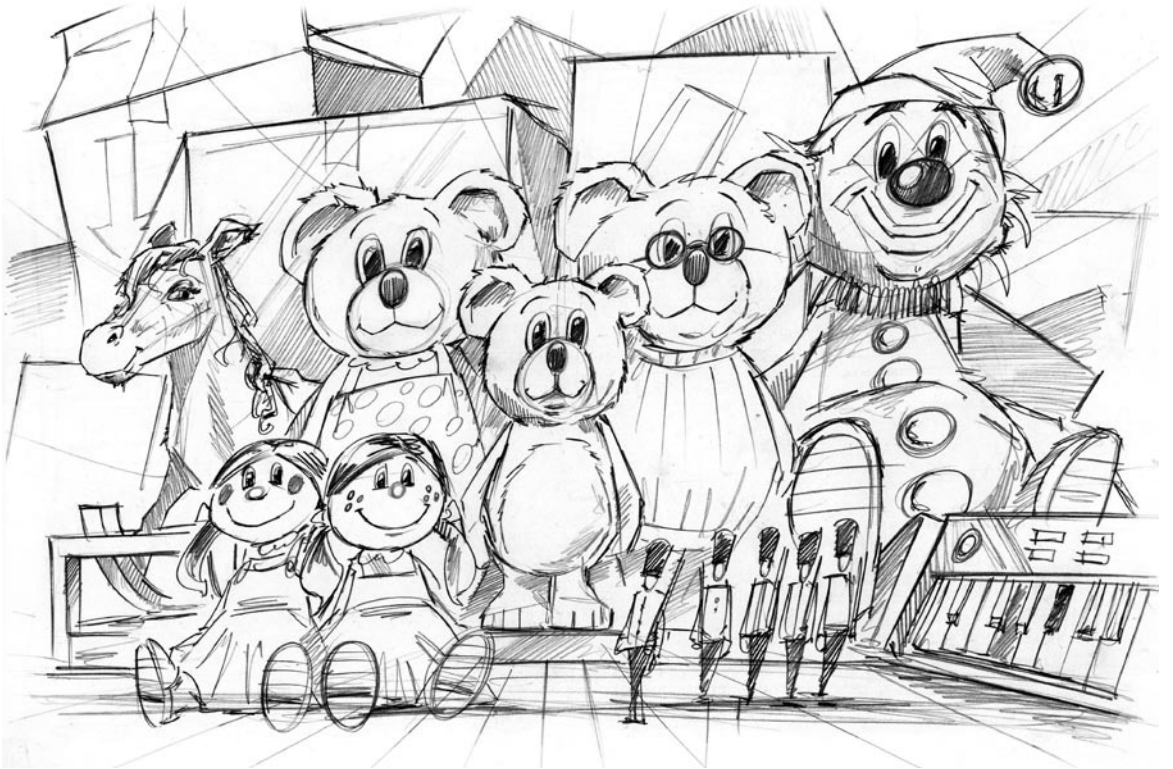


# Chapter 1

## **New Bear On The Block**





This is the amazing story of Harry Bear – the first teddy bear to become a Member of Parliament.

Harry Bear was born and raised in an attic in 666 Ditchwater Street, Dudbury, which used to be Britain's dullest town. His parents, Ted and Clara, were retired teddy bears. They shared the attic with some other retired toys, including Wilbur the Rocking Horse, the Wise Old Clown, a set of soldiers and the Dolly Sisters. There was not much space for them all and they had to share it with a set of golf clubs, a roll of carpet and a keyboard with no G or B flat above middle C, so that whenever the Wise Old Clown wanted to play it the Dolly Sisters had to sing those two notes for him at the right time.

Harry Bear went to Dudbury Academy School. Teddy bears have to go to school like anyone else. They have special lessons to teach them the skills they need to work as a teddy bear. They have to learn at least five languages, including Baby, in case they have to go to work for someone very young. They also have to learn how to hug, how to stand on their heads, and how to fall down stairs. They also train in a special version of unarmed combat – called tedkwando – to protect their owners in case monsters get into the bedroom at night when parents are far away. When they finish school they have to pass a set of exams before they get sent to a shop and take their first job as a teddy bear.

Harry Bear was top of his class at hugging – and there was only one bear who could beat him at tedkwando. This was his special friend Florrie. Florrie wanted to become a hospital bear to look after sick children. Apart from all the regular teddy bear exams, she had to practise taking injections to show children they do not hurt (even though they do) and swallowing medicine to show children it is not nasty (even though it is).

Harry passed all his exams with high marks, and won the certificates you can see at the end of this book. He was sent to the toy floor in Dudbury's department store. At the time this was the most boring store in Britain, but there was nowhere else for him to go. On his first day on the toy floor he met a boy called Luke who was trying to spend his ninth birthday money. Luke first wanted to buy a cricket bat, but as you will see, there was no point in having a cricket bat in Dudbury, and as soon as he saw Harry Bear Luke decided he wanted him instead even though he was nine already. He took Harry back home to 13 Grey Street, Dudbury, and went straight to the spare room.

The main object in that room was a computer with a giant screen. Luke made Harry play Alien Mutant Invaders, and Harry lost by 3,678,954 points to 1, because teddy bear school does not include computer games. The next day they played Paranoid Android and Harry lost by 6,571,983½ points to 1.

The next day they played Crazy Von Neumann Machines and Harry lost by 2,874,215 to 13 because he was getting better. The next day they did not play anything because Luke went out with his parents. Harry took the chance to go back to the attic and tell his parents about his new life. The Wise Old Clown and Wilbur the Rocking Horse came to listen too and so did the soldiers and the Dolly Sisters.

Harry was very excited when he told them about his 13 points on Crazy Von Neumann Machines, but the Wise Old Clown looked worried and muttered something to Wilbur the Rocking Horse who neighed back something to agree.

When Harry finished telling them about his life as Luke's teddy bear, there was a long silence. And then suddenly his father burst into tears. "You've thrown your whole life away – and I let you do it!"

he choked out between sobs. "It's a dog's life being a teddy bear! Long hours, always on call, monsters without warning any night of the week ... and what have you got to show for it? Listen, for every bear that gets rich and famous like Winnie-The-Pooh or Paddington there's thousands in the attic without a pension, like your mother and me!"

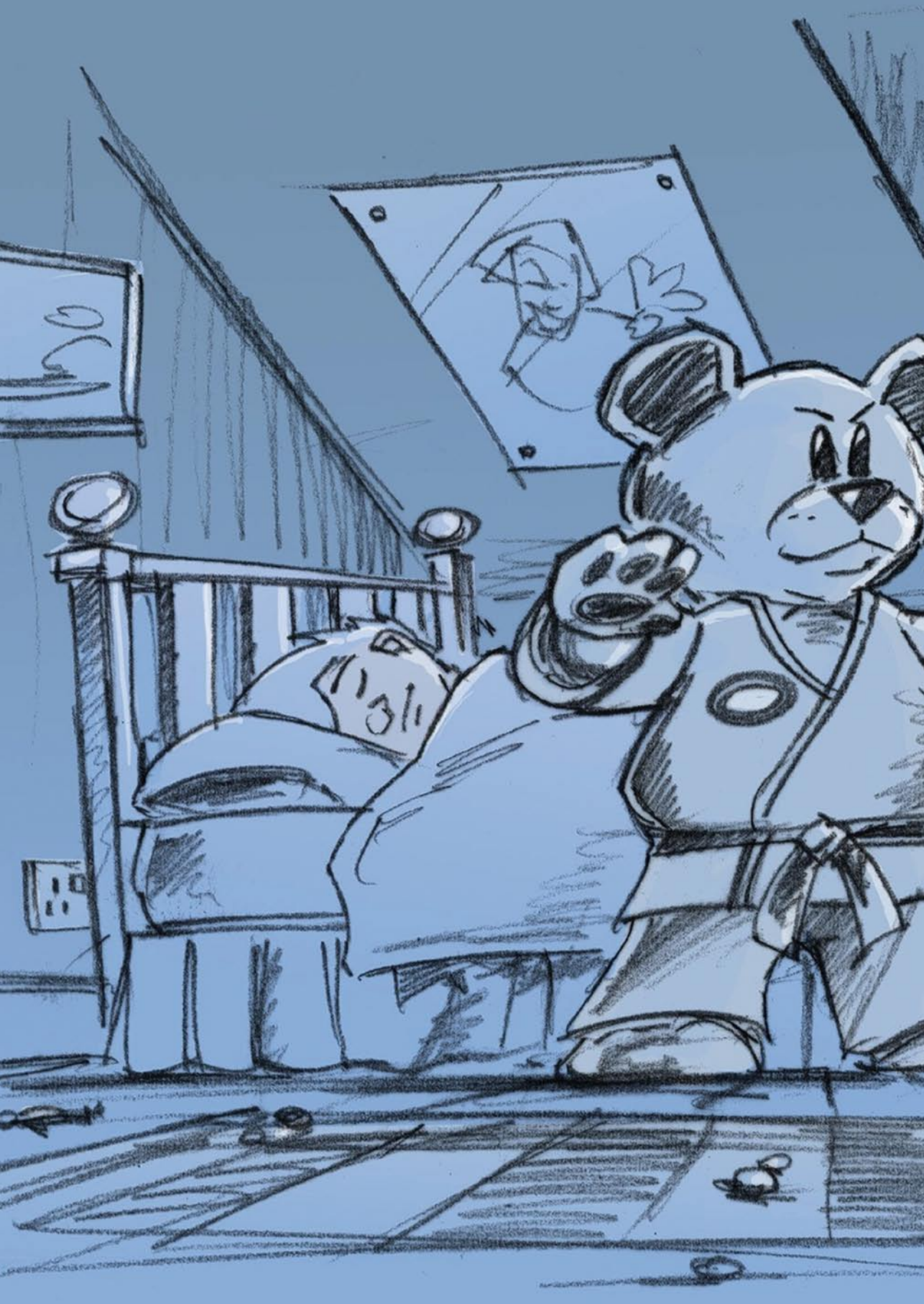
Harry was stunned. He had never heard his father talk like this. "That's terrible," he said. "But Dad, I had no idea. I thought everyone lived in an attic."

His mother cut in. "We had nowhere else to go, son. We wanted something better for you than teddy bear school, but there was nowhere else for you to go."

"You don't get any choice when you're a toy," said his father. "The minute they're bored with you, into the attic you go. Who'd want to live here? It's the same for the others. Look at Wilbur – still as strong as a ... strong as a ... as a horse. He should be giving rides. And the Dolly Sisters should be singing. And the soldiers should be marching. And the Wise Old Clown knows everything. He should be on Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? But he can't even get to the telephone."

"That's terrible," said Harry. "Someone should do something about it."

"It could happen to you," said the Wise Old Clown. "Especially with computer games. He will get bored with you," and Wilbur agreed.



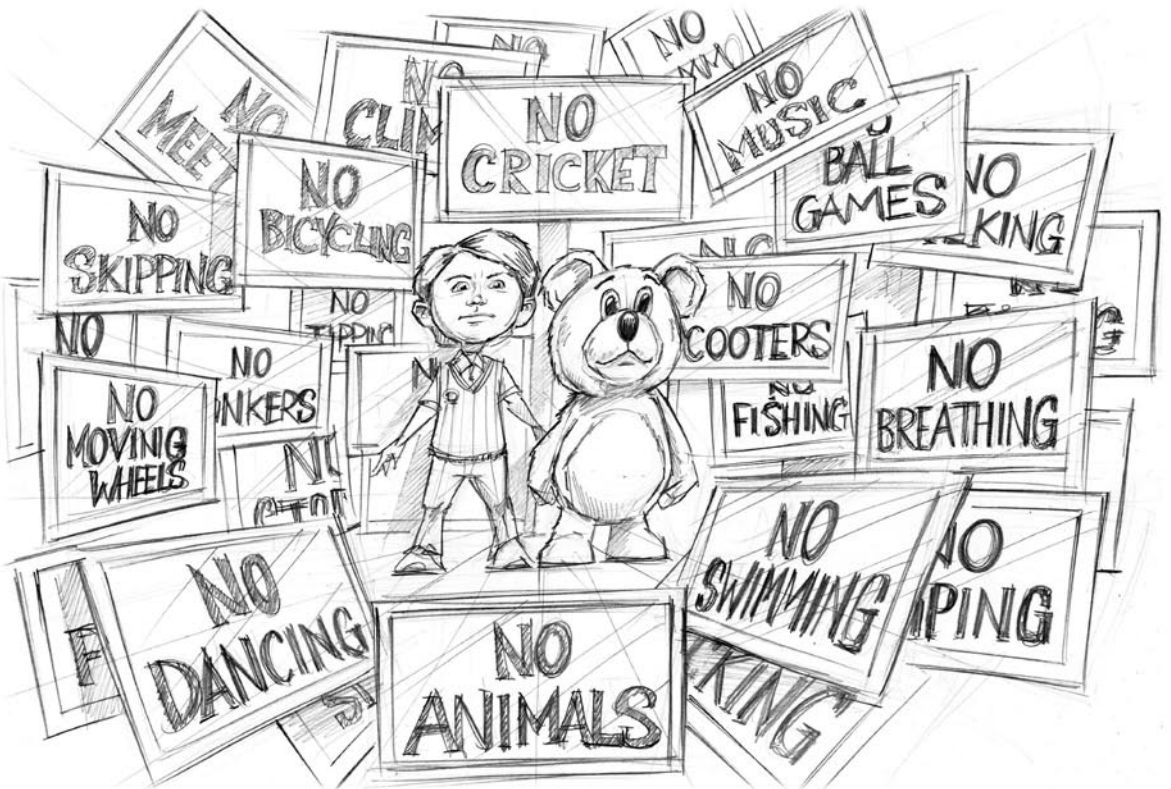






## Chapter 2

# The Most Boring Town In Britain





Harry went back to Luke's house and started to worry. All Luke wanted to do was to play computer games in the spare room. They played Zombie Flesheaters and Harry lost by 1,896,752 points to  $18\frac{1}{4}$ . The next day they played Fungal Meteors and Harry lost by 1,583,724 points to  $32\frac{2}{3}$ . The next day they played Miasmatrons from the Kuiper Zone and Harry lost by 1,274,097 points to  $56\frac{5}{8}$ . And even though he was getting better, Luke said "You're useless."

At the end of Miasmatrons Luke's mother called up, "I wish you would go outdoors for a bit, sweetheart," and Luke said "Boring." And Luke's mother said "You're getting podgy," and Luke said "Am not!" but when he looked in a long mirror he breathed in hard. And when Harry looked in the mirror he did the same. He was getting podgy too.

Harry quickly unpacked his tedkwando pyjamas. He had not practised since he left teddy bear school. He did some basic moves and Luke said "What's that?"

"Tedkwando. A special form of unarmed combat. In case monsters get in."

"There are no monsters here. They would never come to Dudbury, it's the most boring town in the universe. Look, I'll show you." And he grabbed Harry and swept through the house to grab his bicycle and his mother was pleased but said "Helmet" automatically, and Luke stuck it on and sat Harry behind him. He started to pedal down Grey Street. But they had hardly got anywhere at all when they saw a big sign saying "NO Bicycling. NO Skating. NO Scooters. NO Moving Wheels."

"See what I mean," said Luke, and he got off, removed his helmet and started to push the bike and Harry. Before long they reached an

open space with a big sign saying “NO Cricket. NO Football. NO Ball Games At All.”

“See what I mean,” said Luke. And they walked on a bit further and they came to another open space with a big sign saying “NO Music. NO Singing. NO Dancing.”

“See what I mean,” said Luke, and they walked on and the next open space said “NO Animals,” and Luke hid Harry under his jacket just in case. Then they came to a big pond with a big sign saying “NO Fishing. NO Swimming. NO Boating. Ever.” Then they came to some horse chestnut trees with a big sign saying “NO Climbing. NO Conkers.” Then they came to a place full of statues with a big sign saying “Do NOT Touch.” Then they came to a meeting place with a big sign saying “NO Meetings Without Permit” except that someone had blacked out the word “Meetings” and painted “Breathing” in its place.

Finally they came back to Grey Street and Luke stopped in front of the corner shop which had a big sign saying “NO Children Without Adult.”

“See what I mean?” said Luke, and Harry said “That’s terrible. Someone should do something about it.”

Not long after they found nothing to do in Dudbury, Luke and Harry went to visit Luke’s best friend Fred, who was in hospital having his tonsils out. And who should be working in the children’s ward but Florrie, Harry’s special friend? She had just finished her training as a hospital bear. Harry was overjoyed to see her, but Florrie was so tired she could barely speak to him. “There’s only two bears on this whole ward, and we’ve got to look after all of these children. Today I had to have seven injections and pretend they didn’t hurt and nine

doses of medicine and pretend they are not nasty. Never mind the extra hugs for the children who miss their mummies. They say they can't afford more hospital bears and there's three more children due tomorrow."

"That's terrible," said Harry. "Someone should do something about it."



