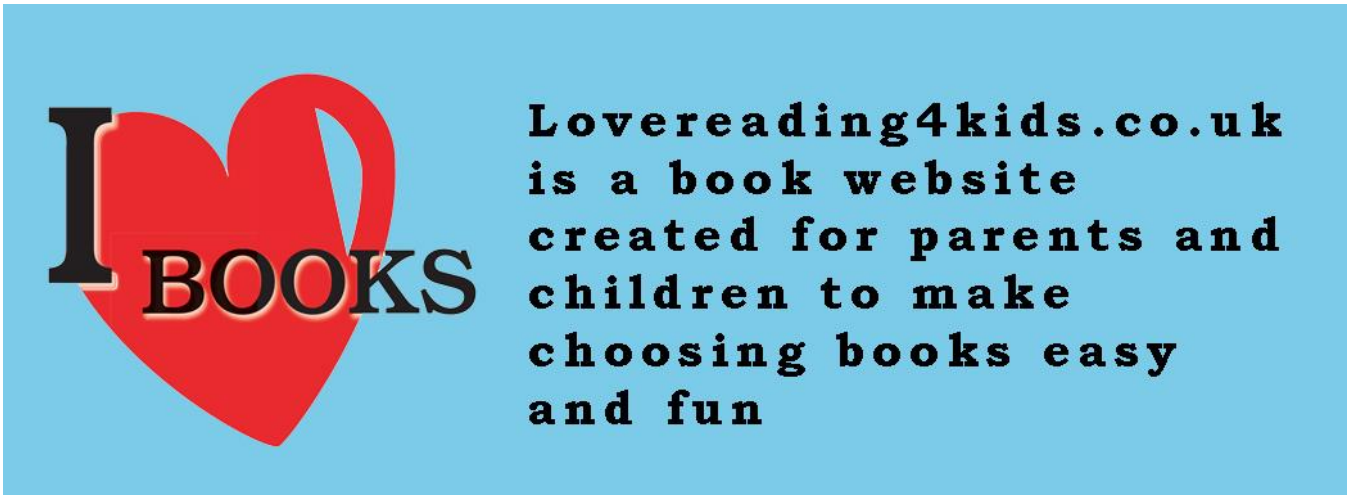


Opening extract from

Spangles McNasty and the Tunnel of Doom

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Illustrated by

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For Nutter
(My imaginary dog)

SW



For Steve's left leg

CM





Shiny Times

Spangles McNasty was a right stinker of a rotter of a nasty of a man. The sort of menace who was happiest when he was eating cold chips from bins, shouting at babies, pulling faces at old ladies and farting in the library – preferably all at the same time.

He owned a heart as cold as a penguin's choc ice, a pair of dancing caterpillar eyebrows, a rusty

camper van and a baldy head full of nasty dreams. But one thing he did not own was a tie, so he was making one out of tin foil.

Spangles stapled the finished tin-foil tie to his grubby shirt, his eyebrows tangoing expertly across his forehead as he did so. He admired his handiwork in the rear-view mirror of his camper-van home and added a tin-foil moustache, which he attached with sticky tape. The moustache was exactly the same shape and size as his actual for-real handlebar moustache but a bit more shiny and a lot less hairy. Finally, he placed a large tin-foil hat-shaped sculpture on top of his baldy head.

As disguises go, it was a bit rubbish.

Rubbish but shiny and, Spangles hoped, enough to stop the Mayor recognising him.



Spangles had been invited to the reading of a will in Bitterly Town Hall. He didn't know what a 'reading of a will' was but he did know the Town Hall was where the Mayor worked and he didn't think Mayor Jackson would be too pleased to see him.

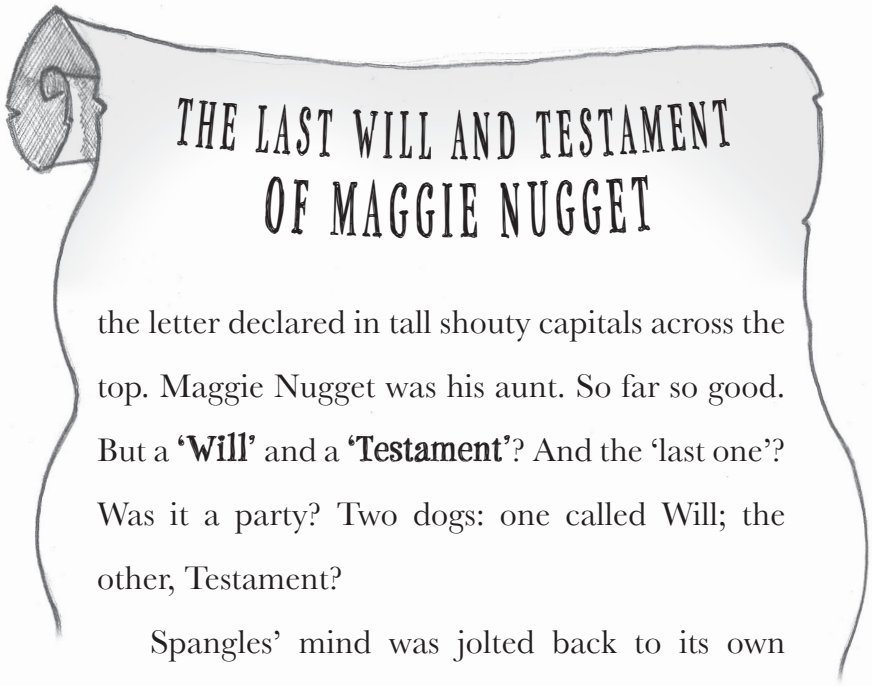
They didn't really get along.

Spangles thought this was because the Mayor was jealous of his moustache. Mayor Jackson

thought it was because Spangles McNasty liked **'collecting'** other people's spangly, shiny, glittery things, or as everyone else calls it, 'stealing'.

Adjusting his tin-foil tie a little, Spangles wondered why tin foil was always silver and not gold and momentarily considered inventing it but quickly changed his tiny mind as that would be all kinds of boring compared to collecting stuff.

For now, though, **collecting** would have to wait. First there was the **MYSTERY** of the will-reading to solve. He pulled a letter from inside his pin-striped jacket, unfolded it and gave it the stare once more. The stare was Spangles' way of dealing with things he didn't understand. It rarely worked, but it was always worth a try.

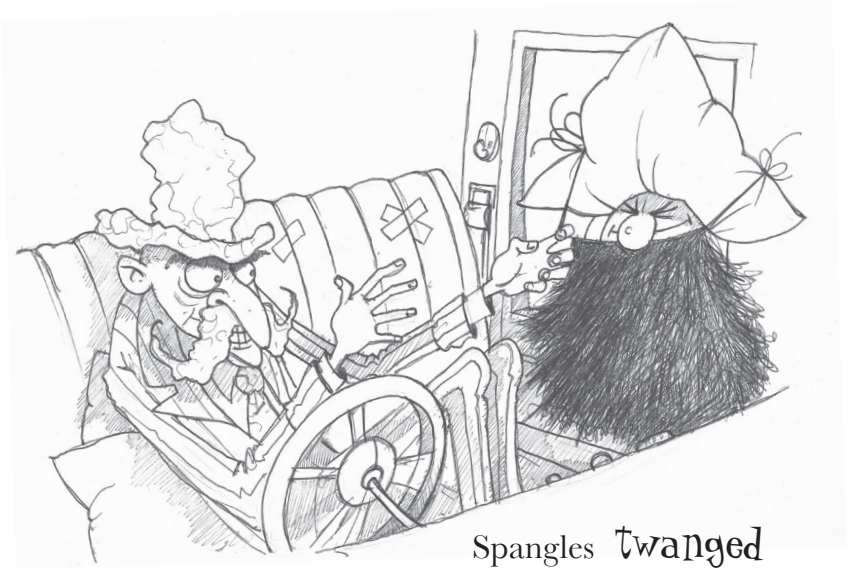


THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF MAGGIE NUGGET

the letter declared in tall shouty capitals across the top. Maggie Nugget was his aunt. So far so good. But a **'Will'** and a **'Testament'**? And the 'last one'? Was it a party? Two dogs: one called Will; the other, Testament?

Spangles' mind was jolted back to its own peculiar reality by a sudden loud banging on the side of his van.

'Wakey, wakey!' Sausage-face Pete yelled, poking his head, hat and beard combination through the window, and filling Spangles' camper van with a **stink of fish** so strong you could spread it on toast.



Spangles twanged the elastic of Sausage's fake beard against his cheek. 'Why do you **always** wear these **fake** whiskers, Sausage?' he asked his old friend with genuine curiosity.

Sausage huffed his head from the window and straightened his oversized yellow fisherman's hat. 'You do know you're dressed like a spaceman, **me old rocket ship?**' he replied, feeling his feelings a little dented. 'I'll have you know this beard once

belonged to my grandfather **Fish-face Jeffrey.**' He gave the fake fuzz a stroke, as if it was a family pet, which was pretty much how he thought of it, except he hadn't given it a name or its own bed.

Sausage-face Pete had been a fisherman long enough to become so used to the **smell of fish** he didn't notice it any more, but everyone else did. Spangles couldn't help thinking that today the aroma was particularly strong.

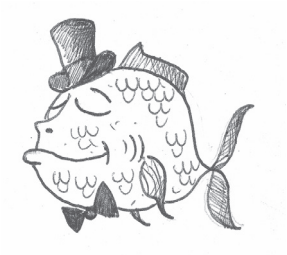
Sausage continued to stroke his fake beard silently.

'What are you up to, Sausage?' Spangles asked. He could smell a spangly opportunity a mile away, and a **fishy friend** even further than that.

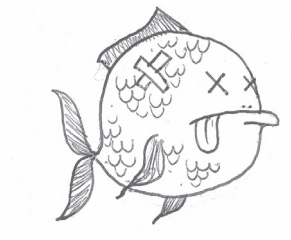
Sausage suddenly remembered his news. He stopped huffing and started bragging instead.

'Well, it's funny you should ask, me old salt an' vinegar. You are looking at the owner of Bitterly Bay's newest fish restaurant: the Sloshy Sushi,' he announced proudly.

'Really? Where is he?' Spangles poked his own head through the window and looked up and down the street.



Sausage ignored his cheeky friend. 'Sushi is like normal fish but so posh you don't have to cook it. Easy peasy, but without the peas,' he explained. 'Opening soon-ish, free glass of sea water with every uncooked dead fish!' he added, flourishing a hand-drawn poster under Spangles' tin-foil tache.



'Sounds disgusting. Count me in.' Spangles snatched the poster and stuffed it into his jacket pocket. 'But first, what do you make of this jibber jabber about wills and things?' He flapped his own paperwork under Sausage's stinky beard.

Sausage lifted the brim of his hat and peered at the letter. 'Aha!' he exclaimed after a moment's remembering. 'A will reading. I went to one of those when my grandfather stopped hanging around my boat.'

Spangles remembered Sausage's grandfather living on his boat with him for a while before he died. Or was it the other way round? It was Sausage's grandfather's fishing boat and, after he died, it became Sausage's boat. Somehow.



'But it can't be about **my** grandfather. He left years ago,' Sausage said, puzzling at the letter again.

'He didn't leave, Sausage, **he died**,' Spangles said as **sensitively** as he could.

'I know, I know, it just sounds so **GLOOMY**. I prefers to say he's **swimmin' with the fishies** or **dancin' with the dodos**!'

'**Whatever** you want to call it, he's not 'ere. And what's that got to do with this **will thing**?'

'Well, a will is a sort of list of what **dead 'uns want** to do with all their stuff after they've died,' Sausage explained, completely **delighted** to be on the wisdom end of a conversation for a change. He grinned as triumphantly as he imagined Sir Isaac Newton probably did when he worked out what gravity was all about. 'And this **will-thing** you're going to is about some dead nutter called Maggie Nugget, **me old jigsaw puzzle**.'

The pieces finally fell into place for Spangles. His aunt Nugget had indeed sadly died. Spangles had even been to the funeral. **Almost.** He went as close as he could but found the whole thing made him feel very angry and some other feeling he'd never felt before and didn't like one bit.

Or as everyone else calls it: **feeling sad**.

Now he was beginning to feel it again just by thinking about feeling it before.

'You all right there, me old handkerchief?' Sausage asked.

'Just got something in me eye, Sausage!' Spangles shouted, his mixed-up emotions melting like jelly in custard. Aunt Nugget had always been kind to Spangles as a boy. Kind enough to teach him how to cheat at cards, pick pockets and steal just about anything.



He smiled at this particular remembering, and suddenly feeling a lorry-load happier said, 'For once, Sausage, I think you might **actually** be right. This **"will reading"** business is something to do with my aunt Nugget and how you got to keep your grandfather's boat.'

'She can't have **my boat**!' Sausage-face Pete suddenly yelled, snatching the letter from Spangles. 'It's a **sushi restaurant**.'

'No, no, Sausage, it's not about **your** boat. It must be about **her** boat,' Spangles replied calmly, taking the letter back and checking the time of the **will reading** again.

'I didn't know she was a fisherman.' Sausage frowned.

Spangles turned the letter over to show Sausage

his favourite part, the part that said the **will reading** would also reveal who would be the new owner of the Tunnel of Doom. He didn't know what that meant but he liked the sound of it, so he tried it out. **'Someone is about to become the new owner of The TUNNEL OF DOOOOOOOM, Sausage.'**

'Funny name for a boat?' Sausage said.

'Exactly,' Spangles said, striding off in the direction of the Town Hall, **'Exactly!'**