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Opening extract from

Uncle Gobb and the Dread Shed

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For Emma, Elsie and Emile

CHAPTER 1

Amazing Things Going On With His Face

It all began when Malcolm looked through the keyhole. Of course he shouldn't have looked. Well, there shouldn't really have been a keyhole.

I mean, why was there a keyhole on the bathroom door anyway? What did the keyhole think it was doing sitting there stuck on a bathroom door?



That's a very good point.

So really it was the keyhole's fault.

This is what happened:

Uncle Gobb came to stay. No one liked Uncle Gobb.

More on him in a minute.

Uncle Gobb went to the bathroom.

Not the American kind of bathroom which is also a restroom. This can be confusing. Are you supposed to rest in the bath? But they don't mean the bath anyway. When they say 'bathroom', they mean the room where you go to pee and poo. Unless they mean you're supposed to pee and poo in the bath. Which they don't.

So there was no need to bring that up.

Sorry.



Let's get on.

Uncle Gobb went to the bathroom. That's the kind of bathroom which has a bath in it. And a sink. He was standing at the sink, looking in the mirror. People often do that. They look in the mirror and talk to themselves. They say things like,

'Hiya, handsome, you're looking good today.'

Or,

'What's cooking?'

Or,

'I've got a little green bit on my chin … I wonder if I'm going mouldy…'

Uncle Gobb wasn't saying any of these things.

He was polishing his face.



Now, everyone knew that Uncle Gobb had a shiny face. And just to be clear, it's perfectly OK for people to have shiny faces. And it's perfectly OK for people to shine their shiny faces. The thing is, Malcolm had never ever seen anyone shine their face before.

This is what happened:

Malcolm was crouching down looking through the keyhole. He saw Uncle Gobb take a piece of cloth in his right hand; in his left hand he took some stuff to make windows shiny. He squirted the shiny stuff into the cloth, took the cloth up to his face and started shining. Round and round and round, over his cheeks, his chin, his forehead till it was all very, very shiny.

When he had finished, Uncle Gobb looked in the mirror and said, 'Hey, Gobby, you're looking good today.'

Malcolm stared. Well, it was one-eye staring because the keyhole wasn't big enough for him to do a full two-eye stare.

In fact, he was wondering whether one-eye staring could be a new kind of competition at the Olympics when the door opened and there was Uncle Gobb. He looked down at Malcolm, who was now trying very hard to stop one-eye staring, and said, 'That doesn't look like homework to me.'

Ah, you might be wondering why Uncle Gobb would say such a thing. Of

course someone kneeling on the floor outside a bathroom doing one-eye staring through a keyhole doesn't look like homework. What an obvious and silly thing to say. But why did Uncle Gobb say such an obvious and silly thing?

To find out the answer to this and to why tomatoes are red, we will need to press on to the next chapter, which is chapter 2.

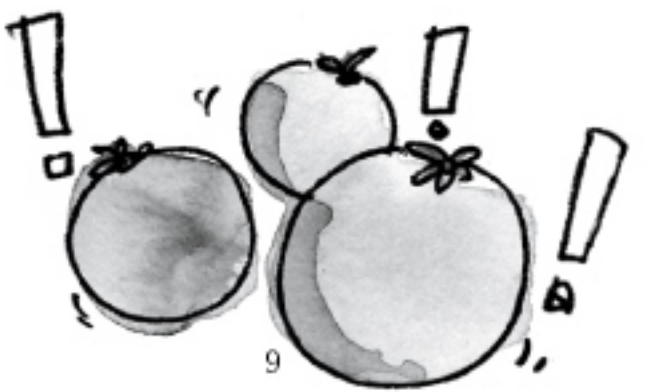


CHAPTER 2

Why Uncle Gobb Said, 'That Doesn't Look Like Homework To Me.'

You'll see that this chapter is not called:

'Why Uncle Gobb Said, "That Doesn't Look Like Homework to Me" AND Why Tomatoes Are Red.'



I'm sorry, we may never find out in this book why tomatoes are red. There are other kinds of book which explain things like that. They're called '**non-fiction books**' and they're very good too. My favourite is one called *Don't Eat Your Best Friend*.

CHAPTER 2 AND A ½

Some Explanation And A BLAMMM!!!

Wherever Malcolm went in life, he thought that people would ask him why he lived with Uncle Gobb. This was the explanation he had ready:

'Many years ago, Uncle Gobb was married to someone called Tammy. Things didn't work out between Uncle Gobb and Tammy, because when they got together, it made

a terrible mixture which exploded.



'They picked themselves up and said, "We've made a bit of a mess – best not do that again, huh?"

'Uncle Gobb and Tammy didn't stay married after that.

'Now Uncle Gobb has nowhere to live (the



blew their house up) so he came to live with me and my mum.'

I can tell you that this is as near to the truth as it is possible to be.