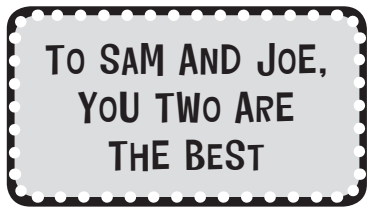

ALIENS
Invaded
My Talent
Show!



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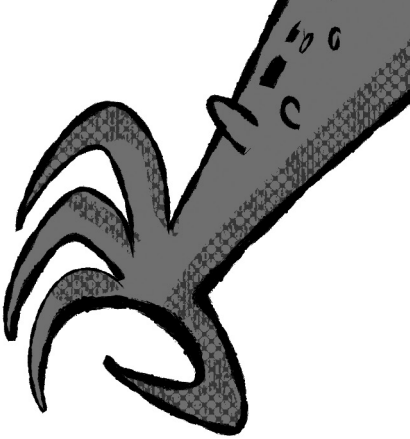
BY Matt Brown

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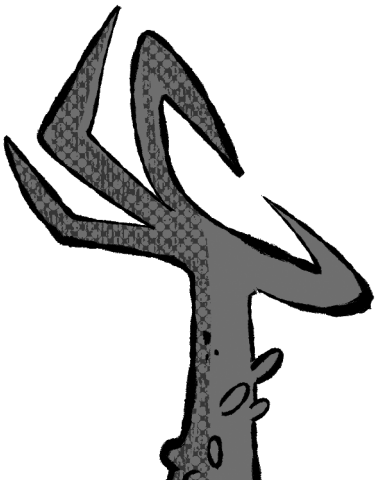
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USBORNE



FRIDAY



A ZERO PLUS A ZERO EQUALS TWO ZEROS

In the whole of his entire, actual life, Eric Doomsday had never got anything through the post.

No letters, no postcards, no parcels, no nothing.

He did get a pizza menu once, although, as it had been addressed to a Mrs Eric Dumsday, he didn't think it counted.

And yet here he was, standing in his bedroom, holding a purple envelope that had just been delivered to *his* house, that had *his* name written



on it. Eric turned the envelope around in his hands. On the back, someone had drawn beautiful swirls and spirals in silver ink, and it had been sealed with a large red star. Hands trembling, Eric carefully lifted open the flap. Inside was a small piece of golden paper. It was an invitation.

Eric held his breath and looked again at the front of the envelope, just to make doubly sure that he hadn't accidentally opened something that was addressed to someone else. He had made that mistake once before with a letter that he thought had been for him but that had, in fact, been addressed to his Auntie Elsie. She had been staying with them while her house was being redecorated. Before Eric realized his mistake, he had spent a very worrying twenty minutes



thinking he needed to get a rather large boil removed from his bottom.

But this time there was no mistake.

He, Eric Doomsday, of number 18 Ottershaw Drive, had been invited to a birthday party. And not just any birthday party either. No, Eric had been invited to *Hattie Lavernock*'s birthday party. He stood there, in his vest, pants and socks, staring at the golden invitation, and lost himself in a daydream of party games and laughter.

DING DONG DING DONG DING DONG

Eric's daydream was shattered by the sound of someone ringing the front doorbell, followed, a few moments later, by the thunder of heavy footsteps coming up the stairs, and a barrage of excited squeals.



"OHMYGOSHOHMYGOSHOHMYGOSH!"

Eric's best friend, Vinnie Mumbles, crashed through his bedroom door, a huge smile plastered right across her face. In fact, Vinnie was so excited that her brain seemed to completely ignore that she was standing in front of a boy in his vest and pants.

"I got one too," said Eric, holding up his invitation. In his state of extreme excitement, his brain had also seemed to completely ignore that he was standing in front of a girl in his vest and pants.

Vinnie grabbed it from his still trembling hand and walked over to the window. She held them up to the light, like she was checking to see if they were forgeries.

"It...it's real," she said, beaming. "It's only blummin' real."



The excitement of getting an invitation to Hattie Lavernock's birthday party suddenly burst out of Eric in all directions and he did a little happy dance. Unfortunately, as he did, his foot slipped on some playing cards that lay strewn on the carpet and he fell backwards into a half-eaten bowl of cornflakes that he'd put on his chair for safekeeping.



Vinnie clasped the invitations to her chest.

"This is our chance," she said.

Eric stood up from the chair and tried to reach the bowl that was now, thanks to the soggy cereal, glued onto his left bottom cheek. He let out a small sigh. He was sick and tired of accidentally getting things stuck onto different bits of his body. Last week, Eric had somehow managed to get the bread bin jammed on his foot while he had been making some toast. And then only yesterday, the World Marble Championship Final that Eric was playing against himself in his bedroom had to be interrupted when he got the waste-paper bin stuck on his head.

"Chance for what?" he said.

Vinnie smiled. "Our chance to be liked," she



said, watching Eric waggle his bum around. "How many parties have you ever been to before?"

Eric stopped waggling.

"Er..." he said.

"That weren't your own," added Vinnie.

"Er..." said Eric, still thinking.

"Or mine," added Vinnie.

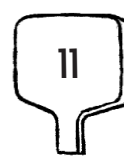
"Er..." said Eric again.

"Or your grandma's," said Vinnie.

Eric counted on his fingers.

"Er, well, none," he said.

"Exactly," said Vinnie. "It's the same with me. Our class has thirty pupils in it so, since we started school, there have been a grand total of 168 birthdays and we haven't been invited to any. On a popularity scale of one to ten, we are a pair of zeros."



"So why has Hattie Lavernock invited us this year?" said Eric. "She must be at least a ten."

"Search me," said Vinnie. "Hey, maybe she got a kick out of the last presentation I did to the class? You know, the one on the history of the internal combustion engine that Ms Mustering gave me top marks for."

Vinnie gave Eric their special secret smile where she curled her fingers around her top lip like a moustache and opened her eyes as wide as they would go.



But Eric didn't have a chance to

say what he thought of Vinnie's theory because, at that moment, with a loud slurping noise, the cereal bowl unstuck itself from his left bottom cheek and slithered and slopped down his leg. It left behind a large trail of soggy cornflakes that made it look like Eric had had a terrible accident before he could get to the toilet.

