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Opening extract from

Monstrous Maud: Freaky Sleepover

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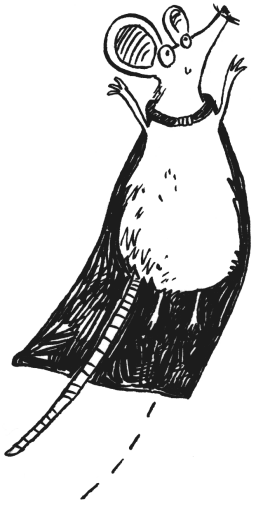
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Chapter One

Maud Montague looked around the bedroom she shared with her twin sister Milly. The room was divided into two very different halves. Maud's half had jet-black wallpaper, and was so cluttered you couldn't see the carpet. Beneath Maud's bed was her pet rat Quentin's daytime den, made of old twigs and bits of cardboard box.

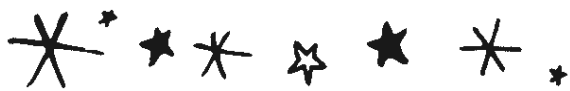
"You're such a messy-potamus," said Milly. "No wonder you can never find anything!"

Milly's half had soppy pink wallpaper. She'd packed all her things away in her lilac chest of

drawers, except for her teddy bears and dolls, which she'd lined up on top in order of size.

"I tidied up once and I was looking for stuff for weeks," said Maud. "This way, I know exactly where everything is."

Milly buttoned her creaseless, navy blue blazer in front of her full-length mirror. "Perfect," she said. "Now for yummy porridge." She ran downstairs, singing to herself.



Maud followed her sister downstairs, passing the family portraits and waving at the one of her favourite ancestor, Great-aunt Ethel. She opened the dining-room door, sat down between her mum and dad, and selected a piece of toast from the metal rack.

Mr Montague was examining a car's exhaust pipe, and leaving an oily stain on the white tablecloth.

His wife was carefully checking through a box of rubber bats she'd bought for the upcoming performance of *Dracula* at their local theatre. She was in charge of props and costumes.

"Are you looking forward to your sleepover on Saturday, Milly?" asked Mr Montague.

Milly's sleepover! Maud had completely forgotten about it. She had told her parents she'd ask some friends along too, but now she wasn't so sure. Maud's friends were quite … unusual. She didn't think they would get on with Milly.

"It's going to be brillingtons," said Milly. "Poppy Simpkins is coming, and Alice Jones and Suzie Singh, and we're going to learn the new dance routine by the Sparkle Club Girls. They're my favourite band of all time. We can teach you, too, if you like, Maud."

Maud was just swallowing a mouthful of toast as Milly said this, but she managed to keep it down.

"Have you invited anyone, Maud?" asked Mrs Montague.



Maud didn't really want to ask anyone to the sleepover, because Maud had a secret. While Milly went to Primrose Towers – a prim girls' school – Maud went to a school for vampires, werewolves, ghosts, witches and other monsters. Even though Maud's great-aunt Ethel was the head teacher, she was a ghost herself. Nobody else in the family knew Rotwood wasn't an ordinary school. If Milly met Maud's monster friends, it would be difficult to stop her family finding out.

"Of course she hasn't," said Milly, licking her porridgey lips. "Maud hasn't got any friends."

"Actually I've got plenty," said Maud.

"It's just a shame these so-called friends are all busy on Saturday," snorted Milly.

"Well, that's where you're wrong," said Maud. "Because I've already asked … er … two of them to come along. And they've both agreed."

"Well, that sounds like it will be fun for everyone," said Mrs Montague. She'd just finished tying a piece of elastic to one of the fake bats, and she was flapping it up and down.

"I vont to bite your neck," said Mrs Montague. "Mwa ha ha!"

Maud was tempted to tell her mum that vampires didn't really talk like that. And she should know – there were several at Rotwood.

"Tooth time!" announced Milly and she darted upstairs. Milly brushed her teeth three times every morning, first with mint-flavoured paste, then with baking soda and then with a lemon and herb mixture.

"Isn't your *Dracula* performance on Saturday night?" Maud asked her mum.

"That's right, petal," said Mrs Montague, "and Tracy's babysitting."

"Maybe I could help with that instead of staying here for the sleepover," said Maud.

"Oh no," said Maud's mum. "I'll be running around looking after the props, and your dad will be up in the lighting box, so there won't be anyone to keep an eye on you."

"I won't need anyone to keep an eye on me," said Maud.

Mr Montague raised an eyebrow. "You said that about your sister's ballet recital."

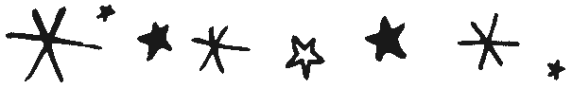
When Maud had gone to her sister's ballet performance, her pet rat had escaped on to the stage and caused havoc.

"But I won't bring Quentin this time," said Maud. "It would be far too scary for him."

"It's too late now anyway," said Mrs Montague. "You've already invited your friends to the sleepover."

"I suppose so," said Maud, and she nipped off to the garage to check on Quentin. On the way, she grabbed a carton of milk and a packet

of crisps so she could top up his supplies. He squeaked with delight as she emptied the crisps into his bowl.



"What am I going to do, Quentin?" asked Maud. "I've promised to bring a couple of friends from school along, and I haven't got a clue who to invite." She watched Quentin tuck into the snacks, blissfully ignoring her. "If those Primrose Towers girls thought you were fearsome," Maud muttered, "wait until they meet the monsters from Rotwood."

