

# Just Kidding!

From PLAYING DEAD.

It's 8:15 a.m. and I'm still in bed. I should have got up an hour ago.

But I didn't. You want to know why?

Because I am dead.

Well, not really dead. I'm just pretending I'm dead so I don't have to go to school.

If I can convince Mum and Dad that I'm dead, not only will I have pulled off one of the greatest practical jokes of the century, but I'll get off going to school for the rest of the year. Maybe even the rest of my life.

I got the idea from my dog. I've been taking Sooty to obedience classes each Sunday morning. We've only been going for a few weeks, but already he's learned to sit, beg *and* roll over. Yesterday he learned how to play dead. I thought, if my dog is smart enough to do it, then why not me?

All I've got to do is lie here without breathing or blinking. Well, when I say without blinking, I mean blinking when nobody is looking.

And when I say breathing, I don't mean not breathing at all – that would be stupid. I mean just taking a tiny little breath every so often – just enough to keep me alive.

The only thing that worries me is, I'm such an excellent practical joker, I might trick myself into thinking I'm really dead. And if that happened, I'd be good as dead – or as bad as dead – because as far as I can see, there's nothing really good about being dead, except that you don't have to go to school.

Suddenly Mum bustles into the room.

'What? Still in bed? Come on, you'll be late!'

I hear the rattle of the curtains being opened.

The sudden light hurts my eyes, but I remember not to blink.

Any moment now Mum is going to see me. And scream.

She's standing right next to me.

'Pooh, what a stink! When's the last time you cleaned this room? It's an absolute pigsty! Dirty socks and undies everywhere. Why can't you put them in the washing basket like your sister does? If you're not showered, dressed and out of this house in ten minutes you're going to miss your bus, and I'm not going to drive you.'

She walks out of the room.

I stare at the ceiling. What else would a real corpse do? It's not as if it would make some brilliantly witty comeback, like, 'Lay off me, you old bag. I'm not going to school today because I'm supposed to be dead. Just leave me alone so I can rot in peace.' Yeah – that would be a good line, but I can't say it because I'm supposed to be dead. So I just lie here and stare at the ceiling some more.