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opening extract from

French Frights
(Too Ghoul for School)

written by

B. Strange

published by

Egmont Books Ltd

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FRENCH FRIGHTS



James stared out of the window. Some year-eights were playing football on the sports field.

In the staff car park, a delivery lorry was dropping off great vats of oil and huge sacks of frozen chips at the kitchens.

There's Mrs Cooper gossiping with the driver. Bet she tries to get him inside for a cup of tea, James thought. *There's Ms Legg, jogging round the field, and there's a knight in armour, holding some hag's hand* – WHAT*?!*

'Zac, I need to show you something . . . Look!' James pointed out of the window and the boys saw the two ghosts sitting under a tree.

Zac was moving from foot to foot. His eyes were wide.

'This knight, he haunts L'Ecole de St Martin! He is a terror! He must have – how you say? – *followed* us here from Poubelle!' He shuddered. 'He won't be alone . . .'

St Sebastian's School in Grimesford is the pits. No, really – it is.

Every year, the high school sinks a bit further into the boggy plague pit beneath it and, every year, the ghosts of the plague victims buried underneath it become a bit more cranky.

Egged on by their spooky ringleader, Edith Codd, they decide to get their own back – and they're willing to play dirty. *Really* dirty.

They kick up a stink by causing as much mischief as in inhumanly possible so as to get St Sebastian's closed down once and for all.

But what they haven't reckoned on is year-seven new boy, James Simpson and his friends Alexander and Lenny.

The question is, are the gang up to the challenge of laying St Sebastian's paranormal problem to rest, or will their school remain forever frightful?

There's only one way to find out . . .





FRENCH FRIGHTS

B. STRANGE

EGMONT

Special thanks to:

Lynn Huggins-Cooper, St John's Walworth Church of England Primary School and Belmont Primary School



EGMONT

We bring stories to life

Published in Great Britain 2007
by Egmont UK Limited
239 Kensington High Street, London W8 6SA

Text & illustrations © 2007 Egmont UK Ltd
Text by Lynn Huggins-Cooper
Illustrations by Pulsar Studios (Beehive Illustration)

ISBN 978 1 4052 3240 1

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available
from the British Library

Typeset by Avon DataSet Ltd, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by the CPI Group

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‘I love *Too Ghoul for School*
– it’s absolutely brilliant! Ten out of ten!’

Sebastian, age 12

‘These are the best horror stories I’ve ever read.
What’s more, they’re the funniest and the goriest’

Harry, age 10

‘These books are the best and I’m getting
everybody into them!’

Thomas, age 10

‘The ghouls are so good’

Michael, age 8

‘*Too Ghoul for School* is the best.
Really gross, but still BRILLIANT!’

Jack, age 9

‘*Too Ghoul* is way too ghoul for school’

Jed, age 8

We want to hear what *you* think about *Too Ghoul for School*! Visit:

www.too-ghoul.com

**for loads of cool stuff to do
and a whole lotta grot!**

School versus . . .



Year-seven new boy
and chief spook-hunter

James Simpson

Headmaster's son
and official brainiac



Alexander Tick



Strong as an ox,
gentle as an
unusually tall lamb

Lenny Maxwell

. . . Ghoul!

Loud-mouthed ringleader of the plague-pit ghosts



Edith Codd

Young ghost and a secret wannabe St Sebastian's pupil

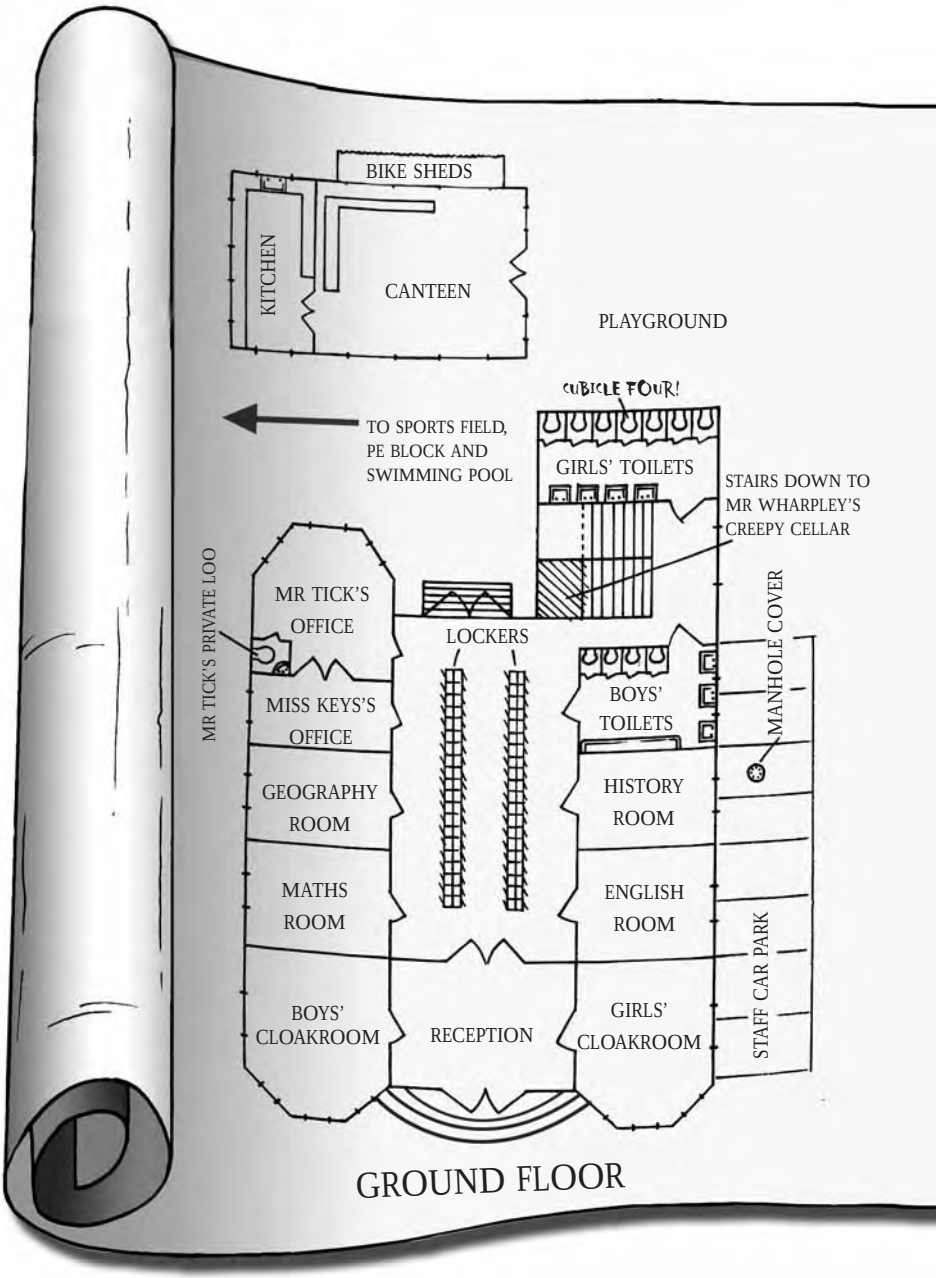


William Scroggins

Bone idle ex-leech merchant with a taste for all things gross



Ambrose Harbottle


BIKE SHEDS
KITCHEN
CANTEEN
PLAYGROUND
CUBICLE FOUR!
TO SPORTS FIELD, PE BLOCK AND SWIMMING POOL
GIRLS' TOILETS
STAIRS DOWN TO MR WHARPLEY'S CREEPY CELLAR
MR TICK'S PRIVATE LOO
MR TICK'S OFFICE
LOCKERS
MANHOLE COVER
MISS KEYS'S OFFICE
BOYS' TOILETS
GEOGRAPHY ROOM
HISTORY ROOM
MATHS ROOM
ENGLISH ROOM
STAFF CAR PARK
BOYS' CLOAKROOM
RECEPTION
GIRLS' CLOAKROOM
GROUND FLOOR

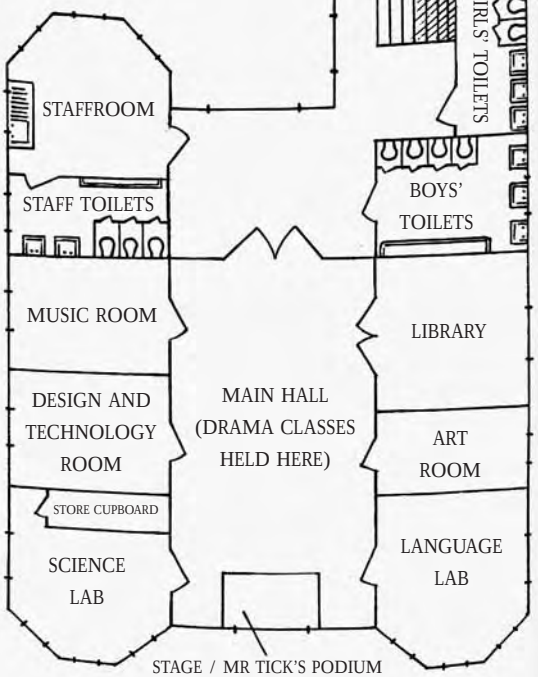
ST SEBASTIAN'S SCHOOL, ~~1899~~

(BUILT ON THE SITE OF A MEDIEVEL PLAGUE PIT)

in the twenty-first century



* over my dead body



FIRST FLOOR

About the Black Death

The Black Death was a terrible plague that is believed to have been spread by fleas on rats. It swept through Europe in the fourteenth century, arriving in England in 1348, where it killed over one third of the population.



One of the Black Death's main symptoms was **foul-smelling boils all over the body called 'buboes'**. The plague was so infectious that its victims and their families were locked in their houses until they died. Many villages were abandoned as the disease wiped out their populations.

So many people died that graveyards overflowed and bodies lay in the street, so special **'plague pits'** were dug to bury the bodies. Almost every town and village in England has a plague pit somewhere underneath it, so watch out when you're digging in the garden . . .



Dear Reader

As you may have already guessed, B. Strange is not a real name.

The author of this series is an ex-teacher who is currently employed by a little-known body called the Organisation For Spook Termination (Excluding Demons), or O.F.S.T.(E.D.). 'B. Strange' is the pen name chosen to protect his identity.

Together, we felt it was our duty to publish these books, in an attempt to save innocent lives. The stories are based on the author's experiences as an O.F.S.T.(E.D.) inspector in various schools over the past two decades.

Please read them carefully - you may regret it if you don't . . .

Yours sincerely
The Publisher.

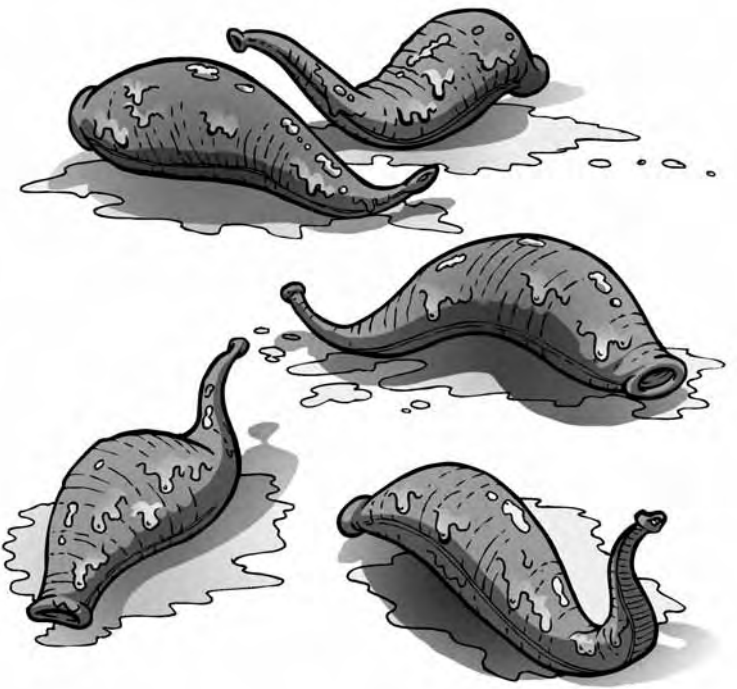
PS - Should you wish to file a report on any suspicious supernatural occurrences at your school, visit **www.too-ghoul.com** and fill out the relevant form. We'll pass it on to O.F.S.T.(E.D.) for you.

PPS - All characters' names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals. Any similarity to actual persons, living or undead, is purely coincidental.



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CHAPTER 1
LOST IN TRANSLATION

James chewed on his pen, frowning.

'I can't do this!' he groaned. He threw the pen down on to the desk with a clatter.

Alexander looked up. He'd written three pages of a letter to his French pen pal already. Unlike James's scribbles, Alexander's page was neat and tidy, just like him.

'Here, James,' said Alexander, holding out a huge, leather-bound book, 'you can use my French dictionary. I got it for my birthday last year. I was really excited, because I'd always wanted . . .'

‘Only you’d ask for a dictionary for your birthday!’ James spluttered. ‘Thanks, though. I’m having real trouble with this letter,’ he sighed, grabbing the book from his friend and beginning to leaf through it.

It was Monday morning, and Madame Dupont – St Sebastian’s French teacher – had instructed her year-sevens to fill their pen pals in on their latest news. She liked using the double lesson first thing on a Monday morning for this, as it meant she could ease her way in to the new week by drinking strong black coffee and reading her French newspaper in peace. She imagined she was sitting in a café in Paris rather than in her stuffy classroom at St Sebastian’s.

Alexander signed his letter with a flourish and leant back in his chair, flexing his knuckles and stretching. James looked up.

‘Well, that’s this month’s letter to Isabelle sorted out,’ smiled Alexander. ‘I can’t *wait* to hear back



from her. I've asked her lots of questions about the French government. She mentioned that her father works in an incredibly interesting department that organises payments for farmers –'

'Stick?' James interrupted.

'Yes, James?'

'Some of us haven't finished. And exciting as I am *sure* Isabelle's dad's job sounds – *not!* – I have to get this done before break time.' He scrubbed at his hair with frustration, leaving it sticking out like a punky hedgehog.

'Sorry, James! Here – let me help,' Alexander replied, leaning over to see what James had written. His brow furrowed. He scratched his head.

'It gives me the creeps when you scratch like that. Makes me think there are zombie nits on your bonce!' shuddered James.

'Have no fear, I'm a nit-free zone!' declared Alexander. He looked at James's letter and started to laugh.



‘What’s so funny?’ James asked, frowning.

‘Erm . . . did you mean to say “I like to ride my fish committee?”’ Alexander spluttered.

Madame Dupont looked up from her newspaper. ‘Alexandre? Is there a problem?’

‘No, no – just helping the less fortunate!’ Alexander giggled.

Madame Dupont smiled. ‘Very well, Alexandre! Carry on!’ She took a slurp of her coffee and went back to her newspaper.

James poked Alexander. ‘What are you going on about? I was just telling Zac about my skateboard. I even used your stupid dictionary. I looked up “skate”, then I looked up “board” and I put them together to make “skateboard”. Simple. So I don’t know why you’re getting your knickers in a twist.’

‘Well, you looked up “skate” and got the word for a type of flat fish, like a ray. Then you looked up “board” and you got the type of board that’s a

committee – like the board of school governors. Mind you, in a way, you're not far off the mark . . . when Dad talks to the governors I've seen them opening and closing their mouths like fish . . .'

'Oh, this is just stupid!' James snorted. 'I'll just draw a picture of me on my skateboard instead.'

'But Madame Dupont wants us to –' Alexander began. He was silenced by a glare from James. He swallowed hard and turned to Lenny, who was attaching some fluff to his letter with a piece of sticky tape.

'What's that?' Alexander asked.

'It was stuck in the zip of my pencil case. It's a clump of fur off our cat Cleo. She likes to sleep in my schoolbag, where it's dark and warm. Sometimes she leaves bits of herself behind . . .' He rummaged about in his bag and brought out a bent whisker. 'See!' He taped that to his letter too.

'OK . . . but why are you sticking it to your letter?' asked Alexander.



‘Well, I was telling my pen pal, Manu, about the things my pets have been getting up to. I told him about the time my hamster escaped and hid in Mum’s jewellery box. When she opened the lid, there was Leo wearing one of her bracelets like a necklace! I can’t understand why she screamed. She scared the life out of him. And I also told him about the time Pooza the rabbit –’

‘*Pooza*?’ Alexander interrupted. ‘What kind of name is that?!’

‘Well, my mum said I should give my animals names that suit their personalities and habits,’ Lenny smiled. ‘And that rabbit poos – a *lot*. His cage is always full of piles of rabbit raisins. I have to clear him out twice a week – so that’s how he earnt his name!’

‘*Ewww* – too much information!’ Alexander laughed, screwing up his nose.

‘Anyway, I was just telling Manu about how Cleo likes to sleep in my schoolbag, when I

suddenly had an idea. I wanted Manu to understand all about my pets, so that's why I stuck a bit of fluff on my letter.'

'Hey – it's a good job Pooza's not here. I don't think Manu would have liked rabbit raisins taped to his letter!'

The boys tried to stifle their laughter.

Madame Dupont looked up at that moment, but they were saved by the school bell. Everyone began to cram books into their schoolbags.

Madame Dupont clapped her hands to get attention. 'Wait a minute, please, everyone! I have an exciting announcement to make!'

'Free *pain au chocolat* for everyone?' wondered Alexander, hopefully.

'Don't be daft, Stick! What use would a chocolate pan be? It'd be as useless as a chocolate teapot. No good for cooking . . .' Lenny frowned.

'No, not a chocolate pan – *pain au chocolat*!

We had them on holiday last year. They're flaky pastry with chocolate chips – yum!' Alexander smiled, wistfully. His tummy rumbled.

'I have arranged a pupil exchange with L'Ecole de St Martin, your pen pals' school in Poubelle! You will all finally get to meet your French friends – next week!' trilled Madame Dupont, beaming at her pupils with excitement.

The boys looked at each other in silence. Then they grinned.

'Wow! A school trip to France!' cried James. 'Brilliant! I've always fancied . . .'

'Sorry, James. We are going nowhere. The students from L'Ecole de St Martin are to come here,' Madame Dupont smiled.

James deflated like a burst balloon.

'Aww, Madame Dupont . . .!' he moaned.

'I shall give you all more details very soon! Now I must go to make arrangements . . .' And with a waft of her chiffon scarf – leaving a trail



of expensive perfume in her wake – the French mistress swept out of the classroom.

James turned to Lenny and Alexander. 'You can always trust a teacher to suck the fun out of things!' he grumbled.

'Cheer up, James! It'll be great. We'll be able to show them around Grimesford . . .' said Alexander.

'And Manu will be able to meet my pets!' Lenny grinned.

'Hmm, well, I suppose I'll be able to show Zac my skateboard. He could even come to the skatepark,' said James, perking up a bit.

'You know, I've got a theory why teachers suck all the fun out of things,' said Alexander. 'Do you want to hear it?'

James sighed and crossed his arms. 'No, I don't – but I've got a horrible feeling I'm going to anyway.'

'Because somewhere along the line they've been crossed with vampires.'

‘Eh?’ James grunted. ‘I’m not sure I get where this is going . . .’

‘And do you know what you get if you cross a teacher with a vampire?’

James and Lenny silently exchanged puzzled glances.

‘Someone who likes to do a lot of blood tests!’ Alexander laughed.

His friends rolled their eyes and groaned, and the boys pushed and jostled with each other as they headed out of the classroom to the playground.