Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Ruby Rogers is a Waste Of Space

written by

Sue Limb

published by

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.



CHAPTER 1

You idiot! You blinking idiot!

MY NAME'S RUBY ROGERS and I'm going to be a gangster when I grow up. Sort of like a modern Robin Hood, only female. I'm going to live in the treetops with my gang. I haven't thought of our name yet, but it'll be scary. We'll have swinging rope bridges and Tarzan-type vines up in the forest canopy. And whenever any horrible people come, we'll drop disgusting stuff on their heads.

We'll drop babies' dirty nappies and carrier bags full of sick. We'll pelt them with bombs made

from bogeys. Then, when they're totally grossed out, covered with gunk and frozen with fear, we'll slide down the trees and steal their valuables. They'll run off screaming and we'll give all the money to a charity that helps kids.

Hmmm. Nice thought! And it was all going to begin today. I had a secret plan. OK, I may not be grown up yet, but inside my head I'm a gangster already.

It was the first day of the summer hols. The perfect moment to reveal my secret plan to my unsuspecting family. I had to tell them because I needed their help. Who would be the lucky person to hear it first? It would be awful if my big announcement was spoiled by somebody being In A Strop.

My brother Joe? Hmm. Not sure. Usually Joe is a bad-tempered, snarling, wild beast. But he'd been on holiday for ages already. The sixth form escape from school the moment their exams are over. He'd been out all day with his mates, doing something cool.

I knocked on Joe's bedroom door. There was a weird, sinister silence. No reply. I knocked again. 'You dirdy rat!' I drawled, trying to sound gangsterish. Still no answer. Maybe he was

fiddling about with one of his dreary old projects.

Joe's into art. He makes little sculpture thingies out of wood. They're really models for great big enormous things, as big as a room. Or even bigger. His ambition is to make a huge Christmas pud by covering the dome of St Paul's Cathedral with yellow custard-type stuff and a gigantic sprig of holly. It's called 'installation art' apparently.

'Joe!' I called. 'Can I borrow a pencil?'

I couldn't just say, 'How was your day?' He'd smell a rat.

'Don't go in my room!' His voice came thundering out from the bathroom. 'Use your own stupid pencils!' I was annoyed. My pencils aren't stupid.

Joe didn't deserve to hear my secret. He had insulted my pencils. Besides, he would probably be in the bathroom for hours. He reads comic books in there.

'OK, OK, relax, why dontcha?!' I called gangsterishly, and slouched off in search of Dad.

I thought Dad might be in the garden. You never quite know with Dad. Sometimes he sits on his bed, playing his guitar and trying to compose songs. The lyrics are usually something to do with city streets. *'A stranger stalks . . . the city streets . . . his name is George, no Fred, no Clive . . .'*

But Dad doesn't actually *like* being in city streets very much. We went to London for the day once, just him, Joe and me. Big mistake – Mum's the only one capable of organising a day out. Dad had a panic attack in the waxworks.

'I've got to get out!' he gasped, racing for the exit. Dingbat! Can you imagine anything more embarrassing?

Many people have dads who are the strong, silent type. My dad's the panicking, noisy type. He



only really relaxes in the garden. And he grows peas, which I like to eat raw, straight from the pod.

I found Dad in the garden shed. He was standing with his back to me, nailing something to the wall.

'SURPRISE, SURPRISE!' I shouted.

Dad jumped, hit his thumb instead of the nail, and let out a yowl of pain.

'You idiot!' he yelled, hopping about and cradling his hand. Dad's not very brave when it comes to injuries. 'You blinking idiot, Ruby! Never do that again!'

'Sorry, Dad!' I backed off, quick. I could see it wasn't the moment. Dad can lose it just like that. Even on an ordinary day he's only moments away from a full-blown panic. And he does hate hitting himself with a hammer. He's such a wuss. I decided to run indoors and talk to Mum. She was my only hope now.



CHAPTER 2

Frankly, this evening sucks

IF MUM'S IN A GOOD mood, somehow the whole house is. Although she's quite small, she bosses everyone about. She's a bit plump and she's got wild, curly, reddish-gold hair and a Welsh accent. She can be a bit strict about things being clean and tidy, but it's because she's a midwife. She spends all day delivering babies. It's a family joke: 'Did you have any nice babies today?' 'Oh no, love. I only had a rather nasty one that looked like a turnip.'

Thank goodness I'm not one of her patients. I'm

not going to have babies anyway. I'm going to have pets instead. Monkeys, mainly. They'll live with me in the forest canopy.

I found Mum asleep on the sofa. She often has catnaps after work. Waking her up is strictly against the rules. If you wake her, she's grouchy as anything. If you let her wake up naturally, in her own time, she's only ***slightly*** grouchy.

I watched her for a little while. She was lying on her back with her mouth half-open, frowning. Mum often talks in her sleep.

'*Where's the nearest toilet?*' she muttered, all of a sudden. '*That one's full of snakes!*' Same old dream! I sighed.

Suddenly I remembered that I hadn't tidied my room. I'm supposed to tidy it every day, but somehow I always forget.

I went upstairs. Not to tidy my room – obviously. I'd never do it without being nagged. I felt a bit low really. Not a single member of my family had been ready to share in my fabulous secret plan.

At times like this I like to hide in a den. The airing cupboard is a favourite location. I'm still small enough to curl up in the middle section, where the sheets and stuff are kept. I climbed up,

pulled the door almost shut and closed my eyes in the darkness.

I thought about my secret plan. It was so exciting! If only I could tell somebody! I heard Joe come out of the bathroom and go back into his room. Right away he put on some loud, shouty music. I don't understand teenage boys. Thank goodness I'm not one. Besides, if I had been a boy, apparently I'd have been called Tristram after my uncle. He runs a bookshop in Bath and knits his



own ponchos. Not really a gangsterish role model.

Suddenly someone walked past the airing cupboard and pushed the door shut with a click. Immediately I panicked. Although I have inherited Mum's love of curling up somewhere cosy, I've also inherited Dad's fear of being shut in. The airing cupboard only opens from the outside! Ohmigawd! I was in danger of being aired to death!

'Heeeeeelp!' I yelled. Moments later, Mum flung the airing cupboard door open. Her face was still a bit crumply from her recent sleep.

'Oh, Ruby, get out of there!' she said grumpily. 'You'll crumple all my sheets! I spent hours ironing them!'

I scrambled out. I was tempted to growl, 'Iron yuh face, why dontcha, lady?' but it didn't seem like the right moment somehow.

'Supper is in ten minutes sharp!' said Mum. 'Tidy your room! I'm going to inspect it and if it's not tidy you won't get any supper!'

I didn't worry. I knew she would never knowingly starve a child. Mum does sometimes shout or snap, but she's not really strict underneath.

I went into my room, shut the door and lay down on my bed. My two monkeys, Stinker and

Funky, were lying on the pillow. Stinker is fat and bald and the boss. Funky is thin, woolly and very bendy.

'Stinker, Funky,' I told them sadly, 'it may be the first day of the hols, but frankly, this evening sucks.'

It wasn't the ideal moment to reveal my fabulous secret plan to my family. But I just *had* to tell somebody tonight. I needed grown-up help. My plan was that big. It was *immense*.