

# The Day My Bum Went Psycho

Zack Freeman woke out of a deep sleep to see his bum perched on the ledge of his bedroom window. It was standing on two pudgy little legs, silhouetted against the moon, its little stick-like arms outstretched in front of it, as if it was about to dive.

Zack sat up in bed.

'No!' he yelled. 'Come back!'

But it was too late. His bum jumped out of the window and landed with a soft thud in the garden bed below.

Zack stared at the window and sighed.

'Oh no,' he said. 'Not again.'

This was not the first time Zack's bum had run away.

Since his twelfth birthday, two months ago, Zack's bum had made a habit of jumping off his body and running around the streets making a nuisance of itself. Zack was sick of it. So was the local bumcatcher who had already caught and impounded it three times.

Until recently Zack's bum had confined itself to a variety of harmless pranks, such as attaching itself to the faces of statues and passersby. But on its last outing it had joined a pack of give hundred feral bums who had lined the emergency stopping lane of the South Eastern Freeway and mooned all the people driving to work. This stunt had caused many accidents, which the bums had thought was a great laugh. The sentencing judge, however, was not amused and placed them all on twelve month good behavior bonds.

Zack knew he had to catch his bum himself this time. If the bumcatcher got involved, he would have to report it and Zack's bum would end up in jail for sure. And there was no way Zack wanted to spend every second weekend visiting his bum in jail.

Zack threw back the blankets and was about to get out of bed when he heard his grandmother call out from the next room.

'Zack?' she said. 'Is that you?'

'Yes, Gran,' said Zack. 'It's all right, go back to sleep.'

'What was that noise?' said his gran. 'Have they resumed firing?'

Zack rolled his eyes.

'There's no war, Gran,' he said. 'Go back to sleep.'

Zack was living with his grandmother while his parents were away. They both played in the wind section of the National Symphony Orchestra and went on tour three or four times a year, during which Zack would have to stay with his grandmother – sometimes for up to a month at a time. He loved his grandmother, but sometimes he wondered who was looking after who.

'No war?' said his grandmother. 'You mean the war's over?'

'Yes,' said Zack.

He was used to this conversation. She was always talking about the war. Zack wasn't sure which war she was talking about, or how long ago it had happened, or whether it had even happened at all – all he knew was that it seemed real to her.

'Did we win?'

'Yes, Gran,' said Zack. He figured that she would go back to sleep quicker if he just agreed with everything she said. 'We creamed them.'

'That's good,' said his grandmother. 'I'll take over the watch. You get some rest. You've earned it, soldier.'

'Yes Gran,' said Zack.

He couldn't tell her the truth. It would be bad enough talking to his parents about his bum, let alone his grandmother.

He waited a minute until he could hear her snoring and then he got out of bed. With difficulty. It wasn't that easy moving without a bum. Zack walked across the room to the window, leaned out and peered into the night.

He saw his bum standing on the tips of its toes at the end of the driveway, as if sniffing the air. It was looking up and down the street.

There was still time to catch it. But he'd have to be quick.

Zack climbed out of the window and tiptoed down the driveway.

As he got closer, Zack realized that he wasn't the only one trying to catch his bum.

Mittens, his grandmother's cat, was crouched on top of the front fence, ready to pounce.

'Uh-oh,' said Zack. He wasn't sure who was in more danger – Mittens or his bum. Mittens was always catching birds and mice and leaving them half-chewed on the front doorstep. But she had never caught a bum before. Well, not as far as Zack knew, anyway. And a half-chewed bum on the doorstep wouldn't be something you'd be likely not to notice. Still, he didn't want to take any chances.

Before Zack had time to do anything, however, Mittens leapt.

But Zack's bum was faster.

It bent over, aimed itself directly at Mittens, and fired a loud, deadly stream of gas. Mittens fell to the ground. Zack's bum took off up the street, its little arms and legs pumping away like pistons.

Zack was shocked. He knew that his bum has gone feral, but he'd never seen it kill anything before. He had to get back. He knew that once a bum gets a taste for killing, it is very difficult for them to stop.

But first he had to try to help Mittens.

Zack hobbled over to her body and knelt down. Poor Mittens was in a bad way. Zack pulled her head back, pinched her nostrils and was preparing to give her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation when Mittens coughed.

She wasn't dead after all. She had just been stunned.

Zack breathed a sigh of relief.

'So my bum isn't a killer,' he thought. 'Not yet, anyway.'