

CHAPTER 2

THE BEE-BOTTLE GANG

Alfie threw his schoolbag at the bottom of the stairs and went into the kitchen.

'Pick up that bag, Alfie,' his mother said. 'Your granny will break her neck. And why are you so late? Dilly-dallying in the park again, I suppose?'

'Yes, Mam,' Alfie said. 'Sorry.'

Well, it was *mostly* the reason why he was late, so Alfie didn't mention

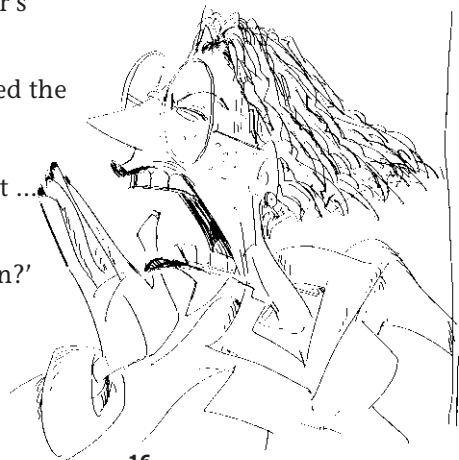
anything about being kept back to do lines.

'Have I time to go over to Fitzer's?'

'All right, but your dinner will be ready in an hour.'

Fitzer's mother answered the door.

'Is Fit ...
I mean,
Dean, in?'



'DEANNNN!' Mrs Fitzpatrick shouted.

Alfie's dad said that Mrs Fitzpatrick's voice would make a great car alarm.

Alfie's ears were **ringing**.

'What's the story, Alfie?' Fitzer asked.

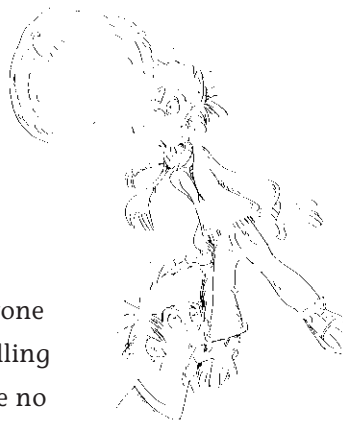
'Are you coming to the park for a game?' asked Alfie.

'Nice one!' said Fitzer, and he got his football from under the stairs.

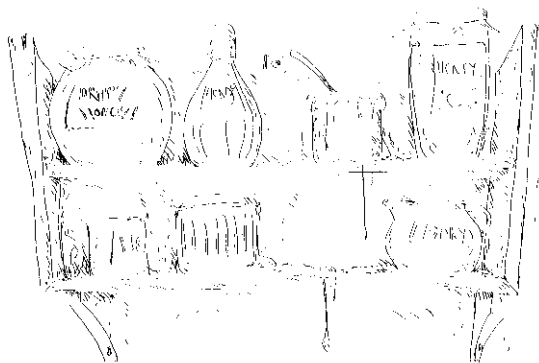
On the way, Alfie told Fitzer about the Bee-Bottle Gang.

'I don't like bees,' Fitzer said. His nose had swollen up like a balloon last summer when he had been stung by a bee.

'I know,' Alfie said. 'But what would happen if everyone went around killing bees? There'd be no more bees. And no more honey!'

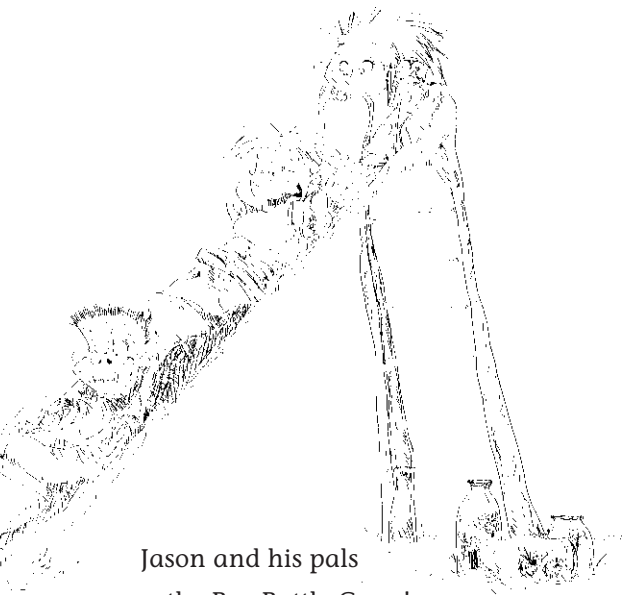


'Oh.' Fitzer loved honey – honey and banana sandwiches, runny honey on his porridge, drippy honey on chocolate ice-cream ...



When they got to the park they saw some kids from their school messing on the slide. Jason Walsh, known as Whacker, was coming down head-first. Adam Burke was hanging on to his ankles and Stephen O'Leary and Emily Farrell followed.

Three glass bottles and a jam-jar lay in the grass by the play area. Alfie could see small shapes flying around inside.



Jason and his pals
were the Bee-Bottle Gang!

'Keep a lookout, Fitzer,' Alfie said,
dropping to the grass. 'I'm going to
save the bees.'

He crawled through the grass and
began unscrewing the tops of the
bottles. Just as the last bee flew out,
there was a shout.

'**Hey!** What do you think you're
doing?' Whacker Walsh roared.

