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Opening extract from

Horror

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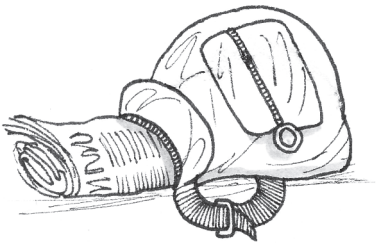
For Emma, who has been a star editor

~ D R and A M



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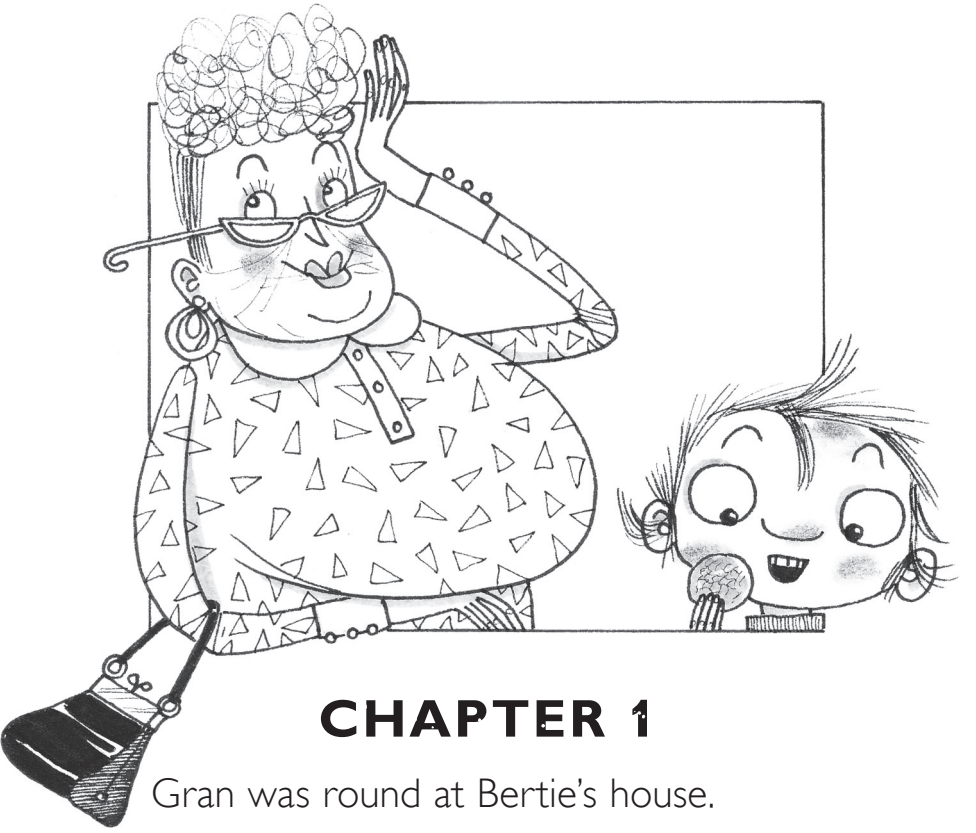
HORROR!



CHAPTER 1

Gran was round at Bertie's house. She seemed pleased with herself for some reason.

"Notice anything different?" she said.

"New dress?" asked Dad.

"New shoes?" asked Mum.

"You've got fatter," said Bertie.

"I have not!" snapped Gran. "If you

must know, I've had my hair done."

Bertie stared. It was true. Gran's hair was normally white and frizzy, but today it was blonde and frizzy.

"I wanted to look smart for the cinema," she said.

"The cinema?" cried Bertie. "Can I come?"

"You?" said Gran.

"Yes, they're showing *Return of the Blob Thing*," said Bertie. "Darren says it's meant to be well scary."

"It doesn't sound suitable," said Mum. "Anyway, I'm sure Gran doesn't want to see a scary film."

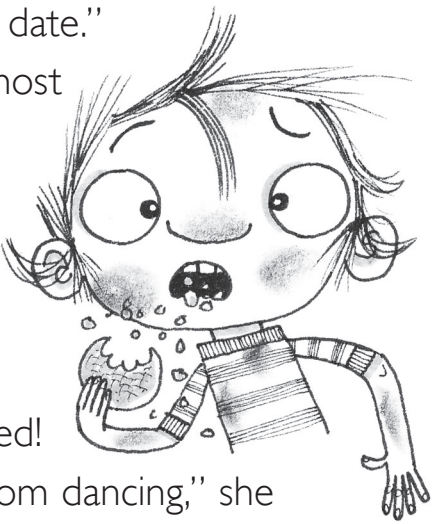
Gran smiled. "Well, I'd have to ask Reg," she said, blushing a little.

"Reg? Who's Reg?" asked Dad.

"My new boyfriend," giggled Gran.

"Tomorrow's our first date."

Boyfriend? Bertie almost choked on his biscuit. Should Gran be getting a boyfriend at her age? Next she'd be wearing jeans and getting her nose pierced!



"I met him at ballroom dancing," she continued. "He says I'm a lovely mover."

"Does he now?" said Dad. "And he's taking you on a date?"

"That's right," said Gran. "He's quite the charmer. I think he fancies me, Bertie." She burst into a fit of giggles.

Bertie didn't know where to look. What had got into her? Gran wasn't normally like this – she sounded like a fourteen-year-old!

"What were you saying about a film, Bertie?" said Gran.

"Oh no, that's okay," said Bertie quickly. "You go with whatshisname."

The last thing he wanted was a cinema trip with Gran and her boyfriend. How embarrassing! What if they held hands during the film? What if they put their arms round each other and… No, he didn't even want to think about it.

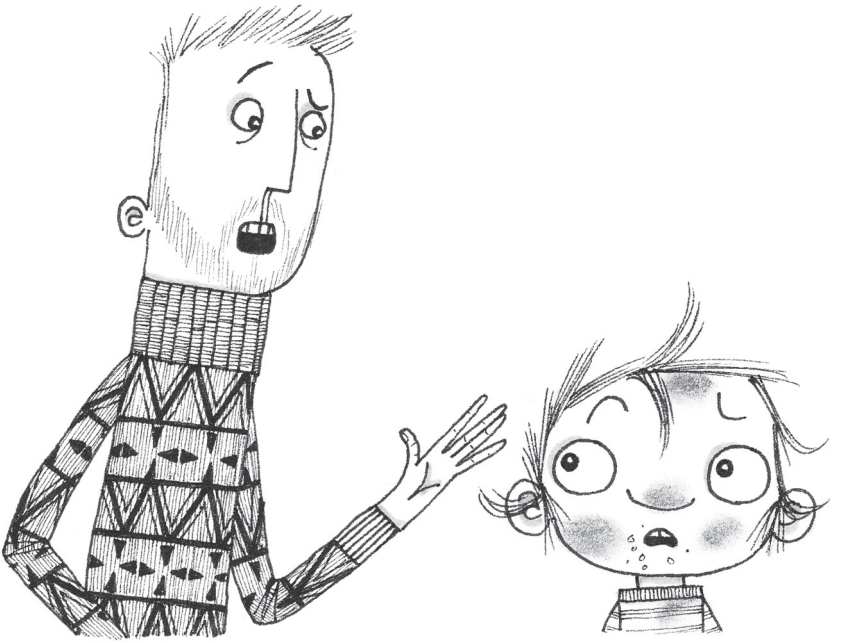
While Gran was upstairs in the loo, Dad turned to Bertie. "Maybe you *should* go to the cinema tomorrow," he said.

"Me? No way!" said Bertie.

"But I thought you wanted to go?"

"Not with Gran and her boyfriend!"

Dad sighed. "The problem is, we don't know anything about this Reg," he said. "He could be after her money."



"Really?" said Bertie. He didn't know Gran had any money!

"What I mean is, he could be anybody," said Dad. "He might be a crook … or a kidnapper!"

"Don't be silly," scoffed Mum. "She met him at ballroom dancing."

"Oh well, that's all right, then!" said Dad, rolling his eyes. "All I'm saying is, Bertie could keep an eye on her."

"Why me? If you're so worried, YOU go!" said Bertie.

"I can't go, she's my mother!" said Dad. He brought out his wallet. "Look, how much is the cinema?" he asked. "Here's five pounds."

Bertie hesitated. He would much rather see the film with his friends. But this might be his only chance.

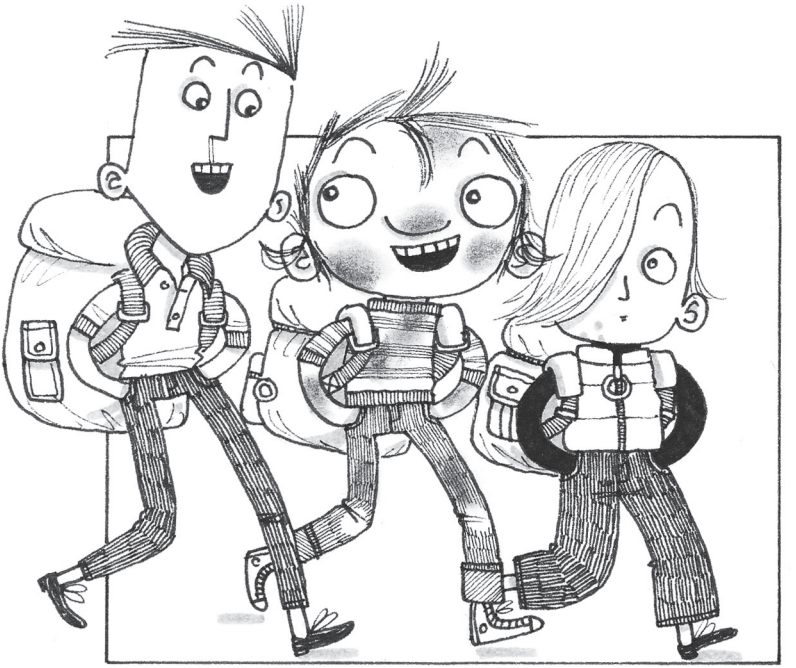
"Can I see *Return of the Blob Thing*?" he asked.

"I don't see why not," said Dad.

"Only if Gran thinks it's suitable," said Mum.

Gran was coming back. "Don't tell her I put you up to this," whispered Dad.

Bertie stuffed the money into his pocket. Result!



CHAPTER 2

"You jammy dodger!" said Darren on the way to school the next day. "How did you fix that?"

Bertie shrugged. "It was easy. Dad's actually paying me to go."

"I wish my mum would let me go," said Eugene. "She says I'm not old enough for scary films."

"My dad says the cinema costs too much," sighed Darren. "Who's taking you, anyway?"

Bertie looked uncomfortable. "Actually it's my gran – and her boyfriend," he admitted.

"HER BOYFRIEND!" Darren burst out laughing. "Ha ha! Seriously?"

"You *are* joking?" said Eugene.

"It'll be fine," said Bertie.

"I wouldn't bet on it," said Darren. "Are they in love?"

"NO!" cried Bertie. "It's the first time they've gone out."

"That's even worse," said Darren. "My mum made my sister and her boyfriend take me to the cinema once. As soon as the lights went down they started, you know … kissing."

"EWW!" cried Eugene.

"This is my gran!" said Bertie. "She's about ninety!"

"Exactly," said Darren. "Imagine seeing your gran kissing in the cinema. Gross!"

Bertie didn't want to imagine it. There was no way he wanted to be there if Gran and her boyfriend were getting all smoochy. He'd be having nightmares about it for months!