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Opening extract from

My Brother Bernadette

Written by

Jacqueline Wilson

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My Brother Bernadette
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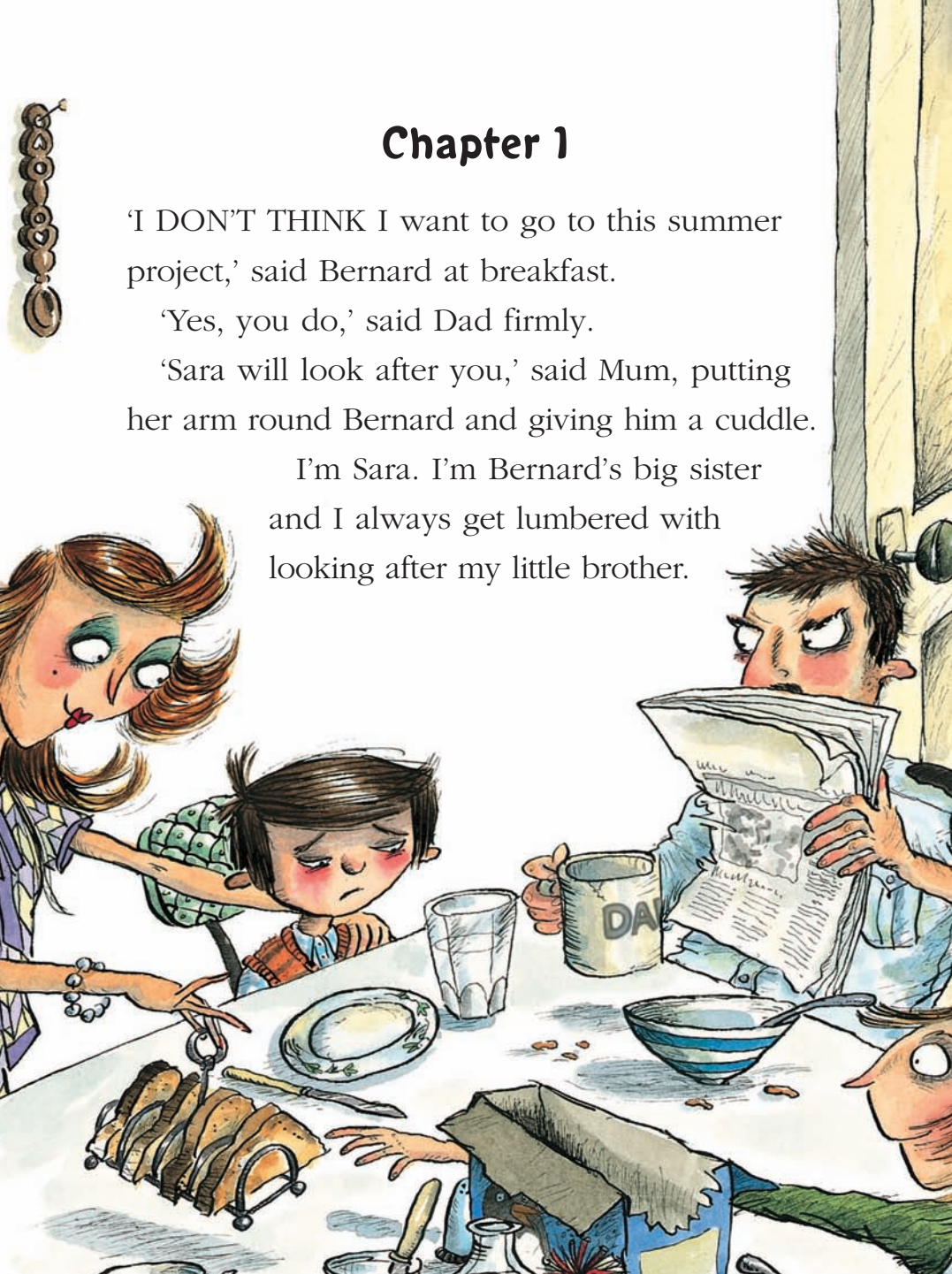
Chapter 1

'I DON'T THINK I want to go to this summer project,' said Bernard at breakfast.

'Yes, you do,' said Dad firmly.

'Sara will look after you,' said Mum, putting her arm round Bernard and giving him a cuddle.

I'm Sara. I'm Bernard's big sister and I always get lumbered with looking after my little brother.



‘The summer project will be great,’ I said, licking honey off my toast. ‘There’s going to be football and computer games and drama and heaps of other stuff. You’ll love it, Bernard,’ I said, though I wasn’t absolutely sure he would. My little brother Bernard is a bit weird.

‘Eat your toast properly, Sara,’ said Mum. ‘And you eat up too, Bernard.’

Bernard bent over his plate, cutting his toast into tiny little squares, the way he likes it.

‘Stop being so finicky, Bernard,’ said Dad. ‘Come on, if you’re quick I’ll walk you both over to the summer project on the way to work.’

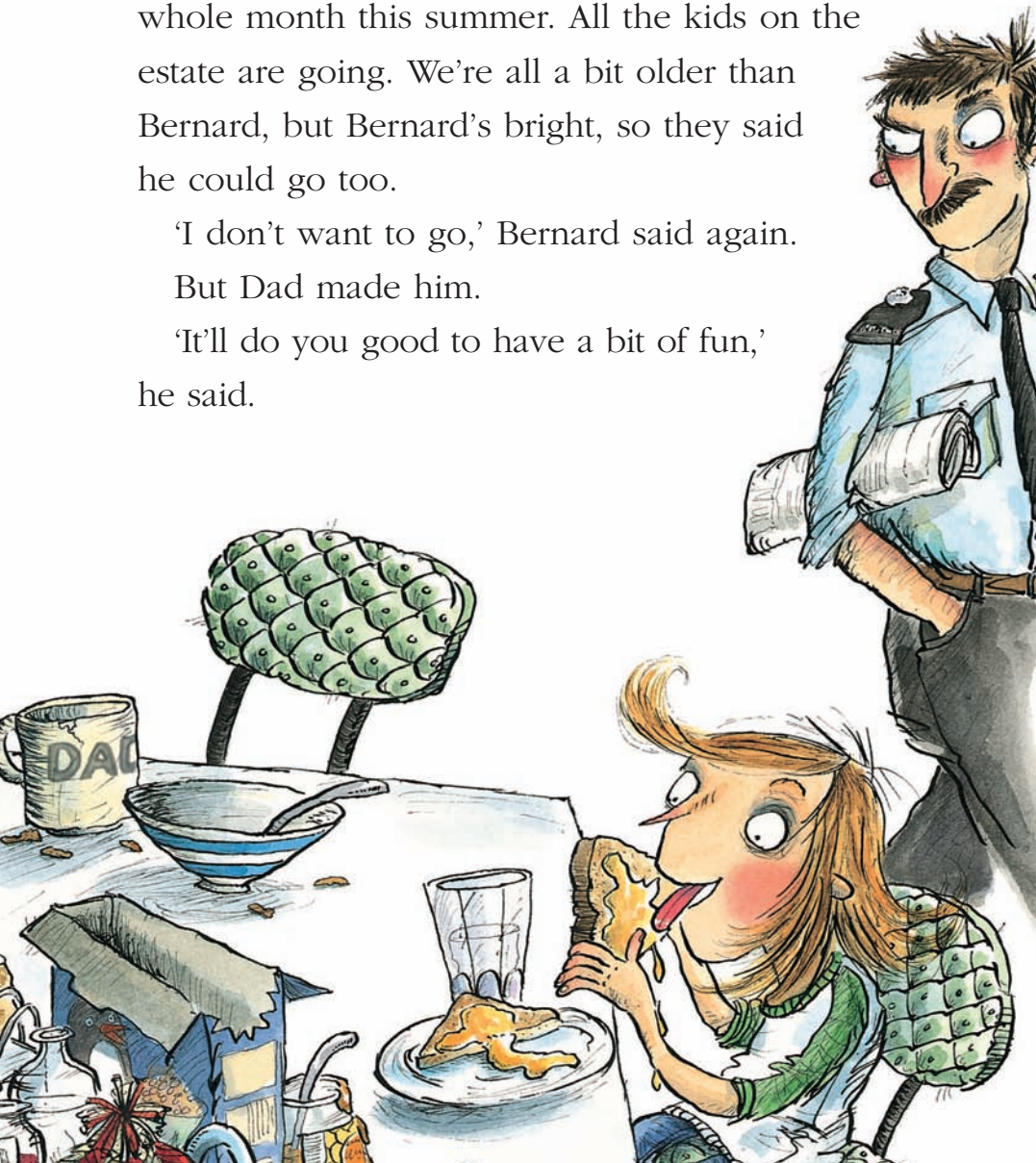


They've set up the summer project in the school next to our estate. It's being held for a whole month this summer. All the kids on the estate are going. We're all a bit older than Bernard, but Bernard's bright, so they said he could go too.

'I don't want to go,' Bernard said again.

But Dad made him.

'It'll do you good to have a bit of fun,' he said.



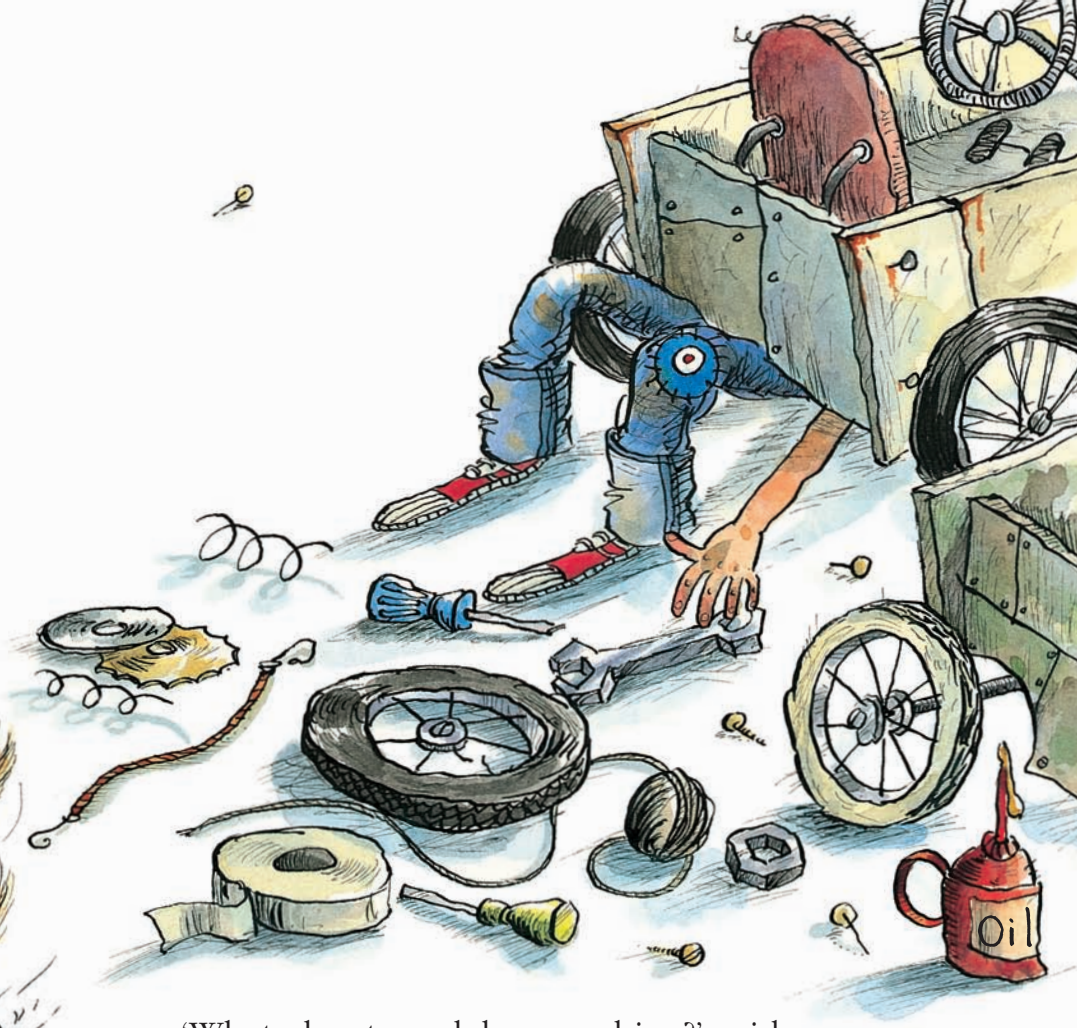
A helper took hold of Bernard's hand.

'Cheer up, pal,' he said. 'What would you like to do this morning, eh?'

'I want to play football,' I said. 'Come and watch me, Bernard.'

The helper decided that Bernard had to choose an activity for himself. Bernard didn't want to play football or baseball or judo or trampolining.





'What about model car making?' said the helper.

'All right,' said Bernard.

My brother Bernard's good at making models. He's got little Plasticine animals trekking up and down our bedroom windowsill and his model aeroplanes zoom above our heads.

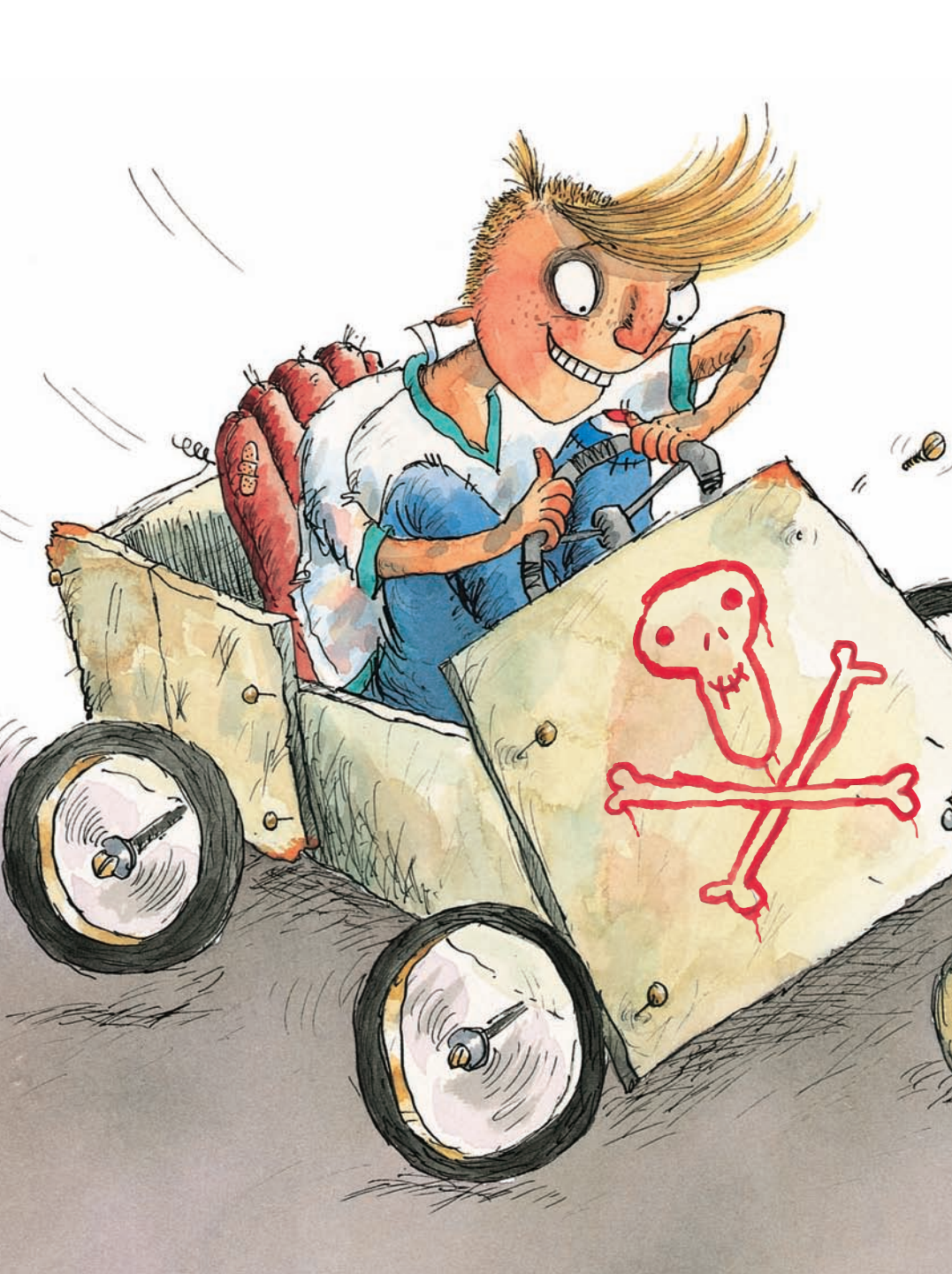
Bernard quite fancied the idea of making model cars. He thought they'd be little cars, but these model cars were big ones. Another helper was showing children how to make cars with wheels and planks of wood. These cars were big enough to ride on.

Bernard made his own model car with a bit of help, no problem. He even perched up on it and went for a very short, slow ride.





But there were a lot of big boys making model cars too. Big Dan was the biggest boy of all. Big Dan is famous on our estate. We all try to keep out of his way.



Big Dan made a big car. He drove it like a dodgem but he didn't dodge. He drove bang into my brother.

Bernard fell off his car. He banged his head and hurt his hands. He tried not to cry but he didn't quite manage it.



The helper picked him up and comforted him. He told Big Dan that he was big enough to know better.

'Poor little Bernard,' said the helper.

Big Dan pulled a terrible face at Bernard.

'Poor little Bernard!' he said, mimicking. 'You stupid sissy little baby. You're like a girl with all that long hair. Bernadette, more like. Yeah. That's your new name. Bernadette.'

