

The Kerfuffles



Written and Illustrated by

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Dedicated to my sons

Cameron & Mitchell

and my nephews and nieces

Antony, Tahlia, Ella,

Nodh, Indigo & Sofia



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Chapter 1

The Slimy Binoculars



“Cool!” whispered Drake.

Hunching forward he stared out into the distance. The sky seemed to be changing colour in front of his very eyes.

It was finally the weekend. Drake's face glistened with sweat as he squatted on the old leather footstool. Today, even his eyeballs were melting. The binoculars trapping in the heat around his sockets.

"Where are you?" Drake muttered.

He lay the binoculars on the floor and rubbed his bloodshot eyes. He definitely needed a break.

Rolling his neck from side to side, he grabbed the collar of his shirt, trying hard to stretch it out. But being two sizes too small, it clung to him as tightly as a sausage skin.

"Worst present ever..." Drake moaned.

Soon he gave up. His arms dropped, hanging awkwardly by his side. The material was impossible to stretch. Weirdly, it squeezed his body so tightly that even his armpits felt tingly.

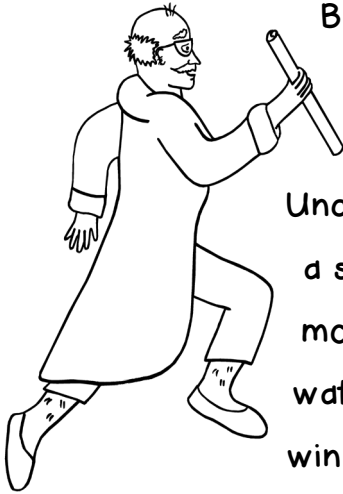


Earlier today, Drake had finally given in to Mum. For months she had been pestering him to wear the terrible Christmas gift his relatives had bought him. But, as usual, Mum refused to listen to anything he had to say.

Even though Mum knew perfectly well that the tiny tee-shirt constricted all muscle movement, she didn't seem concerned in the least. Reminding him to wear it all day.

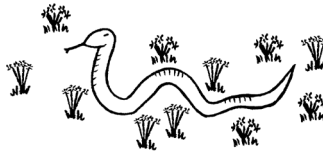


Annoyingly, Mum was constantly making excuses for her relatives. Telling the rest of the family that they couldn't buy a plane ticket back home until Uncle Harold's knee completely healed.



But Drake secretly knew that Dad had been right all along. Uncle Harold didn't have a sore knee at all. Each morning, Drake watched from his window as Uncle Harold would run outside to grab the newspaper. It usually lay in the same spot among the weeds, rolled up tightly in a plastic wrap.

Scared of encountering any snakes, Uncle Harold would sprint across the yard like an athlete competing in the baton relay. With speed and agility.



Very unlike the frail Uncle Harold they all knew, who hobbled about the house on his walking stick. Moaning each and every step of the way.

Drake bent over to grab Uncle Harold's binoculars once again. His sweat, combined with a gross green goo, made them almost impossible to hold without slipping through his fingers. The goo looked identical to Aunty May's homemade ointment, and smelt just as bad.





Drake sighed as he stared out of his bedroom window for the millionth time. He knew he had become obsessed with finding out the identity of their new neighbours. Strangely, he noticed that as soon as his family had moved in over Summer, their old neighbours had moved out within a week.

But only a couple of months earlier, new neighbours had quietly moved in late one night. However, Drake had his suspicions about the middle-aged couple who now lived next door.

They barely made a noise and rarely ventured outside. Their curtains remained drawn during the day and, at night, their house was suspiciously dark. Except for the eerie twinkling of candles from one of their rooms.

Today, Drake had hoped to get a better glimpse of these mysterious people.



Saturday seemed to be the only time that a suspicious looking man would briefly leave the house during daylight hours. He would usually disappear, on his own, into the bushland across the road. Each time, wearing an enormous cork hat and oversized sunglasses as a disguise.

And, for some odd reason, always carrying a bucket.

Drake was desperate to find out who this secretive person was. And what was he really up to?

He sat on the uncomfortable footstool and waited. Staring blankly at the now deserted lake in front of him.

His eyelids soon grew heavy. He could barely even focus.

Suddenly, a flash of lightning made him squint.



“Wow!” Drake laughed, not expecting to see such bright lightning on a hot Autumn day.

Creepily, the faint sound of Mum’s windchimes began to trail down the hallway.

Then, without warning, the door slammed shut behind him.

Drake jumped.

A gust of wind had unexpectedly entered his room, lifting his hair so high that it almost resembled his Aunty May's hairdo. Drake sat motionless. Only his pupils moved rapidly from side to side.



The heavy brass chandelier he had hated so much since moving in, soon started to sway above him.

“Oh no,” Drake bit down on his lip, his eyes now humungous.

A storm is definitely on its way, he thought, secretly excited. The glorious smell made by raindrops hitting the stinking hot bitumen soon wafted into his room. He took a deep breath in.

Best smell ever.

Suddenly, he could hear his Aunty May’s croaky voice, ordering her husband to close their bedroom window. But Uncle Harold couldn’t ever hear a thing.

Drake guessed a whirlwind would have just engulfed their room. A huge pile of Uncle Harold's stinky old socks was probably circling their heads at that very second.



Drake grinned.

“Concentrate,” he whispered to himself, still being careful to keep himself hidden from view.

He wiped his sweaty forehead with the back of his hand. Bad move, he immediately thought, as the slimy goo melted into his hair.

The thunder and lightning now made it almost impossible to concentrate on anything across the road.

Suddenly distracted by the loud creaking sound of floorboards in the hallway, Drake stopped. Turning his stiff body towards the door, he held onto the heavy binoculars tightly.

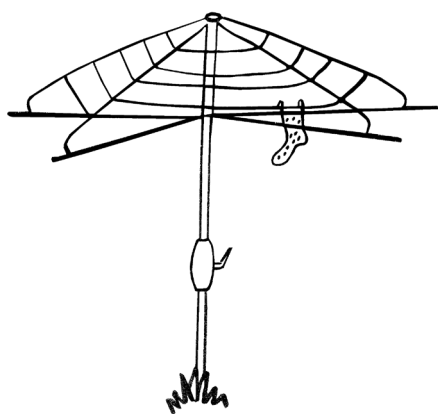
And waited.

The tarnished doorknob shook viciously from side to side.

Within seconds, the rickety old door flew open.

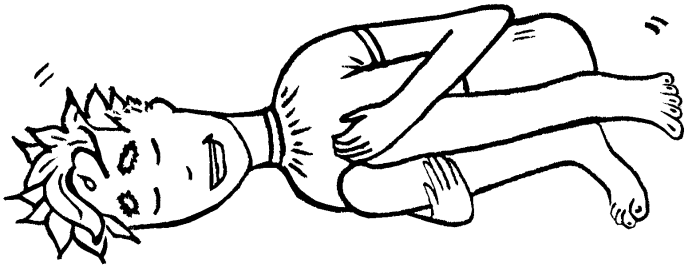
Cindy screamed.





Chapter 2

Aunty May's Cape



Drake laughed.

He dropped the binoculars as he threw himself across the shaggy rug. Holding both legs up to his chest, he rolled about from side to side, laughing hysterically at his sister.



“You scared me! Your enormous eyes were shining in the shadows!”
Cindy frowned, her heart pumping from her chest.

She marched towards the window, stepping over her twin’s squirmy body. Then grabbing the little metal handle, which constantly rattled against the frame, she pushed the window firmly shut.



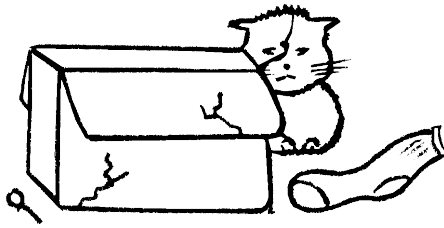
“Leave it open, Cindy!” Drake was now annoyed.

He soon sat up, dragging himself along the dusty floorboards, until he reached the window directly beside her.

With the binoculars now back around his neck, Drake squatted in his original position, totally ignoring his sister. What a pain, he thought, as he tried to concentrate on the footpath outside.

Cindy moaned.

“Mum says a storm is coming!” Cindy shouted.



Then, sensing movement under Drake's bed, she crouched to see a little black shadow with flattened ears hiding behind a cardboard box. Cindy smiled. She was relieved to see that Muggy had found a safe spot to hide during the storm, even if it was her brother's gross room.

"She's under your bed!" Cindy called out.

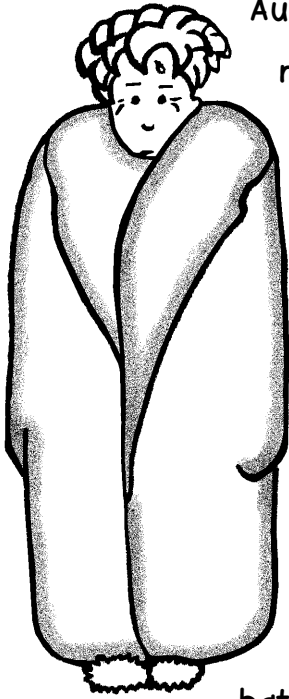
"Mum's under my bed?" Drake slowly lowered the binoculars, his face now pale.

Cindy laughed, "Not, Mum! Muggy!"

"You said Mum was hiding under my bed!"
Drake was confused.

"Why would Mum be under your bed?"
Cindy rolled her eyes.

Suddenly, Aunty May's silhouette appeared in the doorway. The twins groaned in unison. Annoyingly, she always moved about the house without ever making a noise. Her soft slippers gliding her silently to wherever she wanted to go. If ever there was drama in any part of the house, Aunty May would miraculously appear out of nowhere.



Auntie May stood motionless, her beady eyes sparkling in the shadows. Her bathrobe looked like a cape in the dim lighting of the hallway.

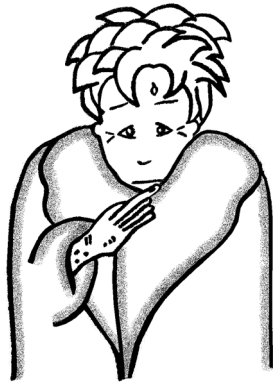
Today, the ridiculously large bathrobe she wore almost covered her wrinkly lips, making her scratchy voice even more muffled than usual.

“Why is your mother in bed? Is she ill?” croaked Auntie May.

“No, Aunty May. She’s cooking potatoes...” Drake shouted slowly.

Emphasising each vowel in every word, Drake now turned to face his Aunt. Her hearing had seemed to be getting even worse so it had become a habit for him to pronounce each word slowly, to avoid repeating every sentence over and over again.

“Oh dear, she has sore toes?” Aunty May frowned. But funnily enough, she seemed almost amused.





Cindy giggled, now trying to hide her smile behind her hand. Then she glanced away, hoping to avoid any eye contact with her Aunt.

Drake rolled his eyes again and sighed even louder. He had no time for this.

“She’s... cooking... potatoes!” he repeated, even more slowly than before. Now exaggerating each syllable as he spoke.

“Looking... after... her... toes!” Aunt May answered just as slowly, nodding slightly.

She tapped her wrinkly finger several times across her thin lips, suddenly in deep thought.

Although Cindy tried to hold in a laugh, a little snort unfortunately escaped. She loved watching Drake's frustration each time he spoke to their Aunt. It was hilarious.

"Since Mum is resting her toes, perhaps you should, too!" Cindy blurted out.

She couldn't help herself. She could barely look at her Aunt, feeling a little wicked by letting her believe Mum actually did have sore toes.

Drake suddenly smiled, glancing over at his sister.

“Yes, Aunty May, it’s probably a good idea for you to have a lay down, too. You can’t really do much during a storm anyway...”
Drake added, trying to look serious.

Nodding, Cindy added, “Yes, that’s true Aunty May. We’ll wake you up later. Once the storm has passed.”

Drake quickly stood up.

He walked directly towards his Aunt. Unfortunately, his armpits were still so tightly constricted by his ridiculous shirt that he could barely even swing them as he walked.

Wishing his Aunt would just turn and float away on her magical slippers, Drake stretched out his arm as best as he could, to guide her in the right direction.

Suddenly, Aunty May's eyes opened so wide that her little eyeballs slightly protruded from her head. Her wide grin was now showing way too much of her gums. Drake grimaced as her false teeth jiggled about. He partially closed his eyes and shivered.



“You DO like the TEE-SHIRT! I knew it!”
Aunty May grabbed Drake’s outstretched
hand and pulled him against her. Giving
him an unexpected and surprisingly strong
bear hug.



Her stained false
teeth almost rubbed
against his cheek.

Drake froze. She
continued to
squeeze his body
tightly, enveloping

him entirely under her black velour
nightgown.

Cindy’s giggles became louder by the
second.

Drake's body soon went limp. His arms dangled by his side. Partly because of his incredibly tight tee-shirt and partly because he could barely breathe.

"Give me a hug, dear!" Aunty May demanded.



The stench of moth balls combined with the stench of her homemade ointment almost made Drake dry reach. He tried to hold his breath but the vapours were so strong they penetrated his nasal cavities nevertheless.

Cindy watched in amazement. Her mouth hung open. She could barely believe what was happening. The hug seemed to last for an eternity.

“Aunty May, I think I hear Uncle Harold calling you!” Cindy lied, trying to free her brother from the clutches of her vampire Aunt.

Cindy waited.

No reaction from either her Aunt or her brother. They both remained frozen in that awkward embrace.

Concerned for Drake's ability to even breathe, Cindy marched over and tapped her Aunt's shoulder.

"Aunty May, I think Uncle Harold would like you to make some afternoon tea," Cindy spoke slowly but sternly, as she stared directly into her Aunt's beady little eyes.

What colour are those strange little eyeballs, she wondered, as she waited for her Aunt to respond.

Aunty May suddenly dropped her arms.

Drake fell to the floor in a lump.



“Spaghetti? He wants me to cook spaghetti?” Aunty May was suddenly so furious with her husband that she barely even noticed her nephew laying at her feet.

“Afternoon tea,” Cindy corrected her.

“I’ll have a word with him. He should have eaten all of his baked beans at lunchtime instead of complaining about them being too moist!” she added angrily, her raspy voice still muffled by her velour bathrobe.

Then, just like in a movie, she turned and glided gracefully away down the hallway. Obviously in search of her next victim, her husband.

Cindy giggled.

Then looking down to the floor, she sighed.

Unfortunately, Drake was still a lump.

