

NINA AND THE FULLMOON GRANNY

Nina has taken to wearing her roll-neck jumper to bed. It's itchy, but it's better than being bitten in the neck by a vampire.

"And they really do that," says her brother, Ingo.

"There's no such thing as vampires, dear, you can be sure of that," says Nina's grandma, who is very wise.

"Grandma only says that because she's a vampire herself!"

Nina doesn't believe a word it, of course, and covers her ears.

"Have you ever noticed that Grandma can't sleep at full moon? And why doesn't she like garlic? She puts her false teeth in a glass at night to make space for her vampire fangs! Then she creeps out her room, because she's thirsty for blood!"

"Get out!"

Ingo doesn't get a chance to continue.

But maybe he's right, and Grandma really is a vampire!

And then, as she lies in bed, she actually does hear strange noises.

"Mummy!" cries Nina, but by the time Mummy comes, the scratching noise has stopped and the vampire has vanished.

"Isn't there anything that helps protect against vampires?" asks Nina.

"Crucifixes and garlic are supposed to work, but believe me, Nina, there are no vampires."

"Can't we send Grandma to a retirement home?" asks Nina the next day.

"Then we'd have space for a dog or a kangaroo."

"You're lucky Grandma is here," says Mummy. "Otherwise you'd have to stay home alone with Ingo."

"We have to stay with Grandma, alone? No way. I... feel ill."

But no matter what Nina thinks up, Mummy's decision is final.

Not even hiding Daddy's shiny shoes stops them from going out.

So Nina eats her garlic pizza and makes a crucifix out of Lego.

She barricades herself in her Punch and Judy theatre and waits for the vampire.

The door opens, and she hears an eerie shuffling.

"Nina, I wanted to give you a good-night kiss."

"That's what you think!" cries Nina, and shields herself with the crucifix.

"Is it an aeroplane?" asks Grandma.

"Don't be silly, it's a crucifix!" says Nina. "What do you think of that, you bloodsucking grandma?"

"Very nice," she replies.

But she has no idea what Nina means by "bloodsucking grandma".

Then Nina tells her everything that Ingo had said.

But she doesn't get very far, because Grandma starts laughing loudly.

And then Nina starts laughing too.

Grandma explains to her that many people have trouble sleeping, and that she even hated garlic when she was a child.

And then she takes out her false teeth to show Nina that she's not hiding any vampire fangs underneath.

"But who was creeping around outside my door last night?"

They look at each other. "Ingo! Of course!"

But how just should they pay him back for his mean trick?

Grandma sends Ingo to bed, then creeps into Nina's room.

The two of them put on some terrifying make up. While Grandma is putting on a dark cape, Nina puts two felt-tip pen lids over her canine teeth.

The two of them lie in wait. Before long, they hear a scratching on Nina's door.

Nina starts to scream: "No, Grandma, please! Go away! Help!"

Ingo's blood runs cold.

Then the door opens, and there stands Grandma, licking her lips and wiping the blood from her mouth. Then she goes into her room without saying a word.

Ingo almost wets himself for fear. Cautiously, he goes into Nina's room.

"Nina?" Something shifts under the blanket.

Nina hisses at him, baring her vampire fangs.

Ingo runs screaming out of the room. "Mummy! Daddy!"

Luckily, they arrive home just at that moment.

He runs crying to their arms.

"Grandma is a vampire," he stammers, "and Nina too!"

As Mummy quietly peeps into Nina's room to check on her, Nina seems to be asleep.

Ingo wonders if he maybe just dreamed it all.

But then Mummy goes into the bathroom and bumps into Grandma, who is wiping away the last traces of make-up. Grandma starts laughing and Mummy is confused.

Curious, she turns on Nina's light, and there she finds a red-haired vampire who is laughing so much that she has to hold her tummy.

Ingo is the only one who doesn't find it funny. He finds it very difficult to get to sleep that night.

Eventually Nina feels sorry for him and brings the Lego crucifix and the itchy roll-neck jumper to his bed.

"But there's really no such thing as vampires, is there?"

"You can never be sure," says Nina, and lies down to sleep.