



**THE TENTACLES OF TIME.
THE SCHNITZEL.
A TALENT SHOW.
PUKING ON A TRAMPOLINE.**

Our band is called the Tentacles of Time. There are eight reasons for this.

- 1) Our band is a rock band, and rock bands need names that sound a bit tough and a lot cool.
- 2) Our real names do not sound tough. They do not sound cool. I present you with:
Malcolm Schnitzel: Guitar and shouting
Robert Trebor: Drums and wailing
Trebor and Schnitzel – we sound like a pair of bakers or grave-diggers or drain-unblockers. Instead of a

wicked cool rock band. So, no real names.

3) Tentacles, though, sounds exactly the right amount of tough and cool.

4) And it rhymes perfectly with the science word for goolies.

5) Also, I like stuff about time.

6) On account of me being a time traveller.

7) Not that Schnitzel believes me, but he likes the name anyway.

8) I don't really have any more reasons, but what with tentacles normally coming in eights, it felt weird having a list of seven.

We almost didn't enter Griffin's Got Talent, because of school talent competitions not being particularly cool. But first prize is £50's worth of vouchers for the local shopping centre, where we could spend the prize money on getting band T-shirts printed.

Malcolm, as well as being a not-too-terrible

guitarist, is an amazing artist and he's designed a logo for the band. It's an octopus playing a guitar, grabbing a microphone, smashing up a clock and generally thrashing about. For £50 we can get two T-shirts printed with the rock octopus on it and still have some money left over for sweets.

Tonight is our final rehearsal for the big show.

It is – clearly – a very important rehearsal.

We need to be focused.

We need to be professional.

We need to practise until our fingers are raw.

But not so raw that we can't actually play tomorrow.

Just sort of a bit tender.

Except, 'practise until our fingers are tender' doesn't sound very rock 'n' roll.

But you get the point. It's important.

I tap my stick against the rim of the drum to count us in for our final – did I mention it's important? – rehearsal.

‘A one, a two, a one two three f—’

‘Say cheese!!!’

I pause with my drumstick in mid-air and turn towards Malcolm. What he should be doing is playing his electric guitar. He should be making the ground shake with powerful rock music. He should be rehearsing.

This is not what Malcolm is doing.

Malcolm, with his school tie knotted around his forehead, is holding his phone in front of his face and grinning like a chimpanzee in a banana factory.

‘What are you doing, Malcolm?’

‘Band selfie,’ he says. ‘For history, for when we’re famous.’

‘Malcolm, we are never going to get famous if you keep wasting precious rehearsal time taking selfies.’

‘Band selfies,’ Malcolm corrects, as if this makes even the slightest difference.

He’s still holding his camera at arm’s length, still

grinning like a monkey, still – apparently – determined to take his band selfie.

‘Smiiiiile,’ says Malcolm.

I’m not sure if what I do with my mouth really counts as a smile, but I at least show my teeth.

‘Perfect,’ says Malcolm.

‘Fine,’ I say. ‘Now perhaps we can get on with rehearsing.’

‘You bet,’ says the Schnitzel. ‘Let’s do it.’

I tap my sticks on the rim of my drum. ‘A one, a two, a one two three f—’

‘Boys!’ says a voice.

And even before I turn my head, I know exactly who it is.

Allow me to introduce Gloria Dizamale. Gloria Dizamale (also known as Gloria Dismal. Also also known as the Dismal One) has been my next-door neighbour for five years. She has been a source of constant embarrassment and annoyance ever since

my mother invited 'Dismal' to my sixth birthday party. Where she ate too much cheesy pasta then barfed all over my birthday present – a brand new trampoline.

Puking while bouncing on a trampoline is bad enough, but my new neighbour wasn't just bouncing, she was rotating, so that her cheesy vomit sprayed in a full circle, coating the nets, the floor and everyone else on the trampoline. You'd think most people, after throwing up their party lunch all over a trampoline and several young children, might stop bouncing. Not Gloria Dismal. She just kept on jumping and twisting and puking like it was some kind of performance at the world's worst and grossest circus.

The party was ruined – children screaming, mothers screaming, fathers laughing so hard they had tears in their eyes. It was like something from a scary movie.

Five years later, I can still hear those people screaming. And on a hot day, I can still smell cheese sick on my trampoline.

I never invited Gloria Dismal to a birthday party again, but what with her being my next-door neighbour she just turns up anyway. Not that anyone will go on the trampoline with her. And not that Dismal cares.

I read that vampires can only come into your house if you invite them. I don't know why anyone would do that – invite a bloodsucking monster into their house – but it's reassuring to know you have the option not to. Gloria Dismal is not like that.

She just barges in whenever she feels like.

Like this evening, slap bang in the middle of our final rehearsal.

It serves me right for not closing the garage door.

Our garage is at the bottom of a long and steep driveway, and Dismal crouches low on her skateboard as she hurtles towards us at terrifying speed. Sunlight flashes off her mirrored helmet as she swerves around Schnitzel's bike, jumps a garden gnome and skids to a stop, inches from my drum kit.

‘Boys!’ she says, flipping her deck and catching it in one hand. ‘Looks like I’m just in time.’

‘Do you mind?’ I say. ‘We’re kind of busy.’

Written down, that may sound reasonably polite (or politely reasonable, for that matter), but the way I said it – the grumpiness in my voice, the frown on my face – should make it clear that what I am really saying is, ‘Oi, Dismal, get the heck out of here.’

But this is Gloria Dismal we’re talking about.

‘Course, I don’t mind,’ she says, removing her helmet and freeing her hair, which springs up and out in one hundred thousand thick black curls.

‘We’re trying to rehearse,’ I say to Gloria. ‘Big competition tomorrow.’

Dismal flops down in Dad’s wheelbarrow, her legs dangling over the edge as if it were some kind of velvet sofa. ‘I know,’ she says. ‘And I’m here to help.’

‘Help? We don’t need help.’



Gloria looks first at me then at Malcolm. ‘Hate to break it to you boys, but I’ve heard you rehearse, and yes, you do. There’s a lot of tough competition. Lot of talented acts.’

‘What,’ I say, laughing, ‘like Maria Mamooli and her hamsters?’

‘Hamster juggling is a real talent,’ says Malcolm.

‘I’m more worried about Eno,’ says Gloria.

Eno Fezzinuff – he’s Year 7 like us, but is already the smartest kid in Griffin High School. Or at least that’s what Eno likes to tell everyone.

‘Apparently he’s invented something,’ says Gloria.

‘Inventing’s not a talent,’ I say. ‘Anyone can invent. Banging drums is a talent. And the Tentacles of Time do not need any help, thank you very much.’

‘You need a better song,’ says Dismal.

‘How dare you!’ I say. ‘How absolutely dare you!’

‘It doesn’t even make sense,’ says Gloria.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE #1

THE TENTACLES OF TIME

Lyrics: Trebor and Schnitzel

Hey yeah, we're the Tentacles of Time.
And we've got eight arms like an Octopus
Except we don't mean it literally
Because we've only got the two of us.

Tentacles, Tentacles, the Tentacles of Time
Yeah yeah yeah we're the Tentacles
The Tentacles of Time.