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Opening extract from

Jonny Jakes Investigates the Hamburgers of Doom

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Monday 15th October

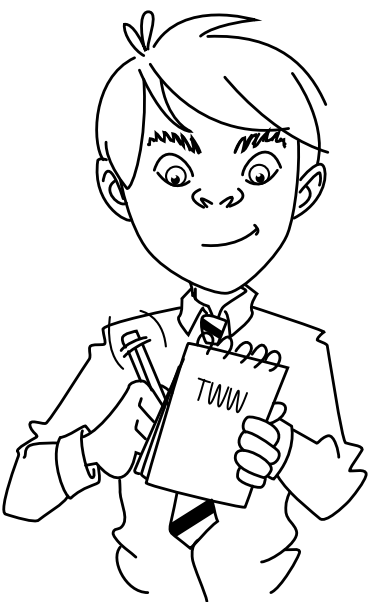
I'm Jonny Jakes.

That's not my real name.

When you're an undercover journalist you don't use your own name. If you're deep undercover you don't even use your own hair.

I have three spy cameras, fifteen disguises and more wigs than is normally considered healthy for a boy of my age.

I'm the reporter for *The Woodford Word*. Some people call it the unofficial school newspaper.



I call it ten pages of truth and justice.

The Head Teacher, Mr Hardy, thinks *The Woodford Word* is 'scurrilous, misleading and unsuitable for young minds'.

That's the thanks you get for telling it like it is.

He's offering a reward of one hundred house points for any information that might lead to the unmasking of Jonny Jakes or the mysterious editor of the paper, Fiona Friend.

My other name is Fiona Friend.

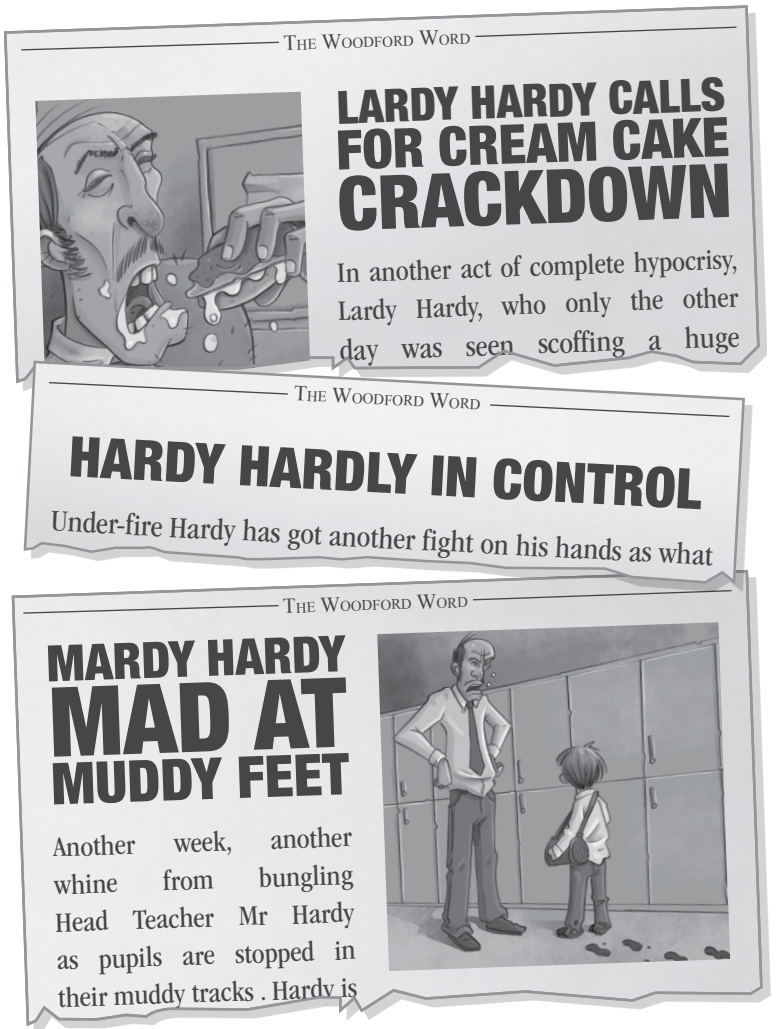
If you want to read about how the school 'allows pupils' creativity to flourish in a supportive environment' then pick up the school's glossy prospectus. It's got a picture on the front of the Head Boy pretending to laugh at one of Mr Hardy's jokes.

If you want to know how the school really works then pick up a paper.

Mr Hardy would much rather you picked up a prospectus.

He doesn't like me.

I think some of my headlines might have offended him:



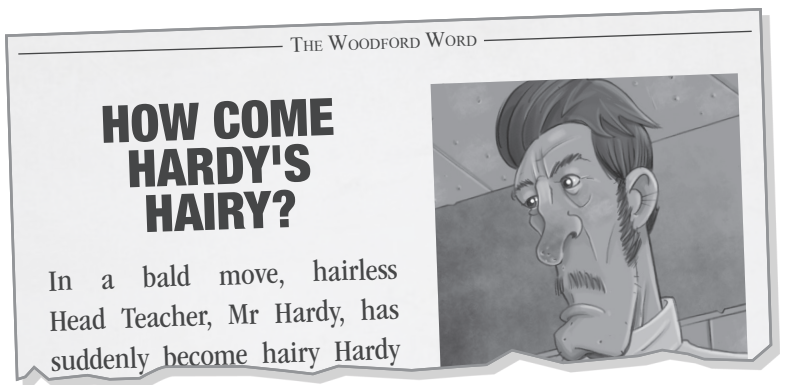
To be honest, I can see why.

Not all of my headlines are about Mr Hardy. After all, *The Woodford Word* is there to provide the school population with balanced reporting about every aspect of school life.

It's just that Mr Hardy asks for it.

Take today. Up until last week Mr Hardy's bald patch was big enough to blind low-flying aircraft. This morning he walked in with shiny black hair.

So I'm going with:


THE WOODFORD WORD

HOW COME HARDY'S HAIRY?

In a bald move, hairless Head Teacher, Mr Hardy, has suddenly become hairy Hardy

I mean, what am I supposed to do? Pretend it didn't happen? My readers need integrity. I'm a defender of truth and justice.

And I've got a paper to sell.

Tuesday 16th October

Home Made Bread Day

On no account let mum find this out.

Hardy went ballistic.

He ordered bag searches across the whole school. Normally I'm pretty careful but today I had some new material for the paper badly hidden in my Geography textbook.

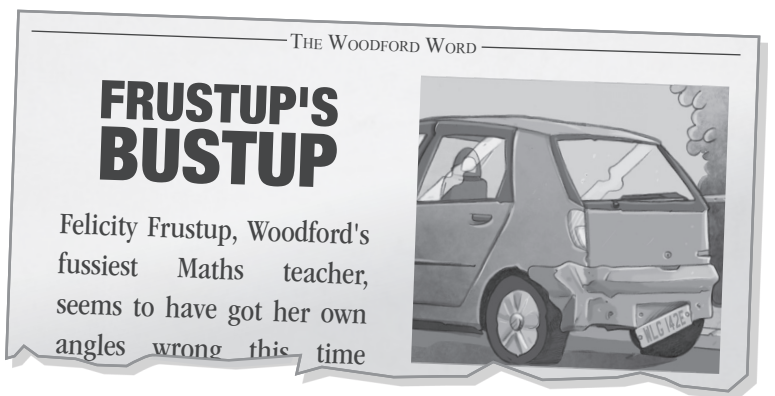
I was in English when it happened, Mrs McKeane's class. I'm good at English. I just try to make sure Mrs McKeane never finds out.

I was sat next to Norris. Norris Morris. He's only eleven and already he's the biggest boy in the school. Which is a good job considering his name.

Mrs McKeane announced that she would be inspecting our bags, row by row, and anyone found with anything they shouldn't have would be sent straight to the Head. She was very thorough. Books were shaken, bags were turned upside down and every copy of *The Woodford Word* was removed and thrown into a black bin bag.

I was trapped.

I stole a look beneath the table. My bag was open and there, sticking out of *The Planet We Live On*, was the picture I'd taken of Miss Frustup's rear bumper. Her car had mysteriously got a dent in it at exactly the same time as the No Entry sign at the front of school got knocked over. All the teachers were blaming it on 'local youths' but I knew different. I'd pencilled an idea for a headline above it:



It was investigative journalism at its finest and it was about to get me chucked out of school.

Next to my bag, by a pair of huge feet, was Norris's bag. It was also open. I looked up. Mrs McKeane was getting closer. Trying not to think about the operation

I would need if Norris's boots ever connected with my backside, I reached beneath the desk and slid my textbook and its deadly contents into Norris's bag.

Mrs McKeane reached our row of tables. She raked her bitter and twisted eyes over us. I tried to act normal but she was staring so hard everyone was starting to look like they'd done something wrong.

Everyone, that is, except Norris.

Norris smiled.

Norris always smiles. That's why everyone thinks he's thick.

Mrs McKeane thought Norris was thick, that's why he was on the back row with me. I could see what she was thinking. Why waste time searching the bags of intellectual pond-life when none of us would be able to read *The Woodford Word* let alone write it?

With a cluck of her tongue she made up her mind. She spun on her heel and headed back to her favourites at the front of the class and Act 3 Scene 5 of *Romeo and*

Juliet.

I was free to write again another day.

I'd completely forgotten about Norris until a large hand tapped me on the shoulder at lunch break.

I turned around slowly. My eyes drew level with a large, white-shirted stomach. I looked up to see a bristly chin and the twin black holes of two giant nostrils. Although it was hard to tell from the angle I was looking from, I was pretty sure Norris was smiling.



I had no idea if that was a good sign or a bad sign.

Norris reached into his blazer pocket and began to pull out some rolled up paper. It looked very familiar. I said goodbye to the world and shut my eyes.

When nothing happened I opened my eyes again. Norris's smile had grown even bigger than normal.

"'Frustup's Bustup". Nice one,' the giant boy said. Then he winked a huge eyelid and strode off across the playground.

It's amazing I've got through the day without a change of underwear.

Wednesday 17th October

World Kindness Day

But apparently we still have to go to school.

Hardy's on his way out! He's had enough.

I haven't even been here a whole term.

I found out waiting for the nurse. I'm an expert at waiting for the nurse. No one bothers me. I put my head in my hands and make a sort of moaning sound. It's like you're invisible.

The great thing about waiting for the nurse is that you get to overhear everything Mrs Singh says. She's Mr Hardy's secretary in the next office along. She's so loud

you could probably overhear her in the next postal district.

I get most of my stories waiting for the nurse and accidentally overhearing Mrs Singh.

As I held my stomach and made the occasional groan I could hear Mrs Singh on the phone. I'm still not convinced she actually needs one. Her door was closed and I could tell she was trying to keep her voice down but I still heard more than enough:

'...take out an advert ... needs to include an interview date ... application forms available from...'

And the clincher:

'...salary of £80,000.'

Only one job at Woodford School earns that sort of money.

It's time for a special issue.

I can't decide on a headline, there are so many to choose from:

HARDY HITS THE HIGHWAY

or

HAPPY END TO HARDY HORROR

or

NO MORE HARDY, LET'S PARTY!

I could use the picture I took of the Year Nines waving goodbye from the back of the coach on their way to the Residential. It's perfect. They've got their faces squashed up against the window and they're waving with their thumbs in their ears.

I could have a Classic Quotes section from Mr Hardy's assemblies, including my all-time favourite:

'This school is a happy school, a caring school and if I ever find out who stole our framed "Happy Child" Gold Star certificate from outside the canteen then I'll make them wish they'd never been born.'

But that's only two pages.

I need someone to help me find some more material. Someone who won't arouse suspicion. Someone who won't give me away. Someone who won't mind using a silly name.

One particular someone springs to mind.



Thursday 18th October

The good news is that the special edition notched up record sales.

The bad news is if I wasn't Public Enemy Number One before, I sure am now.

The teachers are mad I've found out about Hardy leaving before them. Mr Hardy's mad because the teachers are mad. And now the parents have gone mad.

They think *The Woodford Word* has become a menace. They think the school is out of control. They're demanding that Jonny Jakes and Fiona Friend be silenced immediately.

I don't want to be silenced.

Everyone's trying to catch me out. Teachers are patrolling everywhere. The IT technicians keep flashing Administrator warnings up on the computers. There are random bag checks all the time and the photocopier rooms are locked after every use.

I'm going to have to be careful.

Mrs McKeane keeps looking at me in a strange way. Maybe I got carried away with my essay on *Romeo and Juliet* and forgot to put in enough mistakes. Maybe she's wondering how *The Woodford Word* found out about her forgetting Mr De Toillet's silent 't' last week.

Or maybe I've got GUILTY written all over my face.

Fortunately no one suspects Norris. No one ever suspects Norris. He just keeps smiling at everyone.

He must be the only pupil that hasn't had his bag checked so he's got loads of pictures. I might not be getting a paper out anytime soon but when I do I'm going to have plenty to say about this brutal suppression of free speech.

I'm thinking:

TEACHERS CAN'T TAKE THE TRUTH

Or maybe even:

TRUTH TRAMPLED IN TERRIFYING REIGN OF TEACHER TERROR

Although that's probably overdoing the Ts.

And then there's the damage to the business. The loyalty of my customers. Much more bag searching and they'll turn on me.

Or they would do if they knew who I was.

No paper equals no profit. No profit equals no more disguises. No more disguises means no more wigs.

I must be strong.

Friday 19th October

Wrong Socks Day

Really?

Someone else wants to join *The Woodford Word*.

Norris found the Post-it note stuck under a teacher's desk in French. The undersides of the French teachers' desks are the communication network of the entire student population. I mean, when was the last time you saw a French teacher look closely at the bottom of their own desk?

Exactly.

