



# THE TOOTH JOB!



1 My first job. I had to make a good impression or Mum would kill me.

“What do I know about teeth?” I’d asked her.

“Well, Brook, you have some, don’t you? And he’s not offering you a job as a dentist,” she said, scrubbing her tongue with the rough rubber back of her toothbrush. She’d just started dating an

*oral hygienist*, whatever that was. Sounded like someone who goes to university for five years to learn how to brush teeth.

2 3.30 pm Friday. I stood in front of a wonky wooden house with a sign:

*Fensham, Smith and Barrett  
Denture Clinic.*

Mum was dating Smith — Bryce Smith — a smarmy character who, strangely, had a mouth filled with rotten teeth. I said a prayer and pushed open the waiting-room door.

3 “Hello, do you have an appointment?” asked the ancient receptionist.

“No, I’m ah ...”

“Brooklyn!” boomed a voice from down the hall.

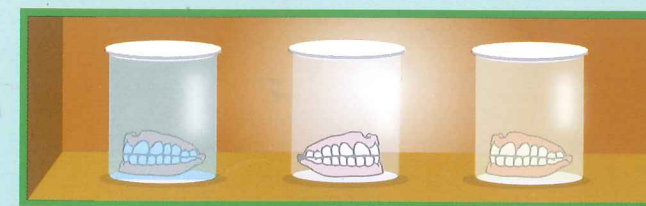
4 I turned. There was Bryce, grinning and flashing those yellow zigzag babies. He grabbed my hand and shook it heartily. “I’ll be taking care of you this afternoon!” he said with so much delight that it felt like I’d won something. “Come!” he said, bouncing off down the hall.

In the back room were rows and rows of teeth in plastic containers. They looked pretty creepy without mouths.

5 “Now,” said Smith, “you need to deliver the dentures on this rack before 5.00 pm. Being Christmas, it’s important we distribute them this afternoon or our patients will be livid.”

“How will I carry them?” I asked. “There are over thirty sets of teeth here.”

“Ah, the delivery vehicle.” He pointed to an old pink bike in the corner. Behind it was a two-wheeled trailer, as high as the bike and a metre long. Smith flicked open doors on either side, revealing four racks.



“Report to me once you’re done, and ride safely!” he said with a threatening wink before toddling off to brush teeth.

6 At 4.00 pm I delivered my first set to Mrs Puttock.

“Oh, lovely, thank you and, here, take some money.” She gave me a twenty-cent piece. “Go and buy yourself an ice cream.”

I pocketed the twenty and smiled, not having the heart to tell her what century it was.

7 I dashed all over town, top speed, delivering teeth here, there and everywhere. That old pink beast hadn’t been so fast in the ninety years since it came off the production line; I was the Lance Armstrong of the tooth delivery world.

8 With just fifteen minutes left and twelve sets still undelivered, I took a shortcut down Compton Lane. I was almost flying when something moved at the corner of my vision. A garbage truck was pulling out of the council depot and I swerved, but a car was tearing towards me from the opposite direction. I slammed the brakes, shredded a tyre and the tooth-trailer began wobbling violently behind me. The trailer flipped, snapping the bar that connected it to the bike. I stopped but the trailer kept screaming down the road, shooting sparks and coming to rest beneath the truck.

9 “Look where you’re going, you idiot!” yelled the driver. I jumped off the bike and wheeled it over to the trailer. The doors were open and teeth had leapt from their containers; a few sets had tyre prints across the gums, pressed into the bitumen like road kill. Most were still intact but no longer in their containers — top teeth without bottoms, bottoms without tops.

10 At 4.55 pm my mobile rang and I stabbed the green button. “Yup.”



"How's it going?" said Smith, chirpy.

"Pretty good," I said, surveying the contents of my trailer spread across the road. "I might be a little late," I said, an idea dawning. "Could you give me till quarter to six?"

"Indeedley doodley," said Smith. "I've got tools to polish. See you then!"

11 I leant down, seizing an empty case, and I did the only thing I could do, the only thing that would allow our respected elderly citizens to avoid eating soup for an entire Christmas. I paired up sets, mashed them together, picked out bits of gravel, polished tyre marks, stuffed containers into my pockets. My tooth delivery career was almost certainly over, but it was Christmas and I had a job to do.

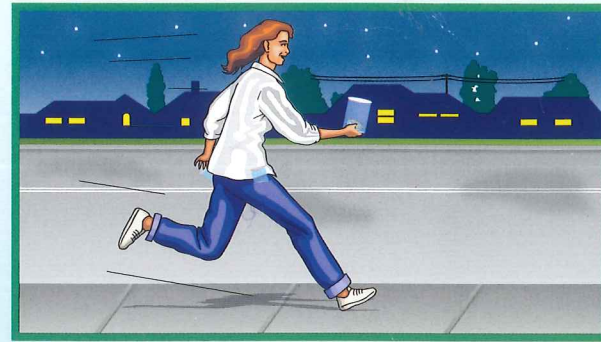
12 I dumped the bike and trailer behind a hedge and started running. First stop, J Larstead.

"Thank you, dear," she said. "Merry Christmas."

"Ah, would you mind trying them on?" I asked.

She looked at me a little funny but then pushed the toppies in. "They feel a wee bit big," she said.

"Right," I said, opening another container, "... would you mind trying these for me?"



## Questions

- 1 Brooklyn's mum was dating
  - a Fensham.
  - b Smith.
  - c Barrett.
- 2 What was strange about Bryce?
  - a He had rotten teeth.
  - b He was an oral hygienist.
  - c He was overly delighted.
- 3 What was important about 5.00 pm?
  - a It was Christmas.
  - b All the teeth had to be delivered by then.
  - c This was when Brooklyn crashed the bike.
- 4 How many racks did the delivery bike have?
  - a one
  - b two
  - c four
- 5 Why did Brooklyn decide to continue delivering the teeth?
  - a She didn't want her mum to get angry at her.
  - b She wanted to impress Bryce.
  - c She didn't want the elderly to just eat soup for Christmas.
- 6 What clue does the author give to suggest that Bryce might not be a nice person?
  - a He shakes Brooklyn's hand heartily.
  - b He gave a threatening wink.
  - c He had rotten, yellow teeth.

## Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 To have an impact or influence (1)
- 8 Rushed (7)
- 9 Ripped into pieces (8)
- 10 To be in good spirits (10)
- 11 Taking hold of something (11)

## Grammar

The words in **BLUE** appear in the text. Match them by writing the correct antonym shown in **RED**.

E.g. *under* / *over*

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 12 <b>livid</b>     | <b>broken</b>     |
| 13 <b>revealing</b> | <b>above</b>      |
| 14 <b>beneath</b>   | <b>calm</b>       |
| 15 <b>intact</b>    | <b>concealing</b> |

## Back To The Text...

- 16 The Clinic was in nice fresh premises.
  - a true
  - b false
- 17 Time is an important factor in this story.
  - a true
  - b false
- 18 In which part of the library would you find this text?
  - a fiction
  - b non-fiction

## Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19
  - a Brook met the receptionist.
  - b Brook met Mr Smith.
- 20
  - a Mr Smith rang Brook.
  - b Brook turned into Compton Lane.
- 21
  - a Brook made a delivery to Mrs Puttock
  - b Brook made a delivery to Mrs Larstead.

## Think About This

- 22 The word *smarmy* in section 2 is
  - a complimentary.
  - b uncomplimentary.
- 23 Look at the illustration on the front cover. It is described in
  - a section 6.
  - b section 7.
  - c section 8.
  - d section 9.

## Challenge Option



Drawing: Do a sketch of yourself in the dentist's chair. Show all the equipment.