Gangsta Granny – plot summary

11-year-old Ben lives in Basildon and visits his grandmother's house every Friday while his parents go out dancing. Ben finds Granny, who has an obsession with cabbage products, boring, until he comes across a large box of jewellery while looking for a biscuit. Granny reveals herself to have been an international jewel thief, known as the "Black Cat", involved in many high-profile heists during her youth, but she tells Ben that she was never able to steal the Crown Jewels, kept in the Tower of London. This prompts Ben, who has a passion for plumbing, to devise a plan to raid the Tower. Granny agrees to go along with his plans.

At the same time, Ben's parents Mike and Linda, who love dancing and unaware of Ben's passion for plumbing, intend to enrol Ben into a ballroom dancing competition. Granny's local neighbours, Mr Parker and his son, watch over Ben's movements to and from Granny's house and suspect that the duo is up to no good.

Granny suffers a fall and is found to have a terminal illness. Granny escapes from the hospital and the plan for the heist continues. On the day of the heist, he forgets the competition and, not having practised once Ben embarrasses himself on the dance floor.

Following the debacle, Ben returns to his grandmother's house to continue with the heist. After Mr Parker fails to stop the heist by tipping off a policeman, Ben and Granny are escorted by the police to the Tower. They gain access to the White Tower in which the Crown Jewels are kept through the complex's sewerage system and a diversion which unsettles the patrols of the Tower's guards. Once inside the White Tower, the duo is met by Queen Elizabeth II, who pardons them, in keeping with tradition, as the last person to attempt to steal the Crown Jewels was also pardoned. In front of the Queen, Granny claims that the jewellery in her box is plastic and that she had made up her biography when she had realised how boring Ben thought she was. Ben and Granny are later met by the police, but they get off the hook after Granny points out that they do not have the Crown Jewels with them.

Granny dies, and her jewellery box is donated to charity. Ben reads at his local newsagent's that a jewellery box worth millions had been anonymously left at a charity shop. Granny's legacy is remembered, all the way through to Christmas, when the Queen delivers a message that young people should be more caring towards the elderly.