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CHAPTER 1

'DAVE! STOP PICKING YOUR NOSE!'

That was my mum.

'John,' she said to my dad, 'tell him.'

Dad had just walked through the door, home from work. He looked at Mum, puzzled, and then at me, and then back at Mum again.

'Tell him what?' he asked.

'To stop picking his nose.'

Dad groaned. 'Not again! Dave'

'But it's part of Science,' I protested. I held out my finger so he could see the interesting black and purple crusty bits on the end of it that had come out of my nostril.

'Yuk!' said Mum, putting on her 'I'm-going-tothrow-up' face. 'Clean that muck off your finger at once!' 'OK,' I said. I put the end of my finger into my mouth and licked off the crusty bits with my tongue.

'Yeurghhh!' said Dad.

'WITH A TISSUE!' roared Mum.

'I haven't got a tissue,' I said. Then I remembered. 'Well, actually I do have, but I'm keeping a lump of snot in it so I can examine it under my microscope.'

FACTOID:

Snot

Snot is very important: it stops muck getting into our lungs.

When someone sneezes, snot belts out of their nose at 160km an hour!

That was too much for Mum. She left the kitchen and headed for the living room.

Dad shook his head. 'This has got to stop, Dave,' he said.

'But it's Science!' I protested. 'It's Biology! We do it at school so it must be all right.'

'Dave,' said Dad firmly, 'we are going to have a

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serious talk about this later. Now go to your room.'

With that he left to find Mum and cheer her up.

Sighing, I headed upstairs to my room. As I got to the landing I could feel my intestines give a little churn and I let out some gas.

'MUM! DAVE'S FARTING AGAIN!'

This time the shout was from my dreadful sister, Krystal. She is thirteen years old and the most terrifying person on the planet. I made a run for my room to escape, but I didn't get there.

CRASH! Krystal banged the door open and stood framed in her doorway, glaring at me.

'You are disgusting!' she said. 'You are the most disgusting thing in the whole world, and that includes all the creepy crawlies and sludge and muck and everything that is revolting and disgusting! I hate the fact that you are my brother! In fact I'm not even sure if you are my brother! I think you were dumped on this family by aliens from the Planet Disgusting! What are you doing, farting outside my room?'

'I was going to my room,' I said, and held out the

rolled-up tissue to prove it. 'I'm going to examine some snot under my microscope.'

'YUK!!!!' And Krystal's face really curled up, her eyes going squidgy and her teeth sticking together. I saw her hand reach for a tennis racket just inside the door and I ran to my room and rushed in and put a chair against the door just in time. The tennis racket smashed against my door.

Like I say, Krystal is the most terrifying person I know. Even more terrifying than Banger Bates's dad who's in my class at school. Banger Bates, that is, who's in my class, not his dad. Banger Bates is the same age as me, eleven. His dad's much older, but if he was at school he'd be in the Reception class because he's an idiot. He's got tattoos all over himself and a big ring through his nose and he terrifies everyone at school, including the teachers. But even Banger Bates's dad isn't as terrifying as my sister.

I got out my microscope and was just putting a blob of snot on one of the slides when there was a knock at my door. It was too quiet and gentle to be my sister. When she wants to come in she doesn't knock, she just kicks down the door. Not that she ever comes right in, because she says my room's a Health Hazard. What Krystal does is stand in my doorway and shout at me when I've done something to upset her, like fart in front of one of her friends. This quiet knocking meant it was either Mum or Dad.

'Dave?'

It was Dad.

I moved the chair away from the door and opened it and Dad came in. He looked gloomy. I imagined he and Mum had just 'had words' about me downstairs. This usually means Mum complaining about me and Dad agreeing and Mum saying, 'Then why don't you do something about him?'

FACTOID:

Snot is mucus in your nose that hasn't got much water in it. The mucus collects the things you breathe through your nostrils: dust, smoke, dirt, pollen. When snot dries, it becomes bogies. 'Dave,' said Dad, 'we have to do something.'

He sat down on my chair, right on top of the piece of tissue with the rest of the snot in it.

'Er ...' I began, thinking it a good idea to warn him what he'd just sat on, but I didn't get the chance.

Dad gave a heavy sigh. 'Dave, you are upsetting your mum and me with the things you do.'

'What things?'

'The disgusting things. Picking your nose and eating it. It's got to stop. Now we've tried talking to you about it. We've tried reasoning with you. There's only one thing left.' And he opened his hand and produced a twenty-pound note. 'Bribery.'

'Bribery?' I echoed.

Dad nodded. 'If you can stop doing anything disgusting for just one week – seven days – then I will give you this twenty-pound note.'

Twenty pounds! All for me! It seemed too good to be true. I looked at the twenty-pound note in Dad's hand, then at Dad, then back at the twenty-pound note. This all seemed too easy.

There had to be a catch.

'What's the catch?' I asked.

Dad shook his head. 'No catch,' he said. 'Just don't do or say anything over the next week that either your mum or Krystal or I consider to be disgusting.'

I thought this over. 'When you say disgusting ...?'
I began, just wanting to make sure of the rules.

'You know what I mean,' said Dad.'No disgusting smells. No disgusting noises. No disgusting actions. And if you can keep it up for just seven days ...' He rustled the twenty-pound note at me.

Twenty pounds! What I could do with twenty pounds! I could buy things for my microscope!

I nodded. 'Agreed,' I said. I held out my hand for the note, but Dad had twitched it away and put it back in his pocket.

'In seven days' time,' he said. 'Providing nothing disgusting happens.'

With that he got up and headed for the door.

'When does it start?' I asked.





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'From now,' said Dad.

I gave him an awkward look. 'Actually, can we start it from about two minutes' time?'

Dad looked at me, puzzled. 'Why?'

'Because you've got a tissue stuck with snot to the bottom of your trousers,' I said.

Dad looked round at his bottom and his face did that thing when he goes silently, 'Yuk'. He pulled the tissue off the seat of his trousers and went to throw it in my wastebin, but it stuck to his thumb. He gave me a look that told me he wasn't pleased.

'I didn't know we were starting when I put it on the chair,' I said, trying to appeal to his sense of fair play.

Dad looked at the snotty tissue stuck to his thumb as if he were about to say something. Then he must have thought about a whole seven days of peace and quiet without Mum and Krystal complaining about me.

He nodded. 'The seven days starts in two minutes, as soon as I've got rid of this yukky thing.'

With that he headed for the door again. As he opened it, I belched. Dad turned and glared at me.

'Two minutes,' I reminded him. 'That's the last one.'

'It had better be,' he said. 'Or no twenty pounds.'

He left, shutting the door. I looked at my clock. I still had thirty seconds left, but I was taking no chances. I let out a silent fart, one last good one before I became a disgust-free zone for seven days.

CHAPTER 2

The next morning, I was really good at breakfast. I didn't make any windy noises, or examine the breakfast cereal in case any insects had managed to get inside the packet and die.

(I once spotted a dried beetle in Krystal's muesli and pointed it out to her just as she was about to put it in her mouth. After Mum had stopped Krystal screaming, she told me off and insisted what I'd seen was actually a raisin. I proved I was right by picking the dried beetle off the wall — where it had stuck when Krystal threw her spoon while she was having hysterics — and broke it in half to show them the dried-up insides of the beetle. Krystal then screamed so loudly she broke a lightbulb, and I got told off again — just for being right!

Life can be very unfair.)

I then set off for school, and – just in case I was being watched by any of the neighbours who might squeal on me to Dad and Mum – I deliberately avoided examining any of the dog poo on the pavement on my way there.

By the time I'd reached the school gates, I was feeling pretty happy about being well on my way to getting my hands on that twenty pounds, but then someone grabbed me by the collar and pushed me against a wall, and my feelings of happiness disappeared. Even though I'd been grabbed from behind, two things told me the person who'd grabbed me was Banger Bates, our school bully.

One was the size of the fist I could see out of the corner of my eye. Like Banger Bates, this fist was HUGE! And Banger Bates is ENORMOUS. I don't believe he is eleven years old, I think he is really about fifteen and his parents got his birth certificate mixed up with someone else's. Possibly a baby gorilla. The other thing that gave him away was the smell. Banger Bates splashes on his dad's aftershave, even though he doesn't shave. This aftershave is like some horrible gas that brings tears to the eyes of anyone who smells it. Anyone, that is, except Banger Bates and his family. This stuff is so awful that if you splashed any near an animal you'd be arrested for cruelty.

FACTOID: Bad Smells

The skunk is an expert at making really bad smells. It squirts a stinking liquid from glands under its tail up to a distance of three metres. The bad smell can be smelt up to half a kilometre away!

'So!' snarled Banger, and he spun me round so he could glare into my face. Banger does the glaring thing very well: his lips curl up and his eyes bore into you like a dentist's drills. He is terrifying.

I didn't say anything because I've found that if

you say anything to Banger before he's ready for you to say it, he's likely to bash you round the head and snarl, 'Shut up, creep!' or something similar. He glared at me a bit longer, as if he was trying to work out the order of his next words. (Banger is VERY thick, with about one brain cell inside his skull. But it's a very dangerous brain cell, because all it can think of is bashing people up.)

