

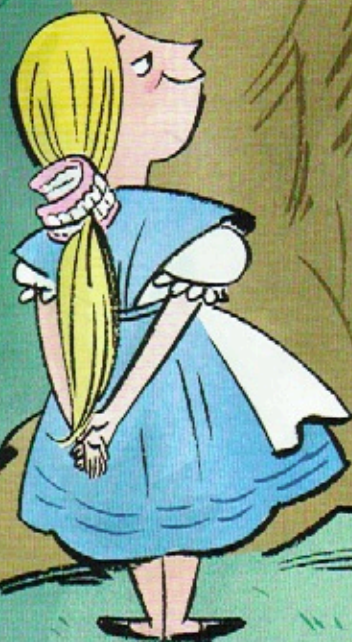


The School Magazine

A world of words since 1916

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BLAST OFF



Meet
Hamlet &
Little Squirr
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Terrifying
toys?

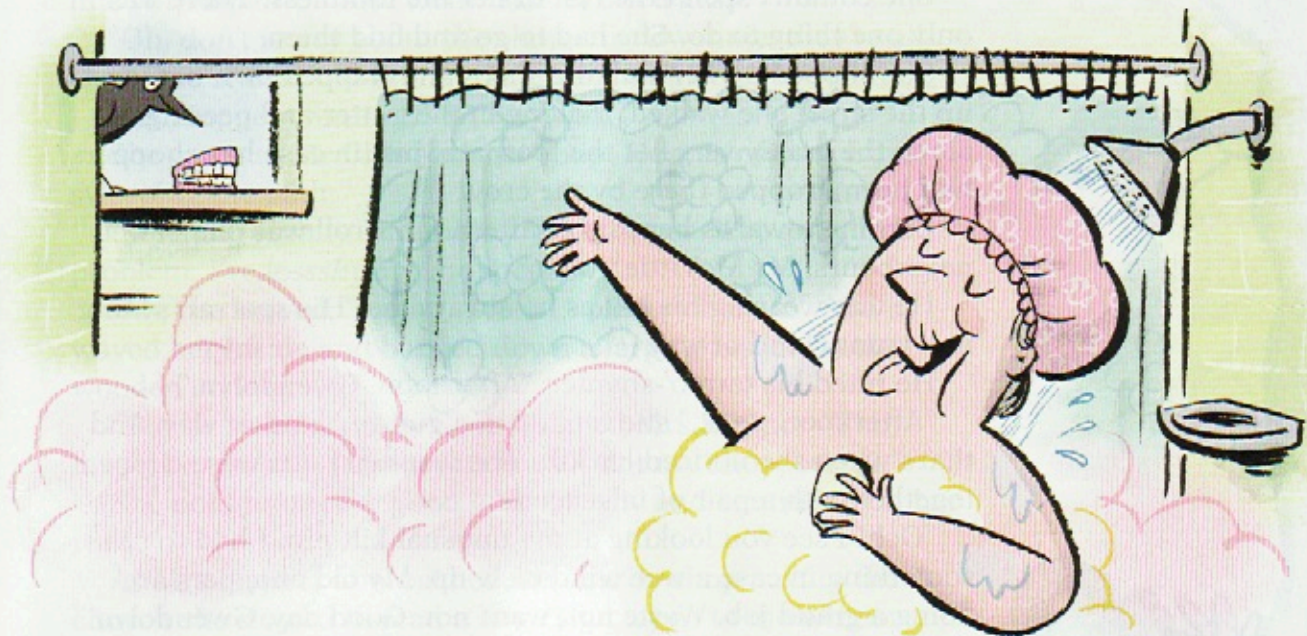
Action-packed play

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Mrs Hopper's choppers

story by Marian McGuinness | illustrated by Andrew Joyner



Every morning Mrs Hopper got out of bed and put her false teeth on the bathroom windowsill to get a little sunlight. She took off her nightie, stretched her polka dot shower cap over her frizzy hair and stepped into the shower. All lathered up with lemony soap, Mrs Hopper began to sing because she liked the echoing sound of her voice in the shower recess. She thought she sounded like an opera singer in a concert hall.

This is what she did every morning. Which was usually OK.

But one morning, as she stepped out of the shower, another voice was singing at the windowsill.

"Arrk ... Arrk ..."

Mrs Hopper spun around. A shiny black crow was looking at her.

"Arrk ... Arrk ..." it sang. And then it flew away, with Mrs Hopper's choppers dangling from its beak.

She stuck her head out the bathroom window and watched the crow fly up to the highest branch of the tallest tree in town.

Mrs Hopper sucked her lips around her gums. It was all she could do now that she had no teeth.

The morning passed slowly. Mrs Hopper slurped porridge for breakfast and sipped soup for lunch. She rang the minister to organise the local book sale at the church, but her voice sounded so strange that he thought she was a prank caller and hung up.

Life was no fun for Mrs Hopper without her choppers.

She couldn't spend the rest of her life toothless. There was only one thing to do. She had to go and find them.

She slipped on her walking shoes and slapped on a hat. And up the street she walked, looking in the gutter and peering along the grassy verge of the footpath, just in case her choppers had been dropped there by the crow.

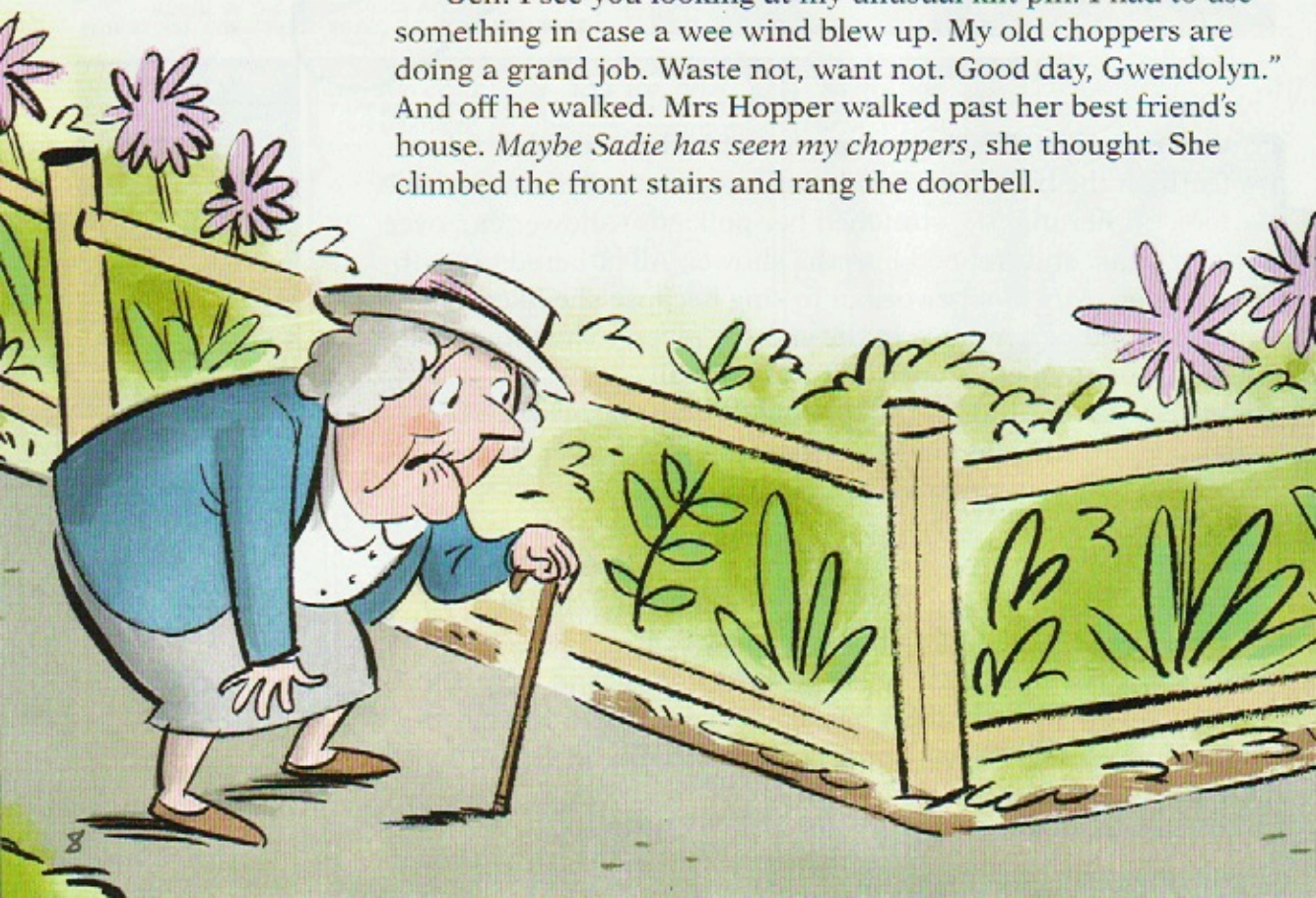
Coming towards her for his afternoon stroll was one of her neighbours, Mr McVittie.

He was wearing his kilt as he always did. His sporran swung in a jaunty kind of way.

He tilted his tam-o'-shanter. "Afternoon, Gwendolyn."

"Afternoon, Jock," she replied in a gummy kind of way. And that's when she noticed his kilt. The woollen folds were clipped together with a pair of false teeth!

"Och! I see you looking at my unusual kilt pin. I had to use something in case a wee wind blew up. My old choppers are doing a grand job. Waste not, want not. Good day, Gwendolyn." And off he walked. Mrs Hopper walked past her best friend's house. *Maybe Sadie has seen my choppers*, she thought. She climbed the front stairs and rang the doorbell.



"Around the back," a faint voice called out.

Mrs Hopper walked around the old verandah and found her friend hanging out the washing.

"Ssshadie," she slurped, "I've got a sssmall problem. A crow flew off with my ..."

And then she saw a bunch of handkerchiefs pegged to the line with a pair of false teeth. She let out a gasp.

"Oh, don't worry about the choppers, Gwennie, they're all that's left of dear old Frank. He always wanted to be handy!"

Mrs Hopper continued on her walk.

She came to Mr Chiu's corner shop. He was out the front, sweeping the path.

"Morning Jimmy," mumbled Mrs Hopper. "I've got a little problem, I've losssht my choppersssh!"

"Ah," he bowed, "teeth ... teeth ... plenty of teeth!" And he waved her inside and banged down a large glass jar on the wooden counter.

"But thessshe are lolly teeth," sighed Mrs Hopper. "They might be tassshy, but they're jussst not my choppersssh."

She bought one for good luck anyway and continued on her walk.

As Mrs Hopper approached the charity shop next to the church she slowed to read a large sign taped to the window.

SALE!
EVERYTHING HALF PRICE!





Mrs Hopper inspected the jumble of goods in the front window. In amongst the stuffed toys and sets of saucepans were an artificial leg, a glass eye and ... a box of false teeth!

She went inside and started trying teeth out, popping them in one set at a time. Some were too big. Some were too small. And some had just too *many* teeth. Sadly, none were the right fit.

Tired and hungry, Mrs Hopper headed for home. *I'm never going to find my choppers*, she thought.

After a dinner of mashed potato and banana custard, Mrs Hopper brushed her gums and went to bed. And she had the strangest dream.

There were choppers everywhere!

In a fish tank.

Holding the junk mail in the letterbox.

Clipping up a ponytail.

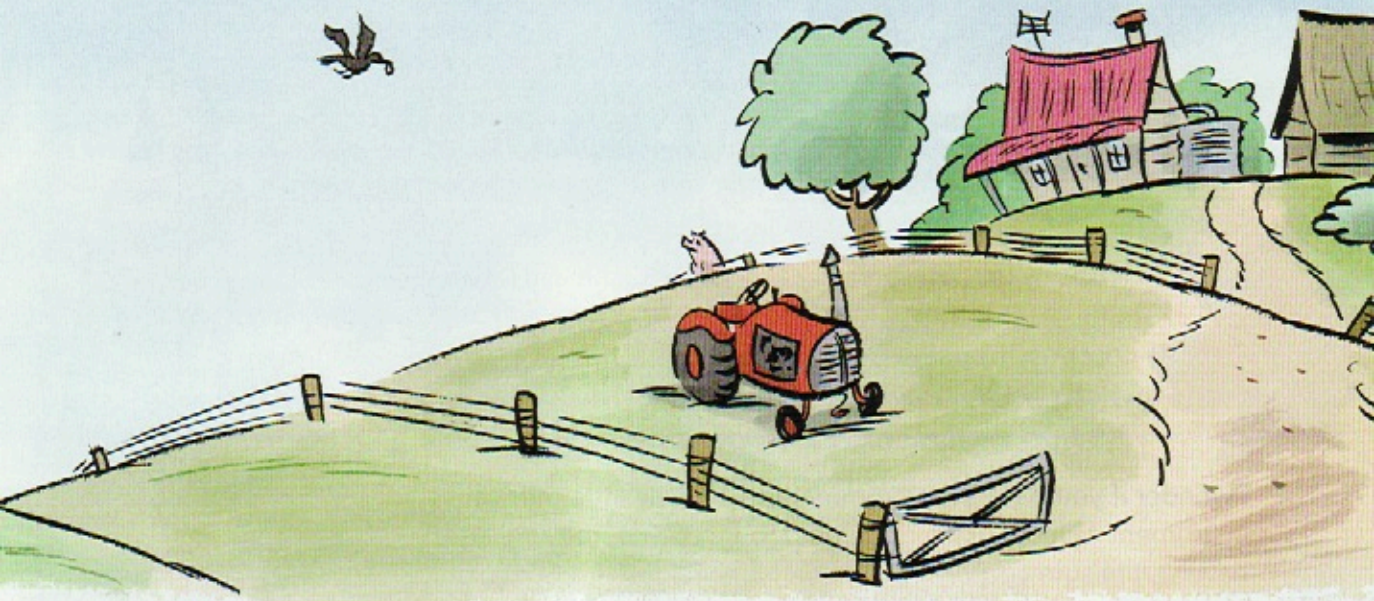
Cutting cookies out of pastry.

Some even opened up as a picture frame with Great Aunt Bessie's photograph in it.

Mrs Hopper sat bolt upright. The sun was streaming through her lacy curtains and she sucked in the morning air. She had an idea.

Then, just as she did every morning, she took off her nightie, stretched her polka dot shower cap over her frizzy hair and stepped into the shower.

All lathered up with lemony soap, Mrs Hopper began to sing. Soon another voice was singing at the windowsill.



"Arrk ... Arrk ..."

It was the shiny black crow.

"Arrk ... Arrk ..." it sang again before flying off with the lolly teeth that Mrs Hopper had placed on the windowsill.

She hopped out of the shower, threw on her tracksuit, slipped on her walking shoes and slapped on a hat. And she followed that crow at a hasty pace.

It flew over the power lines. Over the shops. Over the church steeple. And over the tallest tree. Right to the edge of town. Then it dropped the teeth. Right into Mr Higgins's piggery.

Mrs Hopper banged on Mr Higgins's front door; she could smell bacon and eggs cooking.

"Farmer Higginsssh," she said when he opened the door, "I've got a ssshlight problem. A crow sssh tole my choppersssh and I think they're in your pigssshity."

Farmer Higgins grabbed some apples and they walked around to the sty.

"Here piggy, piggy, piggy," he called.

One by one the pigs stopped rolling in the mud and walked towards Farmer Higgins to collect an apple from him. And then Farmer Higgins and Mrs Hopper both gave a start. They looked at each other in astonishment. For the last pig had raised its snout to the apple and grinned at them—a very toothy grin indeed—with Mrs Hopper's choppers! ■