

## **THE BISCUIT FACTORY SYNOPSIS**

The Biscuit Factory is an anarchic, irreverent comedy novel for 8-10 year olds, told from the perspective of 11-year-old Haddie, a girl with a guitar and a temper.

Haddie and her friends, George and Naomi, are having a band practice at the Community Centre. The band is in trouble: they have a gig coming up and every time they try to play “F Major” they make the suckiest sound any of them has ever heard.

But practice is cancelled suddenly when they find their venue being eaten by a huge, fluffy monster.

It turns out that The Biscuit Factory that sits overlooking the town of Normalton has accidentally torn a hole between dimensions and a bunch of ABC’s (Annoying Big Creatures) have spilled through and are causing havoc around the town.

It is not the first time this sort of thing has happened. Everybody in town knows that the Biscuit Factory is really a Super-Secret Scientific Research Facility in disguise, and they are always having weird “unplanned releases”. But everyone pretends that the fiction is true. It just makes life easier.

But not Haddie, not this time, because the Biscuit Factory’s Biscuiteers have coned off the Community Centre and are urging everybody to stay home and ignore the ABC’s, effectively canceling their practice. And, suspecting Haddie’s guitar may be partially to blame for the outbreak, they’ve confiscated it and taken it to the Factory for tests.

Haddie springs into action. She must infiltrate the Biscuit Factory to steal back her guitar. While there she learns that the Biscuiteers have no idea how to fix this mess other than to cone off the affected areas. They have accidentally opened a One Way Wild Door – a roaming portal pumping out ABC’s that is seemingly impossible to close. And as more and more ABC’s appear across town reality itself will start to destabilise. The fate of the world could be at stake.

She teams up with a rabbit disguised as a superhero – Man Man. He was trapped here after a previous Factory experiment. He has Learned The Ways of Men – if there’s a problem he will punch it until it goes away. He and Haddie find her guitar, but they are captured by the Biscuiteers.

The one man at the factory who may have a plan is Professor Whizz, but because he thinks the townspeople should be told the truth he is sacked. He joins forces with Haddie, and helps her to escape, steal back her guitar, then whisks her to his home lab on a flying surfboard to conduct tests.

They discover the sounds made by her guitar could open a door for the ABC’s to leave our dimension. But only when made in conjunction with her band, and with a machine called the Wibbly Woof (which opens portals via soundwaves) back at the Factory.

It’s now a race against time. The Biscuiteers are coning off areas of town affected by ABC’s, and working hard to stop anyone doing anything about this crisis – because it’s not their job.

As Man Man has a big, pointless battle with the Head Biscuiteer, and Whizz rebuilds the Woof, Haddie must get her band together, play a gig and convince someone, *anyone* to acknowledge the crisis, and to sing along with the suckiest song in the world in order to open a new Wild Door big enough for the ABC’s to return home, thus saving the world and also playing some amazing tunes along the way.

## CHAPTER ONE: WOOOOOOOO

There was a big rabbit in the front garden. I say “big” because it looked big but that might have been an illusion caused by the massive hat it was wearing. Also it was wearing platform boots, so really it was difficult to properly tell how big it was. It was definitely a rabbit though, with its furry face and ridiculous taste in hats. No human would wear a hat like that, I thought, as I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes, readying myself for a mondo magnifico Saturday.

Because it was Saturday morning I could hear the thumpa thumpa thumpa “ugh, ow, OH HECKHECKHECKAAA!” of my Mum doing her exercise DVD downstairs. And on top of all that there was the shrill, piercing WOOOOOOO of the old air raid siren on top of Carpenter's Hill, which indicated the Biscuit Factory was having some kind of crisis or other. If I'd had to guess, which I didn't, but sometimes guessing can be fun, I would have guessed that today's Biscuit Factory emergency was rabbit-based.

I commenced my morning routine. I don't need to go into huge detail about the routine. You probably have one yourself. I did some water-based sprucing up, and got dressed super-quick. I would describe my outfit as “classic Haddie” except I was wearing green trainers which I wouldn't normally wear but my orange ones had died of old age the previous week. RIP orange shoes, I thought as I laced up the greenies. And then I reached for my hairbrush.

The bulk of my routine is taken up with hair admin. I have naturally frizzy hair, so I have a heck of a job getting my hair to behave. As I battered my hair with a hairbrush shaped like half a unicorn (it had broken two days ago due to my hair being so unruly) I wandered back to my window. The rabbit was still out there, crouching behind a patch of rhubarb. I idly wondered what it was hiding from, and where it had got those boots. They were shiny, and red, and had yellow stars stitched to them. I know I shouldn't have been wondering about the

rabbit, or its choice of footwear, because it's not allowed, but I couldn't help it. And then a big black van with "Supreemmm Ingredients!" written on its side screeched into our street and five Men in Beige jumped out of it.

The Men in Beige work for the Biscuit Factory. We are not really supposed to talk about the Men in Beige. We are supposed to ignore them if we see them. In fact, we're not really even allowed to see them, even if we do see them, which we do (or don't), a lot (ie never of course).

The Men in Beige were dressed head-to-toe in light brown overalls, which now I think about it might be where they got their name. They marched into our front garden and faced the rabbit, as I tugged at a madly disobedient clump of hair.

The rabbit stood on its hind legs and lifted up its front paws. It looked like it was going to surrender. I didn't see what happened next because one of the Men in Beige turned and looked up at me. He mimed closing curtains. It was an awkward moment because if I wasn't supposed to be looking at him, how was I supposed to know he wanted me to stop looking at him? It was a puzzle that didn't seem to bother him, because he did another curtain-closing mime so I closed the curtains and kept brushing.

Hair tamed, or at least more or less obeying gravity, and all other aspects of my routine completed successfully, I went down for breakfast.

"Heck," said Mum, every tendon and muscle straining as she attempted to copy what the muscly man on her laptop screen was doing. "Heck heck heck. Morning Haddie. Heck."

She called me Haddie because that is my name. Sometimes I am called Hadz because that is my name too. Sometimes I am called H-bomb. Actually, I am never called H-bomb but gosh I'd like to be.

"Smoothie?" I asked.

"Rrrrrrr, heck!" she said, so I made us both a kale, blueberry and banana puddle. Apparently if you eat food in gloopy liquid form, with miscellaneous bits bobbing about in it, it's super-good for you and you will live forever. That's what my Mum seems to think, although why she would want to live forever when every day seems to be so full of pain I couldn't tell you. Today she was exercising so hard it looked like her whole body was crying. Armpit tears were flying all over the kitchen.

"Oh heck, that feels good," said Mum, against all the evidence, as the man on the screen told her she was the very best version of herself she could possibly be. I thought that was unlikely, but I said nothing as I handed her the smoothie.

"Siren's going," she said.

"Uh huh," I agreed. I didn't mention the rabbitty commotion in the garden because in Normalton we don't talk about that kind of thing.

"You should probably stay in today, do you think?"

"Oh heck Mum! Band practice!"

"Haddie! What have I told you about language?"

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**YOU HAVE 1 NEW NOTIFICATION:**

**A MESSAGE ABOUT LANGUAGE**

This story has a lot of characters in it, and some of those characters are grown-ups. By that I mean: they are old, not that they are adults because that, as you have probably noticed, is a different thing.

As you have also probably noticed, grown-ups use a lot of interesting words that children are not allowed to use, especially when things around them get vexatious. In this story, things get vexatious pretty quickly, and they stay vexatious until about five pages from the end, and the grown-ups in this story have a lot of things to say about the vexations they face, but I have decided to filter their language, partly because my Mum will probably read this and I don't need another lecture about appropriate language, thank you.

What I'm saying is: whenever you read the word "heck" in this story, feel free to replace it with any of the other more interesting grown-up words you know, but only do it in your head. It's fun, and creative, and they can't stop you, so what the heck, right?

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"You've told me all kinds of things about language," I said. She has. She's an English teacher so I hear a lot about language every day. She's also a single Mum who does ridiculous exercise routines every morning, so I hear a lot of interesting language that I'm not allowed to use. My Mum is complicated, and no mistake. If my Mum was a recipe you'd need to go to five different shops just to get the ingredients.

"Well then," she said.

There was no arguing with that, because what did it even mean?

And then the siren stopped.

"Sounds like the emergency's over," I said. "So... Band practice?"

"Are you sure you wouldn't rather stay in, with me? I've got a new aromatherapy diffuser," said Mum.

"Wow. Um..." I didn't really know what to say about that. Mum doesn't like going out, which is fine, but my feeling is that if I go out and do stuff, and then come back and tell

her about all the stuff that I've done, then maybe next time she'll want to come out and do stuff too.

Mum is a bit weird. She doesn't like going out. She buys too many candles that make the house smell of "calm" or "contemplation" or "cookie dough", and she eats too much broccoli which makes the house smell of something else altogether.

So yeah, a bit weird.

But when you think about it, it's all kinds of weird out there, in the world. But in here, at home, it's our kind of weird and that's comforting.

Anyway, at that precise moment I didn't realise exactly how weird things were going to get out there.

Maybe if I had known, I might have stayed inside with Mum and her new aromatherapy diffuser and her veggie toots and her comforting kind of weirdness.

But if I had, the world would have ended.

I'll leave it to you to decide whether I made the right decision.

"I'll see you later, Mum," I said. And then I went out and saved the world.

## **CHAPTER TWO: RAAAAAR!**

I stepped out of my house and...

Oh, just so we're clear, I'm not going to save the world in this chapter. Actually, I don't save the world until quite near the end of the book, because that's traditional, for books. You don't save the world in chapter two and then spend 28 chapters going on about how everything's all rainbows and cupcakes and unicorns now it's been saved. You spend 28 chapters writing about things getting worse and worse and worse, and then you save the

world, and then you stop. And I hereby promise there are no rainbows, cupcakes or unicorns in this book, apart from the half a unicorn in chapter one.

Also, I didn't really even *mean* to save the world, I just wanted to play my guitar with my friends.

Now all that is clear, I think we can get on with the story.

So, I stepped out of the house. There was a pile of Men in Beige on our front lawn, all bruised and battered. There was no sign of the rabbit.

"...Ohhh heck..." one of the Men said quietly in a tone that suggested regret and poor life choices but I just ignored him and kept walking because I wasn't supposed to be looking at them and anyway I had other things to think about, because today we were going to have a band practice.

Yes! I am in a band, thank you for asking. We're really good, but we'll never be famous because we're better than that.

On that particular day we were called Raaar! which I know is a terrible name but names are hard and we'd had lots of them. Fidget Winners, Bacon Wendyhouse, UMWELT!, Twin Poops, Heckington, Bazookalele, Womble Death Trap. I could go on.

I play guitar and sing. I am truly faboo at it apart from one problem: all the chords.

When I decided we would be in a band I bought a book with all the chords in and honestly I just could not get my fingers round even the easiest ones on page one.

I tried for ages, at least until lunchtime, but it became clear my stupid fingers WILL NOT STRETCH THAT WAY. So I decided to make up my own chords. Because who says the person who wrote that chord book found all the chords?

So our songs are full of chords like C bomb maboomboom, G willikers, A major catastrophe, E splat manga, etc. etc.



It is hard to describe what these chords sound like, but if you imagine our music is Godzilla, and your ears are Tokyo... why, that's the great sound of Raaar!

I went to call for George. George's house was a lot like mine only it didn't currently have a pile of battered men in beige on the front lawn. I rang the doorbell and Mrs George opened the door.

"Have you seen his little smile!" she said, right at my face. She was laughing. "He's so useful! I love him!"

"Morning Mrs George. He is useful isn't he?" I said. George *was* super-useful. Drummers are very hard to find.

"Would you like to push him around the carpet for a bit?" said Mrs George.

"I... I don't think so," I said. "I think we'll just go to band practice if that's OK."

"He really does suck up all the dirt," said Mrs George. "And he never stops smiling! Hilarious!"

My Mum is weird, but George's family are really weird. Even though I had just now realised she wasn't talking about George at this point, she was talking about the Vinny Vacuum cleaner that was in the hall behind her, a squat, red cylinder of a thing with a smiley face painted on the front of it.

"I'm here for George," I said.

"Oh, him," said Mrs George. "George!"

"Hey up," said George, pattering down the stairs behind his Mum. He wasn't smiling. He had a worried look on his face, but that's how his face always was. He was carrying his "drum kit" - three Tupperware boxes, a biscuit tin and an old maraca. His mum looked at him, then at the Vinny Vacuum, and sighed.

"If you can't be useful, you could at least smile," she said.

"OK Mum, sorry Mum," said George, and off we went, heading for the Scout Hut.