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Opening extract from

The Fish Detective

Written by

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& Nick V. Murphy

MOONE BOY

The Fish Detective



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To all the glorious migrants of the world – enjoy this book. But please don't use it as an example of good English. And to my son, Art, who emigrated from the womb around Chapter 6 and is already making a name for himself.

Chris

To my son, Jules, who showed up around Chapter 12. I hope this book is pleasant to chew on, is absorbent of your puke and will some day make you giggle as much as having a raspberry blown on your armpits.

Nick



Hello!

Sean 'Caution' Murphy here. Professional Imaginary Friend and Local Man of Mystery! (Apart from my name and occupation, which I just told you.)

Before we begin, please just check to make sure you're in the right book.

This is *Moone Boy: The Fish Detective*. If you've come for *Moo Joy: The Cow's Objective*, then you're in the wrong place – try the Nature section. Likewise, if you're looking for *Mean Boys: A Bully's Perspective*, *Food Toys: The Fun Congestive* or *Flu Boy: The Snotty Infective*, then please move along and ask for assistance.

But if you're in the *right* place, then welcome to this book! I'll be your book host! So come on in and make yourself at home. Put your feet up.

Not on the book though. Unless you don't mind reading through your toes.

Help yourself to some snacks – if you've brought some snacks. Snacks are not included with this book. Although you're very welcome to chew on the cover. All the red bits taste like strawberries.

OK, you ready? Then let's get this party started! Buckle up, slouch down and put your eyes to work, because these pages aren't going to read themselves! Unless you've bought the expensive Self-Reading Edition. In which case, press 'Auto-Read' now and enjoy a nice nap.

But the rest of you cheapskates – commence Manual Reading!

Signed,
Sean Murphy

PS I've just been informed that the red bits *don't* taste like strawberries. This is due to a malfunction by the printing machine. It

seems that your new phonebook will taste like strawberries instead, and this book just tastes like a phonebook. But if you happen to like the finger-lickin' flavour of names and numbers, then lap it up, my friends, because you're in for a tasty treat!

CHAPTER ONE
FIFTY SLEEPS TO CHRISTMAS

A year is a very long time when you're an idiot.

When you think about it, there are very few things you could do for a whole year. You couldn't spend a year growing your toenails, for example, or you'd require some kind of hacksaw to trim them. You couldn't eat nothing but honey for an entire year, or bees would start growing in your belly. That's a fact – I looked it up. And you should avoid whistling the same song every day for a year or your classmates will eventually turn on you and staple your shoes to the ceiling – possibly while you're still wearing them, depending on the song.

To cope with the curse of the calendar, Martin Moone had developed the habit of dividing each year into smaller sections of

roughly fifty days. Give or take a week here and there. These year sections, or 'yections' as he liked to call them, helped Martin cope with the vastness of time before him. He even named these yections, as a way of remembering them.

Boxing for Love: St Stephen's Day to Valentine's Day
Lovefool: Valentine's to April Fool's Day
Fool's Gold: April Fool's to 20th May (my birthday, when I always ask for gold gifts)
Golden Days: 20th May to end of term!
Days of Wonder: summer holidays!
Wonder what happened to the New School Year: start of term to 5th November
Why won't it end?: 5th November to Christmas Day

The yection which always seemed to take the longest to pass was from 5th November to Christmas Day. The evenings were long, the rain was extra chilly and there were no birthdays to distract Martin. (It was actually his sister Sinead's

birthday on 18th November, but every year one of the things she asked for was that Martin got none of her birthday cake – that was one of her actual presents, that Martin got no cake! – so he did his best to ignore her celebrations altogether.)

It was Sunday 5th November in the Moone home, and Martin and I decided to check his yection schedule to see what was in store for the fifty days ahead.



'Hmmm. Not much to get us excited there, buddy,' I grumbled.

But the one upside to entering the saddest yection in his made-up calendar was that it was now only FIFTY SLEEPS TO CHRISTMAS. You probably already knew that because you're a maths genius. And, also, this chapter is called 'Fifty Sleeps to Christmas'. But that had only just occurred to Martin, so he leaped to his feet and rushed into the kitchen to inform his mother. He knew it was unlikely she was aware of the significance of the day because her maths was pretty terrible and she probably hadn't yet read this book.

'Great news, Mam!' the boy blurted. 'It's only fifty sleeps till Christmas!'

'Did we not just have Christmas?'

'What?! No, silly,' he chuckled.

'That was over six yections ago!' I told her. Not that Martin's family could actually see me or hear me, but I liked shouting stuff at them anyway. 'Keep up, Moones!' I yelled.

'Anyway, not to put the pressure on,' Martin continued, 'but I was wondering how your Christmas-present-buying was going?'

Debra paused, which was a bit worrying, and glanced at Martin's dad, who was buttering some toast.

'Ahm, good, yeah,' Liam lied. 'We're torn between getting you new school trousers or fixing the sink in the bathroom. You love that sink, don't you?'

'You're funny, Dad!'

Liam and Debra shared a look that suggested they hadn't been joking at all.

Over the years, Martin had learned to keep expectations low around Christmas. He'd learned this by initially having extraordinarily high expectations (motorboat, diamond-encrusted tennis shoes, volcano holiday, etc.) and always ending up slightly disappointed (boat motor, new slippers, lava lamp, etc.).

'Give 'em the pitch, buddy,' I urged.

Martin nodded and laid out his demands to

his parents. 'I've put a lot of thought into this, folks, and after weeks of having my mind set on some kind of flying carpet for Christmas, my mind is now set on a Game Boy!'

'Your mind seems to set quite quickly,' Debra noted.

'Well, before it was only set like jelly, but now it's set like cement.'

'Who or what is a Game Boy?' Liam asked.

'It's a magical thing, Dad! It's like having a whole games arcade* in the palm of your hand!'

'Are these Game Boyos given out for free somewhere, by any chance?'

'Very funny, Dad. I can't imagine they cost less than a small fortune, but they're so worth it. Trevor at school has one and sometimes he lets me watch him playing it. It's really exciting. I can't even imagine how exciting it would be to *actually* play it.'

***GAMES ARCADE** – a massive room containing games, toys and shady characters. This room was later replaced by the internet.

MOONE DICTIONARY

'The thing is, Martin, money's a bit tight at the moment,' Liam said.

'Is it because Mam spends so much on vegetables? Because I've already offered a solution to that.'

'We can't just send all the vegetables to hell, Martin,' Debra sighed, as if this was a regular argument.

I checked out the dinner Debra was preparing and it actually looked like most of it had come from hell already, so her point was valid.

'Martin,' I said tentatively, 'I have some bad news about dinner.'

Martin peeked into the oven hoping to see his favourite Friday meal – pork shoulder, sausages and meat waffles. What he saw was disappointing.

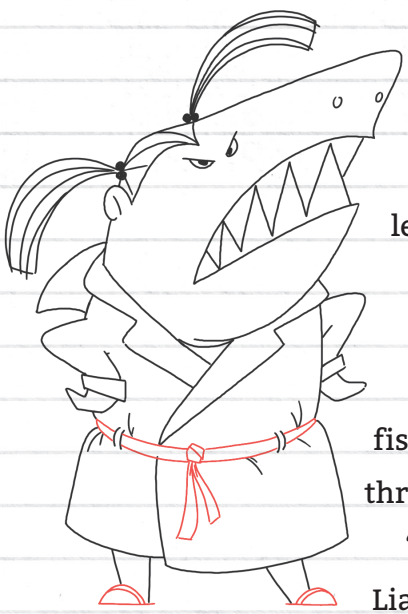
'Are we having flippin' fish again?' he complained. 'We're not sharks, ya know!'

'Imagine if we *were* sharks though, buddy – living with a creature from the deep with razor-sharp teeth, the personality of a dead-eyed

demon and jaws that could rip you apart!'

Just then Martin's sister Sinead entered the kitchen and we realized we already knew what that was like.

'If that bathroom sink leaks on me again, I'm gonna destroy it with my bare hands!' she said, scowling.



'Or your flippers!' I quipped.

Martin's ~~shark~~ sister leaned down to look through the oven window, dead-eyed.

'Are we having flippin' fish again?!' she grunted through her gills.

'C'mon now, Sinead,' Liam sighed. 'We all agreed at the family meeting* that we need to tighten our money belts for a while. So that means

***FAMILY MEETING** – a weekly get-together arranged to shout at fellow family members.

more cheap fish dinners, and no – I repeat, NO! – casual destruction of bathroom hardware.'

As this debate looked set to get violent, Martin and I skulked* away towards the safety of the living-room couch.

'Ya know what, buddy,' I started, 'I think if we really want that Game Boy, we might have to buy it ourselves.'

'Well, Sean, I could see how the back-of-the-couch account is looking. We haven't withdrawn from it since I bought those magic beans from Declan Mannion.'

'What a waste of money *that* was.'

'How were we to know they were just peas?'

'Bottom line is, buddy, if we want a Game Boy, we can't just sit around relying on the kindness of strangers.'

'Or my family, for that matter,' Martin added glumly.

'No, there's only one person you can

***SKULK** – to quietly move out of sight. Originated from when the Incredible Hulk, renowned for his smelly bottom, would drop a fart and amble away, ashamed.

really depend on, Martin.'

'You?' he asked.

'No, definitely not me. I meant you!'

'Me?'

'Yes – who loves you more than you?'

'I don't know. You?'

'No, definitely not me.'

'So I need to rely on my own kindness to myself?'

'Exactly! What we need is a regular wage,' I said, as I perched on the back of the couch in prime thinking pose. 'Then we can buy all the Game Boys we want! We need to get you a job!'

'Yes! I'm twelve years old for crying out loud! It's high time I got a proper job.'

'A real job. For a real man. Making real money. And if we've got enough left over, we can get Christmas presents for the rest of the family too!'

'Let's not go bananas, Sean.'

'You're right, let's buy you a Game Boy and let the family watch you play it.'

'Perfecto!'