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Opening extract from

Dirty Bertie: Fangs!

Written by

Alan MacDonald

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DAVID ROBERTS WRITTEN BY ALAN MACDONALD

Dirty Bertie

FANGS!



BEWARE! BERTIE'S REVOLTING HABITS COULD RUB OFF ON YOU!

For Simon – thanks for my "SURPRISE" birthday song ~ D R

For all Bertie fans – and especially those who have written me letters ~ A M



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Dirty Bertie

FANGS!

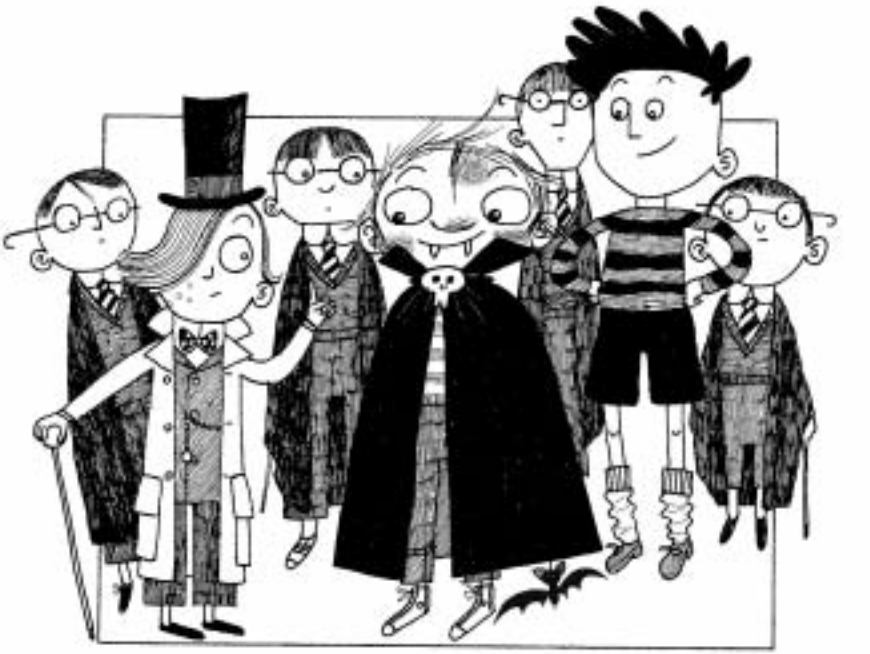


DAVID ROBERTS WRITTEN BY ALAN MACDONALD

Stripes

FANGS!





CHAPTER 1

It was Book Week at Bertie's school and everyone had come dressed as their favourite character. Bertie looked round the playground. There were four witches, a sprinkling of fairies and a rash of Harry Potters. Darren was dressed as Dennis the Menace. Eugene was Willy Wonka. Bertie smiled to himself. His costume

was better than any of them. He was Count Dracula. He had a black cloak and a pair of plastic fangs. A rubber bat dangled from his wrist like a yo-yo.

"Who are you?" asked Eugene.

Bertie glared. "Who do you think?"

"Dunno. The Big Bad Wolf?"

"I'm Count Dracula!" said Bertie.

"Dracula doesn't wear trainers," said Darren.

Suddenly, a dark shadow fell over them.



"Good morning!" said a sinister voice.

Bertie turned round. He gasped. Yikes, it was another vampire! And this one was taller and ten times as scary!

"Heh heh! Did I frighten you?" laughed the vampire, taking out his fangs.



"Mr Grouch!" said Bertie.

"Count Grouch," corrected the caretaker. "I see you had the same idea. Spooky, eh?"

He looked down at something by Bertie's foot.

"What's that?"

"Um … a sweet wrapper," said Bertie.

"LITTER! Pick it up!"

"But I didn't…"

"PICK IT UP!" snapped Mr Grouch.

"And don't ever drop litter in my playground. I have my eye on you."

He put in his fangs and swept away, trailing his cape behind him.

"Yikes!" shivered Eugene. "He scared me to death!"

"Me too," said Darren. "How does he sneak up like that?"

Bertie scowled. "It's not fair! Dracula was my idea!"

"Yeah, but his costume's better," said Darren. "I thought he *was* a vampire."

"Maybe he is," said Eugene.

Darren and Bertie stared at him.

"What do you mean?"

"Well," said Eugene, "yesterday I passed his shed – the one he always keeps locked. Mr Grouch was sitting outside, having a drink."

Darren shrugged. "So? What's funny about that?"

"It's what he was drinking," said Eugene. "It looked like … *blood*!"

"BLOOD?" gasped Bertie.



"Shh, not so loud!" hissed Eugene. "And look at his costume – it fits perfectly. Maybe he really *is* a vampire."

"But vampires can't stand the daylight," Darren objected.

"Maybe he's a kind of half vampire," suggested Bertie. "Half vampire, half caretaker."

It made sense. Bertie had always thought there was something creepy about the school caretaker. He had staring eyes for a start – and no hair. He hated children (Bertie especially). Plus he had a weird habit of suddenly appearing, like a ghost.

"We've got to stop him!" said Bertie.

"He hasn't done anything yet," said Darren, "except clean the toilets."

"How do you know?" said Bertie. "How do you know he's not murderin' teachers and drinking their blood? What about Miss Withers?"

Miss Withers had taught Class 2 – until she had gone home sick and never

returned. Or that was what people said. But what if Mr Grouch had murdered her and hidden the body? It was a worrying thought.

Eugene fingered his neck uneasily. "What shall we do?" he asked.

"Spy on him," said Bertie. "Find out what he's up to. We'll take it in turns."

"Good idea," said Darren. "You go first."

"ME? Why me?" said Bertie.

"It's your idea. And anyway, he hates you already."