

Brian smiled. "You will always be my brightest spark, Dad.
The brightest spark of light in my life."

The man looked close to tears.

"Fanks. Next time I will try to use my brain!" he said,
pointing to his chest.

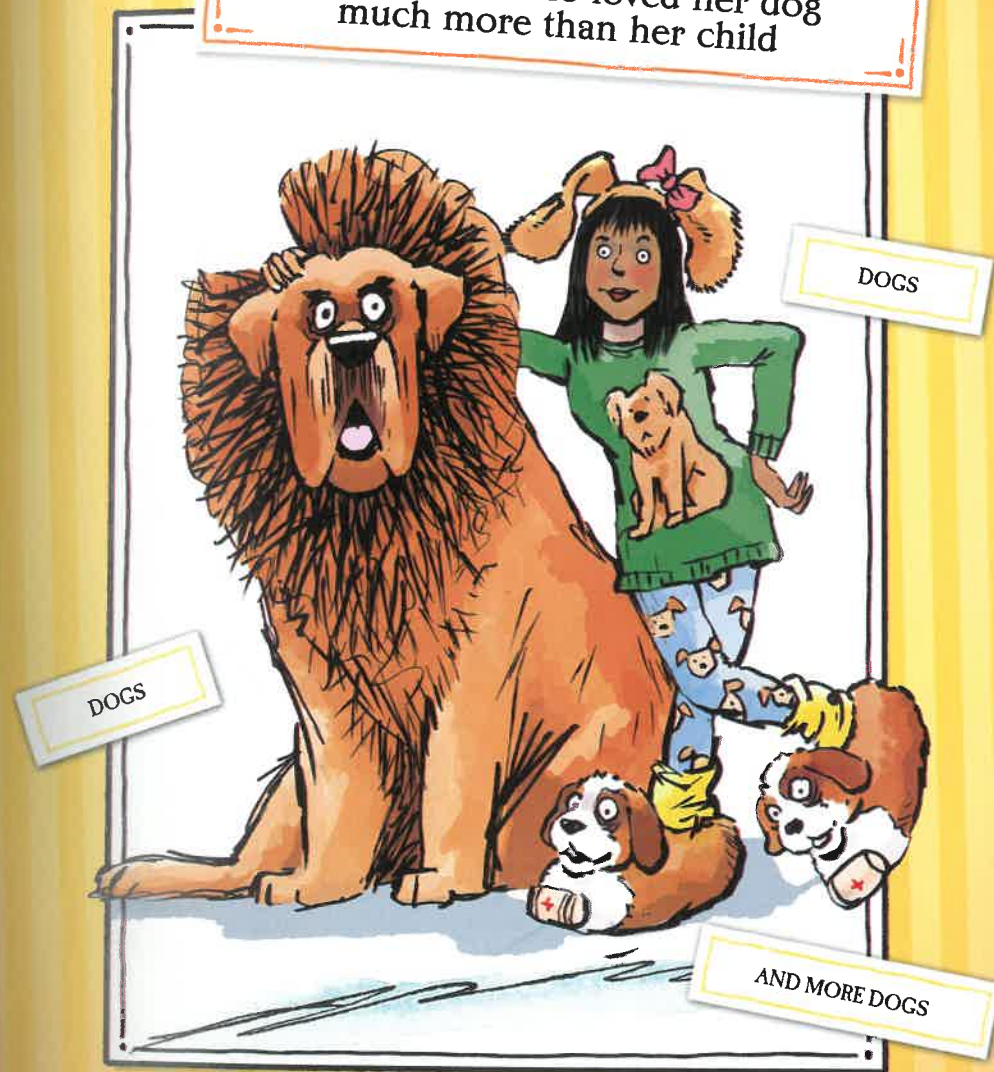
Brian didn't have the heart to tell him his brain was
actually in his head.



And as the ambulance doors closed,
Barry Bovver smiled and waved goodbye
with his huge flat hand.

POSY POOCH

The mother who loved her dog
much more than her child





POSY POOCH

POSY POOCH WAS BARKING mad about dogs. She always wore bright woolly jumpers and leggings with pictures of puppies on them, finished off with doggy slippers. These were huge furry monstrosities shaped like St Bernards, and nearly as big as the real thing.

POSY POOCH

Her look was topped off with a hairband that had dog ears sticking out of the top.

In the highly unlikely event that you had somehow missed Posy Pooch's love of dogs, she had customised the family car. First, she covered it in thick brown carpet so it looked like fur. Next she stuck a ball of black foam to the bonnet for a nose. The finishing touches were all made of fabric: eyes, ears, a tail and even a big floppy tongue hanging from the front grille. Posy Pooch named the car **"THE MUTT MOBILE"**.



THE WORLD'S WORST PARENTS

The lady had named the family home **"POOCH PLACE"**.
It was a house themed **entirely** around dogs.

Posy had purchased:

Wallpaper of **Weimaraners**



Curtains adorned with **Chihuahuas**

A **Pekinese** plate set



A sofa in the shape of a **schnauzer**



Mugs with **Malteses** painted on them



A **chow-chow** coffee table



A **King Charles spaniel** kettle



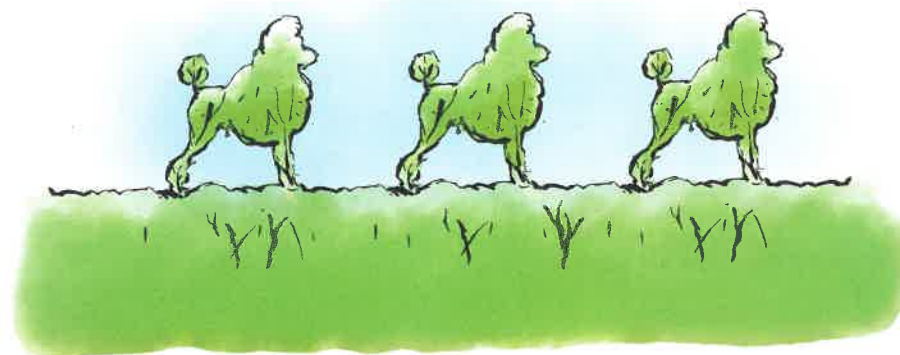
Great Dane glasses



A **Rottweiler** rug



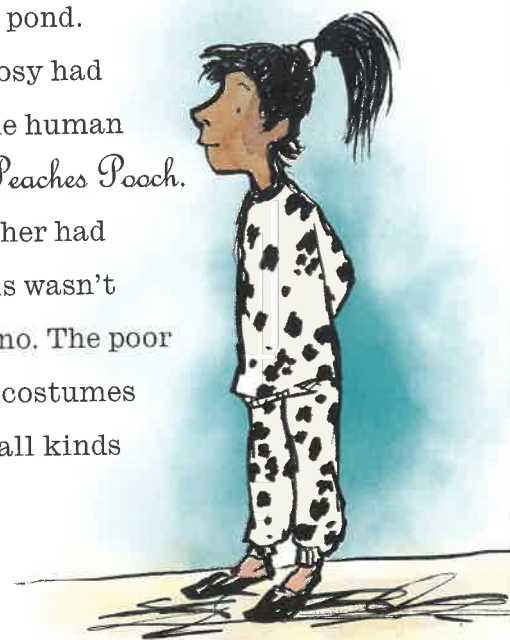
A bedspread of **basset hounds**



If that weren't enough, all the hedges in the front lawn had been cut into the shapes of **poodles**. In the back garden, she had a giant stone statue of a **springer spaniel**, which looked as if it were leaping into the pond.



Posy had just the one human child. Her name was Peaches – *Peaches Pooch*. From a very young age, her mother had dressed Peaches up as a dog. This wasn't just for fancy-dress parties. Oh no. The poor girl had a wardrobe full of dog costumes and was made to wear them for all kinds of occasions.





A Boston terrier costume for a christening



A Dalmatian outfit for a dental appointment



A Border terrier suit for the school disco



A golden retriever get-up for the Girl Guides' summer fête



A collie costume for ballet practice



A Pomeranian get-up for a playdate



A bulldog outfit for a bar mitzvah



A red setter suit to go roller-skating in the park



A corgi costume for a school trip to Buckingham Palace



A pug outfit for a karaoke party

Needless to say, Peaches hated being dressed up like this, but she didn't have any choice. Her mother didn't buy her any other clothes. It meant all the children at school would make fun of her. Except one. Kitty Purr. Her mother was crazy about cats, so she had to go to school dressed as a white fluffy kitten.

Of course, Posy Pooch owned a dog. If her husband, Paul, hadn't been allergic to dogs (they made him itch and sneeze), she would have had a hundred. However, what she lacked in numbers, she made up for in size. Posy chose one of the **biggest** dog breeds in the world for her pet. A **Tibetan mastiff**.

The dog was named after the country from which it originated: Tibet, set in the Himalayan mountains, bordering China. Mastiffs are **massive** dogs with huge feet and drooping ears. This great lolloping thing was bred as a guard dog. It was the size of a grizzly bear and looked not unlike one too.

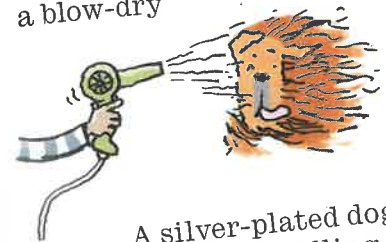
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



Posy named her dog **Nigel**. If ever there was a less suitable name for a dog, I would like to hear it. The mastiff looked absolutely nothing like a **Nigel**. But, like all names, it stuck.

Needless to say, Posy **lavished** love on her pooch. Whatever **Nigel** wanted, **Nigel** got:

A long relaxing bath twice a day, followed by a blow-dry



A silver-plated dog bowl the size of a paddling pool with the name **NIGEL** printed on it



A luxury leather lead-and-collar set, designed by the famous fashion designer Barbara Barking

A gold dog tag, with the words **HELLO, MY NAME IS NIGEL** on one side, and **YES, I KNOW I AM BEAUTIFUL** on the other



A one-hundred-piece grooming set for all **Nigel's** needs



Dog toys made especially large so Nigel could play with them



A stuffed bunny toy he liked to hurl around the house that was too big to fit through a doorway

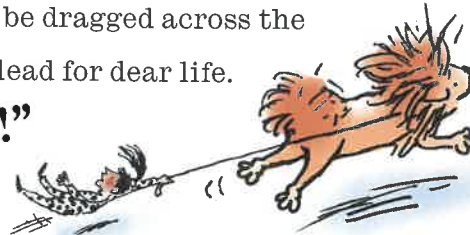
A ball that had a motor inside, operated by remote control as Nigel was too lazy to fetch it



A life-sized oil painting of Nigel that was given pride of place over the fireplace in the living room

The problem was that the dog was absolutely impossible to train. So Nigel ran riot. When Posy sent Peaches to take her precious Nigel out for a walk in the park, the poor girl would be dragged across the grass, clinging on to the lead for dear life.

"ARGH!"



If the Pooch family were having dinner, Nigel would wolf down everyone's food in one gulp, and poor Peaches would go hungry.

"CHOMP!"

Nigel took to sleeping in Posy and Paul's room.

Peaches's mother would snuggle up with Nigel, while her father would have to sleep in the dog basket at the end of the bed. The poor man would sneeze all night, as he was allergic to dog hair.

"ACHOO!"

When he woke up in the morning, he was so covered in dog hair he looked like the creature of legend BIGFOOT.



BIGFOOT



FATHER

There was one exceedingly unusual thing about **Nigel**. Something that I'm sure you are NEVER, EVER going to guess...

This huge beast was absolutely terrified of...
CATS!

"MiAow!"

It is meant to be cats that are terrified of dogs, but not in this case.

If **Nigel** spotted even a tiny one when out on a walk, he would shake with fear, and howl like a baby...

"WAHOOO!"

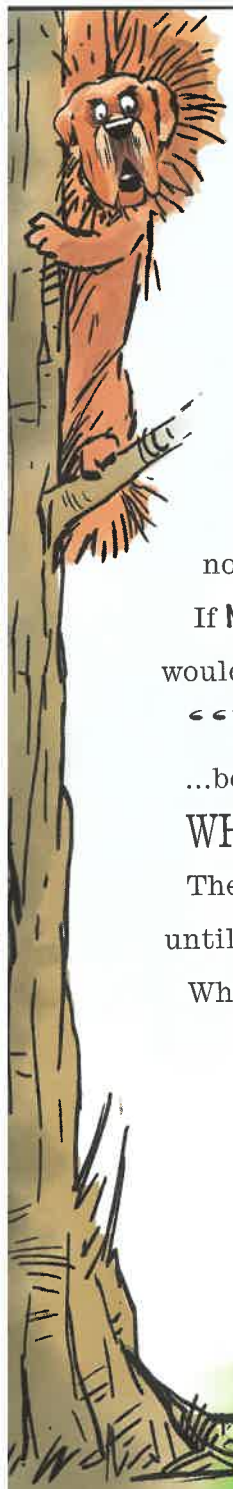
...before leaping up a tree to escape.

WHOOMPH!

The great big scaredy-dog wouldn't then come down until he was sure the moggy was miles away.

When he did leap to the ground, **Nigel** would flatten poor Peaches, who would be waiting patiently for him under the tree.

SPLAT!



The day our story begins, Posy Pooch did the unthinkable.

She got another dog!

Despite **Nigel** being the size of a hundred normal dogs, she decided that the family needed one more. A wife for **Nigel**. Without even telling Peaches or the girl's father, she bought another **Tibetan mastiff**. This one she called *Nigella*.

That afternoon, Dad picked up Peaches from school, and they were coming through the front door when Mum shouted, "SURPRISE!"

"Oh no," muttered Dad, fearing the worst.

"It's not what I think it is, is it?" asked Peaches.

"Well, what do you think it is?" demanded Mum.

"Another dog!" chimed in Dad and Peaches together.

"Well, don't spoil it for yourselves!"

"It is another dog, though, isn't it, Mum?" pressed Peaches.

"Well, you are actually ruining this for me! Just wait!"

Then the lady opened the door to the living room and shouted, "TA-DA!"

There were **TWO** of the biggest dogs known to man lying there, taking up the entire room, slobbering all over the carpet.

"What an incredible surprise!" said Peaches sarcastically.

On noticing the little girl and her father, the pair of pooches barked...

"WOOF!"
"RUFF!"



...leaped up and **knocked** them both clean over. Then the mutts **tramped** all over them with their huge paws, before **bounding** out of the room, nearly **knocking** the door off its hinges as they went.

"Aren't **Nigel** and *Nigella* absolutely delightful together?" said Mum.

From the floor, Peaches and her father turned to each other and shared a look of horror.

Now you might think things couldn't get any worse. Well, you would be wrong. Because when you have a boy dog and a girl dog, sometimes they have... you guessed it...

PUPPIES!

One night, *Nigella* gave birth to not one, not two, not three, not four— Actually, this is going to take too long. I might as well just tell you how many puppies she had.

Ninety-nine!

Ninety-nine **Tibetan mastiff** puppies in one little house. The puppies might have been smaller than their parents, but by any other standards they were **HUGE**. Each one was about the size of a Shetland pony.



In no time, the ninety-nine puppies had the run of the house. There were too many of them to even try to train, so they were:

Pooping in the plant pots.

POOP!

Climbing on each other's shoulders so they could steal Peaches's sweets from the top shelf of the fridge.

SCOFF!

Ripping the girl's schoolbooks to shreds.

RIP!

Chewing everything in sight, including Peaches's toes. **GNAW!**

Jumping in the pond.

SPLOSH! SPLISH! SPLASH!

Then drying themselves by shaking pond water over the girl.

SHOOK-A-SHOOK-A-SHOOK!



Pee-peeing in Peaches's shoes. **PSSSSS!**

"YUCK!"

Charging up the stairs and knocking Peaches clean over!

STOMP! STOMP! STOMP!

WHOOSH!

"ARGH!"

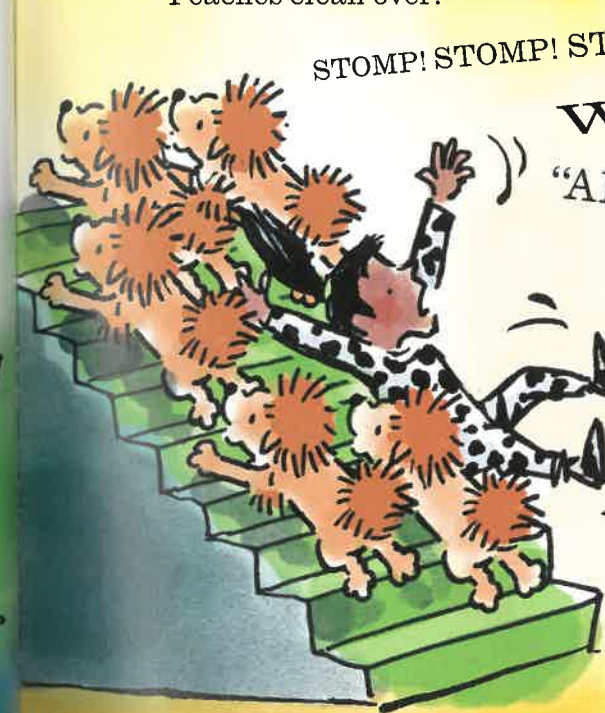
The girl would then tumble down the stairs on her bottom.

BUMP! BUMP! BUMP!

Blowing off right next to her face and then scrambling away at speed.

PFFT!
"YUCK!"

Hogging the remote control so Peaches couldn't watch her favourite cartoons on television. Instead, the puppies would only click on dog-themed films. **"WOOF!"**



As for Peaches, she was forced out of her own bedroom! Her mother had decided that it needed to be a playroom for the puppies.

The girl took to sleeping on the sofa, but would be woken up by a mountain of mutts squatting on her head.

"EURGH! GET OFF!"

As for her father, he'd been moved out of the bedroom entirely, as his wife was now sleeping in the basket.

Posy had given their double bed over to **Nigel** and *Nigella*. Dad had no choice but to sleep in the greenhouse. It wasn't ideal, as the neighbours could see him taking off his pyjamas in the morning. As the old saying goes, people in glass houses... shouldn't undress in daylight.

Finally, Peaches and her father couldn't take any more. One night, they confronted Mum.

"Please, please, please can we give some of the puppies away?" the girl pleaded.

"Away! Why on earth would we give any away?" Mum was shocked.

"Because we have a hundred and one dogs in the house!" exclaimed Dad.

"Well, I have some good news! *Nigella* is expecting again!"

"NOOO!" screamed Peaches and Dad.

"Oh yes! With any luck, there might be another ninety-nine puppies running around here soon!"

"PLEASE, NO!" exploded Dad.

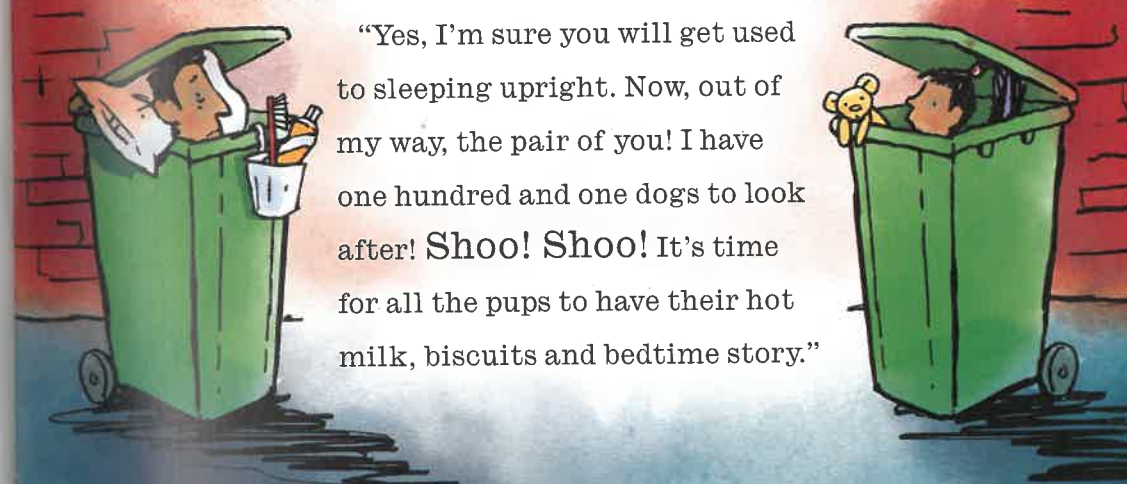
"It's just two hundred dogs. Nothing really. Oh, that reminds me! I will need the greenhouse back soon, and of course the sofa, for the new puppies."

"Where do you want us to sleep, then?" protested Peaches.

Mum thought for a moment. "Both of you could always sleep in the dustbins."

"The dustbins!" Peaches couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"Yes, I'm sure you will get used to sleeping upright. Now, out of my way, the pair of you! I have one hundred and one dogs to look after! **Shoo! Shoo!** It's time for all the pups to have their hot milk, biscuits and bedtime story."



Finally, Peaches decided that **ENOUGH WAS ENOUGH!**

So that night, when it was dark, the girl got up off the sofa and tiptoed out to the greenhouse. There her father was making the best of it by trying to sleep on a bag of compost.

"PSST! DAD!" she hissed, not wanting her mother to know she was conspiring with her father.

"Oh! Hello, love," said Dad, who by now looked completely beaten by life. He was unshaven, unwashed and his hair was **sticking up** in the most ludicrous way. One side of his face was blackened by **compost**.

"What are you doing out of bed? I mean off the sofa?" he asked.

"We need to do something about all these **dogs!** We can't live like this!"

"I know! But what? Soon we are going to be sharing the house with **two hundred dogs!**"

"I've been thinking, Dad. **Nigel** is scared of **cats**, right?"

"**Yes!** Yes, he is. He runs a mile whenever he sees one."

"Well, maybe *Nigella* and all the ninety-nine puppies

might be scared of them too. Maybe all **Tibetan mastiffs** are."

"So? We don't have a **cat**."

"Not yet, but let's buy a **kitten!**"

"**You're a genius!**"

Peaches blushed.

First thing in the morning, while Posy was bathing her hundred and one dogs, Peaches and Dad raced to the local pet shop. There they found the most adorable-looking white fluffy **kitten**, named Snowflake.



When they arrived home, Peaches hid Snowflake under her coat. Once inside the hallway of the house, the girl called out,

"MOTHER!"

"I AM BUSY PREPARING TWO HUNDRED STEAKS FOR THE DOGGIES' BREAKFAST," she hollered from the kitchen at the end of the hallway.

"Oh! Don't worry, Mum. I picked up something I think they'll much prefer," called back Peaches.

"Are you sure about this?" hissed Dad.

"We can always get another *kitten*!"

"WHAT?" spluttered Dad.

"I am joking, of course! Don't worry. I will keep a firm hold on Snowflake," she replied, taking out the *kitten* from under her coat and giving the adorable little thing a gentle stroke.

"If you're sure," said Dad.

The girl nodded before shouting, "COME ON, DOGGIES!"

In an instant, one hundred and one dogs were charging towards them.

STOMP! STOMP! STOMP!

Nigel led the pack, with *Nigella* and the ninety-nine puppies not far behind.



"LOOK, *NIGEL*!" shouted the girl, showing him the *kitten*.

"*MiAow!*" it miaowed.

The sight of the little white fluffy *kitten* was enough to send a shaking *Nigel* into a fit of howling.

"WOOOOOOOOOOH!"

As Peaches had predicted, all the other dogs were scared of the tiny *kitten* too.

"WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!"

They all began howling.

"WOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOH!"



"Hiss!" hissed Snowflake.

The dogs were terrified. They scrambled over each other as they bounded back down the hallway.

STOMP! STOMP! STOMP!

They flooded into the kitchen. A tsunami of **Tibetan mastiffs**. They swept Mum clean off her feet.

"ARGH!"

She flew into the air.

The dogs charged at the back door, smashing it off its hinges.

BOOM!



Posy Pooch landed on **Nigel's** back.

THOMP!

The dogs scattered into the garden, bursting through the fence...



...and disappearing off into the distance.

Mum was still riding on **Nigel's** back, and the dog showed no signs of slowing down.

"HELP!" she cried.

But she was so far away that there was nothing her daughter or husband could do.

THE WORLD'S WORST PARENTS

Soon the giant dogs were nothing more than dots on the horizon.

"Not sure where they are all off to in such a hurry," remarked Dad.

"By the look of it," began Peaches, "**Nigel** is running all the way back to Tibet!"

