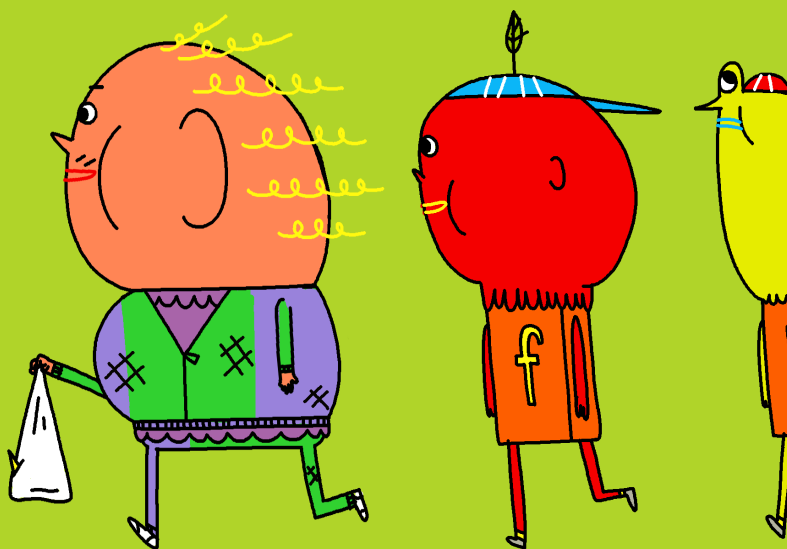
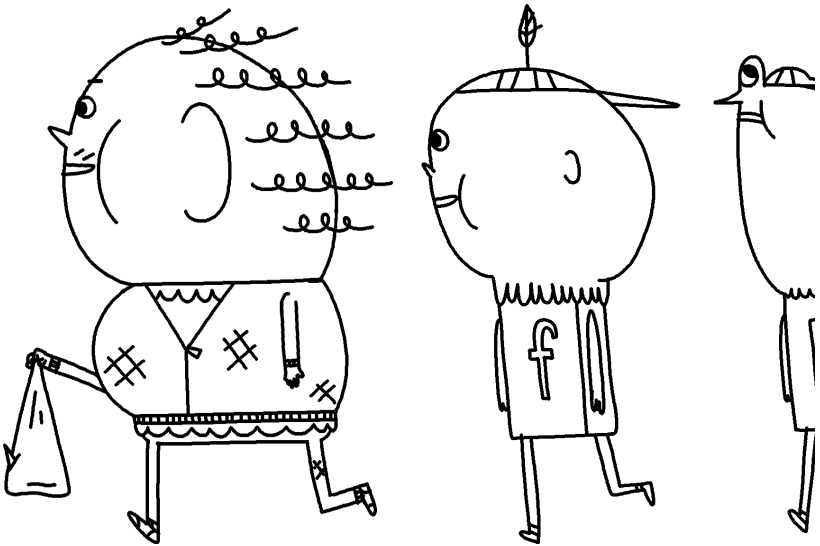


the **FUNNY** **FISH FINGER** **FRIENDS**



fourth adventure -
the King's got no pals
by Davey Ferguson

The funny fish finger friends' fourth adventure - the King's got no pals



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Please note

This story doesn't start the next day after the last one, some time has passed. Not ages, just a couple of weeks or something.

Part 1

breakfast

One day after they'd already woke up and Francie had already fallen out of his tree and into the pond and taken Bertie with him and all the fish had laughed at them as usual and they had dried off in the lift tube, they went underground to their house. Bertie was eating cereal for his breakfast and watching someone on the telly being interviewed that he had never heard of.

Francie had already finished his breakfast of toast and bacon with the fat cut off and was sitting on the floor beside the pound coin tap which he kept turning on and off quickly and stacking the pound coins that fell out in columns of £10.

'I wish this tap had a facility to pay pound coins back in when I've finished playing with them,' said Francie, 'Oh well, we'll just have to spend them all - Ha ha ha!'

'Francie, we're not spending money for the sake of it, just stop playing with the tap,' said Bertie

without taking his eyes off the telly.

'<sigh> - I'm bored waiting for you to finish your breakfast so that we can go out and have a funny adventure, hurry up mate,' said Francie and turned the tap on and off full blast and started piling up a new column.

Bertie just shook his head and rolled his eyes and got on with his breakfast.

'I tell you what,' said Francie, 'I bet the King would hate our guts if he knew his pound coins came out a tap in our house! Not to mention the thing with his laptop the other week!' He was referring to stuff that happened in previous stories.

'Aye, well don't drain away all his pound coins and he won't find out,' said Bertie. He had finished his breakfast now so he took his dishes to the kitchen then he said, 'Do you want to brush your teeth before I go to the toilet?'

'I will, aye,' said Francie so he used the bathroom then Bertie did then they went up in the lift to have an adventure and get up to mischief.

they head to the palace

'What direction will we go in today?' said Bertie.
'After talking about the King I want to go that way and look at his palace to see if it's as majestic as it is in my mind,' said Francie. In Francie's mind the palace was very majestic indeed and he had a wee day dream about it and could hear medieval music.
'Ok, but I hope we don't run into the King,' said Bertie.

'Why would we? I doubt he's going to be hanging about outside his palace when I bet its soooo minted inside,' said Francie and then he had a wee day dream about the inside of the palace.
'Stop day dreaming for once and lets go!' said Bertie.

So they headed off into the woods in the direction of the palace which was west.

They walked for ages and had to go between lots of trees and over stony bits. After they crossed a shallow stream they sat down on a log for a rest.
'I didn't think it would take this long, we should have brought some snacks,' said Francie.
'And a drink,' said Bertie because it was a hot day.

Then he felt something land on his cap and he said, 'Is that the rain on?'

'No, somebody's grogged on you, mate,' said Francie and they both looked up.

Suddenly a boy who had been sitting up a tree watching them jumped down holding a polybag with something metal in it that clanged on a stone and gave them a fright. He was sweaty and had curly ginger hair and a wee moustache and was wearing a grubby tracky and new looking trainers.

'A big monkey just did a grog on you there and swung away,' said the boy.

Bertie wiped his cap on the ground and splashed water on it from the stream and gave the boy a dirty look because he didn't believe him about the monkey.

'I didn't think you got monkeys living around here,' said Francie.

'Well you do,' said the boy. Then he said, 'What're your names?'

'I'm Francie and he's Bertie,' said Francie.

Bertie didn't say anything because he was still angry about his cap getting grogged on.

'What are you supposed to be?' said the boy. 'I've got an apple for a head and a fish finger body, and he's got a frog's head and a fish finger body,' said Francie, 'It's not fancy dress, this is what we look like.'

'I can see that, they'd have to be Hollywood FX animatronics for your faces to move like that, and who would make a feature film about wee guys with fish finger bodies and frog faces?' said the boy.

'They might make a film about a wee guy with a fish finger boy and an apple face,' said Francie.

'Would they whiff!' said the boy, 'Unless they wanted to make the lowest grossing film ever.'

Francie was hurt and furrowed his brow and glanced at Bertie for reassurance but Bertie's face didn't have an expression on it and he was being very quiet because he was suspicious about something.

Then the boy said, 'Anyway, I know all the films that are coming out and I see them early before anyone else,' and did a smug face as if he didn't think it was that much of a big deal but that they should.

'What's your name?' asked Bertie.

'I'll tell you in a minute. Where did you come from?' asked the boy.

'Back that way,' said Francie.

'Where do you live?' asked the boy.

'I live up a tr...' Francie started to say but Bertie shooshed him – 'Shhhh!'

'What's the big secret?' asked the boy.

'Nothing, we live in a house in the town,' said Bertie. Francie gave Bertie a look as if to say, 'That's not where we live!'

'He started saying he lived up something,' said the boy and he pointed at Francie.

'We live up on the second floor of a house in the town,' said Bertie.

'Were you born on this planet?' asked the boy.

'Yes?' said Francie and he looked at Bertie to check that was the answer Bertie wanted him to give and Bertie nodded.

'Where are your parents?' asked the boy.

'Don't think we have any,' said Francie and he did a shrug.

'Well, you guys are freaks of nature, you can tell that just by looking at you,' said the boy.

Francie was about to say something nasty back but Bertie said, 'What's in your bag?' and he was talking about the polybag with the metal thing in it that the boy was swinging idly about.

'None of your business, an ornament for my mum,' said the boy, 'What are you even doing in these woods? This is the King's land you're on now.' Before Bertie could shoosh him again Francie said, 'We're going to have a look at the King's palace because we've never seen it.'

'Are you now?' said the boy, 'Well I've seen it loads of times but I'll come with yous and see it again. Follow me.' The boy wandered off in the direction of the palace.

'Eh, ok,' said Francie and he looked at Bertie and then followed the boy then Bertie followed too. 'And my name's Baz,' the boy shouted back without turning round.

at the palace wall

The three of them walked through the woods for ages and the boy's bag kept clanging off the ground.

Eventually they came to a huge stone wall that stretched off forever in both directions and was very tall and had ramparts on it.

'This is the wall that surrounds the palace,' said Baz.

'Aw, whit? What's the point of that, we can't see anything with a big stupid wall in the way!' said Francie and he gave the wall a kick.

'Hiy, watch what you're kicking. The wall's there because d'you think the King wants people just wandering up and looking at his palace?' said Baz. Francie made a farting sound with his lips and folded his arms.

'Lucky for yous I know a secret way though the wall that we can go through and then run about in the palace grounds,' said Baz and he did his smug face again.

'How?' asked Francie.

'Turn away a minute,' said Baz.

'Why?' asked Francie.

'Because I don't want you seeing the secret,' said Baz.

Francie and Bertie turned away and when they did they had a whisper conference.

'Psssst, Bertie, do you not think Baz looks dead like the King?' said Francie.

'That's because he is the blinkin' King, Francie! He's got the King's face, the King's haircut, you can see he's wearing fancy clothes under his tracky and a bit of his crown's poking through that polybag!' said Bertie.

Francie did a quiet laugh. 'Why's he pretending not to be the King?'

'I'm not sure, but whatever you do don't mention the pound coin tap or what happened to his laptop!' said Bertie.

'As if I would - I'm no daft!' said Francie, 'Is that why you didn't want him knowing where we live?'

'Exactly, I think we should make our excuses and head back,' said Bertie.

'Naaa-aaaw! Lets go along with it for now until he shows us the palace, then we'll split. Otherwise we might never get to see it,' said Francie.

'Why are you so obsessed with seeing the palace all of a sudden?' said Bertie.

'Because I can't stop thinking about how majestic it might be,' said Francie.

'You're a weirdo, mate,' said Bertie, 'As soon as we've seen the palace, we're getting out of there. The dirty pig spat on my cap and was rude to us and I don't like him one bit.'

Francie started to say, 'Me neither,' but then the King said, 'Right. Turn around and hold an arm out, but keep your eyes shut. The wall has a phony stone that I've pushed through and I'm going to lead you to the hole.'

Francie and Bertie did as they were told.

'What does it matter to you if we see which stone you pushed through?' said Bertie, 'Are you the King's security consultant?'

Francie did a laugh.

'Eh, because I don't want you coming back here on your own and getting caught and spoiling it for me,' said the King.

Francie and Bertie opened one eye each and looked at each other as if to say, 'Good answer but we know you're the King.'

'Get your eyes shut!' shouted the King.

The King took Francie's hand first and led him to the hole in the wall where the phony stone was missing and assisted him through. When Francie was on the other side the King shouted, 'Keep your back to the wall and wait, and no peeking until I come through and get the stone back in place!' but Francie peeked anyway.

He had a great view of the side of the palace which was in the distance and there were lots of gardens and paths and steps and fountains and huge lawns and a big hedge maze between him and it. He could also see the main road leading from a big gate house (which was shut) to the big front door of the palace (which was also shut) and the road was lined with fancy lampposts and trees. The palace itself was even more majestic and medieval looking than he had imagined and was mostly white with lots of blue and pink spires.

Francie said, 'Oh wow-wee, that is majestic,' and then the King shouted through, 'No peeking!'

Francie had expected to see lots of ladies in big dresses and men in funny wigs and hear medieval music but there was nobody out enjoying the

gardens and all you could hear were some birds. The only people that were out were a half a dozen guards on individual patrol routes through the gardens so Francie said, 'There's guards everywhere,' but it was just as Bertie was coming through the hole and it gave Bertie a fright and he said 'What?' and fell out the hole and tucked in to a wee ball thinking he was going to get stabbed in the ribs by a guard's sword.

When he didn't he got up and felt embarrassed and said, 'I thought you meant it was an ambush,' and Francie laughed at him.

The King came through and said, 'Shhhhh! If the guards catch us in the palace grounds we'll be in serious trouble, but I know which routes they take off by heart so they won't see us if you stick with me. Now shut your eyes while I put this stone back in the wall.'

Francie and Bertie did as they were told again and the King lifted the stone and pushed it back into place then said, 'Right, you can open them.'

Francie immediately turned round and looked at the wall and said, 'Was it that one that's clearly made of polystyrene and looks like it's been painted

with poster paint? Ha ha ha!

Bertie laughed as well and the King was angry and said, 'What are you talking about, you can't see which one it is with the naked eye!'

Bertie was about to argue with him when he looked up from the phony stone to see a guard standing on a rampart looking down at them. The guard and Bertie looked at each other right in the eye then the guard looked away.

'That guard looked right at us then looked away,' said Bertie.

'No he didn't,' said the King and he started running towards the gardens, 'Follow me.'

Bertie looked back up at the guard and caught him looking at them then looking away again and said to Francie, 'That guard definitely knows we're here.'

'Why doesn't he shoot us with an arrow then?' said Francie.

'I think he knows that that's the King and that we've just come in with him,' said Bertie. He waved at the guard and the guard pretended not to notice.

'Well we know how to get back through the wall if

things gets dodgy,' said Francie.

'Things are already dodgy, Francie!' said Bertie.

'Just five minutes Bertie, it's amazing in here!' said Francie.

The King came running back across the grass towards them and said, 'Are you trying to get us caught? Hurry up!' and then he ran off again and Francie ran after him.

Bertie did a big sigh and then followed them both. They all ran like commandos down paths through beautiful gardens with columns and rose bushes and statues in them. None of the gardens had any people in them which was a bit creepy but the ones with flowers were full of bees.

Suddenly a guard appeared on the path in front of them and looked right at them then looked up at the sky.

The King said, 'Quick!' and pushed Francie and Bertie in behind a big fancy urn and they all crouched down.

Then the guard walked up to the urn and stopped and said, 'I thought I heard something,' but his acting was terrible.

The King whispered, 'We have to crawl between

his legs!' When he said this the guard seemed to change his stance so that his feet were further apart and the King and Francie and Bertie in that order crawled between his legs and Bertie shook his head and rolled his eyes about fifty times. Then there was an awkward moment where nobody knew what to do next so the guard just started walking down the path again and he turned a corner and disappeared. 'That was a close one,' said Bertie being very sarcastic. 'It *was* a close one, come on!' said the King and he ran off down the path like a commando again and Francie followed. Bertie stood up and just jogged casually because there was no real need to be stealthy and when Francie turned round and saw him he started jogging casually too but then realised it was more fun being a commando so he ran like that again.

a big hedge maze

They came round a corner and found the King standing at the big arched entrance of a hedge maze.

'You'll never guess what's at the middle of this maze!' said the King and he looked both ways to check none of the guards were watching then he ran away into it.

'This I gotta see!' said Francie and he ran in after him.

'You don't even know what you gotta see, it might be rubbish!' said Bertie.

'Doubtsies if its at the middle of a maze!' Francie shouted back.

Bertie did another big sigh and followed him in. Francie and Bertie tried to keep up with the King but they kept seeing his bum just disappearing around corners before they got there.

'He went left!' said Francie.

'He went right that time,' said Bertie.

Then he got too far ahead and they lost sight of him and had to just guess which way to turn.

The hedges were really high and the experience

was disorientating and a bit upsetting.

Eventually they came to a dead end with a big statue of a gargoyle making a cheeky face at them and gave up.

'<puff> <puff> He's got us lost on purpose because it's a trap, he's going to leave us here to starve or seal the exits and torch the maze,' said Bertie but he didn't really mean it.

'<puff> <puff> Doubt it mate, I think he's just showing off,' said Francie.

'What's the thing with the guards? Is that just for our benefit or does he honestly think they can't see us?' said Bertie.

'I don't know but I'm having fun! Just go along with it and don't be a such a sour-puss stick in the mud,' said Francie, 'Now let's find the middle of this maze, c'mon!' Francie marched back the way they came and Bertie did another big sigh and followed him.

They turned some corners and Francie said, 'Now we're getting somewhere,' but then they turned another corner and they were back at the gargoyle statue again.

'Right, forget it, I can't be bothered with this now,'

said Francie, 'so let's chose a direction and pull holes in the hedges until we either find the middle or get out.' Then he went over to a hedge and started pulling leaves off it.

'That'll take ages and you'll hurt your fingers,' said Bertie, 'Why don't I do a big jump on top of a hedge so I can get a better look and guide us out?' 'Nice one, I forgot you can do big frog jumps,' said Francie.

'So did I. Right, here I go,' said Bertie and he did a deep-knee bend then bounced up and landed on top of a hedge.

Francie got a sore neck looking up at Bertie and he shouted, 'Is the hedge okay to walk on?'

Bertie shouted back, 'Its okay to walk on with shoes but it would be too jaggy to kneel on.'

Bertie stood on his toes and had a good look around him. He saw a couple of patrolling guards outside the maze look at him but they didn't do anything. Then he saw the center of the maze and what the big surprise was – it was a couple of vendy machines. The King was sitting on a bench beside the machines drinking a can of juice and checking his phone.

'I can see the middle, it's just vendies!' Bertie shouted down to Francie and the King heard him and looked up and was furious.

He shouted, 'Ho! Get down from there this instant!' and got up and started running holding his can in a funny way with his finger tips to try and not spill any juice.

Bertie watched the King make his way back through the maze towards them to give them into trouble and the King kept glancing up at him to get his bearings and giving him a dirty look.

Francie stood waiting and got a wee fright when the King suddenly appeared round a corner.

The King was sweaty and raging and shouted up at Bertie, 'You've not to stand on the hedges ya cheat! And you spoiled the surprise at the middle!' Bertie jumped down beside Francie and had a bit of an insolent smile on his face.

'We got lost,' said Francie.

'Tough titties, that's the point of a maze! I had to learn it off by heart so that I don't get lost anymore,' said the King.

'Right, well walk us to the center and we'll try to remember the route,' said Francie.

'Aye right, as if you'd be able to remember it first time! Just try to keep up this time,' said the King and he jogged away and Francie and Bertie followed.

'What's the big deal about spoiling the surprise, we've seen blinkin' vendy machines before,' Bertie whispered and Francie did a wee laugh.

After a bit they turned a corner and found themselves back at the dead end with the gargoyle again and the King went mental and chucked his can of juice at the ground and it bounced and sent fizzy juice everywhere.

'Uh-oh, are we lost?' said Francie.

'Aye we're blinkin' lost, and it's your blinkin' fault for putting me off!' said the King, 'I never usually have to come this way.' Then he kicked his can and more juice came out and he blew sweat off his face.

'Do you want me to jump back up and work out where we are?' asked Bertie and he was trying not to smile.

The King was about to start screaming then he changed his mind and just breathed for a bit.

'Yes, get back up there,' he said, 'And pick that

can up and put it in the bin when we get to the machines.'

Bertie picked up the can and bounced up on top of the hedge and gave directions.

'Go right, on a bit, don't go down there, no wait, do go down there, no wait -wait a minute til I work out the route...' Bertie had his finger in the air and was trying to trace the right route through the maze. The King was not happy waiting.

'Right, keep going the way you're facing, ok, now go left then right, you're dead close now, just go right then left - I'll just run along the top and meet yous in the middle,' said Bertie and he took off.

'No running on the hedges!' shouted the King but Bertie was already out of sight.

When the King and Francie got to the middle Bertie was just putting the can in the bin.

'Right,' said the King as he composed himself,

'There's a machine that does ice-cream lollies, a cans of juice one and a sweetie and crisps one, and an arcade machine but the screens all faded in the sun, anyway it's old and I've got better games for my consoles these days.'

Francie's eyes lit up at the word consoles and he

said, 'We should get a console, Bertie.' Bertie nodded.

'I've got *all* the consoles,' said the King.

'You must be rich,' said Bertie.

'Eh, not that rich,' said the King.

Bertie said this in his mind, 'Oh yes you are, because you're the King.'

'What do you want out the machines?' asked the King.

'Can I get an ice-cream lolly please?' asked Francie.

'Yep, just press the button, you don't have to put money in,' said the King, 'And take a can of juice as well.'

'Nice one,' said Francie.

'Can I have a can?' asked Bertie.

'No, you can get nothing because you cheated,' said the King.

Bertie sighed and rolled his eyes and folded his arms and sat on the bench.

'You can finish my can, Bertie,' said Francie and he shoogled his can and it made a fizzy sound.

'No he can't,' said the King, 'Either you finish it or put the rest in the bin.'

Francie did a shrug to Bertie and Bertie did a funny

face back to show he wasn't that bothered.

The King got another can and a packet of crisps for himself then told them, 'There used to just be a stupid fountain here, but I got them to change it to vendy machines.'

Bertie thought the King had finally blown his cover with that statement and asked, 'Why were you given a say on what the King has in his maze?' to try and catch him out.

'Eh, because, it was a competition for people to send in ideas and my idea won,' said the King.

'Good answer,' thought Bertie.

When they were finished the King made sure every drip was out of Francie's can and crushed it with his hand to make sure Bertie didn't try to drink it. Then he gave Francie his rubbish and Francie put all the rubbish in the bin.

'Right, it's time we headed, Francie,' said Bertie.

'I'll lead the way,' said the King and he ran off into the maze and Francie and Bertie followed him and managed to keep up this time.

When they got out of the maze they were at a different bit to where they came in and they were much closer to the palace now. They were

standing at the bottom of a wee grassy hill leading up to the side of it.

at the moat

'Here, lets sneak into the palace and look at the suits of armour!' said the King.

'No thanks, we need to get going now,' said Bertie.

'Can we put the armour on and have a pretend fight?' asked Francie.

'No, it's just for show and it wouldn't fit us anyway because we're all too wee,' said the King.

'No thanks then. Let's roll Bertie,' said Francie.

The King thought for a moment and said, 'Unless we had a look at the King's games consoles instead?

'Can we?' said Francie and he was suddenly very excited.

'No, Francie,' said Bertie and he shook his head with a pained look on his face.

The King noticed this look and said, 'Yes we certainly can, Francie. I know where the King keeps all his consoles in a big computer games room.'

Then he said to Bertie, 'If you don't want to come you can just go home yourself.'

'Just come,' said Francie.

Bertie actually really wanted to play on the consoles as well so he said, 'Ok, just for half an hour.'

'We'll play them for as long as I say,' said the King, 'Now follow me.' He ran up the grassy hill and Francie and Bertie followed.

It was only when they got to the top of the hill that they noticed there was a big moat around the palace.

'Shouldn't the moat be outside the big wall?' asked Bertie, just out of interest, not trying to catch the King out.

'The moat was here before the big wall was built,' said the King.

Then he said, 'The drawbridge is round the front, but we can't exactly just wander across it and chap on the front door – the guards would throw us straight in the dungeon.'

Francie and Bertie did pretend scared faces to each other.

'Luckily I know a way to cross the moat,' said the

King.

'Is it this?' said Bertie and he did a big jump right across the moat and landed on a ridge of grass at the other side.

'Easy peasy...' said Francie, and he did a wee rubbish run up and jumped and fell in the moat not even half way across.

'...lemon soakin <cough cough>,' he said and spat out water.

'You're a pair of clowns!' said the King, 'If you'd waited two seconds I'm about to show you where the King keeps his mini-speedboat!'

Still holding his polybag, the King dreepied over the side of the moat and Francie and Bertie noticed that the moat had a gutter where a mini-speedboat was tethered to a drain. The King used his foot to pull the boat out far enough so that he could drop down into the driving seat. He untethered the boat then pushed off the side with his hand before turning the keys that were already in the ignition. The engine started and he motored past Francie treading water to the other side of the moat where he tethered it to a drain at that side. Then he stood on the boat and climbed up a

wee ladder to get to where Bertie was standing. Francie swam across and said, 'Can I use the boat to step up and reach the ladder?'

'Yes, but stand on the bit at the back and don't drip water on the seats,' said the King so Francie pulled himself up onto the boat and climbed up the ladder. Bertie put his hand out to help Francie up but Francie put his full weight on it when Bertie wasn't ready and Francie grabbed the Kings ankle as well and all three of them tumbled into the moat. The fish in the moat laughed at them and Francie and Bertie started laughing but the King wasn't laughing.

'You're a pair of stupid blinkin' idiots!' he shouted and slapped the water.

They all climbed out and Francie and Bertie sat on the grass and the King checked his phone was okay which it wasn't so he threw it into the moat. 'Do you want us to buy you a new phone?' asked Francie.

'I've got hundreds of phones,' said the King and when he saw Bertie looking at him about to ask how he could afford so many phones he said, 'my dad works for the factory and we get all the

spare ones.' Bertie raised his palms as if to say, 'fair enough.'

'I'm soakin,' said the King, looking down at his tracky bottoms.

'Does this mean we can't go in and play on the consoles?' asked Francie.

The King thought for a moment and said, 'We can, but I'll go inside first and find towels because you're not going in soaking. Get on your feet and lets go.'

Bertie noticed the King trying to subtly put the speedboat keys in the zip pocket of his tracky bottoms.

'Are you stealing the King's keys?' asked Bertie.

'No, these are my house keys with a speedboat keyring because my dad likes speedboats, the speedboat keys are still in the ignition where the King left them,' said the King.

'When we were climbing back out the moat there I noticed the keys were gone,' said Bertie but he hadn't noticed that at all, he just wanted to see what the King would say.

'Ok, these are the speedboat keys. I'm taking them with me for the way back in case yous try

to ditch me and take the boat yourselves,' said the King.

Bertie thought to himself, 'What I have learned is that the King is quite good at making up lies, except about the spitting monkey, but I'll continue to test him.'

'Now let's get over the palace wall,' said the King and they all ran along the side of the palace until they came to a vine.

inside the palace

'We can climb up this vine to get over the wall,' said the King and he started climbing. There was something funny about the way the leaves on the vine were too rigid and conveniently placed.

Francie tapped the vine with his knuckle and said, 'This is fake, what's it made of?'

The King was having too hard a time climbing in two layers of wet clothes to argue so he just said, 'Fibre glass.'

Francie and Bertie followed him up the vine and they had to be very careful because it was a silly idea to climb with slippy trainers and they all nearly

fell.

At the top they climbed up onto ramparts where guards were supposed to walk but there were no guards on this bit at the moment. They all sat down for a rest after the climb. The King was especially knackered and was cooking in the heat. Once he had caught his breath he said, 'There's a window over there that we can climb in, but we'll need to crawl over on our bellies in case he looks up.' Where they were sitting looked down over a courtyard where a guard was marching around in a big square and this is who the King was talking about.

They crawled along to the window and even Bertie joined in. Then the King whispered, 'Right, wait here and I'll get towels.'

The King was away about ten minutes and Bertie didn't bother trying to talk Francie into leaving because he wanted to play computer games too. When the King appeared at the window he had changed into a new tracksuit but it still looked like he was wearing finery underneath it and he now had a hunch back that Bertie assumed must be tucked up robes or something.

'I found a new tracksuit and trainers in my size, the King won't care because he's got hundreds of clothes,' said the King then he threw them one measly hand towel between the two of them but they were mostly dry from the sun anyway.

Francie tried to give the King the towel back but he wouldn't take it and said just leave it outside.

Then Francie started climbing in the window and when he put his foot on the windowsill his trainers made a wee squelch. 'Wait!' said the King, 'You can't walk on the carpet with wet trainers!'

Bertie was about to ask why he cared so much about the King's carpets but Francie beat him to it and said, 'Because you don't want us leaving a trail of wet footprints for a guard to follow!'

The King looked confused for a second then he said, 'Exactly,' and pretended as if that was the reason when actually he just didn't want wet marks on his good carpets.

Bertie gave Francie a look as if to say, 'Don't encourage him,' and Francie just pulled a funny face back and flared his nostrils.

'Take your socks and shoes off and you can sit them on the radiator in the computer games

room when we get there,' said the King so Francie and Bertie took their socks and shoes off and climbed in the window one at a time.

They found themselves in a long corridor with a really high ceiling and a marble floor with a fancy carpet running up the middle and wooden panels on the walls that some of them had exquisite carvings on them. There were also paintings, drapes, fancy doors, pillars and some statues and the ceiling had arches and carvings as well.

'I see you've found a new bag to put your mum's ornament in,' said Bertie and he meant the thicker polybag from a posher shop that the King was carrying his crown in now.

The King just said, 'Mm Hmm,' in agreement then said, 'This way,' and they followed him running along the corridor carrying their socks and shoes in their hands.

Eventually the King stopped at a door, looked both ways then opened it and ushered them in.

The lights came on automatically and Francie and Bertie could see a big room that wasn't medieval at all and looked like an electronics convention with all the latest and some previous generation games

consoles hooked up to individual tellies on stands. There were also hand held consoles on a shelf with all their chargers and a strip of wall sockets. Francie gasped and gave Bertie a look as if to say, 'It was worth putting up with him so that we could come in here,' and Bertie gave him a look back as if to say he agreed.

The King went over to a pile of beanbags and said, 'Just grab yourself a beanbag and sit in front of whatever console you want to play – the games are in that cabinet over there and there are duplicates of games and consoles if you want to play multiplayer with a telly each.'

Francie and Bertie first walked over to the radiator and laid out their socks and shoes to dry, then went and got a beanbag each, then went over to the huge cabinet of games but there was too much choice and they didn't know what to pick.

'The games without proper boxes are the ones that I, eh, the King gets sent before they're even out in the shops yet, but I think we should play this one even though I'll definitely tan your hides at it,' said the King and he had picked up one where you go soldiers in the future and shoot each other. He

gave Francie and Bertie a copy of the game each and pointed them to the right consoles to use. 'Just set up guest profiles, I'll use the King's and he'll appreciate me getting him hi-scores and experience,' said the King.

After everything had been set up to the King's satisfaction they started playing but because Francie and Bertie had never played it before and couldn't get used to the buttons the King kept killing them before they even knew what was happening.

'Ha ha, I told you, you've no chance! Ha ha ha!' laughed the King but after a while he got bored because there was no challenge and he told them to play something else whilst he went online and played against proper players which suited Francie and Bertie just fine.

Francie went and picked a racing game where you could change the colour of your car but not during a race.

Bertie went and picked a game where you went a funny animal that jumped over things and collected as much money as possible.

Then Francie got one with exciting pictures on the

box but he had to sit through lots of people talking to each other for ages and he gave up and got a fighting one instead and played Bertie at it. Then Bertie went away and played one where he had to sneak around a castle and not get caught a bit like what they had just been doing in real-life and he wondered if it had given the King the idea. Then they heard the King getting killed in his game and all the online players were laughing at him so he turned his console off.

'Messing about on wee tellies is fine for a while, but this is how I like to play games for REAL,' said the King and he went over and got a space ship game out of the cabinet and put it in a console on a shelf that didn't have a telly connected to it. Then he pressed a remote control and the lights went off and a projector shone a loading screen onto the wall which was massive. Then the game started and the sound effects and music started blaring out of surround sound speakers all around the room.

'No way!' said Francie but Bertie thought it was a bit loud and pulled a face.

'You might want to wear these to get the full

effect, but there're only two pairs and I need one so you's'll have to share,' said the King and he put on a pair of 3D specs and gave Francie a pair. Francie put them on and watched the King play the game and said, 'Whoa, it feels like you're actually in outer-space!'

'Francie, we *have* actually been in outer-space, remember?' said Bertie but Francie didn't hear him over all the laser noises.

Bertie noticed a can machine against the wall and remembered he was still thirsty. 'Can I get a can?' he asked the King.

'What?' asked the King.

'Can I get a can out the machine?' asked Bertie.

The King took his attention off the game for a second and looked at the can machine and then at Bertie and then said, 'Eh, no, the machine's not working,' and looked back at his game.

Bertie thought to himself, 'How come its on and all the buttons are lit up then you liar?'

'Have a look Bertie,' said Francie and he gave him the 3D glasses but Bertie only had a quick look because he was in a huff about the can machine. Francie put the glasses back on and watched the

King play some more and then asked him, 'Can I get a shot?'

'After I've done this next bit,' said the King.

The next bit seemed to take ages and Francie was getting more and more anxious waiting for his shot and Bertie was getting more and more angry stewing about not being allowed a can of juice.

When Francie finally got a shot he wasn't very good at it and his tongue kept flicking in and out of his mouth in concentration. The King tried to take over to get Francie past a bit but Francie kept a grip of the controller and the King let him play a bit longer. Bertie was starting to forget about the juice because watching Francie play the game made him want a shot so he asked Francie if he could have a shot. Francie handed over the controller and took off the 3D glasses but all of a sudden the King snatched everything back and said, 'Actually, we've been here for ages, we should get out in case the King comes back and catches us.' Then he pressed the remote control to turn all the games off and the lights back on.

Francie did an apologetic face for Bertie but Bertie was staring at the King and gritting his teeth.

Bertie pushes it

'Maybe if the King came back he'd let us play on his consoles with him?' said Bertie, 'I think I'll sit here and wait for him.' Bertie plonked himself on a bean bag and folded his arms.

'He wouldn't,' said the King, 'Get up and put the bean bag back where you got it.'

'Why would he not, is he a bit of a jobby?' said Bertie and Francie burst out laughing.

'No he's not a jobby actually!' said the King and his face went red with anger.

'Don't tell him I said this, but I think the King must be just such a big jobby,' said Bertie and Francie was nervous and biting his knuckles and giggling because he couldn't believe what Bertie was coming out with. Then Bertie started blowing raspberries and saying, '<rasp rasp rasp> I'm the King of this land! <rasp rasp rasp> And I'm a stupid big jobby! <rasp rasp rasp>'

'Right, that's it!' shouted the King and banged his polybag off the ground and Francie and Bertie both got a fright. His face was purple now and he

was breathing hard, but he seemed to suddenly think of something and he calmed himself right down.

'You'd better just hope the King never finds out what you said about him,' said the King to Bertie. Bertie didn't say anything back and had an insolent smile on his face again but actually he was scared that he'd gone over the score.

The King pulled Bertie's bean bag out from under him which made him bang his bum on the floor. Then the King took the bean bag away to put it with the rest.

'We need to get out of here Francie,' whispered Bertie and Francie nodded.

The King came back over and led them out the room. 'There's one more thing I want to show you, I think you'll really like it,' he said.

'What is it?' asked Francie.

'It's the treasury where the King keeps all his money and treasure,' said the King.

'We need to head off now,' said Bertie.

'Yeah, thanks anyway, see you later,' said Francie and the two friends started off in the direction of the window they'd all come in. But the King

shouted, 'Get back here!' and they did as they were told.

'You're trying to tell me yous don't want to see all the King's treasure? I find that hard to believe. A whole big massive room full of treasure?' said the King.

Francie thought to himself, 'I do want to see all the treasure, but since Bertie called the King a big jobby the mood's changed and the King's acting suspicious so I think we should leave,' and he was about to make his excuses out loud when he realised that their socks and shoes were still on the radiator.

'Oh, we need our socks and shoes,' he said.

'Oh,' said Bertie, looking worriedly down at own his bare feet.

The King tried the door to the computer games room and said, 'The door locked itself behind us, sorry.'

Francie tried the door to see if the King was at it but it was locked.

'The King keeps the keys to this room in the treasury for some reason so we'll need to go there now anyway. This way,' said the King and he

marched off down the corridor.

Francie and Bertie reluctantly followed him.

'Are we going to make a break for it? Because I'd rather we got our socks and shoes back first, Bertie,' whispered Francie.

'If we bolt he'll call the guards on us,' whispered Bertie.

'Why would anyone keep keys to a games room in a treasury, do you think he's actually got them on him?' whispered Francie.

'Who knows, probably, but we can't exactly jump him for them,' whispered Bertie.

Francie studied the King from behind.

'He's just walking normally now, he's not bothered about sneaking about anymore,' said Francie, 'I don't like this one bit Bertie, you shouldn't have called him a big jobby!'

'I know, but I was really thirsty and he *was* being a big jobby. And I wanted to play that space ship game,' said Bertie. 'Let's just keep calm and go along with whatever he says until he gets bored and lets us go home.'

'Ok,' said Francie, 'But I wish we didn't have bare feet, its making me even more anxious times a

hundred.'

'Me too,' said Bertie.

They went down some stairs and along more corridors until eventually the King stopped and opened a door into a big hall and Francie and Bertie nervously followed him in.

There was a massive unlit fireplace and all suits of armour stood everywhere and medieval weapons on the walls.

'Shut your eyes a minute,' said the King and the room was echoey.

'What are you going to do?' gulped Francie because he was imagining getting morning starred on the head.

'There's a secret puzzle to open the fireplace and I don't want yous knowing it,' said the King.

Francie and Bertie looked at each other then closed their eyes but kept one open each just a wee bit so they could see what the King was up to.

The King waved his hand in front of them and when they didn't react he was satisfied and went around the hall lifting the knees up of every second suit of armour.

Once he'd done the last one the big fireplace turned round to reveal what looked like a cash machine and all the armour legs slowly squeaked back into position.

'You can open your eyes now,' said the King then he directed this at Bertie - 'I supposed you're going to ask how I knew how to do the secret puzzle?

Well I watched the King doing it once, and I was hiding in that big chest over there, peeking out.'

Bertie raised his hands as if to say, 'Whatever, I wasn't going to ask anyway,' because he thought better of trying to catch the King out anymore.

'Why does the King have a cash machine in the palace?' asked Francie, forgetting how nervous he was for a moment because he was genuinely interested.

'So he can get money out without going all the way down the to the treasury,' said the King.

The King started going through options on the cash machine screen and Francie and Bertie turned to face the other way.

'What are you doing?' asked the King.

'You don't want us to see your PIN do you?' said Francie.

'The secret puzzle was the PIN,' said the King.
'You... The King might be safer with a 4-digit PIN as well,' suggested Bertie.
'And a cash card,' said Francie.
'And a fingerprint scanner,' said Bertie.
'The day the King comes to you guys for security advice is the day he'll just give up on life altogether,' said the King.
'Are you getting money out now?' asked Francie.
'No, I'm bringing the lift up,' said the King, 'If the King wants notes or bills they come out this slot, if he wants doubloons they come out here, if he wants a gold bar it comes out here, but if he wants something bigger like a big scepter with gems on it...'
You could hear a lift coming up behind the wall then the cash machine moved out the way to reveal a big service lift.
'Where's the scepter?' asked Francie.
'I didn't ask for one, that was just an example.
We're using the lift as a quick way down,' said the King. Then he walked into the lift and told Francie and Bertie to get in too which they did after giving each other a look.

Bertie suddenly had an idea that they should jump out just before the doors closed and leave the King heading down in the lift so they could escape. He took Francie's wrist and stepped towards the door but he was too hesitant and the doors shut in front of him so he let go of Francie and pretended he was just doing stretches. The King gave him a dirty look and the lift started going down.

All three of them stood with their bums against different walls and nobody said anything. 'Even if we had jumped out at the last minute, lift doors open automatically so you don't get crushed so the King could have chased after us anyway.

Although maybe this lift doesn't have the sensors in it that shopping centre lifts do. Either way its too late,' thought Bertie in his mind.

the treasury

The lift finally got to the bottom and the doors opened and Francie and Bertie got a big fright because there were two big prongs pointing in at them. The King noticed them flinch and laughed, 'Ha ha! It's only the forklift truck that puts stuff in the lift. Just squeeze past it.' So they all squeezed out the lift and past the fork lift and along a grey service corridor that had a couple of gold coins on the floor.

Then they pushed through a plastic strip curtain and the King did his smug face and said, 'Whaddaya think?'

Francie and Bertie could hardly believe their eyes they were looking at that much treasure. The room was higher than an aeroplane hangar and down one side there were big warehouse shelves full of big bits of treasure that went on into the distance and on the other side there was massive mounds of gold coins and gems like in Aladdin's cave.

Francie did a big whistle that went on for ages. 'I knew yous'd be impressed,' said the King.

'Where does the King keep all his bank notes and pound coins and that?' said Bertie.

'There are separate smaller treasuries for notes and pound coins, this is just the most expensive stuff in here,' said the King.

Francie and Bertie were afraid to go and touch anything so they just stood on the spot and looked. The King stood looking at them to make sure they were suitably impressed until it started to feel awkward so Francie did another big long whistle.

'Well, that was great, thanks very much, lets go and get our socks and shoes now,' said Francie.

'Wait,' said the King, 'I've just had an idea.'

Francie and Bertie looked at each other.

The King wandered over and hopped up and sat on the edge of a shelf full of treasure and swung his legs.

'I think we should take some treasure,' said the King.

Francie and Bertie looked at each other again.

'Doesn't sound like a good idea,' said Bertie.

'Nah, we're not theifs,' said Francie.

The King gave a big gold bejeweled globe a spin

and said, 'OK, we wont steal anything, but lets try and get this globe of the world outside right under the guards' noses - lets try and get it to the middle of the maze!'

'But we need our socks and shoes,' pleaded Francie. 'Don't be chickens,' said the King and he did an impression of a chicken at them but Francie and Bertie stayed stood on the spot.

The King did a big sigh and said, 'God sake,' and put his arms around the globe and dropped off the shelf hugging it. It was very heavy and he struggled to walk carrying it. 'Help me out,' he said. 'You did say we should go along with whatever he says until he lets us out,' whispered Francie and Bertie nodded because he did say that. So Francie and Bertie helped the King take the weight of the globe.

'Right, we're going towards that big vault door,' said the King and they all shuffled towards a big circular bank vault door.

Then the King suddenly let go of the globe and took off towards the door and Francie and Bertie had to use all their muscles not to drop it on their toes.

'I'll open the door, it's dead easy from the inside,' said the King and he started turning a wheel and pressing a keypad. Then the door opened itself out the way and Francie and Bertie watched the King stick his head out to check something before jogging back over to them.

'Actually, there's something else I want to show you,' said the King, 'and it's this...' The King slid down his tracky bottoms to reveal light purple leggings then he took off his tracky top to reveal a light blue velvet top and his robes that he had to unbuckle and were all creased. Then he took his crown out of the posh polybag and put it on his head but it wasn't one smooth action like he'd wanted because a crown prong snagged on the bag. He was still wearing trainers which didn't look very regal.

'That's right, I was the King all along!' laughed the King.

Francie and Bertie put the globe carefully on the ground.

'Why don't you tell us something we don't already know,' said Francie in the most cheeky tone imaginable.

'Aye right! You thought I was just some normal wee guy hanging about outside the palace, but guess what, I'm your King!' said the King.

'We've known you've been lying ever since you spat on my cap and said it was a monkey,' sighed Bertie and he took his cap off and looked at the greasy mark.

'It *was* a monkey. Anyway, now that yous know I'm the King I've got some bad news for yous - yous are getting sent to the dungeon and guess how long for?' said the King,

'How long?' asked Francie.

'Forever,' said the King then he shouted, 'Guards!' Two guards that were guarding the treasury from the outside poked their heads in to see what was going on. Then they marched in and stood behind Francie and Bertie.

'I've just caught these two trying to steal treasure, so they're to be done for it and thrown in the dungeon until further notice,' said the King. Francie did a big gasp of disbelief and said, 'It was you who told us to lift the globe!' Bertie just rolled his eyes and shook his head.

'And they called the King a 'big jobby' which is high

treason,' said the King and the guards did well not to laugh or even smile.

'I didn't call you a big jobby,' muttered Francie.

'Actually, he's right,' said the King and he thought for a moment. 'Take the one with the frog's head down to the dungeon, he's been giving me the most cheek. Francie's alright, he can come back upstairs with me and play computer games.' 'I wouldn't be able to enjoy myself with my best friend in a dungeon,' said Francie and that made Bertie smile and blush.

'FORGET YOU THEN!' shouted the King, 'Take them BOTH to the dungeon and leave them there to ROT!'

The guards nudged Francie and Bertie with their poles to make them start walking and they led them out of the vault.

'Can we get our socks and shoes back at least?' Francie called back.

'NEVER!' shouted the King. When he was alone he just stood and stewed for a bit then he noticed his tracksuit lying on the floor so he picked it up and shoved it into his polybag. Then he made an attempt to lift the globe to put it back on the

shelf but gave up and left it.

down in the dungeon

The guards marched Francie and Bertie out of the vault then through a side door and down some stone steps to a dark dingy dungeon that looked like what you would expect. On the way Bertie started saying, 'We weren't stealing anything, the King was dressed up as a...' but one of the guards cut him off by saying, 'Sssh, we know, don't worry about it, I'll be back down to talk to you soon.'

This made Francie and Bertie feel a bit more hopeful but it was still not a nice experience to get locked up in a cell and left on their own.

When the guard was gone Francie kicked the bars and said, 'He can't do this!'

'He's the King, he can do whatever he wants,' said Bertie, 'I knew we shouldn't have hung about with him, we should have about turned as soon as we met him.'

'It was going fine until you slagged him right off! And before that you just kept trying to catch him

out, if you'd just joined in properly we wouldn't be on lockdown,' said Francie.

'I don't know, he probably planned something like this from the start, he's a wee creep,' said Bertie.

Francie kicked the bars again then he was suddenly worried and said, 'You don't think this is actually about the pound coin tap and his laptop do you?'

'I don't think so, I was watching his face when I asked him about the pound coin treasury and he didn't twitch or anything,' said Bertie.

'Who are you, the worlds number one ace detective all of a sudden!' said Francie, 'What if he's had us under 24/7 surveillance for weeks?'

'Don't be silly, Francie,' said Bertie, 'Let's just be quiet and wait for that guard to come back.'

Francie folded his arms and sat on the ground but it was too cold on his bum so he stood up. Then they both stood and listened and all they could hear for ages were big drips somewhere until eventually they heard the guard coming down the stairs.

'Right,' said the guard, 'This isn't the first time he's done this. He'll dress up as an ordinary wee guy and invite kids in to play with him, but it never ends

well when he doesn't get his own way or somebody cheeks him,' said the guard. Bertie did a guilty face.

'What do you mean 'doesn't end well?'" asked Francie and he noticed the guard glancing at something behind them so he turned round to see what it was and it was a big skeleton on the floor. Francie and Bertie both did a big, 'Aaaaaaaaah!' and rushed forwards and clinged to the bars.

'It's not real, its from Halloween,' laughed the guard then he went serious and said, 'I was just thinking about the time when the King sent a boy with asthma down here and he got a fright off the skeleton and had an attack and we had to take him home and pay his parents off.'

Francie walked over and lifted the skeleton by the skull and jangled it a bit.

'Why does the King want to trick people all the time?' asked Bertie.

'It's not that he wants to trick people...' said the guard, then he sighed and said, 'Look, I shouldn't be saying this but some of us guards feel a bit sorry for the King because he doesn't have any real pals. He gets invited to loads of ceremonies and

functions and that but he doesn't have anybody to play with. But he doesn't think it's right for a King to hang around with the general public, so that's why he wears a disguise to try and make friends.'

'When I want to make a new friend the first thing I do is spit on their cap,' said Bertie being really sarcastic. Then he said, 'What about all the sneaking around in front of the guards outside, it was obvious you could see us. Does the King tell you to pretend not to notice him?'

'No, he's never specifically ordered us or anything, but he knows that we can see him I'm sure. It's just this pretence we play along with it so as not to hurt his feelings,' said the guard.

'Or lose your jobs,' said Bertie.

The guard raised his eyebrows as if to say 'that as well.'

'So do you know about the phony brick to get in through the wall and that plastic vine for scaling the palace?' asked Bertie.

'Of course, we helped him fit them even though we don't think they're a good idea. Especially the hole in the wall, but we keep it well guarded,' said

the guard.

'That's all great, but when are we getting out of here?' asked Francie.

'You'll probably be in here for the week,' said the guard and Francie and Bertie both did big gasps.

'But... I have an idea that might get you out sooner,' said the guard.

'What is it?' asked Francie.

'Well, I think if you were to ask for an audience with the King, apologise for trying to steal from him... wait, let me finish, apologise for trying to steal from him and for calling him names, and then offer to be his new best friends, you might be pardoned,' said the guard and he'd had to say the 'wait let me finish bit' because Francie and Bertie had both wanted to interrupt at that point.

'Are you kidding us on? Did the King put you up to this? Why would we want to apologise for something we didn't do and be friends with that idiot after the way he's behaved?' asked Bertie.

'Because I'm telling you it might get you out quicker,' said the guard, 'And you should stop calling him names.'

'Lets just do it and get out of here,' said Francie

but Bertie didn't say anything.

'Look, I'm doing yous a big favour here,' said the guard, 'I could just as easy follow orders and leave yous down here.'

Bertie did a big huffy sigh and said, 'OK, lets get it over with then, but it'd better work.'

'Or what?' said the guard which made Bertie feel small. Then he said, 'Right yous sit tight til I come back,' and he went back upstairs again.

the throne room

After about 45 minutes of waiting doing nothing Francie and Bertie heard the guard coming back and he had brought another one with him. The guard they had spoken to gave them the thumbs up then gave them their socks and shoes back which they were very relieved about. Once they had fastened their laces they were let out and led upstairs.

Then they were led through an enormous pair of doors into the throne room which was the biggest room they had ever been in in their lives. It had a marble floor and columns and big drapes and huge

stained glass windows on the walls. In the distance there was a wee building about the height of the ones firemen practice in but then they realised it was actually the King's throne and he was sat on the top looking tiny. Bertie wondered how the King got up so high and could only assume there must be ladders or a staircase behind the throne.

The guards led them along a carpeted bit for ages until they were stood at the bottom of some steps at a distance away from the throne where the King was towering above them but at an angle where everyone could still see everyone else's face. There was nobody else in the huge hall apart from another two guards back at the door. 'Do a bow,' whispered the guard.

Francie and Bertie both did a bow then got knocked off their feet when the King's voice boomed out of a hidden loud speaker somewhere behind a drape.

'I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU WISH TO APOLOGISE TO YOUR KING FOR ATTEMPTING TO STEAL FROM HIM.'

'Eh, yup,' said Francie after he had stood back up. 'SPEAK UP,' said the King.

The guard presented Francie with a wireless microphone spray-painted gold with some gems stuck to it.

'YUP,' said Francie into the microphone and it came out through the speaker.

'AND YOU ALSO WISH TO APOLOGISE FOR CALLING ME A BAD NAME?' asked the King. Francie was about to say 'yup' again but then he gave the microphone to Bertie for him to say it.

'YES,' said Bertie.

'ALRIGHT THEN, GET ON YOUR KNEES AND APOLOGISE,' said the King.

Francie and Bertie looked at each other then did as they were told. They held the microphone between them and tried to speak in unison which was a bad idea because they didn't know the exact wording the other one was going to use so it sounded awkward - 'WE'RE BOTH SOR... BOTH VERY SORRY FOR TRYING TO STEAL... STEAL A GLOBE AND FOR CALLING YOU A BAD NA... A BIG JOBBY.' It was very funny to hear 'BIG JOBBY' echo around such a big important room and they only just managed not to laugh for once.

'VERY WELL YOU ARE PARDONED,' said the King

and Francie said, 'PHEW,' into the mic.
'I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE ALSO
PROPOSED THAT YOU TWO SHOULD BE MY NEW
BEST FRIENDS.'

'EH, THAT'S RIGHT,' said Francie.
'WELL HOW DARE YOU BE SO IMPERTINENT TO
THINK THAT A KING COULD BE BEST FRIENDS
WITH THE LIKES OF YOU.'

Francie did a face to Bertie as if to say 'uh-oh.'
'IT IS QUITE RIDICULOUS AND OUT OF THE
QUESTION. FOR THAT YOU WILL BE MARCHED
OFF THE PALACE GROUNDS AND NEVER INVITED
BACK. GET THEM OUT OF MY SIGHT THIS
INSTANT.'

The guard gave them another thumbs up and
Francie and Bertie were in shock because for a
minute there they thought the King was going to
punish them for asking to be his friend but it
looked like he was letting them go.

As the guards led them back towards the door
they suddenly heard a commotion through the
loud speakers and the King letting out a cry then
the sound cut off.

They turned round and looked up to see the King

hanging off the front of his throne with his legs scrabbling about. The guards immediately ran back and one of them stood under the King in case he fell and the other one disappeared behind the throne.

Then the back bit where the King leans against opened up and the guard stepped out because there was a lift built into the throne and that's how the King gets up and down. The guard took the King's hand and dragged him to safety.

What had happened was that the King had been in a hurry to come down and remembered to unbuckle his seat belt but forgotten to take off his lapel mic that plugs into the arm of his throne and he'd tripped on the wire.

Francie and Bertie heard the lift opening at the bottom and the King rolled into view and you could see he had microphone wire all wrapped around his ankles that both guards tried to untangle. The guard that had spoken to them before did a shooing gesture to them so Francie and Bertie wandered out of the throne room and again did very well not to laugh.

waiting at the gatehouse

A different set of guards led Francie and Bertie out of the palace and through a courtyard and across the drawbridge and along the long main road with the lampposts and trees to the gatehouse that Francie had seen when they first came through the wall earlier. Then the guards headed back towards the castle.

There was another guard stationed on top of the gatehouse and when Bertie gestured to him that the gates were shut he shouted down, 'two minutes.'

'Thank goodness that's over,' said Bertie.

'Too right,' said Francie.

'I couldn't believe it when the King was dangling off his throne, I nearly burst out laughing! Ha ha!' said Bertie.

'Ha ha! Me too Bertie, but imagine he'd fallen, he'd have died!' said Francie, 'And remember when we said 'BIG JOBBY' over the microphone! Ha ha!'

'Ha ha, what a big jobby he really is,' said Bertie shaking his head, 'It feels great to be shot of him

at last.'

'Deffo,' said Francie.

'Lets get home and get some lunch on,' said Bertie.

'Good call Bertie, I've just realised I'm starving,' said Francie.

They both looked up at the gate house guard to see what the big hold up was. Then they heard a car behind them in the distance coming from the palace.

They gave each other worried looks. It was a big white limo and it pulled up alongside them. The door opened and they saw the King sitting on the backseat in his tracksuit again with his crown back in a polybag laying on the seat beside him.

'Alright guys, I was caught by the guards too so the King's flung me out as well! Get in, this limo's going to drop us all off in town.'

The King must have sensed that Francie and Bertie were considering bolting because he said, 'And the King's put extra guards on patrol especially around the hole in the wall, so this is the only way out.'

Francie and Bertie both felt sick and needed the toilet but they got into the limo with King.

Part 2

McDonalds lunch

'Ha ha, sorry about all that back at the palace, sticking you in the dungeon, just my wee joke,' said the King after he'd told the driver to put the screen up so that he couldn't listen in. 'I'm just a born practical joker, I love pulling pranks. I actually thought it was hilarious when you called me a big jobby, I was like, 'if he only knew who he was talking to!' Ha ha!'

Francie and Bertie just did weak smiles and Bertie didn't think there was any worth in reminding the King again that they had known it was him the whole time.

The King's mood was much friendlier now and he seemed really excited to be heading into town.

'I've got to go incognito again so that no one sees the King hanging about with normal people, it's not allowed,' said the King and he did a shrug and an apologetic face. Then he laughed and said, 'Did you see when I nearly fell off the throne, how embarrassing, I was nearly a goner! Ha ha!' he said.

Francie and Bertie managed a wee laugh each. Then the King sat forward and reached into his back pocket and brought out a wad of notes. 'First things first, how about a burger feast at Maccy Ds for the new best friends?' Francie and Bertie looked at each other with raised eyebrows as if to say, 'maybe this wont be so bad after all.' 'Nice one,' said Francie and the King looked genuinely pleased with a lot less smugness than usual. Bertie noticed that the King didn't look like he was wearing regal clothes under his tracksuit this time, maybe he had realised it was too hot. The limo dropped them off at a part of town Francie and Bertie had never been to before with lots of shops and it was quite busy. The driver wound down the window and it was the guard who had been bad at acting earlier in the palace grounds and he said, 'Now the King doesn't want to see any of you guys anywhere near his palace ever again so beat it!' Then he put his window back up and drove off. 'Ha ha, he has no idea who he's just dropped off,'

said the King and he jogged off towards McDonalds. He barged through the front door and didn't hold it open after him so Francie nearly got hit in the face when it swung back. While Bertie waited for Francie to open the door again he happened to notice a helicopter in the sky. Inside the King told them to go and get a seat upstairs and he'd order loads of stuff and bring it up. It was quite busy but Francie and Bertie managed to find a corner booth facing the top of the stairs.

'He's certainly in a better mood this afternoon. How about we stick around for a free lunch but then as soon as he acts up we ditch him for good this time?' said Bertie.

'Sounds like a plan,' said Francie. Then Francie realised that he hadn't asked the King to make his burgers plain and Bertie said he wanted his plain too so Francie ran downstairs and luckily the King was still in the queue. 'Plain plain, what a pain,' tutted the King, 'Take some napkins and straws back up with you.'

Francie and Bertie waited patiently and got hungrier and hungrier. The place was noisy with

everybody talking and pop music playing. Eventually the King appeared at the top of the stairs with a tray stacked high with burgers and his arm through the handle of his polybag.

'That's your blinkin' plains that took so long,' he said and he tipped the tray so that all the burgers slid onto the table in front of Francie and Bertie and their eyes lit up.

'I've got us four different kinds of burger each and the guy's bringing up another tray with two large fries each and a coke and a milkshake each. Then one of yous can go down and get ice-creams when we're ready for them,' said the King.

Sure enough a young girl member of staff came up with the second tray and Francie and Bertie couldn't believe their luck. Bertie did a secret thumbs up to Francie and Francie did 'OK' fingers and kissed his fingertips like a french chef back which the King noticed and laughed.

Francie and Bertie both stuffed a handful of chips in their gubs and set to work unboxing and unwrapping their burgers while the King opened his straw.

'Watch this,' he said and he bit the end off the

wrapper and blew down the straw like a pea shooter and the wrapper shot off and bounced off a promotional display of toys to coincide with a kids movie about a cartoon elephant being out. 'Ha ha!' said Francie and he did the same thing with his straw except his landed on the floor.

Then Bertie tried it but he just blew a hole in the wrapper.

'Nae luck,' said the King, 'Somebody go downstairs and get more straws.' Francie shot out of his seat and ran downstairs he was so excited about shooting more straw wrappers. He came up with a bundle and dropped them all on the table.

'You didn't have to go downstairs, Francie, you can get them over there,' said Bertie but Francie didn't care, he was already biting the end of one and so was the King.

Then a male member of staff in his late thirties with ginger hair and glasses and a shiny nose and a cloth for wiping tables appeared at the top of the stairs because he had seen Francie take so many straws and followed him.

'What you planning on doing with them?' asked the member of staff.

By way of an answer the King spat another straw wrapper at the promotional display and Francie and Bertie giggled because they couldn't believe his cheek.

'Get that picked up,' said the member of staff and he snatched the pile of straws off the table.

'Get this picked up,' said the King and he tore the top off a tomato sauce tub and flung it at the display and it splattered everywhere.

Francie laughed again but Bertie didn't this time.

A couple of girls gasped and said, 'Ooohhhhh,' and a parent tutted.

'Right, out!' said the member of staff and he grabbed the King's upper arm.

'Don't you touch me,' said the King.

'Or what?' said the member of staff but he let go anyway.

Then the King got his crown out its polybag and placed it on his head.

'Or I'll have you flung in a dungeon for the rest of your poxy life,' said the King and everybody gasped when they realised who he was.

The member of staff turned very pale and got down on one knee and started stuttering.

'Me and my friends are going to sit and eat our burgers and you're going to keep spitting more and more straws at that cartoon elephant until I tell you to stop. If we think you've scored enough points by the time we've done then you'll be spared,' said the King.

So for the rest of their meal the member of staff spat straw wrappers and the King would laugh and make up points like, 'Right in the eye, 10 points,' and, 'Dungarees, only 1 point.' The King had a horrible expression on his face that made him look very pleased with himself. Francie and Bertie just ate their burgers in silence and tried not to catch anyone's eye because everyone was too scared to give the King a dirty look so they kept directing them at Francie and Bertie instead. The pop music was still playing but the place was a lot quieter now because people were only whispering if they spoke at all. The member of staff had to keep going back and getting more straws and some other members of staff gathered at the top of the stairs and watched with sombre faces. Eventually the King asked, 'You finished?' and Francie and Bertie nodded even though Bertie still

had one and a half burgers still to eat and they both had loads of chips left.

'I've tallied up your points and you've just scraped through,' said the King to the member of staff, 'But next time the cut-off will be higher. Let's head fellas.'

The member of staff looked relieved when they passed him but all the other members of staff gave Francie and Bertie dirty looks as they went by them on the stairs. The King must have forgotten about ice-creams because they just went straight outside and then he put his crown back in its bag. Then he licked salt off his fingers and said, 'This crown is great, as soon as I put it on I can get people to do whatever I want. For example if you tried to run away I could get members of the public to chase after you and throttle you.'

Francie and Bertie did big gulps.

'Ha ha! Only kidding. Only half-kidding,' said the King, 'Now lets head over the road to see what new computer games are out.' He ran across the road and all the traffic stopped and peeped at him until he put his crown on and off again and then

the peeping stopped.

'Why does he keep putting his crown on if he wants to stay incognito?' said Francie.

'He just puts it back on when it suits him,' said Bertie.

Then Francie and Bertie had no option but to follow the King and stick with him in case he got them throttled by members of the public.

egging a wedding car

The King stood looking in a computer game shop window. 'I've got all these games at the palace because any games that come out get sent straight to me and I just snap the discs of the rubbish ones,' said the King.

Bertie thought to himself, 'It feels like a different day to when we were in the palace playing computer games, I just want this day to end.'

They wandered past another couple of shops until they came to a mini-supermarket. The King suddenly said, 'Wait here,' and disappeared inside.

Bertie noticed the helicopter in the sky again.

'Do you think that's the King's guards in that

helicopter watching us?' asked Francie.

'Probably,' said Bertie.

The King came back out with a poly bag for each of them. When Francie had a look to see what was in his bag the King said, 'It's ammunition,' and it was boxes of eggs he had given them.

'We need to find the right spot, come on,' said the King and he jogged off ahead of them.

Francie and Bertie jogged along behind him and kept checking to see if the helicopter was still above them and it was.

They passed a hole in the road with traffic cones around it and the King told Francie to lift one.

Then they went round a corner where there was a wee wall outside a big building. The King stopped and said, 'This'll do nicely.' He told Francie to put the traffic cone on the road in the middle of a lane. Then he said all three of them had to hide behind the wee wall and open some egg boxes and wait.

'It's going to be an ambush,' said the King and he laughed to himself.

They heard a car coming along the road and coming to a stop and the driver getting out to

move the cone and tutting.

'Now!' said the King and they all stood up and the King flung an egg at the car but Francie and Bertie held back.

'Ha ha, perfect! Ha ha!' laughed the King when he realised it was an open top wedding car with a bride and the bride's father in it that had stopped. The chauffeur held his hand up to the King and said, 'Don't you dare!' but the King laughed and flung another egg. The chauffeur tried to use the traffic cone like a baseball bat to knock the egg away but it exploded and wee bits landed on the bride's dress and she let out a cry.

The bride's dad put a protective arm round his daughter and screamed, 'FOR GOD-SAKES PACK IT IN, IT'S MY DAUGHTER'S WEDDING!'

The chauffeur marched towards the King as if he was going to batter him but the King put his crown on and the chauffeur backed off.

'Put the cone back in front of your car and get in, but don't you dare drive away,' said the King.

When the chauffeur was back in the car the King said to Francie and Bertie, 'Right when I count to three we're going to absolutely pelt them, no

mercy.'

When Francie and Bertie just stood there looking at him the King added, 'And yous better join in or everyone here's for it,' and he did a finger motion to include everyone in the wedding car and Francie and Bertie then he pointed up towards the helicopter.

'W-w-what does that mean, does the helicopter have m-m-missiles?' said Francie.

'Ha ha, I wish!' laughed the King, 'Right, get your throwing arms up.'

Francie and Bertie each picked up an egg and held it as if they were about to throw it. The bride started sobbing and her dad tried to console her. The chauffeur just stared straight ahead of him. 'One...two.....THREE!' said the King and he started flinging egg after egg at the car and its passengers. Francie and Bertie tried to aim their eggs lower so as just to hit the car but Bertie accidentally sconned one right off the dad's bald head and he started wailing, 'IT'S MY DAUGHTER'S WEDDING! Awww naaaaaw haaawww haaaaaaaaw,' which broke Francie and Berties' hearts. The assault ended when they had all emptied two

boxes each. The car was a state and so was everyone in it with egg and bits of shell dripping off them and the dad and bride were sobbing. 'What are you crying for, the bride's a BEAST!' jeered the King. Bertie briefly caught the dad's eye and saw pure hatred.

'Get more boxes open and commence wave two!' said the King but the chauffeur had had enough and he made the car's wheels spin and then screeched away and knocked the cone flying.

The King just laughed and said, 'I bet I know which church they're going to, quick grab the eggs, let's wait outside and get the whole wedding party!'

Then he took off running and left Francie and Bertie tidying the boxes with eggs still in them back into poly-bags.

'I know we like getting up to mischief Bertie, but this is too much, this is just pure badness,' said Francie with tears in his eyes.

'I know, Francie, I've never felt worse,' sniffed Bertie.

'Get a move on!' shouted the King.

Francie and Bertie ran after him and he led them through a posh residential bit and took a shortcut

through people's back gardens who didn't dare say anything and stood as still as statues because the King still had his crown on.

They came to a fence which the King and Francie struggled to climb over but Bertie cleared it easily. He found himself on a path beside a canal, and as he looked around waiting for the other two to get over the fence he thought he recognised a nearby field as being one not far from where he and Francie lived.

The King came over the fence and landed hard on his feet and said, 'Quick, the church is over the other side of the canal.' So they ran along the canal path until they came to a bridge which they ran across. At just past the middle the King suddenly stopped because he'd noticed two guys fishing on the canal bank. They weren't posh guys with body warmers and waders, they were dodgy looking with torn jeans and clippered heads.

'Quick, give me an egg,' said the King and he held his hand out and did a 'gimme gimme gimme' motion.

Francie gave him one and the King shouted, 'HERE! Do you want some egg to go with your fish?' and

did a kind of jump up and lean over the bridge and flung the egg at the same time and it smashed on the ground between the two fishing guys. The King did a laugh and rocked back but as he did his crown slipped off his head and splashed down into the canal and sank.

'Aw whit!' he cried.

The two guys came swaggering onto the bridge to confront the King and one of them said, 'What d'you think you're playin' at mate?'

'Who d'you think your talkin' to mate, I'm your King!' said the King.

'Is that right mate?' said the other one, 'Gies those eggs a minute pal,' and Francie gave him a box of eggs.

'Don't you dare,' said the King, 'I'm your King, my crown just fell in the canal!'

'Does the King pure cut about in trackies these days, aye?' said one of the dodgy guys and his pal laughed.

The King zipped his top down to show off his finery but then he remembered he hadn't put anything on under it.

'Here, keep yer claethes on mate,' said one of the

dodgy guys.

'Are you ready for your egg shower, your highness?' said the one with the eggs.

The King started running away but they grabbed him. He looked about frantically for the helicopter but even though you could still hear it it must have lost them when they cut through the back gardens.

The dodgy guy with the eggs emptied them into his hand then he spanked them down hard on the King's head and his pal jumped back to avoid getting splattered. Then the guy wiped his egggy hand on the ground and high-fived his pal and they went back to their fishing spot laughing.

The King just stood stunned with egg dripping down his face and neck and Francie and Bertie were just stood looking at him.

Then Bertie snapped out of it and realised that this was their big chance – the King was powerless without his crown and the helicopter was nowhere to be seen still trying to find them.

'Now's our chance Francie!' said Bertie.

'First let's give him a piece of our minds Francie and Bertie style!' said Francie. So they ran up and

stood at either side of the King then both said together, 'one...two...three...You're one nasty piece of work and we'll NEVER be friends with you! See ya! <rasp>' which they just made up on the spot but it still sounded pretty good and the King couldn't believe what he was hearing.

The helicopter sounded closer now so Francie and Bertie sprinted off towards the field that Bertie thought he recognised. On the way past the fishing guys Bertie shouted, 'That *is* the King, yous better get out of here!' so they packed up their stuff and bolted too.

The King snapped out of his trance and started checking his pockets and shouted, 'Where's my blinkin' phone!' but if you remember his phone got damaged in the moat earlier and he forgot to lift another one.

Francie and Bertie kept running and didn't look back even when the King shouted, 'Yous are DEAD MEAT!'

'<puff> <puff> I guess you could say he got <puff> <puff> exactly what he deserved <puff> I mean eggs-actly,' said Francie.

'<puff> <puff> Don't start that Francie <puff>

<puff>' said Bertie.

It turned out Bertie hadn't recognised the field but eventually they came out at a housing estate that they definitely did recognise near the shopping centre so they knew how to get home from there. They ran the whole way and when they finally got to their tree stump they both collapsed onto it and when the lift took them down to their house they rolled out and just lay on the floor breathing for ages.

Epilogue

Francie and Bertie were too scared to go topside that night so they decided to sleep in their beds for once rather than Francie up his tree or Bertie on his lily pad. They both suffered a sweaty sleepless night and only fell asleep the next day on the couch in front of the news which they were scanning for any mention of a bounty on their heads but there was nothing on any of the channels.

Later that day their telly flashed a warning and told them there was a helicopter that kept circling the area. Then it told them that somebody on foot was hanging around right above them. The somebody appeared on the screen and it was one of the King's guards snooping around. Had the King infiltrated the police and got a hold of the Duncan the policeman's notes? How else would the guards know to look here? Luckily nobody else but the alien princess knew about Francie and Berties' underground house so they felt safe enough.

The King's guard hung around for the rest of the

day and another one changed over with him at night and Francie and Bertie felt like prisoners in their own home but at least they could watch the telly and still get all their meals.

The day after that the guard just left and nobody took his place.

Francie and Bertie hatched a plan to sneak back into the palace and use their memory ray on the King so that he would stop looking for them, even though Bertie was worried the alien princess might have told them it only erased memories about a day old.

But when they got to the palace wall they couldn't find the phony polystyrene stone.

'We probably would've got lost in the maze anyway,' said Francie.

'Francie, we wouldn't even've gone through the maze, you can just walk round the outside,' said Bertie.

'Oh aye. Ha ha!' said Francie.

'D'you know what? I get the impression that not even the guards really like the King so I doubt they'll keep up trying to find us for him,' said Bertie. Francie agreed so they went back home and put

the memory ray back under Bertie's bed. They felt confident to go about their daily business again and within the week they even started using the pound coin tap. They also kept using the phrase, 'Do you want some egg to go with your fish?' to make each other laugh because it was a rubbish thing the King had said. The next time they met the King he pretended not to remember about the eggs or them ditching him, and he had a new friend with him but that's another story...

Also the King did decide to employ the increased security measures that Francie and Bertie suggested back when they were at the cash machine in the palace.

THE END

Other stories I still might write -

The funny fish finger friends' fifth adventure -
they buy a console

The funny fish finger friends' sixth adventure -
the climbing frame hotel

