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opening extract from

The Bubonic Builders (Too Ghoul for School)

written by

B. Strange

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THE BUBONIC BUILDERS



After lunch, James, Lenny and Alexander made their way to what was left of the ground-floor girls' toilet block.

'There's only one builder in there again – the same bloke I spoke to last time,' James whispered.

'I think he's talking to himself,' Alexander hissed.

James walked forwards carefully, standing to the side to avoid the builder's swinging hammer. 'Excuse me! Excuse me, sir . . .'

The man didn't look round. James tried again.

'Hi, it's me – I was in here before . . .'

With one extra-wild swing, the builder smashed the heavy hammer hard down on to his hand.

The boys stared on in horror. The builder carried on hammering, not noticing that one of his fingers had been completely smashed off. Green goo dripped on to the plaster dust below.

www.egmont.co.uk

St Sebastian's School in Grimesford is the pits. No, really – it is.

Every year, the high school sinks a bit further into the boggy plague pit beneath it and, every year, the ghosts of the plague victims buried underneath it become a bit more cranky.

Egged on by their spooky ringleader, Edith Codd, they decide to get their own back – and they're willing to play dirty. *Really* dirty.

They kick up a stink by causing as much mischief as in inhumanly possible so as to get St Sebastian's closed down once and for all.

But what they haven't reckoned on is year-seven new boy, James Simpson and his friends Alexander and Lenny.

The question is, are the gang up to the challenge of laying St Sebastian's paranormal problem to rest, or will their school remain forever frightful?

There's only one way to find out . . .





THE BUBONIC BUILDERS

B. STRANGE

EGMONT

Special thanks to:

Lynn Huggins-Cooper, St John's Walworth Church of England Primary School and Belmont Primary School



EGMONT

We bring stories to life

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'More books – I love it!'
Ashley, age 11

'It's disgusting. . .'
Joe, age 10

'. . . it's all good!'
Alexander, age 9

'. . . loads of excitement and really gross!'
Jay, age 9

'I like the way there's the brainy boy,
the brawny boy and the cool boy that form a
team of friends'
Charlie, age 10

'That ghost Edith is wicked'
Matthew, age 11

'This is really good and funny!'
Sam, age 9

We want to hear what *you* think about *Too Ghoul for School*! Visit:

www.too-ghoul.com

**for loads of cool stuff to do
and a whole lotta grot!**

School versus . . .



James Simpson

Year-seven new boy
and chief spook-hunter

Headmaster's son
and official brainiac



Alexander Tick



Lenny Maxwell

Strong as an ox,
gentle as an
unusually tall lamb

. . . Ghoul!

Loud-mouthed ringleader of the plague-pit ghosts



Edith Codd



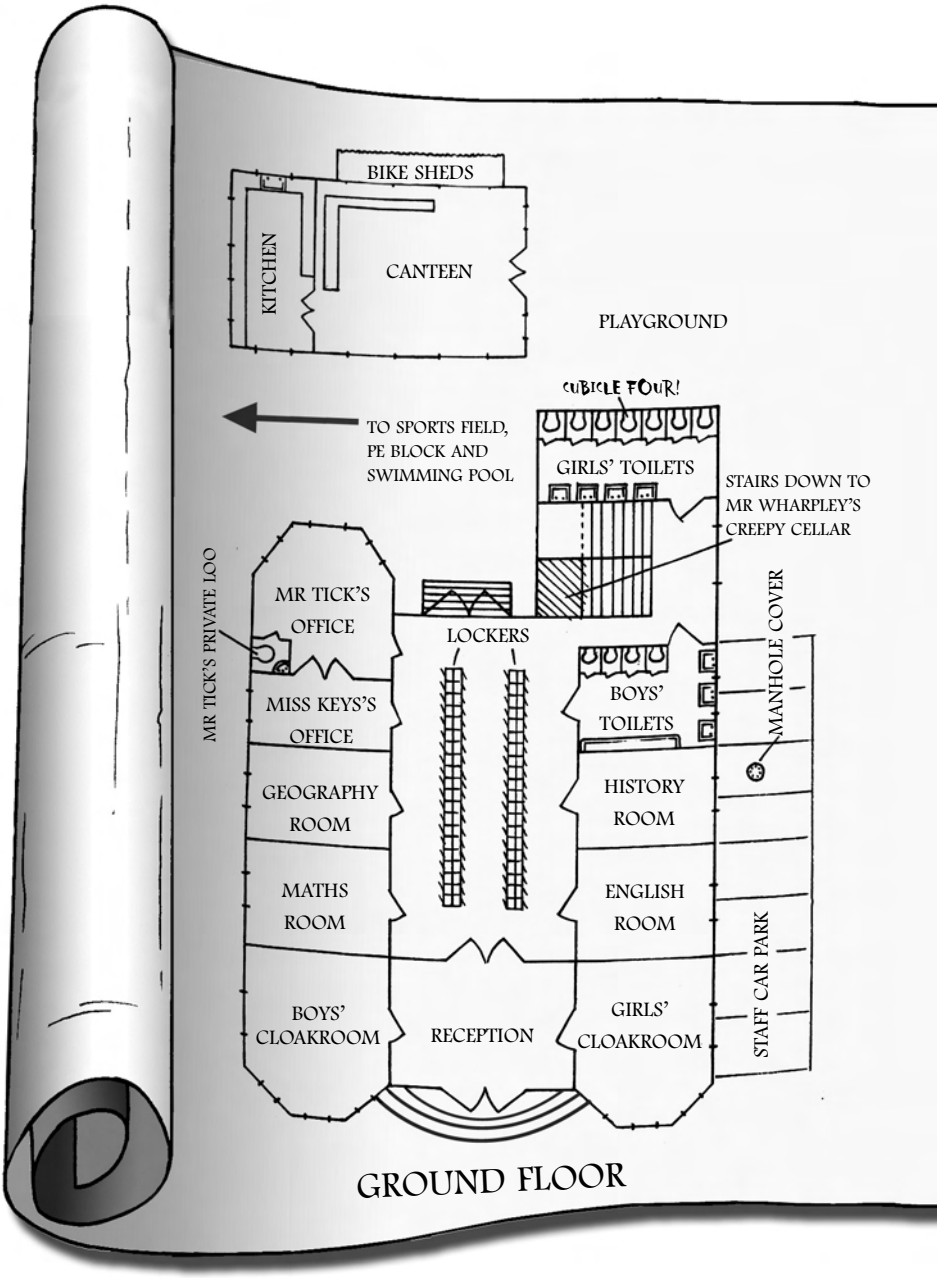
William Scroggins

Young ghost and a secret wannabe St Sebastian's pupil

Bone idle ex-leech merchant with a taste for all things gross



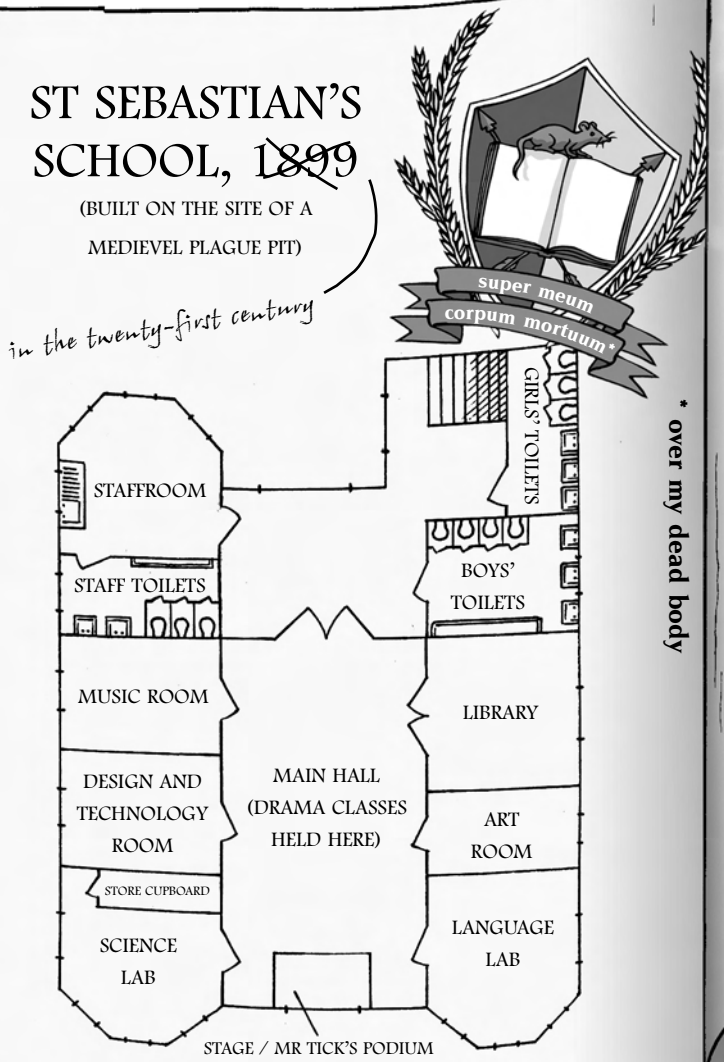
Ambrose Harbottle


BIKE SHEDS
KITCHEN
CANTEEN
PLAYGROUND
CUBICLE FOUR!
TO SPORTS FIELD, PE BLOCK AND SWIMMING POOL
GIRLS' TOILETS
STAIRS DOWN TO MR WHARPLEY'S CREEPY CELLAR
MR TICK'S PRIVATE LOO
MR TICK'S OFFICE
LOCKERS
MANHOLE COVER
MISS KEYS'S OFFICE
BOYS' TOILETS
GEOGRAPHY ROOM
HISTORY ROOM
MATHS ROOM
ENGLISH ROOM
STAFF CAR PARK
BOYS' CLOAKROOM
RECEPTION
GIRLS' CLOAKROOM
GROUND FLOOR

ST SEBASTIAN'S SCHOOL, ~~1899~~

(BUILT ON THE SITE OF A MEDIEVEL PLAGUE PIT)

in the twenty-first century



FIRST FLOOR

* over my dead body

About the Black Death

The Black Death was a terrible plague that is believed to have been spread by fleas on rats. It swept through Europe in the fourteenth century, arriving in England in 1348, where it killed over one third of the population.



One of the Black Death's main symptoms was **foul-smelling boils all over the body called 'buboes'**. The plague was so infectious that its victims and their families were locked in their houses until they died. Many villages were abandoned as the disease wiped out their populations.

So many people died that graveyards overflowed and bodies lay in the street, so special **'plague pits'** were dug to bury the bodies. Almost every town and village in England has a plague pit somewhere underneath it, so watch out when you're digging in the garden . . .



Dear Reader

As you may have already guessed, B. Strange is not a real name.

The author of this series is an ex-teacher who is currently employed by a little-known body called the Organisation For Spook Termination (Excluding Demons), or O.F.S.T.(E.D.). 'B. Strange' is the pen name chosen to protect his identity.

Together, we felt it was our duty to publish these books, in an attempt to save innocent lives. The stories are based on the author's experiences as an O.F.S.T.(E.D.) inspector in various schools over the past two decades.

Please read them carefully - you may regret it if you don't . . .

Yours sincerely
The Publisher.

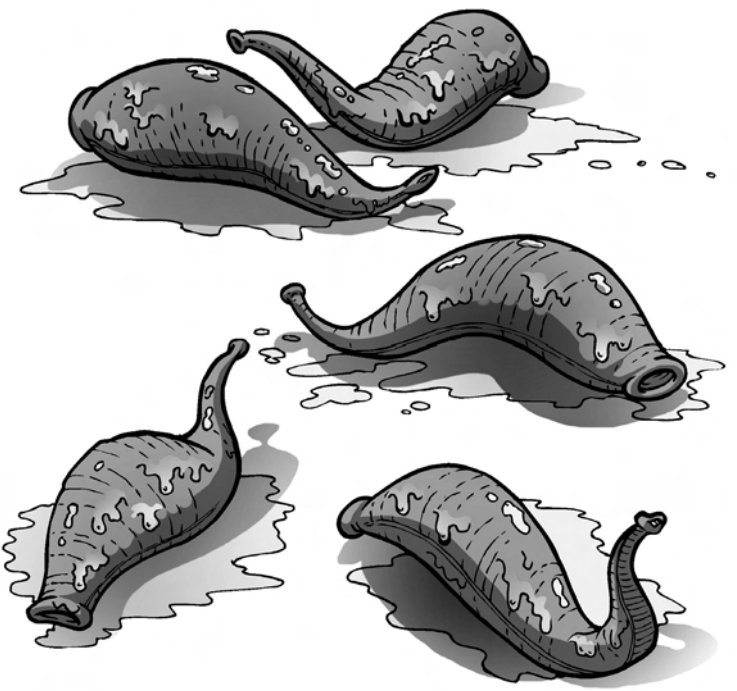
PS - Should you wish to file a report on any suspicious supernatural occurrences at your school, visit **www.too-ghoul.com** and fill out the relevant form. We'll pass it on to O.F.S.T.(E.D.) for you.

PPS - All characters' names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals. Any similarity to actual persons, living or undead, is purely coincidental.



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CHAPTER 1
TOILET TALES

'But I need to *go*!' Alexander wailed, dancing from foot to shiny-shoed foot. It was break time, and the corridors of St Sebastian's School were crammed with pupils. All the teachers were tucked safely away in the staffroom, slurping coffee.

'Well, go then, Stick! What's your problem?' asked James, pulling the sagging knot in his tie even looser.

'You know – girls!'

'Sorry – I don't get the connection. It's not one of your terrible jokes coming on, is it?'





'Looks like something'll be coming soon – a puddle!' sneered Gordon 'The Gorilla' Carver – the school bully – as he scooted past, clipping Alexander round the back of the head.

James glared after the bully as he ran down the corridor. 'Stick – I hate to say this, but The Gorilla has a point. You'd better go now!'

'But . . . it's all of these girls invading our conveniences. It's very *in*convenient! You go

rushing in, unzipping your fly, and a girl's there doing girly stuff like brushing her manky hair or something – and she looks at you like you're the *contents* of the toilet instead of just being there because you need to use it . . .' Alexander groaned.

'Well, you can't really blame them, you know,' said Lenny. 'There's only one set of girls' loos left for all the girls in the entire school while their ground-floor block is being rebuilt.'

At that moment, Leandra Maxwell, Lenny's sister, arrived. Stacey Carmichael, her best friend and the prettiest girl in school, trailed in her wake.

'New dance, Stick?' she honked. 'Very nice. Not sure it'll catch on though. Is it The Widdle Waltz? Or The Tinkle Tango?'

'It's not funny, Leandra!' growled Lenny. He shared his sister's dark curly hair and deep brown eyes, but that's where the similarities ended.



Leandra liked to tease. Her brother Lenny was the kindest person ever.

'You . . . you should keep out of our lavatories – it's against school rules!' Alexander blustered.

By now, a small crowd had begun to gather. Girls screeched with laughter and even a few boys were grinning. The Gorilla arrived, smelling trouble.

'Oh, yes – and *Daddy*'s the headmaster, isn't he? He'd be cross if we broke his precious rules, wouldn't he?' The Gorilla snarled, snapping a bubblegum bubble in Alexander's face. Even the sugary smell couldn't sweeten his mean expression. Lenny pushed the bully away.

'Leave him alone, Carver!'

'Who are you pushing about?' the bully blustered. 'If I could be bothered, I'd have you . . .' he sneered at Lenny. 'You're only friends with that loser,' he jabbed Alexander in the chest with a chubby finger, 'because you like hopeless cases!



I saw you, carrying that stupid hedgehog with scorched prickles you rescued last week.'

He turned to the crowd. 'He's got it in his locker, y'know. It smells, *and* it's full of fleas.' He turned back to Alexander and poked him in the shoulder. 'Yeah – just like you, Stick! And from the look of you, you're about to get even smellier!'

Alexander looked away.

Lenny got closer to Gordon. 'I said, leave . . . him . . . alone!' he growled.

Leandra stepped in between the boys.

A small girl tugged at Leandra's arm. 'Hey, you know, I wouldn't like to use the boys' toilets. I heard they were haunted . . .' she said. Leandra turned and frowned at the girl and she let go, smoothing the older girl's jumper sleeve. Continuing bravely, she added, 'Really. I heard that a kid went into that loo . . . and never came out again!'



‘I heard that zombies ate him,’ a boy grimaced horribly.

Stacey gave a pretty little shudder that made her short skirt twitch. It made a few of the boys twitch, too, like a chain reaction.

‘Well, I heard there’s an alien octopus that lives down the pipes. It eats poo – and year sevens!’ a boy in year nine added.

‘Naw . . . a headless horseman sweeps through the toilets banging on doors with his sword and slicing off legs at the ankles – knickers and all!’ his friend called, swishing the air with an imaginary sabre as he spoke.

‘Well,’ Leandra said drily, ‘I don’t suppose many boys are sat there constipated with all that going on!’ Stacey covered her mouth with her hand, her pink glossy nails sparkling as she tittered.

‘I heard it was a portal for a dump demon,’ said a tall year eight. ‘It feeds off the gases in the



toilets and suffocates people with its stinky breath as they sit on the throne. Its victims are doomed to haunt the toilet forever, wafting around on a cloud of methane . . .'

'From the stink coming out of the boys' toilets, I can believe *that* story!' laughed Leandra.

'I heard there's a vampire toilet seat in one of the cubicles,' another boy whispered. 'You sit down quite happily, but you notice that the seat's deathly cold. Just as it starts to warm up and you get comfy – CHOMP! Spiky gnashers clamp down on your bum. You're stuck there until every drop of your blood is drained – and you're dead!'

'Or should that be *undead*?' laughed another boy, sweeping his jacket over his shoulders like a vampire's cloak. Snapping his teeth at the crowd, he made a beeline for Stacey and her delicate pink neck. Leandra raised a hand in front of his face and the boy stopped dead. He melted into the crowd again.





'No – you're all wrong. It's a ghoul that hides in the shadows and snatches kids as they flush – and the noise hides their screams,' a small, worried boy said with a shudder.

'Actually, it's The Toilet Man,' a year-nine boy said, leaning against the wall. 'You say his name three times as you look in the mirror and your reflection slowly changes. Smoke swirls around your face and your eyes glint gold, like snake eyes. You bend closer to the mirror for a better look, rubbing it with your hand . . .' Everyone leant in as the boy told his tale.

'And The Toilet Man *grabs* it with his scaly talons and pulls you in!' he shouted, catching Stacey's hands and tugging her towards him. Everyone jumped.

'Well, that one's enough to make you wet yourself!' James laughed, suddenly reminded of Alexander's problem. He was now red in the face and quite obviously in pain, clutching the strap

of his backpack so tightly that his knuckles were white.

'Come on, Stick,' Lenny whispered to his friend. 'While they're busy here, you can go to the loo undisturbed. I'll be your lookout and check for sneaky girls.' Alexander smiled gratefully. Lenny glowered at Gordon once more as they left.

'If only they all knew how close to the truth their stories are,' James sighed to himself as he made his way off down the corridor.