

Aggie
Flea

*For Sophie G, who wouldn't sleep
until she heard the end. — TI*

For my siblings. — AY

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Aggie Flea

is **NOT** a **LIAR!**

Tania Ingram A. Yi

A Scholastic Press book from Scholastic Australia



one

I'm in bed watching a **millipede** that is watching *me* from the corner of my bedroom.

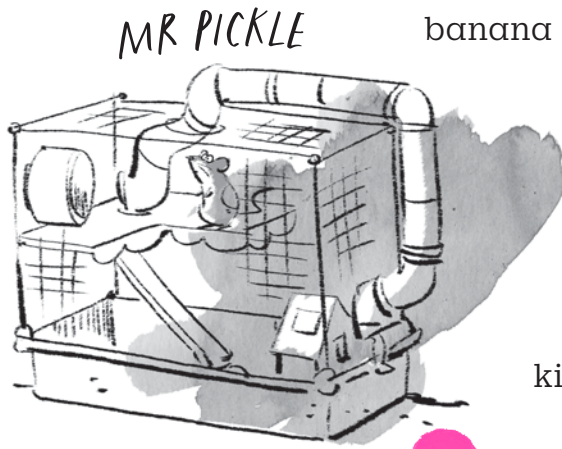
Well, I assume it's watching me, anyway. It's been there for about a month now and I don't think it's **dead** because I'm sure one of its legs moved last week. I've thought about **poking it with a ruler** to check but I'm worried it might get mad and try and **climb into my ear** while I'm sleeping.



That happens, you know.

I saw it online once. The doctor had to pour liquid into the person's ear to make the millipede crawl out. I wouldn't want a millipede living in my ear. What if it laid eggs and the baby millipedes **climbed into my brain? Yuck!**

Across the room, **Mr Pickle** runs laps through his brightly coloured tunnels. It's Saturday today and Mr Pickle likes Saturdays because he gets to eat apple while his cage is cleaned. Apples are Mr Pickle's favourite food. There's no point giving him



MR PICKLE

banana or watermelon.

He'll refuse to eat it. Mr Pickle is an **apple-or-nothing** kind of mouse.

I like Saturdays too. I don't have to get up early for school and I can stay in bed all day and read my **Princess Zombie** books.



Princess Zombie is the **greatest princess ever!** She's cursed by a wicked witch and when she turns six, she pricks her finger on a pitchfork and becomes **a full-blown zombie princess.**

I am the **biggest Princess Zombie fan** in the **entire whole world**. I have almost every one of the Princess Zombie novels and for my tenth birthday last month, I got my very own **Princess Zombie doll**. My dad, who is also a huge Princess Zombie fan, sent me a **poster** last week. He said he saw it in a bookstore window and he had to buy a heap of **expensive books** before the bookstore owner would agree to give him the poster. He also said that for Christmas this year, we should expect a heap of expensive books.

I've put the Princess Zombie poster above my bed so I can see her first thing in the morning when I wake up. **I love her so much!** She's **sassy and strong** and has the funniest adventures.

I'm planning on being just like her when I grow up. Except the part about being a **Princess**. And the part about being a **zombie**.



I'm staring at **Princess Zombie** when Mum comes in and tells me it's time to get up and go downstairs.

'But it's Saturday!' I protest.

I point to my stack of Princess Zombie books, waiting to be read.

Mum points to the clock on my bedside table.

'It's ten thirty,' she says. **'And I need to wash your bed linen. So up . . . now.'**

Mum grabs the doona from my bed and starts to strip off the cover. I **squeal** and roll my sheets around me tighter. Mum laughs and pretends to be a **tickle monster** until I roll out of bed in fits of giggles.

Suddenly **Kumi** bursts into my room, her long black hair swinging behind her in an excited ponytail. Kumi has been my **best friend** since

kindergarten. She lives across the road from me but she spends most of her time at my house because her parents work a lot. Kumi doesn't have any brothers or sisters and I think she gets lonely sometimes.

'You have a new neighbour!' she yells.

Her brow furrows when she spots me, sprawled on the floor in my pyjamas.



‘Good morning, Kumi,’ Mum says, bundling my bed linen into a messy ball. ‘What’s this about a new neighbour?’

‘Dad came home late from work last night and said he saw a **moving van** at Mrs Branson’s old house,’ Kumi says. ‘He said they were moving

furniture in at midnight! Who moves house in the middle of the night? **That’s just crazy.**’

‘What’s crazy?’ My brother **Jack** stands in the doorway, rubbing his eyes.

Since Dad and Mum got divorced, Jack thinks that he’s the **man of the house** and therefore should know



everything that happens. I think he’s just really **nosy**. Mum says Jack has a big, clever, thirteen-year-old brain and that makes him a curious person. His big brain probably explains why Jack has such an **enormous head**.

I’m not allowed to mention the size of his head, though, because it makes him mad. I once asked him if it hurt his neck to have such a **huge head** and he shot me a look that said, *Shut up, Aggie, or else I’m going to give you a dead arm.* Then he said, ‘Shut up, dork, or else I’ll give you a dead arm’ and that was that.

‘A **new neighbour** moved in . . . in the middle of the night,’ Kumi tells Jack with a knowing nod.

Jack runs to my bedroom window, which overlooks the neighbour’s house.

I join him and see a **strange car** parked in the neighbour's yard.

'Is that a **hearse?**' Jack says.

'What's a hearse?' I ask.

'It's a car that's used to carry coffins,' he says.

'Coffins! Like with dead people inside?'

The hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

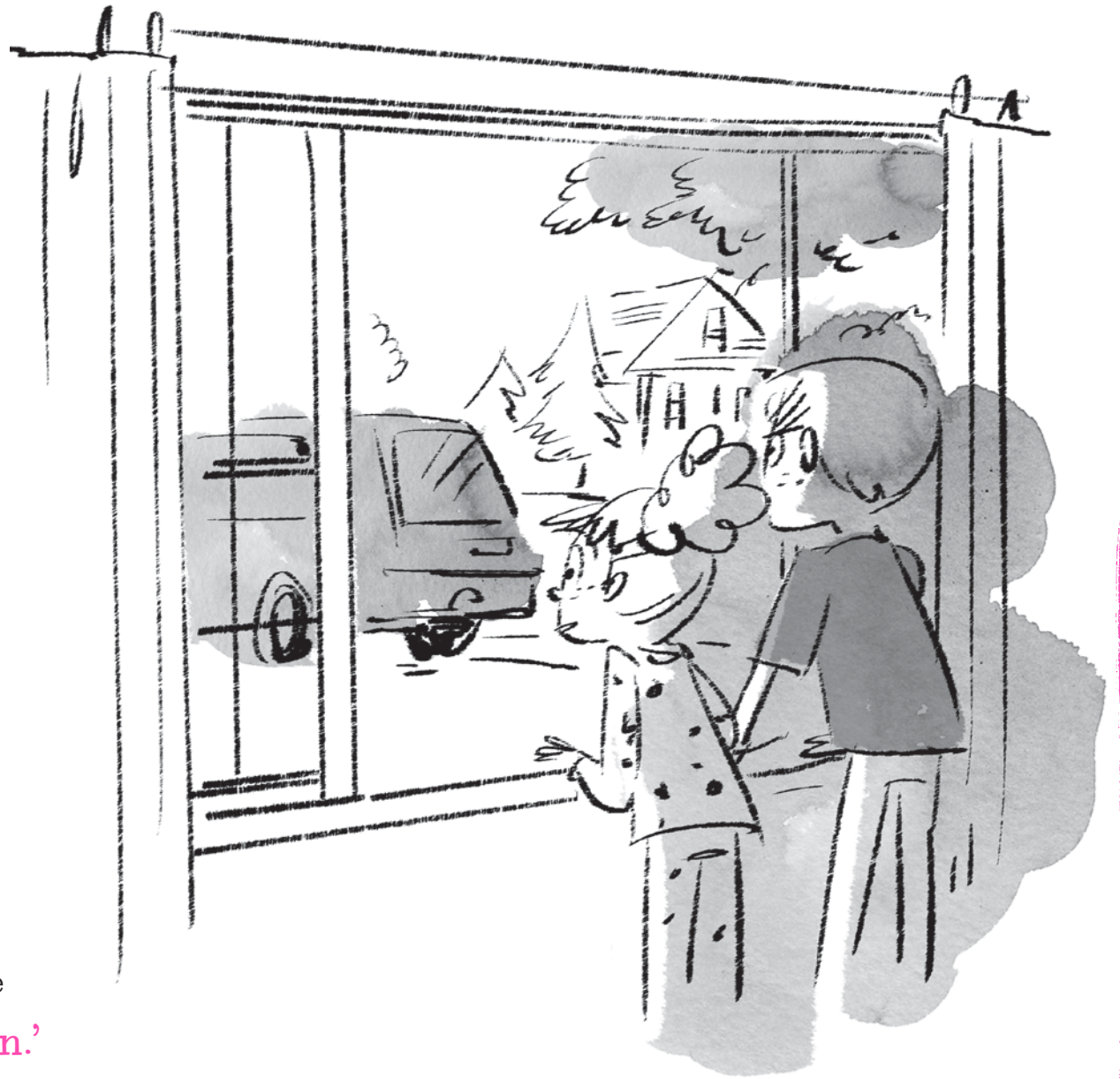
'Someone with something to hide, I reckon,' Jack says. 'Maybe our new neighbour is on the run from the police and he stole the hearse as his getaway car.'

'He might be a **bank robber!**' I add.

Mum frowns as she pushes us away from the window.

'Get dressed and come downstairs,' she says.

'And no more talk of bank robbers, Aggie. I'm sure our new neighbour is a **perfectly nice person.**'



I look at Kumi and roll my eyes. Mum has **absolutely no imagination** and she's always telling me to control mine or else it's going to get me into big trouble one day.

I guess I'm getting into enough trouble already. My school teacher, **Mrs Fossy**, is the absolute worst. Last week she **totally lost it** because I left a **dead spider** in my workbook.

It wasn't my fault though.

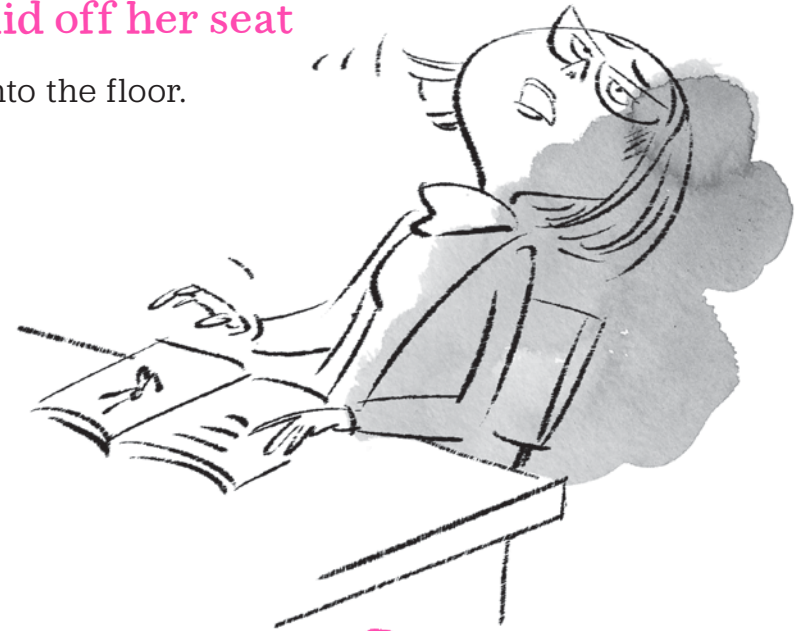
I was writing my spelling words in my workbook when the spider crawled across the page. I slammed the book shut without thinking.

I was going to shake the spider into the bin but then

Ethan Brown let our class budgie, Petey, out of his cage.

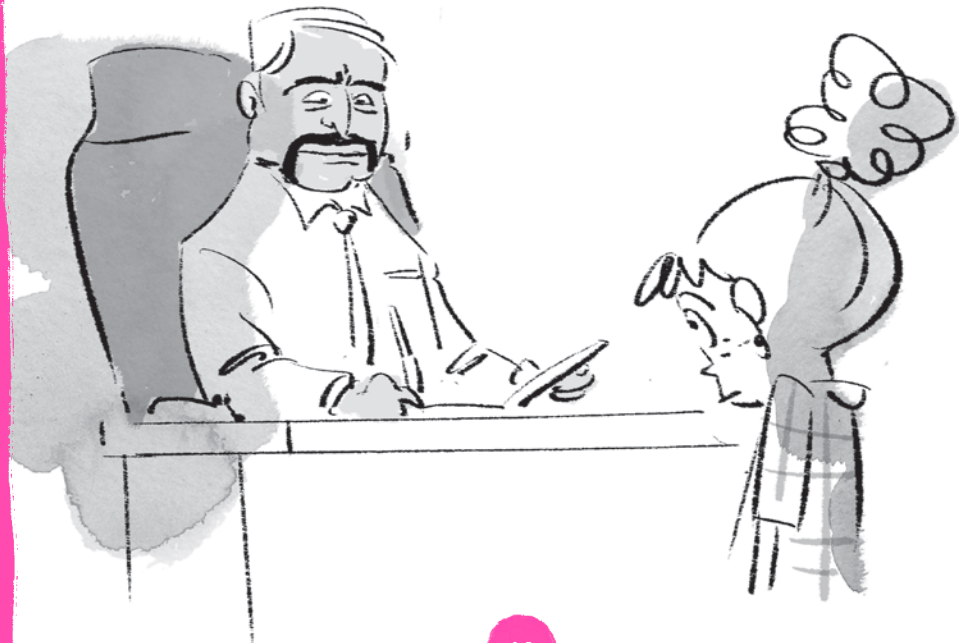
Everyone started shouting and chasing Petey around the room and I **completely forgot** about the spider.

When Mrs Fossy went to check my spelling words after lunch, she found the dead spider inside. Apparently she's **really scared** of spiders. Her eyes did this **weird rolling thing** like she was trying to look at her brain and she **slid off her seat** onto the floor.



She stayed there for ages until Thomas Chan **poked her with a ruler** to see if she was still alive. Then she sat up and muttered my name and said some things that I don't think adults who are in charge of children should be allowed to say.

She wouldn't believe me when I told her that the spider was an accident and she sent me to see **Mr Strong**, our school principal.



Mr Strong didn't believe me either and wrote a note to Mum on the **special yellow pad** he uses when he needs to write stern notes to parents.

When Mum got Mr Strong's note, she just sighed and said, 'Again, Aggie?'

I tried explaining what happened but even Mum gave me that look that says *I don't believe you* and then she told me to **unpack the dishwasher**. Mum always tells me to unpack the dishwasher when she's **mad**. Last night she told me to unpack the dishwasher **three times**, even though I'd already done it and there were no dishes left to unpack!



Mum thinks that I should **try harder** to stay out of **trouble**. I don't know why I get in trouble so much. Things just seem to happen to me. I think maybe a **wicked fairy put a curse on me** when I was a baby, just like what happened to Princess Zombie.

Sometimes, I wish Dad still lived with us. He likes my imagination. If he were here, I'm sure he'd believe me over my teacher. And he would definitely believe me about our new neighbour. I can picture him calling the police and marching right next door to tell the neighbour that the jig is up. I miss Dad since he moved to London. He always understands me. Mum never seems to, and nor do Mrs Fossy or Mr Strong. It's a burden that Princess Zombie and I share.

We are both **misunderstood**.



