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Opening extract from

Dirty Bertie: Toothy!

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Published by

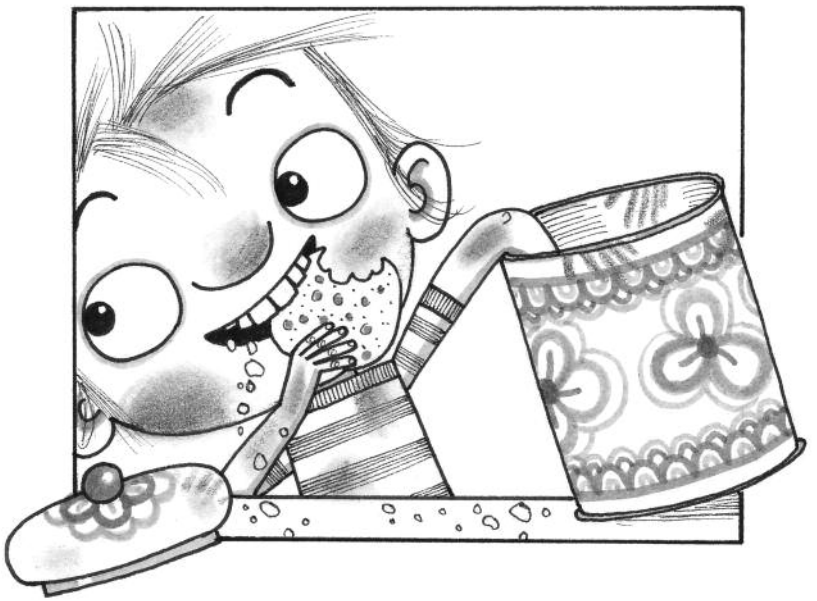
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CHAPTER 1

MUNCH! CRUNCH!

Bertie was back from school and raiding the biscuit tin. Uh-oh! Mum was coming.

"Put it back, Bertie," she said. "Don't forget you've got the dentist tomorrow."

Bertie's legs suddenly felt weak. His eyes bulged.

"The dentist?"

"Yes," said Mum. "You and Suzy are due for a check-up."

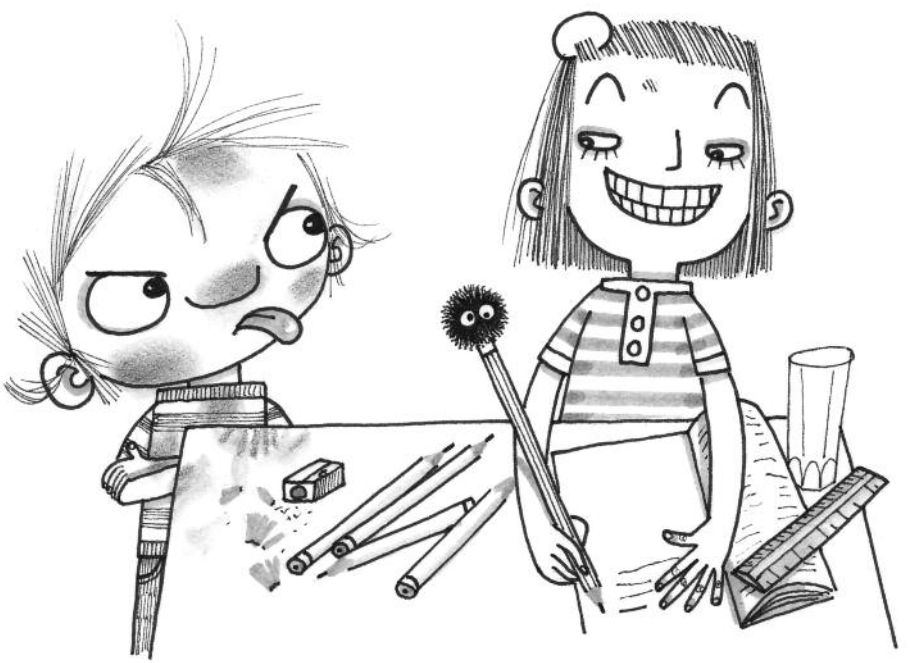
"But … but I went before!" stammered Bertie.

"That was last year," said Mum.

Suzy looked up from her homework.

"I *like* going to the dentist," she said. "Mr Filling says I've got perfect teeth."

Bertie stuck out his tongue at her.



Dirty Bertie

"Just 'cos you're scared," jeered Suzy.

"I'm not!" said Bertie.

"You are!" said Suzy. "Last time Mum had to drag you there."

That was a lie, thought Bertie. He'd hung on to the lamp post because he was worried they were early. Besides, it wasn't his fault that their dentist looked scary. Mr Filling had big hairy hands and mad eyes. He wore a mask over his mouth. Bertie thought he looked like a murderer.

In any case, there was nothing wrong with his teeth. None of them had fallen out, so why did he have to go? Wait a moment … didn't Mum say his check-up was tomorrow? He was saved!

"I can't go!" he said. "I've got school."

"Don't worry," said Mum. "I dropped a note in to Miss Boot this morning."

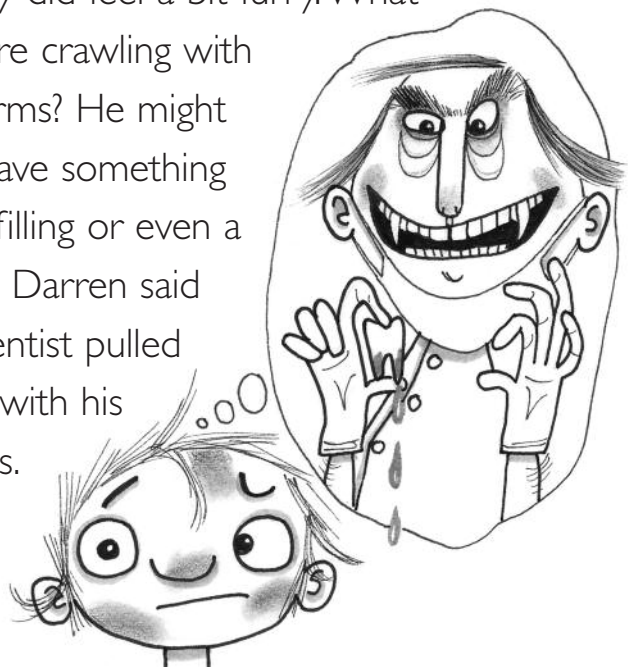
Bertie groaned.

"Anyway," said Mum, "if you clean your teeth you've nothing to worry about."

"I clean MY teeth!" boasted Suzy.

Bertie frowned. He did clean his teeth – just not every day. It saved time just to slosh water round his mouth. Now and again he used toothpaste, but mainly for drawing faces on the mirror.

He ran his tongue over his teeth. Hmm, they did feel a bit furry. What if they were crawling with toothy germs? He might need to have something done – a filling or even a tooth out! Darren said that his dentist pulled teeth out with his bare hands.



Dirty Bertie

Bertie gulped. He needed to think of an excuse quickly. Wait! Mum said she'd written Miss Boot a note. So what was to stop Miss Boot writing back? Bertie rushed upstairs to find a pencil and paper.

Deer Missus Burns,

Just to let you kno Bertie sore the skool dentist today. He sed Bertie's teeth was the best in the class. They are so good he do not need to see the dentist agane. Not never.

Miss Boote (Teecher)

That should do it, thought Bertie, folding the letter in two.

He took it downstairs and waited as Mum read it through. She frowned.

"I see, and Miss Boot wrote this, did she?"

Bertie nodded. "This afternoon."

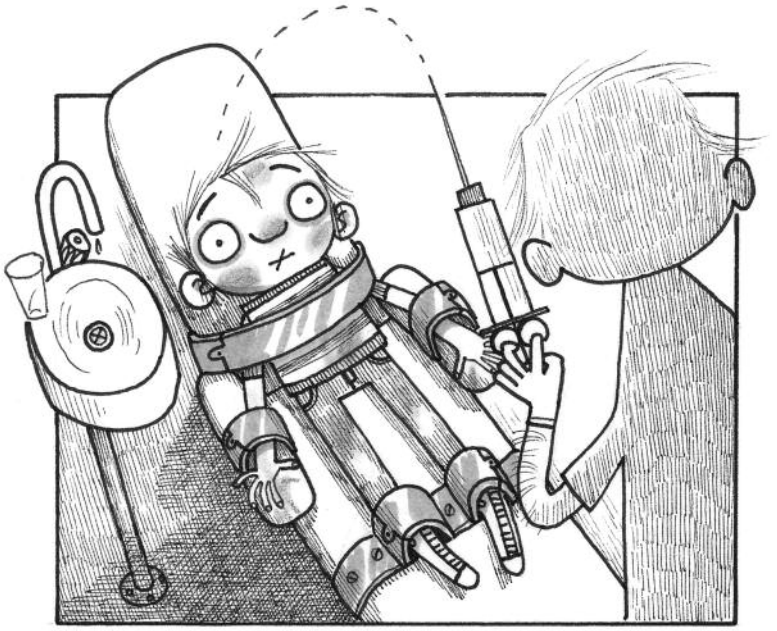
"Strange," said Mum. "Her handwriting is exactly like yours."

"Um … is it?" said Bertie.

"Yes," said Mum. "And she can't spell her own name."

She screwed up the letter and tossed it in the bin.

"Nice try, Bertie," she said. "But you are going to the dentist and that's final."



CHAPTER 2

"Ah, Bertie," breathed Mr Filling. "I've been waiting for you."

Bertie was pushed back into a chair. CLUNK! Iron rings snapped down over his wrists. He was a prisoner.

"Now, let's have a look, shall we?" cackled Mr Filling. The mask over his face slipped down, revealing two sharp fangs.

"ARGHHHHH!"

Bertie woke up in bed clutching his pillow. He opened his eyes. Thank goodness, it was only a nightmare.

What day was it today? Just a normal school day – maths, English, then… Bertie turned cold. Then THE DENTIST. HELP!



Later that day, Bertie sat in the dentist's waiting room. Suzy yawned. Mum was reading a magazine. None of the other people in the waiting room seemed nervous at all.

Bertie stared at a poster on the opposite wall. A large smiley tooth said *Brush your teeth!*

Bertie wished he was back in school – anything was better than this.



He slumped back in his chair with a groan.

"What's the matter? Scared?" said Suzy.

"Course not," said Bertie.

"You're such a baby," said Suzy.

"I'm not," scowled Bertie. "And I'm not afraid of the dentist either."

"Good," said Suzy. "Then you won't mind going first."

Bertie turned pale. Go first? Why couldn't he go last? Or better still go home?

He gripped his seat. From now on he vowed to clean his teeth ten times a day. He would even use toothpaste. He would give up sweets – apart from jelly snakes, obviously.

The dental nurse came in. "Bertie and Suzy Burns? Who's going first?" she asked.

"Bertie," said Suzy, pointing to him.

Bertie got shakily to his feet. This was it. He was a dead man.

"Good luck!" whispered Suzy. "Don't wet your pants."

"Do you want me to come with you?" asked Mum.

Bertie shook his head. He wasn't a baby.



The nurse had gone ahead. Bertie dragged himself down the corridor. Mr Filling's surgery was the last room on the left. The door was slightly open and he could hear the dentist's booming voice.

"Yes, it's a real shame," he said. "He's only seven years old."

"Is there nothing you can do?" the nurse asked.

"Afraid not. It's the kindest way, he'll have to be put to sleep."

Bertie froze. His blood ran cold. Had he imagined it? No, he'd heard it with his own ears. The dentist was planning to put him to sleep … in other words, bump him off! Bertie gulped. Hadn't he always said Mr Filling looked like a murderer? That explained why he wore gloves, so he didn't leave fingerprints!

Bertie looked around wildly. He could run back and tell his mum. But she'd never believe him. "Mr Filling – a murderer? Don't be silly, Bertie," she'd laugh. No, there was only one thing for it – he had to escape. Bertie spotted a cloakroom to his right. He slipped inside and closed the door.

