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Opening extract from
**Baddies, Beasties and a Sprinkling
of Crumbs!**

Written by
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Illustrated by
Ali Pye

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Stripes Publishing

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Please print off and read at your leisure.

For Mark, with love xx – TC
For E.M. Burton – AP

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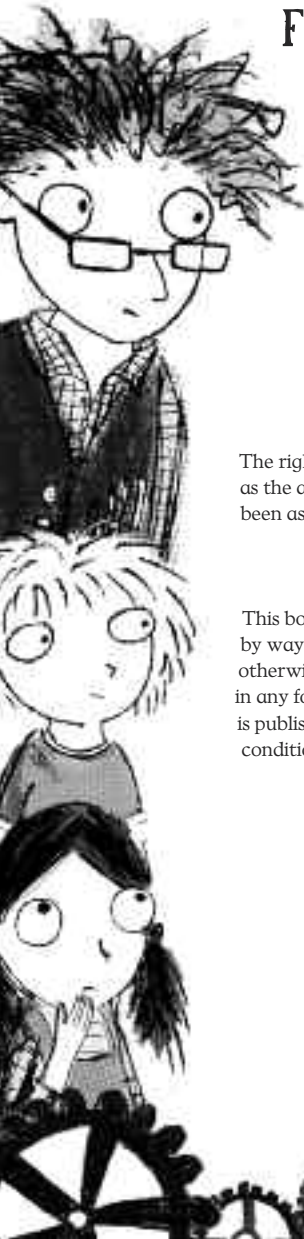
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Inventions 384-389

Fig 384. Coggs

Clockwork cat as pet for Martha. Must be lovable and house-trained.

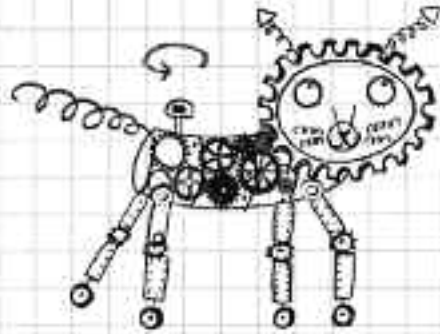


Fig 385. Rudolf

Bright blue fluorescent circular frame for making a hole appear in a solid object. Hole disappears when frame is removed.

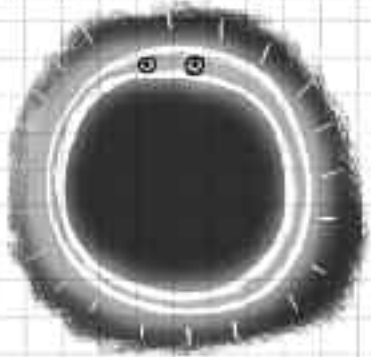


Fig 386. Tilly-Twirl

Blender to make any flavour smoothie. Just add milk then programme in your order.



Fig 387. Clucky

Oven for cooking eggs (boiled, scrambled, poached or fried). Squawks when the eggs are ready. Moving wings and tail parts.

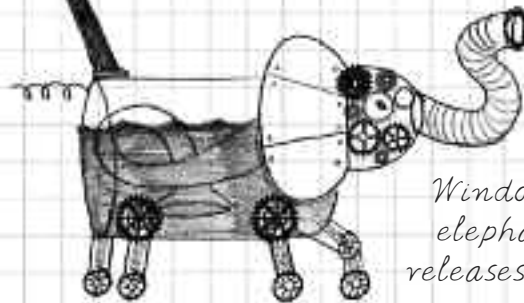
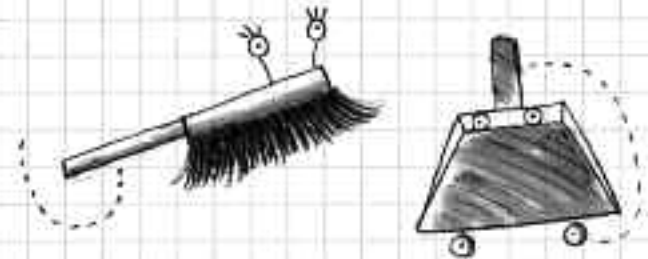


Fig 388. Wilma

Window-cleaning elephant. Trunk releases Bubbletastic foam.

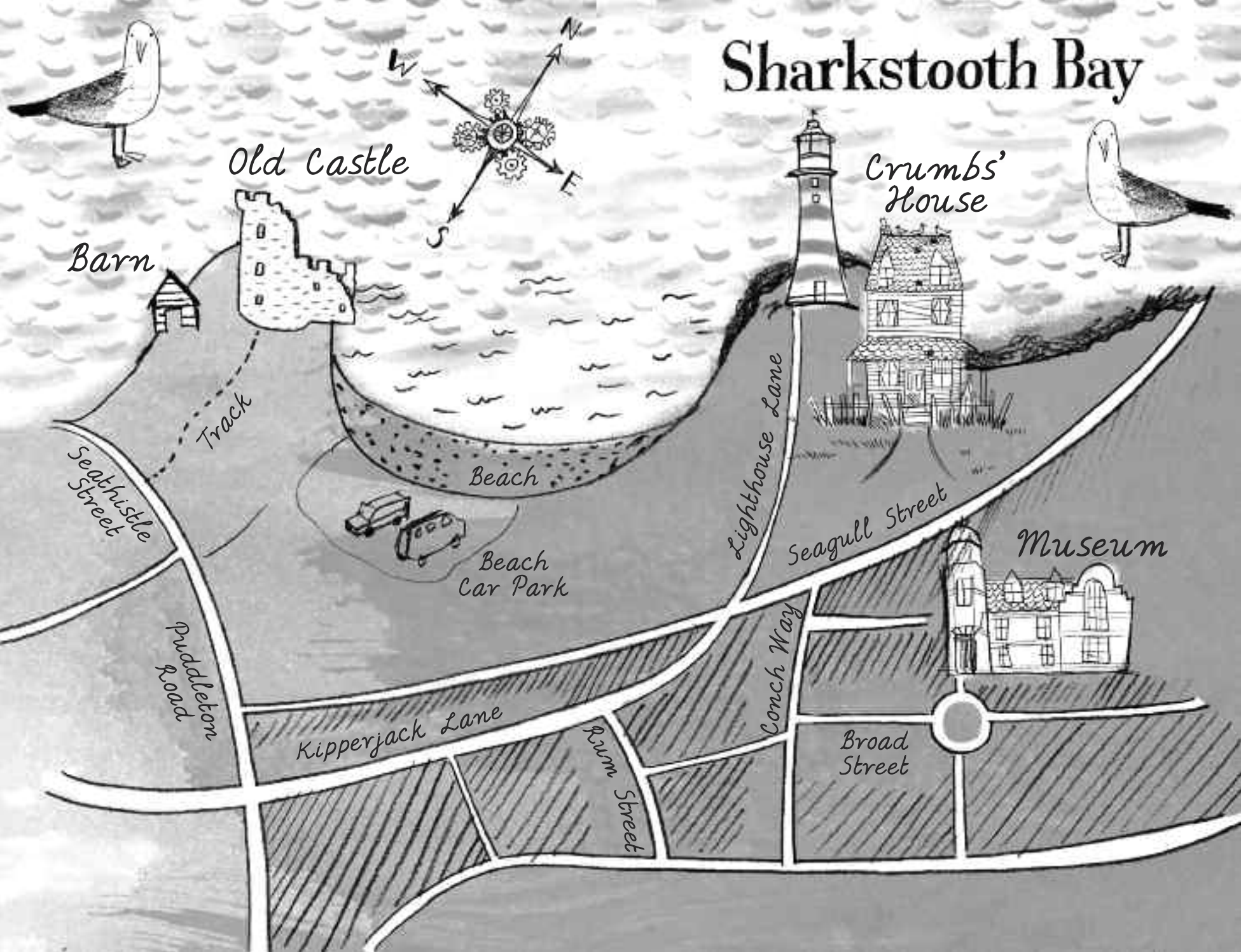
Fig 389. Bertram and Bella-May



Dustpan and brush with automated wheels and bristles for super-speedy cleaning.

Property of Henrig Crumb

Sharkstooth Bay



Old Castle

Crumbs' House

Barn

Track

Seathistle Street

Beach

Beach Car Park

Lighthouse Lane

Seagull Street

Museum

Purpleton Road

Kipperjack Lane

Rum Street

Conch Way

Broad Street



Martha, Otto and Scarlett Crumb were rather unusual children.

Martha was almost eleven, and the eldest Crumb. She had pale skin, chewed fingernails and mousy brown hair, which she wore in limp bunches. And she was a complete worrywart.

She worried about everything, from germs and fires to floods and plagues. She worried about forgetting to do her homework, even though she

always remembered, and sometimes she even worried about *worrying*. But most of all, **Martha** worried about bad things happening to her family.

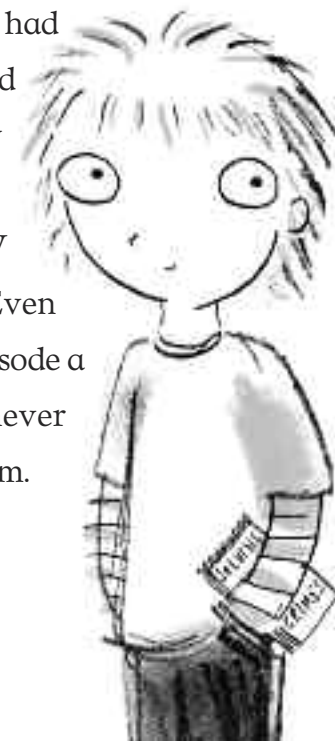
To make life sort of safe, Martha did wobbly handstands and cartwheels for luck, and made funny little creatures out of fluff.



She hoped that these lucky-fluffles would protect her family from bad things and bad people (even wicked goblins with pointy ears who could pop out of plugholes when you were least expecting them). She also wrote down happy words in her *Happy Words Book* to calm her nerves in particularly anxious moments.

Otto Crumb was nine. He was a skinny boy with white-blond hair, which had once been cut into a neat page-boy style, but had long since grown out. He had large pale blue eyes and very fair skin, like Martha.

Otto was a huge fan of TV detective Montague Plum. Even though Otto had seen every episode a hundred times or more, he never seemed to tire of watching them.



Just like Plum, Otto carried around a *Solving Crimes Notebook*, which he used to jot down the comings and goings of the street, or sketch anyone who looked, in his eyes, a little bit dodgy.

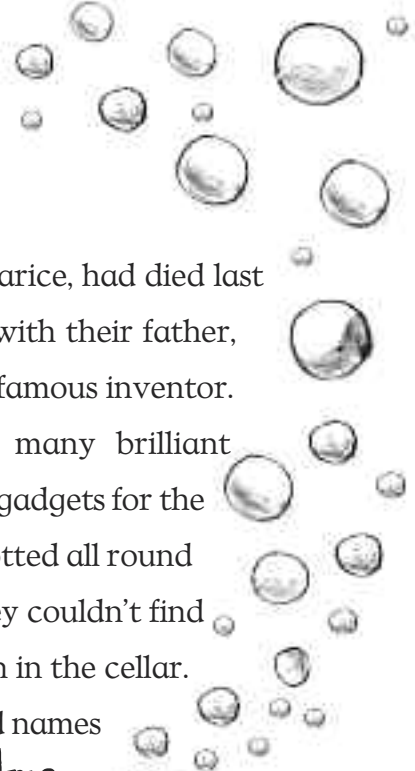
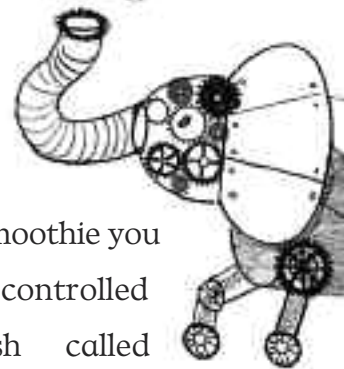
Scarlett, the youngest of the Crumbs, had just turned six and three-quarters. She had curly red hair that did as it pleased, a burst of freckles across her nose and, on her last count, three wobbly teeth.

Just like her hair, **Scarlett** did as she pleased. She was bold and fearless and a dab hand at karate. She ate peanut butter and jam sandwiches in the rain, growled through the letterbox at the postman, and she could pinch like a crab!



The children's mother, Clarice, had died last year, so now they just lived with their father, Henrig. Henrig was a world-famous inventor. In the past he'd invented many brilliant contraptions, as well as some gadgets for the home. His inventions were dotted all round the house, and those that they couldn't find a space for were stored down in the cellar.

The children had invented names for them all. There was **Wilma**, a window-cleaning robotic elephant that sneezed out jets of coloured foam, a blender, **Tilly-Twirl**, that made any smoothie you wanted, and a remote-controlled dustpan and brush called **Bertram and Bella-May**, who scuttled round sweeping up.



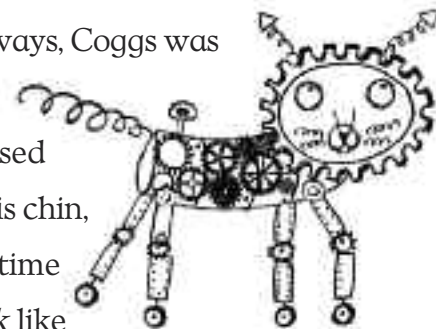
But best of all was Rudolf. Rudolf wasn't much to look at, but he was a very useful invention indeed. His name stood for **Relative Ultrasonic Displacement Of Location Frame**. In other words, he was a magic hole!

Rudolf had a bright blue fluorescent frame, which allowed him to be folded up without getting lost. But when he was opened out, Rudolf formed a perfect circle, like a large frisbee. Then, when Rudolf was slapped on a wall, he made the bricks vanish, creating a magic hole to climb through.

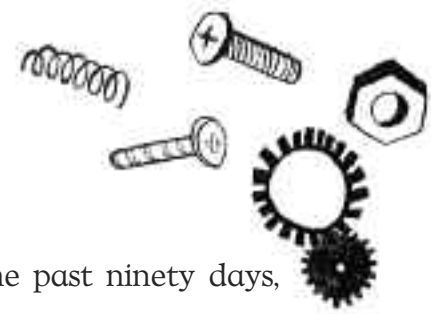
Rudolf made holes in other things, too – fridge doors (for easy snacking), cupboards (for unloading mugs and plates), and wardrobes (for super-quick tidying up). He could make holes in pretty much anything.



Then there was **Coggs**, a clockwork cat that Henrig had made for Martha when she was a baby. In some ways, Coggs was just like any ordinary cat; he liked to be fussed over and tickled under his chin, and he spent a lot of time asleep. But he didn't *look* like an ordinary cat at all. Rather than having fur, he had cogs and springs. Coggs adored Martha, but strangers made him nervous.



The Crumbs lived in Lighthouse Lane, on the outskirts of Sharkstooth Bay. The other houses in their street were painted ice-cream colours, from shades of yellow to soft pastel pinks, and the gardens were all beautifully mowed and planted. Once upon a much happier time, the Crumbs' house had been painted a cool mint green.



But now the paint was peeling off and the garden was as overgrown as Otto's hair.

In the past, Henrig would have dealt with these things, but this year he hadn't been himself.



Henrig had always *looked* muddly. He'd always worn odd socks. And his shirts and waistcoats had never quite matched his trousers. But since Clarice died, Henrig Crumb had been muddly on the *inside*, too. He forgot little things, like what day it was, and bigger things, too (like Christmas).

For a time he'd even stopped inventing things. But as the months rolled on, the mountain of unpaid bills had forced him back to work.

And so today, as for the past ninety days, Henrig was locked away in his study working on something very important. He'd been commissioned by the curator of the town's museum to create an incredible *unbreakable* case. And in three days' time, a priceless ornament would be arriving at the museum to be displayed in Henrig's case. This ornament was a solid gold statue of an elephant, the size of a small cat, encrusted with precious jewels and worth *millions*.

Henrig had a few tests left to do on the case, and as he worked away in his attic room, the children made themselves breakfast. There was nothing terribly unusual about that, except that today was the first day of the summer holidays.

"So," said Otto, yawning widely, "do you think Dad will remember there's no school?"

Usually the children got themselves to school

after taking their dad a cup of coffee and the morning newspaper. But now six whole weeks lay ahead of them with nothing to do.

“Nah,” said Scarlett. “He’s probably forgotten. I’ll bet you a half-chewed toffee he’s forgotten to go shopping, too.” She whisked a sticky half-chewed toffee out of her pocket.

The possibility of no food in the house sent Martha into a frenzy. “Forgotten to go shopping? *We’ll starve!*” she cried.

Ignoring his sister, Otto took three eggs from a basket on the table and wandered over to Cluck 'n' Fry. “Who wants eggs then? We’d better eat while we can...”

“Me!” cried Scarlett.

“Yes, please,” said Martha. “But make sure they’re cooked. Undercooked eggs make you turn green. Then die.”

Cluck 'n' Fry (or Clucky for short) was a mechanical chicken with an oven for a tummy and she made a mean fried egg. Otto popped the first egg into a hatch in Clucky’s tummy and waited for the ear-splitting

SQUAWK!

that signalled Clucky had set about frying it.

A minute later, her wings started flapping.

“The first egg is ready!” Otto cried. “Get the plates!”

Quickly, Martha snatched up a plate, opened the hatch in Clucky’s tummy and scooped out one perfectly cooked fried egg. She popped in the next one.



While the eggs were cooking, Scarlett made toast. She buttered it messily then slapped a slice on to each of their plates.

“After breakfast, we should go to the beach,” said Scarlett, as they sat down to eat. “I’m going to dig a deep tunnel, right to Australia, and spend my holidays *there* catching crocodiles!”

“No!” wailed Martha. “Not the beach! What if you cut your foot on a shell and bleed to death!”

“That’s nonsense,” Scarlett scowled. “Otto, tell her we are going!”

But Otto had caught a glimpse of the front page of the newspaper. Dad’s picture was on it. Why on earth would Dad be in the newspaper?

