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Boyface and the Tartan Badger

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Media type:

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This is the second outing of James Campbell's young hero, Boyface, and this time the loveable 'stripemonger' is accompanied by the world's worst pet? a tartan badger. In the previous episode (**Boyface and the Quantum Chromatic Disruption Machine**) Boyface learns the family business of taking stripes off things and putting them on different things. This time, a new, mysterious villain is introduced, a young boy in extremely peculiar dress, who appears to bear a terrible grudge against Boyface ? for no immediately obvious reason.

Trouble starts for Boyface with the arrival of a most unusual (and unpleasant) pet. The tartan badger does little to endear itself to his new owner. It scratches and bites Boyface's feet, emits the vomitous odour of lemony hospitals and poos in Boyface's underwear draw. 'Is that why your pants smell of poo?' asks his friend? 'Yes. Well. Usually. Yes.'

Ridiculous humour like this is used sparingly throughout the story and is very well timed ? just when you think the narrative is in danger of lurching towards seriousness, someone will drop a telephone box full of water down a flight of stairs. There are plenty of giggles on offer for younger readers.

Despite the badger's 'qualities?', Boyface cares for the abusive beast with clemency and tolerance and is rather upset to find him missing one day, replaced by a mysterious, threatening letter and a clown's red nose. Fortunately, there are plenty of people around to help Boyface solve his conundrum. It is Campbell's characterisation of this supporting cast that is most charming.

Mandala Eyelash, for example, runs the local cafeteria and is described as 'almost definitely the most tummy-flippingly scrummiest person you've ever heard of.' She offers to help Boyface by reading his fortune (by cutting up and studying scones). Her boyfriend, Mr Perfect, is similarly generous and has rippling muscles 'like ferrets in a pillow case.'

However, nobody helps Boyface quite as much as his extremely shouty friend, Clotie, who is introduced early on wearing a saucepan over her face. Clotie is desperate to 'scrag' the evil clown but Boyface is not a violent character and, instead, decodes various pearls of wisdom from his father that help him on his quest. In the finale, we are reminded that children with the extraordinary kindness and patience necessary to look after a tartan badger are capable of anything.

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