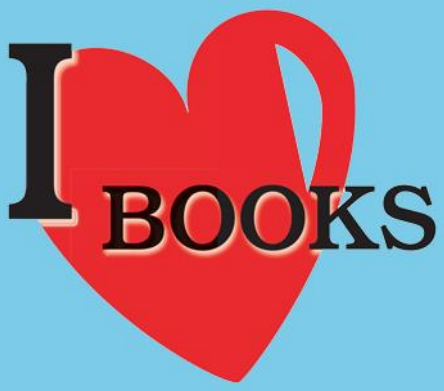


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Opening extract from

St Grizzles School for Girls, Ghosts and Runaway Grannies

Written by

Karen McCombie

Illustrated by

Becka Moor

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GRIZZLE'S ST[redacted] SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, GHOSTS AND RUNAWAY GRANNIES

KAREN McCOMBIE

Illustrated by BECKA MOOR

Stripes

For Naina, the Pickled Pepper girl!

– KMcC

To Woodsend

– BM

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ST GRIZZLE'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS



Kindly on loan to

NAME	YEAR
Ottilie Fudge	1919
Marcia Middletrot	1945
Trixie van der Boot	1963
Aisha Shah-McBean	2012

Dani

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Chapter 1

St Grizzle's New Guest (Gulp)



It's hard to take your head teacher seriously when she's wearing a unicorn onesie.

Especially when the horn on her head bounces up and down when she's making a point.

"...and *that's* why we all have to remember to be kind and thoughtful to one another!" says Lulu – the head – stomping her hoof.

Today's topic for assembly is "KINDNESS". The whole school is here in the hall, in their PJs and slippers, sprawled on the floor with random pillows, soft-toy buddies and scruffy bed-head hair as they tuck into their breakfast.



At St Grizzle's we always have pyjama assemblies first thing on a Monday, cos Lulu thinks it gives the week a nice, relaxed start. I haven't been here all that long, so I'm still wow-ing at the difference between this and assemblies at my *old* school.

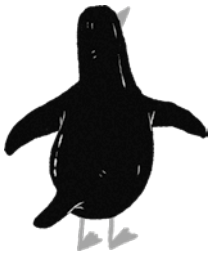
There, we had to sit statue-still, listening to stern, grey-suited Mr Robinson drone on about "APPLYING OURSELVES" or "WHY HOMEWORK MATTERS" while we were all going quietly demented with pins and needles in our crossed legs.

From the squashy comfort of my polka-dot pillow, I sneak a peek at my new schoolmates – everyone's listening very politely to Lulu's speech, even the eight-year-olds of Newts Class, who are wriggling and squiggling just the *tiniest* bit.

The only noise is the occasional crunch and spoon-clunk from those pupils and teachers who haven't finished their breakfast yet, and a loud "OW!" from May-Belle, who's just been headbutted off her beanbag by a goat.

St Grizelda's School for Girls – St Grizzle's to us – really isn't what you might call normal.

My mum assumed it was, when she packed me off here for three months while she went to study penguins' bums in the Antarctic. (She's a zoologist doing a project on why they waddle – she's not just staring at bums for fun.)

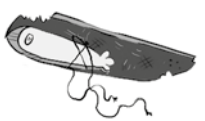


Mum chose St Grizzle's because she thought it was all about sensible uniforms, serious lessons and jolly-hockey games.

Instead, it's more about pyjama assemblies, classes in tree-house building and four-legged school mascots that eat anything, whether it's a recognizable food or not. (Yesterday, Twinkle the goat ate Mademoiselle Fabienne the art teacher's left shoe and a tube of magenta poster paint.)



Before she dropped me off here, Mum *also*



assumed St Grizzle's was big and busy and packed with plenty of perky students. But a few months ago, Lulu changed the style of the school and that wasn't too popular with one or two of the parents. OK, about a *hundred* parents, who took their kids out faster than you can say, "Oh, please give it a chance..."

So now there are only twenty names on the St Grizzle's school register.

The biggest class is the Newts (all ten of them), then come the Otters (i.e. the scary, starey triplets), then the Conkers (Yas, Angel, May-Belle and Klara) and finally Fungi Class – the oldest in the school, which consists of me and twins Zed and Swan.

I was pretty wary of Swan to start with. OK, I'm still wary of her now, to be honest, even though she's totally cool and my friend and everything. She is super-smart and super-snarky



at the same time, and has a real talent for art and for blowing huge bubbles of gum in the most menacing way possible. When that big pink bubble **POPS!** in your face, you can bet she's not best pleased with you...

Zed is totally different:

1) he is a boy, which is a bit unexpected, what with St Grizzle's being a girls' school.

2) fact number one might have something to do with him being Lulu's child, along with his sister Swan.

3) unlike the rest of us, he is not lounging on the floor but sitting in his wheelchair.

4) he's wearing these super-cool, neon green PJs that I'm a bit jealous of.

"**Psst!**" Zed hisses at me now.

"What?" I hiss back, frowning up at him.

I don't want to get caught talking – I like Lulu a

lot and don't want her to think I'm rude. And it's not that she's the sort of head teacher who'd give you a month's detention for sneezing in class or anything – she's more likely to look at you with sad, puppy-dog eyes that make you feel totally *terrible* for letting her down, which is worse.

Zed lifts one eyebrow, then holds up a small bag of sweets he's snuck in. Drool...

"So," says Lulu, gazing around at us all and smiling brightly. "Before we move on, does anyone have any thoughts on kindness? Any questions? Yes, Dani?"

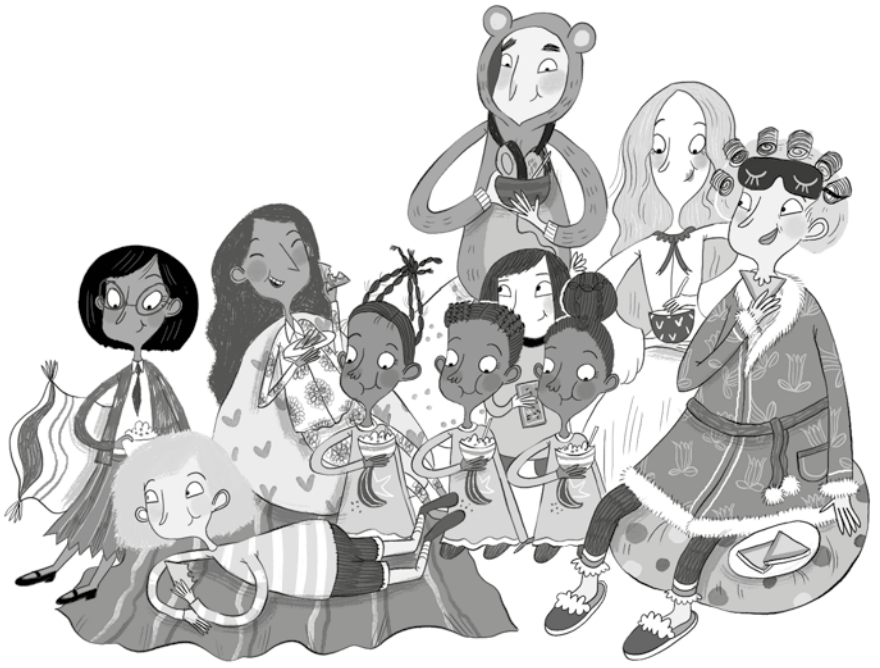


Oops. It might have looked like I was starting to put my hand up but I was actually just reaching for a Jelly Baby.

"I ... uh..." I fumble, trying to think fast. "Is the frog all right?" The frog is the reason that today's assembly is about kindness. It's really about kindness to frogs and to dinner ladies.



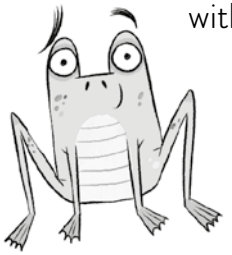
Yesterday, *someone* put a frog in the kitchen sink, just before Mrs Hedges – St Grizzle's dinner lady and housekeeper – went in there to start making our lunch. Mrs Hedges got a terrible fright when what looked like an old teabag jumped up at her. But I think the frog got *more* of a scare... Mrs Hedges' screams were louder than



the fire alarm that went off last Friday. (The fire alarm – well, that's another story.)

What I'm going to say next might sound mean but I think everyone was more worried about the frog. Mrs Hedges is *not* what you might call friendly, or cheerful, or fond of children. Swan says she's allergic to St Grizzle's and everyone in it.

"The frog is fine, thank you, Dani," says Lulu, with a nod and a bob of her unicorn horn. "Isn't it, Miss Amethyst?"



We all turn round to look at our science and drama teacher, who's wearing a fluffy dressing gown and matching slippers that are the *exact* same shade of purple as her hair, which is currently adorned with curlers. Beside her is Mademoiselle Fabienne (yawning genteely) and Toshio the temporary receptionist, with his headphones round his neck (he can't bear to be parted from his new favourite indie band, even at mealtimes).

Anyway, Lulu's sudden question takes Miss Amethyst a bit by surprise and she chokes a little on her toast and Marmite.

"Yes! The frog was quite all right!" she reassures everyone after a quiet cough. "I took it to the pond in the woods. Perhaps we can do

a nature walk as part of biology this week and see how it's doing."

Lots of enthusiastic "Ooh, yes, please!"s echo around the hall, because Miss Amethyst *always* makes her lessons so much fun. On Friday she burned different chemicals to show what amazing colours they'd make while playing an old punky-sounding song called 'Firestarter' really loudly. It was brilliant … till the fire alarm went off and frightened Twinkle, who went mad. There are two horn-shaped dents in the classroom door where she tried to headbutt her way out.

"Right, let's move on, then!" says Lulu and pulls a piece of paper out of her unicorn pocket.

"I wish she would…" says Swan, who's sitting on the floor next to me.

While Lulu's unfolding the sheet of paper, Zed quickly hands me two Jelly Babies and I just as quickly pass one on to Swan. It might sweeten

her up a bit. I've come to realize that she DOES have a sweet side – it's just that she doesn't like to show it too often. Sometimes Swan looks like she's sucked a lemon by accident and is a little bit furious about it.





"Exciting news!" Lulu announces, wafting the sheet of paper at us.

"Bet it's not..." drones Swan.

"THIS is from the local council," Lulu carries on. "They've emailed all the schools in the county, asking them to make a short promotional film about the area. The title of the project is Why We Love Where We Live. *We* can focus on the woods around the school, or Huddleton, the local village, perhaps."

A film?

My ears prick up as much as my dog Downboy's at the mention of walkies.

I LOVE making films! Me and my best buddy Arch have shot tons of mini-movies using our ex-toys as actors and posted them on YouTube. I was watching one of our favourites yesterday – our version of *The X Factor* with a Furby, a one-legged Barbie and my T rex as judges, while two Elmers did a rap (yo!).

Apart from Mum and Downboy and my gorgeous Granny Viv, making films with Arch is what I most miss about home...

I clutch my T rex closer (other people sleep with stuffed teddies and rabbits, I have a plastic dinosaur that's been chewed by a goat) and hardly breathe while I wait to hear what Lulu's got to say next.

"The BAD news is, the council haven't given us much time to make our film," says Lulu. "The closing date is the end of the day on Wednesday, so we'll have to get a move on. The GOOD news

is, they've invited participating schools to travel to the Town Hall in Dunchester on Friday afternoon for a screening of all the films. Won't that be fun?"

"Mneh," Swan grunts, with a couldn't-care-less shrug of her shoulder.

"And that's not all," Lulu adds. "*After* the screening, the organizers will choose ONE film to feature on the council's new-look website."

"Zzzzzzzzz..." snores Swan.

"And the winning film will get a prize!"

Swan sits up, suddenly interested.

"A prize – like a lot of money, you mean?" she asks.

"It doesn't say," mutters Lulu, scouring the printout in her hand. "But it's not the winning that matters, is it, Swan? It's the taking part that counts!"

Swan makes a sound like a balloon deflating.

But when Lulu speaks next, I feel like I'm about to burst.

"Now, our newest student is, of course, an expert when it comes to making videos. So I suggest that Dani Dexter should be our director."

And I blush so much when everyone cheers that I worry the heat from my face will set off the fire alarm again. Wait till I tell Arch!

"And as fellow Fungi and the oldest students, I think Zed and Swan should be part of the production team, alongside Dani," Lulu declares.

Me and Zed do a high five.



I turn round and go to do the same to Swan but she gives me a don't-even-think-about-it stare and I pretend to smooth my hair instead.

"But, remember, it's a whole-school project, guys," Lulu says to the three of us. "So I want you to find a role for everyone. Cos at St Grizelda's, we're a team. Isn't that right, CONKERS!"

"Yes!" call out the ten-year-old Conkers.

"Aren't we, OTTERS!"

The nine-year-old triplets, who hardly ever speak, nod enthusiastically.

"Aren't we, NEWTS!"

"**YEAHHHHHH!**" roar a whole bunch of eight-year-olds with peanut-butter-and-Marmite-smeared hands, faces and PJs.

"Um, Ms Murphy?" says Yas.

Yas isn't in PJs; she's the only pupil who still wears the old school uniform of grey skirt and stripey tie. Yas doesn't call our head teacher Lulu

either – she still calls her Ms Murphy. Yas is lovely but she thinks the new-look St Grizelda's is completely bonkers and is waiting for her dad to come and collect her. She says he'll be here any day. But the truth of it is, she's been saying that for two months.

"Yes, Yas?" says Lulu.

"Um, not all of the Newts are here..."

Lulu frowns. Everyone stares at the Newts, and they stare back at us as we count them.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven..." Lulu says aloud. "We're missing three!"

Three, which includes Blossom, who's part-child, part-goblin. And who everyone reckons is responsible for the frog-sink-dinner-lady-freak-out yesterday...

"Er, Lulu," says May-Belle, kneeling up in her bat-patterned PJs and pointing towards the big windows that overlook the garden.

"Maybe they're out there, with that ghost?"

GHOST!

GHOST!

You have never seen seventeen children, four adults and a goat move quicker.

We reach the windows in a rackety jumble, only to see a shrouded white figure careering across the lawn, screeeechhhhing like a ... a screechy thing.

Looks like St Grizzle's School for Girls, Goats and Random Boys has a new – and unwelcome – guest.

Gulp...

