Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

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

opening extract from

Katie the Revolting Bridesmaid

written by

Mary Hooper

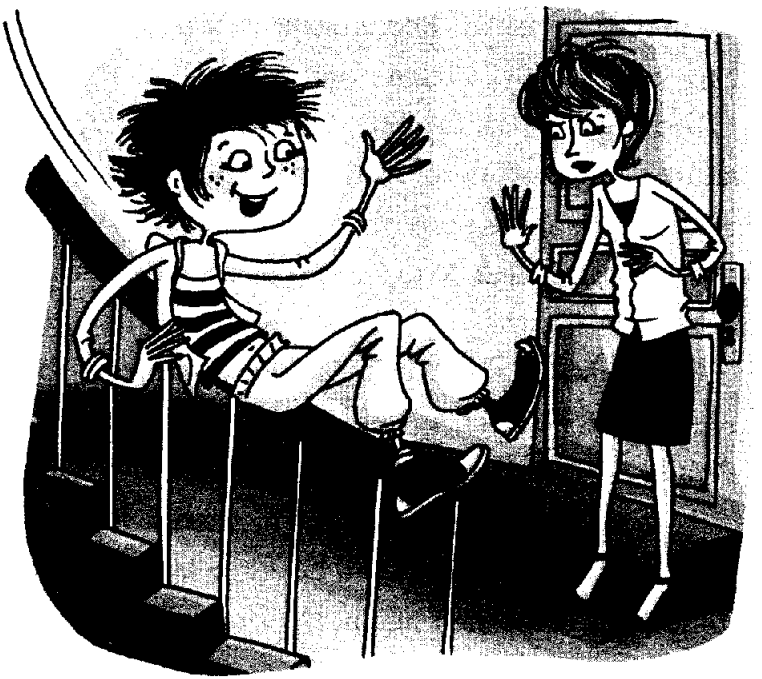
published by

Bloomsbury

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

chapter one



I slid down the stairs and was about to do a forward roll into the sitting room when Mum ran into the hall and more or less threw herself across the door to stop me going in.

'Don't go in there now!' she said, waving her hands about and pulling a peculiar face. 'It's

Helen and Christopher!' And then she mouthed something excitedly and pulled me into the kitchen.

I looked at her in concern; she appeared to have gone quite loopy. 'Helen's doing what?' I asked.

'Sssh,' Mum said. 'She and Christopher are talking to Dad now. You know how he likes things to be done properly, your dad.'

'Helen and That Man,' I said in a louder voice, 'are doing *what*?'

'Sshh,' Mum said again, sitting down on the edge of the kitchen table. 'Getting married! People do, you know.'

'Not in this house they don't,' I said, amazed and a bit put out because I'd been the last to know something important again. 'Not often.'

'No, not often,' Mum said, 'just sometimes – and I do hope you're not going to be difficult, Katie. You must have seen the signs, after all.'

'What signs?'

'That she and Christopher were serious about each other, of course.'

Signs? I thought hard but couldn't remember seeing any. Real signs? Black and white HELEN

AND CHRISTOPHER ARE SERIOUS signs? I hadn't seen any of those.

Anyway, even if I had . . . I didn't exactly fancy the idea. OK, it would be nice to have Mum and Dad all to myself, but sometimes Helen could be fun. *And* she gave me her old make-up and clothes. Also, if she wasn't around I'd have to have old Mrs Crabbe down the road to babysit all the time. Besides, I certainly didn't want her to marry *him*. She'd been out with much nicer ones. He was too old for a start, and he wore old-fashioned trousers and stupid shirts patterned with little



cars or little trees. Worst of all, he was a teacher and kept asking me things about school in a bracing voice, like: 'How's the old history project going?' or, last week, on seeing me throwing my maths homework into the bin in disgust, 'In trouble with our binary numbers, are we?'

I tiptoed out of the kitchen and dropped on to all fours in front of the sitting-room door to try and listen to what was going on.

'Come away from that door at once!' Mum hissed from the kitchen. 'How's it going to look when they open it and you're kneeling there with



your ears flapping?'

'I'm not. I'm just sitting here examining the world of nature beneath the edge of this carpet,' I said. 'There's a little tiny thing with two hundred legs, a black beetle – well, half of one – a –'

'Come away from that door *now*!' Mum said sternly, but not before I heard him – That Man – saying something boring about mortgages and putting down deposits.

I reluctantly rolled over towards her and she looked at me and shook her head wearily. 'Now, before they come out, why don't you go upstairs and put on something other than that dreadful old tracksuit?'

'You bought this dreadful old tracksuit,' I pointed out. 'You wanted me to have one.'

'I didn't know you'd wear it day in and day out. It was clean when I bought it. Clean and pale pink,' she said with a sigh, 'and now it always seems to be grey.'

'She can't marry him!' I said urgently, ignoring the insults to my tracksuit. 'He's too old, for a start. He doesn't look like a bridegroom.'

'What do they look like, then?'

I thought back to a black and white film I'd seen on TV on Sunday afternoon. 'They're good-looking – like film stars – with slicked-back black hair and shiny shoes. They've got a bouquet of flowers in one hand and a diamond ring in a little box in the other.'

'I can't see any diamond rings forthcoming,' Mum said. 'Not on what he earns. And people don't have shiny shoes any more.'

'But he's old . . .' I wailed. 'Horribly old and fat.'

'Don't be silly,' Mum said. 'He's not at all fat. His face is chubby, that's all. And he's only twenty-nine.'

'That's what he tells you,' I said darkly.

'And Helen's twenty-two. That's a good age difference.'

'Fat, old and boring,' I said stubbornly. Of all the interesting people I could have had for a brother-in-law, I had to be lumbered with *him*.

'You'll not be losing a sister; you're gaining a brother,' Mum said.

'I don't want to gain a brother,' I said, infuriated. 'Not a brother like *him*, anyway. If she's got to



get married, then why can't it be someone in the royal family, or a pop star, or a DJ or someone exciting. Not him; *definitely* not him.'

'Well, I'm afraid it's not up to you,' she said. 'When you get married you're allowed to choose for yourself and I must say Dad and I are very –'

The sitting-room door handle rattled and Mum broke off and looked towards it expectantly, and then Helen and That Man came out holding hands and looking at each other with very silly grins.

'It's OK,' Helen said to Mum, smiling a big soppy smile. 'It's all arranged.'

'As if I actually had any say in the matter!' Dad shouted in a jolly voice, and then I heard glasses tinkling and he came through into the kitchen with a bottle of something on a tray.

I looked at That Man stonily: at his horrible shirt, silly trousers and face with a stupid pleased expression on it. The shame of it; imagine having to tell everyone that Helen was marrying *him*. I mean, couldn't she find anyone better? Surely she couldn't be that desperate?

I looked at Helen: she wasn't bad . . . she had frizzy red hair and lots of freckles and she dressed quite nicely . . . so was this frump in peculiar trousers honestly all she could get? But perhaps she hadn't looked properly; perhaps she needed a helping hand. Maybe it wasn't too late to find her someone better . . .

'Katie!' Mum said suddenly. 'How about having a little sip of something to celebrate?'

'And how about a kiss for your new brother?' That Man said heartily.

I screwed up my face in absolute disgust.

'Oh, Katie never kisses anyone,' Mum said hastily, moving to stand between him and my face.

'We've got another surprise for you!' Helen said, obviously not caring that she was leaning cosily against a shirt patterned with tiny fire engines. 'Something you've always wanted.'

'Not Disneyland?' I squealed. Maybe they were going there on honeymoon and taking me . . . if so, it wasn't too late for us to become instant best friends.

They laughed. 'Not quite that,' Helen said. 'The wedding will be quite soon – in September – and we want you to be our bridesmaid.'

'Yuk!' I said.

'Don't be silly, dear,' Mum said quickly and brightly. 'You've always wanted to be a bridesmaid.'

'That was when I was four!'

'Last year! You had a bride doll and you –'

'I never did!' I said hotly. 'Anyway, you bought it for me.'

'Well, anyway,' Helen said, 'Christopher and I would like you to be our bridesmaid and you'll

have a lovely dress and satin shoes and everything.'

I made an exaggerated sick noise and everyone looked at me and tutted.

'At least it'll be interesting to see if she can be prised out of that tracksuit,' Dad said.

'If you'll excuse me,' I said with dignity, 'I'm going to my room to do homework. And yes, I am getting on all right with my binary numbers, thank you very much.' And I went off quickly before anyone could shout at me.

I flung myself on my bed. The wedding was in two months, but as it was the school holidays I had plenty of free time to find Helen someone better. My campaign would start immediately.