

## Chesy Beans and Sausage

Ben sped home on his bike, not even noticing his burning legs and aching chest. He was going so fast he thought the police might give him a speeding ticket. As the wheels raced round so did his mind.

*Could his boring old granny really be a gangsta?!*

*A Gangsta Granny?!*

*That must be why she liked books about gangstas so much – she was one!*

He slid through the back door just as the familiar *Strictly Stars Dancing* theme tune

blasted out from the living room. He had made it home just in time.

But as Ben was about to disappear upstairs and pretend he had been in his bedroom doing his homework, Mum burst into the kitchen.

“What are you doing?” she asked suspiciously.

“You look very sweaty.”

“Oh, nothing,” said Ben, feeling very sweaty.

“Look at you,” she continued, as she approached him. “You are sweating like a pig.”

Ben had seen a few pigs in his life and none of them had been sweating. In fact, pig fans everywhere will tell you that pigs don’t even have sweat glands, so they can’t sweat.

Wow, this book is actually really educational.

“I’m not sweating,” Ben protested. Being accused of sweating made him sweat even more.

“You *are* sweating. Have you been out running?”

“No,” replied a now very sweaty Ben.

“Ben, don’t lie to me, I’m your mother,” she said, pointing at herself, a false nail flying off into the air in the process.

Her false nails came off a lot. Once Ben had even found one in his microwaveable paella Bolognese.

“If you haven’t been out running, Ben, then why are you sweating?”

Ben had to think fast. *The Strictly Stars*

*Dancing* theme tune was coming to an end.

“I was dancing!” he blurted out.

“Dancing?” Mum didn’t look convinced. Ben was no Flavio Flavioli. And of course he hated ballroom dancing.

“Yes, well, I have changed my mind about ballroom dancing. I love it!”

“But you said you hated it,” shot back an increasingly suspicious Mum. “Many many

many times. Only the other week you said that you would rather 'eat your own bogeys than watch that rubbish'. Hearing you say that was like a dagger through my heart!"

Mum was becoming visibly upset at the memory.

"I'm sorry, Mum, I really am."

Ben reached out a hand to comfort her and another false nail fell on to the floor. "But now I love it, honestly. I was just watching *Strictly* through the crack in the door, and copying all the moves."

Mum beamed with pride. She looked as if her whole life suddenly had meaning. Her face turned strangely happy yet sad, as if this was destiny.

"Do you want to be a..." She took a deep breath, "...professional dancer?"

"Where's my Cheesy Beans and Sausage,

wife?!" called Dad from the living room.

"Shut your face, Pete!" Mum's eyes were wet with tears of joy.

She hadn't cried so much since Flavio was kicked out of the show in week two last year. Flavio had been forced to partner Dame Rachel Prejudice, who was so podgy all he could do was drag her around the floor.

"Well... erm... aah..." Ben desperately searched for a way to get out of this one. "... yeah."

That really wasn't it.

"Yes! I knew it!" cried Mum. "Pete, come in here a moment. Ben has got something he needs to tell you."

Dad trudged in wearily. "What is it, Ben? You're not joining the circus, are you? My word, you are sweaty."

"No, Pete," said Mum, slowly and deliberately



as if she was about to read out the name of a winner at an awards ceremony. “Ben doesn’t want to be a silly old plumber any more—”

“Thank goodness for that,” said Dad.

“He wants to be...” Mum looked at her son.

“Tell him, Ben.”

Ben opened his mouth, but before he could say anything Mum chimed in. “Ben wants to be a ballroom dancer!”

“Oh, there is a God!” exclaimed Dad. He looked up at the nicotine-stained ceiling as if he might catch a glimpse of the divine one.

“He was just practising in the kitchen,” jabbered Mum excitedly. “Copying all the moves from the show...”

Dad looked into his son’s eyes and shook his hand manfully. “That’s wonderful news, my boy! Your mum and me haven’t achieved much in our lives. What with Mum being a nail polisher—”

“I am a nail technician, Pete!” corrected Mum scornfully. “There is a world of difference, Pete, you do know that...”

“Nail technician. Sorry. And me being just a boring old security guard because I was too fat for the police. The most excitement I’ve had all year was when I stopped a man in a wheelchair speeding out of the store with a tin of custard

concealed under his blanket. But you becoming a ballroom dancer, well... this... this is the greatest thing that's ever happened to us."

"The very greatest!" said Mum.

"The very very greatest," agreed Dad.

"Really it's the very very very greatest," said Mum.

"Let's just agree it's extremely great," said Dad, irritated. "Only, I warn you, boy, it's not going to be easy. If you train eight hours a day every day for the next twenty years, you might just get on the TV show."

"Maybe he can do the American version!" exclaimed Mum. "Oh Pete, just imagine, our boy a huge star in America!"

"Well, let's not jump the gun, wife. He's not won the British one yet. Right now we have to think about entering him for a junior competition."

"You're right, Pete. Gail told me there's one in the town hall just before Christmas."

"Crack open the sparkling wine, wife! Our son is going to be a cha-cha-cha champion!"

A naughty word exploded in Ben's head.

How on earth was he going to get out of this?!