eaten one, is normally the size of a corn dog. The one in the glass case is the size of a corn cow. It's big and fat with a body like stacked rubber tyres. It lives on a diet of pizzas, milkshakes and popcorn and occupies its time by watching the telly.

Oh. I do love The Telly. It's to blame for so much bad behaviour!

The museum has nicknamed it the Grub A-Blub-Blub, because at night time it cries itself to sleep. Not surprising really, because it's not a grub at all!

Boo hoo! Boo hoo!

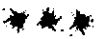
Let her cry! She's brought it on herself.

Savannah Slumberson was cursed. Not by trolls or bad fairies, but by her parents. They belonged to that select breed of adult who believes that life is best lived outdoors. Never a weekend passed when they weren't out scaling peaks or yomping through bogland or cycling the Pennine Way. They liked being cold and wet. They preferred their clothes sticky and damp. They looked forward to blisters and welcomed a wind-burn or three. If you asked Savannah's parents to choose between a weekend break in a posh hotel, or sleeping with badgers and digging a hole for a loo, they were hole diggers every time! Their hallway was a monument to the Great Outdoors, piled high with walking sticks, muddy boots and steaming woollen socks with that unmistakable tang of unwashed yak.

Savannah was cursed because her parents were ramblers and *she*, most definitely, was not. The furthest Savannah liked rambling was from the

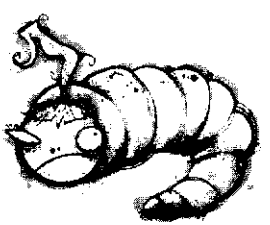


warmth of her bed to the fridge. The closest she liked being to the weather was watching it on the telly or thumbing her nose at it through the window. Savannah was a lie-a-bed, a slovenly sloth, who despised everything her parents stood for and made it her daily task to do the exact opposite of whatever they wanted her to do.

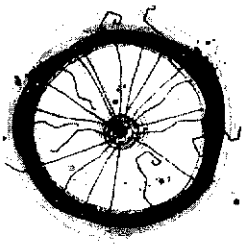


Mornings in the Slumberson house always followed a similar pattern. Savannah would lie in while her parents rose with the lark and made preparations for that day's excursion. Then, at seven o'clock sharp, they would wake Savannah up by flinging back the curtains and opening the window. It was always a source of acute embarrassment when her parents tramped into her bedroom, coiled with ropes and crampons, wearing khaki shorts and hard hats!

'With a step and a stamp
And a heave and a ho,
It's a mighty hearty tramp
And a Ramb-er-ling we go!'



As they sang out of tune, Savannah pulled the duvet up around her ears.



'Oh come on, Savvy, sweetie!' pleaded her mother. 'You'll love it at the summit.'

'Summit!' yelled Savannah. 'What summit?'

'It's only a *little* mountain,' said her father.

'Do I look like a goat?' growled Savannah. 'Because you must be confusing me with something that LIKES it up mountains! Go away. You're depressing me!'

But Savannah's parents never went away. They just kept coming on like a bad dose of stomach cramps. If she locked her bedroom door and tried to stay in bed all day, they would attach grappling hooks to her window sill and climb up ropes to reach her. Then they'd knock on her window and whisper quietly through the glass.

'Oh, Savannah! Oh, Savannah, darling! It's time to get up!'

Which was why Savannah spent her whole life being never less than grumpy.

But thankfully that was all about to change! For the worse!

Boo hoo! Boo hoo!