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Opening extract from

Completely Cassidy Star Reporter

Written by

Tamsyn Murray

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For Tania, the original Cassidy.

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COMPLETELY CASSIDY



TAMSYN MURRAY

USBORNE

Page torn out of Mum's book
SPICE UP YOUR LIFE!

Tired of living a life you hate?

Of course you are. But did you know the power to change is inside each and every one of us? All you need to do is find a way to unlock that power! Start by writing it down here:

I TOTALLY need to spice up my life. I'm still looking for my thing – a talent that stops me being a Nobody and turns me into a Somebody. My theory is that everyone has something they do really, really well. Last term, I thought I might be an undiscovered genius but it turns out that's not my thing, so I'm stepping up my search. And if whatever it is turns out to make me really popular (especially with ~~Nathan Crossfield~~ You Know Who) and gets me some respect, I won't mind at all.

Also, I'd like the power to mute my brother, Liam, so that I don't have to listen to his moronic ramblings. And if it worked on my baby brother and sister too, that'd be AWESOME.

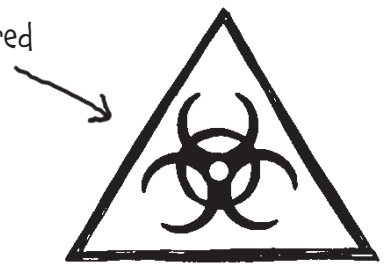
CHAPTER ONE



"Once upon a time there was a girl called Cassidy. She was gentle and kind, in spite of being poor and having a cruel older brother. Everyone loved her, especially her faithful dog, Rolo, and her besties, Molly and Shenice. She lived in a rose-covered cottage in the middle of the woods and every morning, she sang so sweetly that even the birds stopped to listen—"

WHAT IS THAT SMELL?

What **IS** it? Seriously, it is like something has died in my room. The twins are asleep in Mum and Dad's room – surely it can't be them? Then again, nothing would surprise me where Joshua and Ethel's bottoms are concerned. Having lived through some of their nappies in the last five months, I am amazed our house hasn't been declared a biological hazard. I know they can't help it but I am pretty sure I didn't do that when I was a baby.



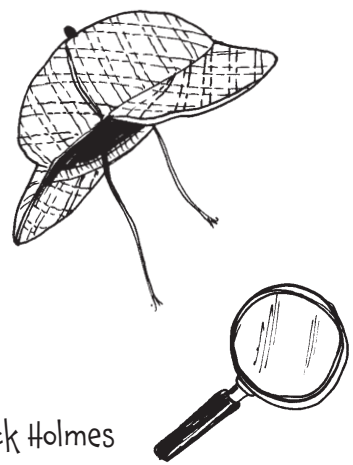
I **SUPPOSE** it could always be Liam – he is almost fifteen and smells worse than our wheelie bin. But I think he is round at a mate's house and even he does not stink that much. Whatever the cause, it is making my eyes water. How am I supposed to turn my life into a fairy tale using less than five hundred words for double English tomorrow when the atmosphere around me is more poisonous than Saturn's? Some people might say it is my

own fault for leaving my homework until eight o'clock on a Sunday evening but that hardly helps me now, does it? There isn't even any way I can use the pong as an excuse for not doing my essay – ever since we came back after the Easter holidays, the teachers at St Jude's have been drumming into us that the end-of-year exams are just around the corner. Never mind that it is only the end of April and the exams are not until June – apparently, even physical evidence that the dog has eaten your homework is Not Good Enough.

Which brings me to the only other stinky suspect – my dog, Rolo. When I asked for a puppy for my tenth birthday, I didn't know we would somehow end up with one who was part chocolate Labrador, part T. rex. **NOTHING** is safe around him, as my dad found to his cost when he left one of his Elvis Presley wigs lying on the sofa and came down the next morning to find only the tufty black quiff left. And as the old saying goes, what goes in, must come out – pretty sure I don't need to

draw you a picture. But as disgusting as Rolo is, he doesn't usually do his business in the house. And this smell is so bad, it can only be an inside job. I wonder if I can work it into my fairy tale somehow – **CINDERSMELLA**, maybe. Urgh. I will have to turn one of Mum's bras into a gas mask at this rate.

It's no good, I am going to have to investigate. Hey, maybe that could be my talent – I could be a great detective and solve crimes. One mystery...three suspects...a dangerous mission to uncover the truth...



Alright, it's not exactly Sherlock Holmes but even he had to start somewhere.

Mum and Dad were slumped on the sofa when I went downstairs. Mum was gently snoring and Dad was so engrossed in an **ELVIS** documentary that he hadn't noticed the smell.

"Although now you come to mention it, there is a hint of Brussels sprouts in the air," he said, wrinkling his nose. "Is Liam home?"

I shook my head. "It's either the babies or Rolo."

"Or both," Dad suggested, pulling a face. He glanced at Mum, who chose that moment to let out an especially unladylike snort. "Shall we investigate? I'll be Doctor Who and you can be my assistant."

"No, thanks," I said, following Dad up the stairs. "I'll be the Doctor and you can be the sidekick."

The stink that greeted us when we opened the door

was unbelievable. And we soon realized why – Joshua had had the kind of nappy malfunction they don't show you on the adverts. I'm not joking, his vest was basically an enormous brown stain, starting at his bottom and stretching all the way up to his neck. It looked like someone had spray-painted him while he slept.

Dad clamped his hand over his mouth. "Ah fink ee ave fan ver cubrit."

I pinched my nose. "Whad?"

He removed his hand and winced. "I said, I think we've found the culprit."

I couldn't argue with that – the evidence was pretty overwhelming. What I couldn't get over was the way that Ethel was sleeping soundly next to him, completely unaware that WORLD WAR POO had begun beside her.

Backing away from the horror, I left Dad to it and went to get the changing stuff.

Half an hour later the smell was **STILL** lingering, even though Dad had sorted Joshua out and opened a window to let some air in. I was back in my room and doing my best to concentrate on my homework, but the stink seemed to be getting worse.

After several hard sniffs, I decided that after all that the pong might actually be coming from under my bed, which kind of ruled out the twins. I thought about calling Dad again, but then I remembered that a good investigator does her own dirty work, so I took a deep breath and peered under the bed. And there, staring up at me, was a very embarrassed-looking Rolo. Holding a cushion over my nose, I leaned closer and saw he was encrusted from head to toe in something brown and smelly. The parts that weren't crusty seemed to be oozing. I have no idea what he'd rolled in – have the

neighbours upgraded their tabby to a pet elephant or something? And it was just typical that he'd hidden in my room instead of Liam's. There's all kinds of rubbish and fluff under my bed, which probably explains why he had a Starburst wrapper stuck over one eye and – URGH – the pong! Let's just say it made Joshua's little accident seem like a walk in the rose gardens.

I have texted Molly and Shenice, letting them know that POOMAGEDDON has struck and that I might not survive the clean-up operation.

It's at times like this I wish we'd got a cat.



CHAPTER TWO



AAARGH! There is only one thing worse than being woken up at three-thirty in the morning by a screaming baby. And that's being woken up by two screaming babies. Especially when it's a school night and you've only just nodded off after the last time they broke the sound barrier.

Joshua and Ethel have the kind of cries that pierce pillows and it's turning us into sleep-deprived wrecks. Sometimes I think they wait until we've all drifted off