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Opening extract from

Mr Gum and the Secret Hideout

Written by

Andy Stanton

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Mr Gum and the Secret Hideout
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Mr Gum and the Secret Hideout



Andy Stanton

Illustrated by David Tazzyman

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Contents

1	The Secret Hideout	1
2	The Department of Clouds and Yogurts	3
3	The Badsters Yick it Up	32
4	'Vestigations and Birdseed	41
5	Down by the Riverside	58
6	The Midnight Meating	73
7	Prisoners!	94
8	Ship's Biscuit	107
9	The Captain and Elizabeth	126
10	Old Granny on the Hoof	143
11	Mr Gum Gets a Surprise	168
12	Clouds of Sorrow, Clouds of Joy	196
Epilogue		220

Some of the crazy old townsfolk from Lamonic Bibber



Mrs Lovely



Friday O'Leary



Billy William the Third



Old Granny



Mr Gum



Martin Launderette



Alan Taylor



Polly

Chapter 1

The Secret Hideout

Mr Gum was a fierce old blister with a face as angry as a thousand walnuts and a big red beard which smelt of menace and beer. He hated children, animals, fun, comics, pop music, birthday parties, books, Christmas, the seaside,

computer games, people called 'Colin', Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fri– Actually, it would probably be quicker to tell you what he liked instead. What he liked was snoozing in bed all day, being a horror and secret hideouts. And the secret hideout he was in right now was the best secret hideout he'd ever seen.

'This secret hideout's flippin' brilliant!' shouted Mr Gum as he paced up and down in his hobnail boots. 'It's got everythin'! Rats! Cockroaches! Pipes what keep drippin'

slime everywhere! An' it stinks! It's like what I always imagined Heaven would be! An' best of all, no one's ever gonna find us here!'

'Yeah,' agreed Mr Gum's dreadful accomplice, a scrawny butcher by the name of Billy William the Third. Billy was standing by a great iron furnace, shovelling old bits of meat on to the flames. And not just any old old bits of meat, but the stalest, grubbiest, most appalling specimens imaginable. Strings of ancient entrails, withered old horse legs, rubbery turkey necks . . .





On they all went, on to the flames. Billy was covered in soot and he was dripping with gobs of hot fat, but he hardly noticed. And why? I don't know, I'm not him. He just didn't.

'Faster!' commanded Mr Gum, hopping from one foot to the other like an unstoppable quail. 'Shovel them entrails, Billy me boy! Chuck it on, chuck it on! An' stoke it all up with coal or I'll bash ya!'

'Right you are, Gummy me old rattler!'

laughed Billy, chucking on a piece of coal that was twice the size of a piece of coal that was half the size of the piece of coal I'm talking about.

ROAR! bellowed the furnace. A great long lick of flame flicked out and singed off Billy's eyebrows, cruel as a scarlet donkey.

'Ha ha ha!' cackled Billy, who loved to see people getting hurt. 'Someone jus' got their eyebrows burned off!' Then he realised who that someone was, and he let out a bloodcurdling howl.

‘OOW!’ yelled Billy, hopping up and down in agony. ‘How come I gotta do all the shovellin’ ’round here anyway? How come you ain’t doin’ none?’

‘Shut up!’ roared Mr Gum, whacking Billy over the head with a silk handkerchief. He didn’t have a silk handkerchief, so he used a cricket bat instead. ‘We gotta keep gettin’ that power up! We can’t afford to rest for a moment. Now, you carry on shovellin’. I gotta rest for a moment.’

Mr Gum threw himself down on a filthy old sofa he'd found on a rubbish tip, all covered with stains and moss. The cushions were cold and soggy, and a big rusty spring poked uncomfortably into his back, but Mr Gum was such a lazer he didn't really care.

'I tell ya, I love this secret hideout,' yawned Mr Gum as he lay there staring up at the ceiling, his hands behind his head and his head behind whatever was in front of his head, probably just

a bit of air or something. 'This is the life, eh, Billy?'

'Yeah, this is the life,' said Billy.

'Yeah, this is the life,' said another voice.

'Who the blimmin' flip said that?' shouted Mr Gum.

'It was I!' cried a man, jumping out from behind the sofa.



'I'm Surprising Ben! I pop up here, I pop up there! Surprise! Surprise! I'm everywhere!'

And off he ran, giggling like a packed lunch.

'Well, that was surprisin',' scowled Mr Gum.

'It certainly was,' said Billy, chewing a piece of coal to see if he could turn it into a diamond but actually just hurting his teeth. 'Anyway,' he continued, spitting it into the fire. 'Soon we'll have a blaze so powerful it'll be the most powerful in history! Even more powerful than itself, even though that's impossible!'

'Yeah,' grinned Mr Gum, rubbing his hands

with glee. Then he rubbed his hands with brie, which is sort of the same but a lot smellier. 'An' the more powerful that blaze gets, the closer we gets to winnin' once an' for all!'

'Ha ha ha!' said Billy William. 'It's funty!'

And the rats they scuttled and the pipes dripped slime and the vats they bubbled and Billy he shovelled in the secret hideout where the two men hid, cos they were low-down villains and that's what they did.