



Chapter 1

*In which our heroes wake up,
and a startling discovery is made*

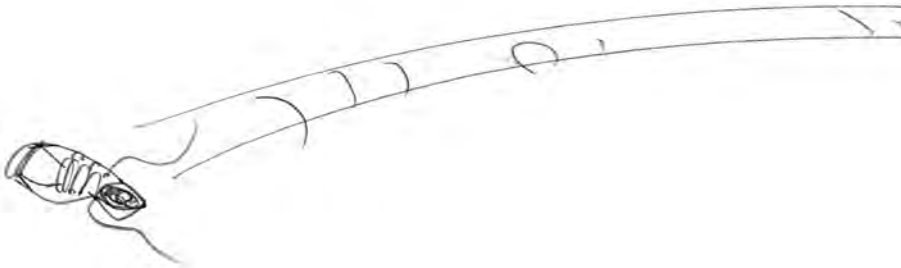
It was early morning, and dawn was breaking over the peaceful little island of Great Kerfuffle. The golden sun peeped over the horizon, checked to make sure no one was looking, and slowly climbed into the blue sky.

And far below, in a tall tree in the garden of a lovely house high on a hillside above the tiny village of Loose Chippings, a blackbird cleared



its throat and broke forth into song to greet the new day.

Inside the lovely house, in a beautiful pink bedroom, a little girl opened her eyes and leapt out of bed. Dashing to the window, she flung the shutters wide open. The sunlight streamed in, bringing with it the sweet smell of blossoms on the morning breeze, and, as if in greeting, the tree waved



gently and rustled its leaves. There, on the nearest branch, so close she could almost touch it, perched the blackbird, trilling merrily.

'Oi! Blackbird!
Shut your beak!'

yelled the little girl, and she threw a shoe at it.



The shoe bounced off the branch and fell to the ground, where it was picked up by a passing cat. The blackbird stuck out its tongue and blew a **defiant raspberry**; then it flew away. The



little girl stomped grumpily back to her bed and shut her eyes. But it was no good: she couldn't get back to sleep. After a few minutes, she tried actually getting into the bed and lying down; but that didn't help either. So then she decided to go and jump on her brother's face.

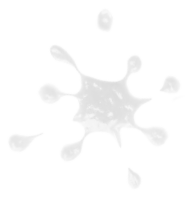
Seconds later, in the bedroom just across the landing, the little girl's brother pulled one of her toes out of his left nostril and groaned wearily.

'Morning, Stinkbomb!' said the little girl cheerily, sitting down with a **flump!** on his tummy. 'Time to get up!'

'Why?' said Stinkbomb grouchily.

'Because,' said the little girl, 'it's a beautiful morning, and the sun is shining, and we can play games and have adventures, and if you don't get up I'm going to put porridge down your trousers forever, so there.'

Stinkbomb thought about this. The idea of having porridge put down his trousers forever



certainly sounded interesting, but on balance he wasn't sure if he fancied it. So he decided to get up.

As he did, he made a disturbing discovery. On his bedroom floor lay a small ceramic pig with its feet in the air and a hole in its tummy.

'Oi! Ketchup-Face!' he said crossly. 'Have you been raiding my piggy bank?'

Ketchup-Face shook her head. 'Nope,' she said.

'Well, *somebody* has!' said Stinkbomb. 'Look!' He picked up the empty pig and shook it. A solitary penny fell out and landed with a little *thunk* on the carpet.

'I had a **whole tenner** in there, and it's gone!'

Ketchup-Face shrugged. 'Wasn't me.'

Stinkbomb scratched his head. His sister had


many faults, but telling lies wasn't one of them. 'Well, then,' he said, 'it must have been the badgers.'

Ketchup-Face thought about this. She wasn't really sure what badgers were, so she just nodded and tried to look wise. Then she changed her mind and asked, 'What's a badger?'

'It's a, it's a, well, *you* know,' said Stinkbomb. 'They dig holes in the lawn, and eat all the worms, and they knock over dustbins, and frighten chickens, and drive too fast.'


'Oh,' said Ketchup-Face. 'And do they empty piggy banks as well?'

'Probably,' Stinkbomb said knowledgeably. 'It sounds like the sort of thing they *would* do.'




Ketchup-Face scratched her head. It was quite a pretty head, except when the front bit was covered with **ketchup** and **chocolate** and **jam** and **mud**. Just at the moment it was clean, but it was a fair bet that by the end of Chapter Four it would be filthy again.

‘Does it?’ she asked.



Stinkbomb tutted in a big-brotherly kind of way. ‘Of course it does,’ he said. ‘Think about it. They do **bad** things, ’cos they’re **bad**gers. If they weren’t **bad**, they’d just be **gers**. I bet our bin’s been knocked over as well.’

Ketchup-Face opened the window and looked outside. Sure enough, the family dustbin was lying



on its side in the garden, giving every indication of having been badgered.

‘Gosh,’ Ketchup-Face said, impressed, ‘I suppose that proves it. The badgers have taken your tenner. What are we going to do about it?’

Stinkbomb drew himself upright. Then he drew himself sitting down, and then he drew himself winning a race and getting a medal, and then he drew a dinosaur having a bath; and then he put his pencil down and said, ‘I’ll tell you what we’re going to do. We’re going to see the king.’