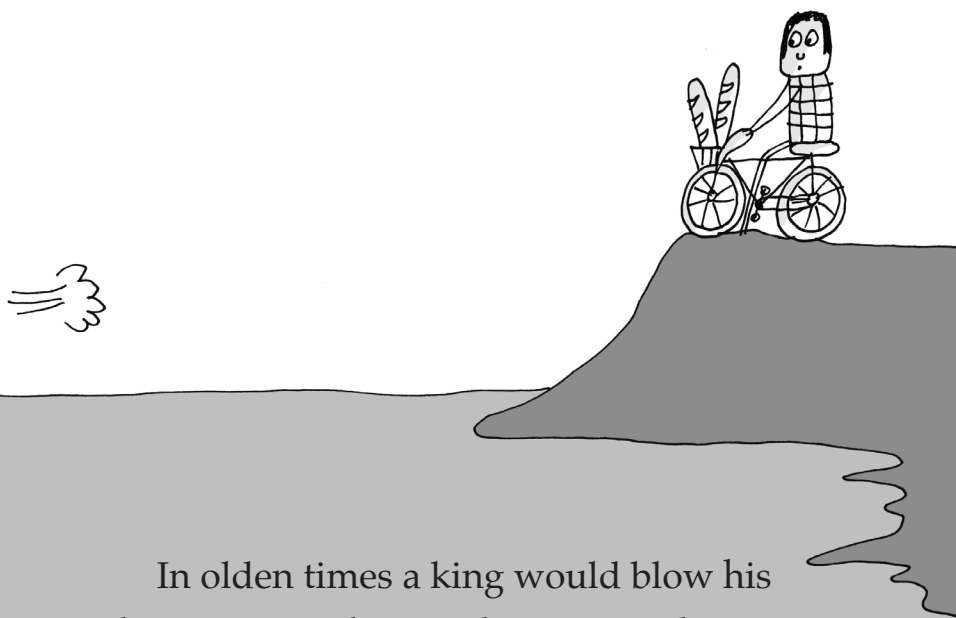




CHAPTER ONE: *A Blow on the Horn*

It doesn't start, though, in deadly danger. As it *all starts* I am at home. Mrs Welkin is round, but she's outside in the garden with her dog, Wilkins. I am *alone*. I have just *allowed myself* the *luxury* of a fart.

And it's a good one. It has a warm, eggy
smell. It's as loud as one from Wilkins,
and that's saying something. When that
dog LETS RIP they hear it in France.



In olden times a king would blow his
horn to make his knights come to him,
and it's like that now. I've blown my
horn . . .

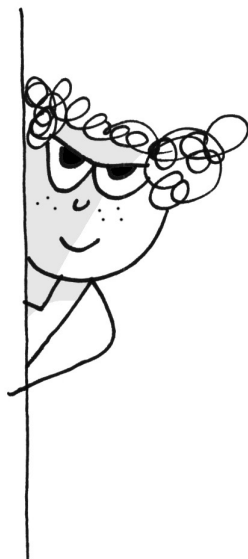
And Cat appears at my front door.

‘I heard that,’
she says. ‘Which
room were you
in?’

I say,
‘Kitchen.’

‘Take me to
your lounge,’
she says. ‘I am ready to show you I’m a
better detective.’

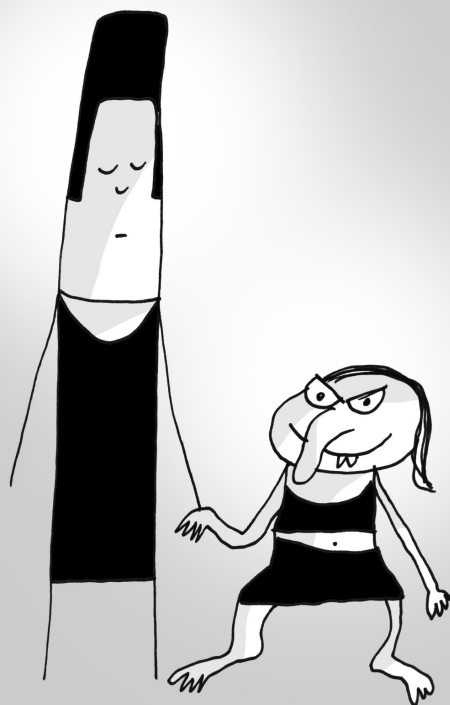
And she is sooo cat-like. She comes into
my lounge. She blinks her big green eyes
once . . . then . . .



. . . *two seconds later*, there's a noise at the front door.

'That's your brother,' she whispers.
'He's brought home a girl!'

I am thinking: *It is very, very unlikely my stinky brother has brought home a GIRL. He's more likely to have brought home a GOBLIN.*

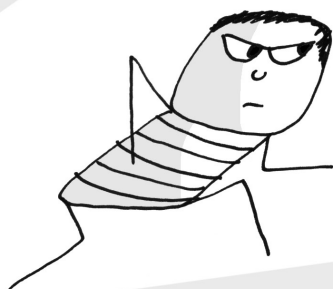


‘She is tall and thin,’ says Cat, ‘and wearing Doc Marten boots with a hole in one sole.’

‘*How* do you even know that?’ I snarl.

‘She has a long, *light* stride,’ says Cat. ‘And if you *listen carefully*, you’ll hear the boots *squeaking*.’

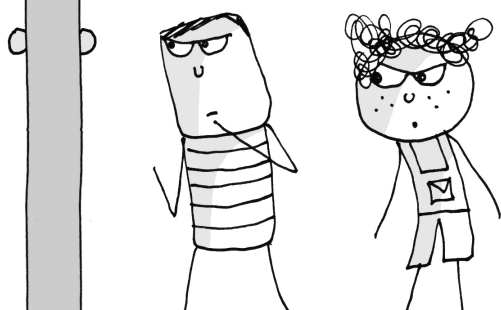
I sneak to the kitchen, hoping to prove Cat wrong.



I see my brother standing in the kitchen with a weird look *smeared* over his BIG HEAD. He's looking *pleased* but *embarrassed*.



Peeking through the crack by the hinge
of the door, we see the girl. She *is* tall, thin
and wearing Doc Marten boots.





'Hello,' she says.

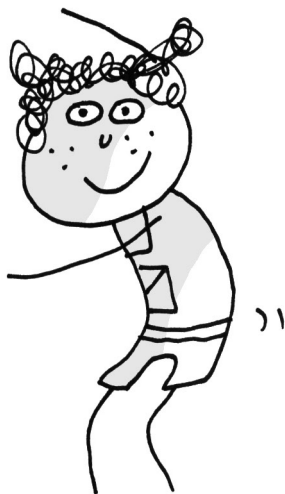
We go in.

'I'm Julia,' she
says.

'What made the
hole in your boot?'
asks Cat.

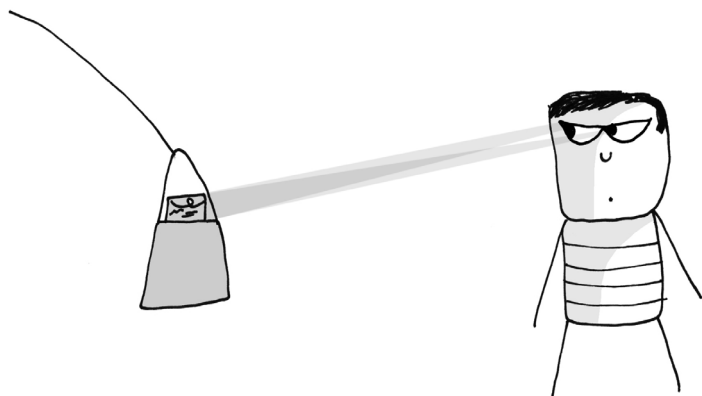
'I trod on a pin,'
she answers, looking
surprised.

Turning, Cat mouths, *'I am a better detective than you!'* And she wiggles her bum, like a cat wiggling its tail.



I now look at Julia carefully.

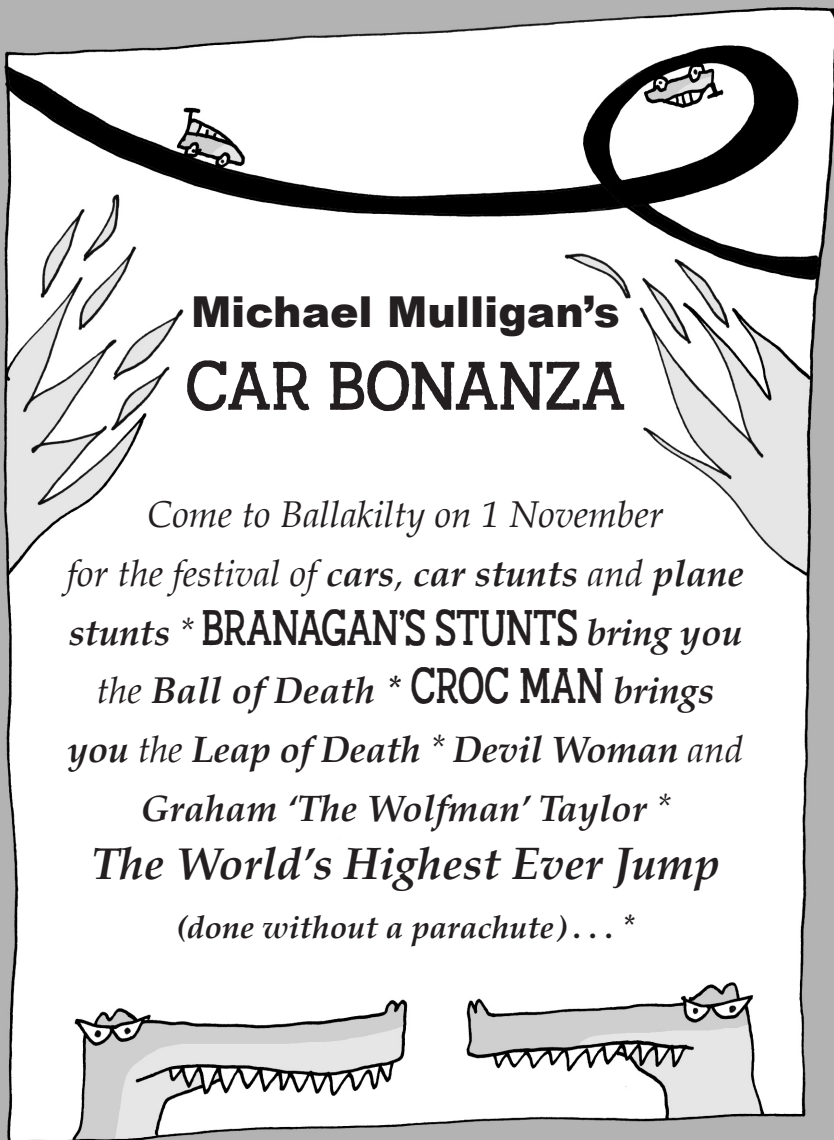
And with my highly trained detective vision *I* notice *a leaflet* in Julia's bag. I catch sight of two very interesting words . . . '*Michael Mulligan*'.



Michael Mulligan is a famous, dangerous *crime lord*. I came up against him when I was solving the Big Cash Robbery.

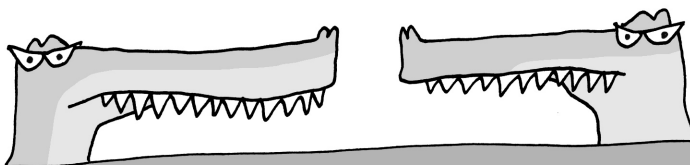
'Can I look at that?' I ask Julia.

She says, 'Sure!' She takes out the leaflet, and I cannot *believe* it, because it says . . .



Michael Mulligan's CAR BONANZA

*Come to Ballakilty on 1 November
for the festival of cars, car stunts and plane
stunts * **BRANAGAN'S STUNTS** bring you
the *Ball of Death* * **CROC MAN** brings
you the *Leap of Death* * Devil Woman and
Graham 'The Wolfman' Taylor *
The World's Highest Ever Jump
(done without a parachute)... **



The words 'Branagan's Stunts' *leap* out at me. I am thinking: *That could actually be Dad!* I lift the leaflet up to Cat's face.



'That is happening TODAY,' she says.

'Yes, and my dad could *be* there!'

'We should GO!' she says.

'We definitely should!' I agree.

But my brother never wants to go anywhere. (He just wants to stay all day lurking in the dark, being EVIL like a big fat slug.)

‘There are LOADS of Branagans,’ he says. ‘And Ballakilty is *ten miles away*. If you tell Mum you’ve gone ten miles to go *detectiving*, she will throw you ten miles into *space*!’

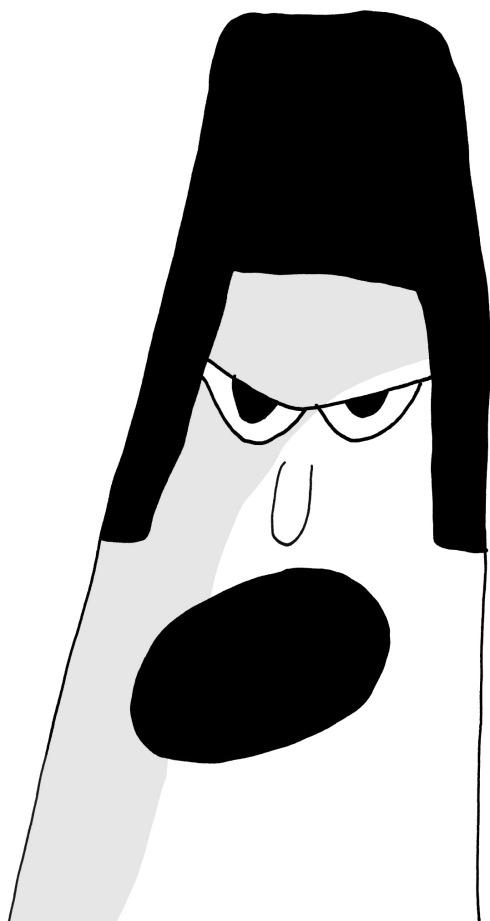


'Well, *I'd* definitely like to go,' says Julia. 'That's why I got the leaflet!'

'And *I* want to go,' says Cat.

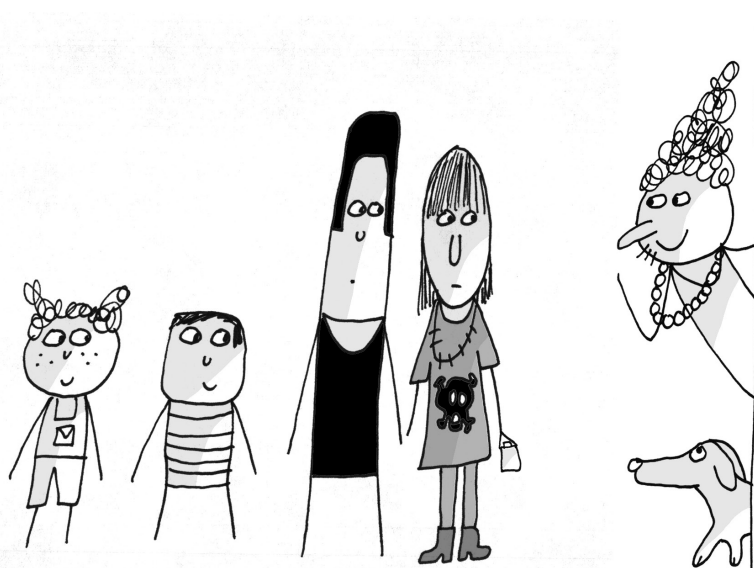
'And *I definitely* want to go!' I say.

'*How are we all supposed to get to Car Bonanza?*' shouts my brother (now losing it).

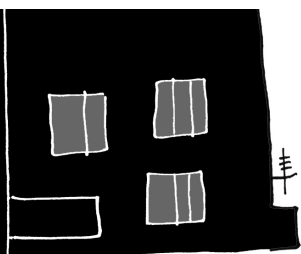


Suddenly Mrs Welkin appears from the toilet.

‘We could take the camper van,’ she says.



I didn't even know Mrs Welkin was listening. It turns out she *was*, and she has a *camper van*.



We write a note for Mum and head
out to see it.

