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Opening extract from

# Indie Kidd

Written by

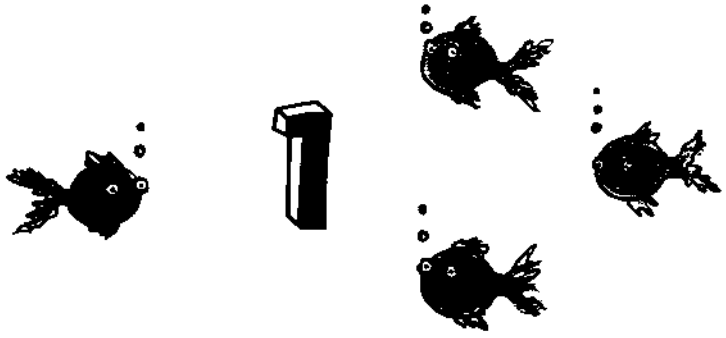
## Karen McCombie

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# Stressed fish and bad news

I was **VERY** glad to see my step-brother Dylan.

OK. I was *quite* pleased to see Dylan, and **VERY** pleased to see he had some kind of big cake in his hand.

"We have to eat this," he said.

Yeah, like we were just going to look at it, I don't think...

"Better come in, then," I said, holding the door open for him.

Oh, boy – my friends Soph and Fee were going to be

**SOOOOOO**

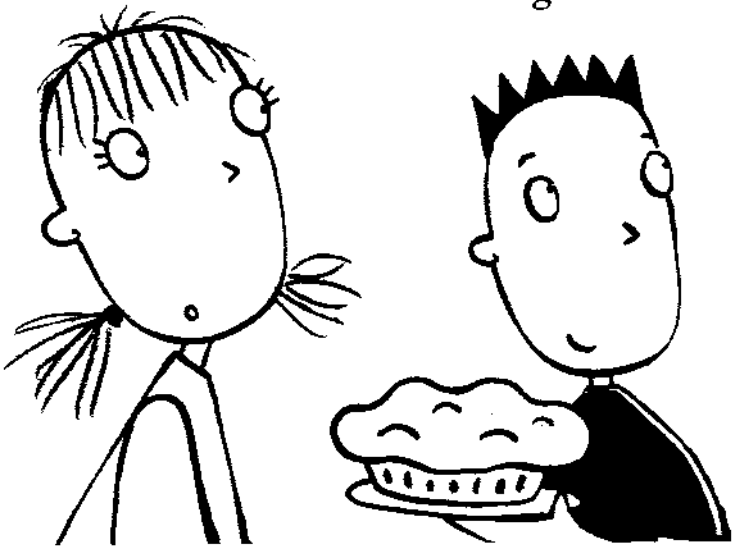
glad they decided to come back to mine after school today.

"Indie!" I heard my step-mum Fiona call out from her car. "Can you two try my new recipe and tell me what you think?"

"Sure!!" I nodded, thinking that I was

**SOOOOOO**

glad to have a step-mum who cooks for a living.



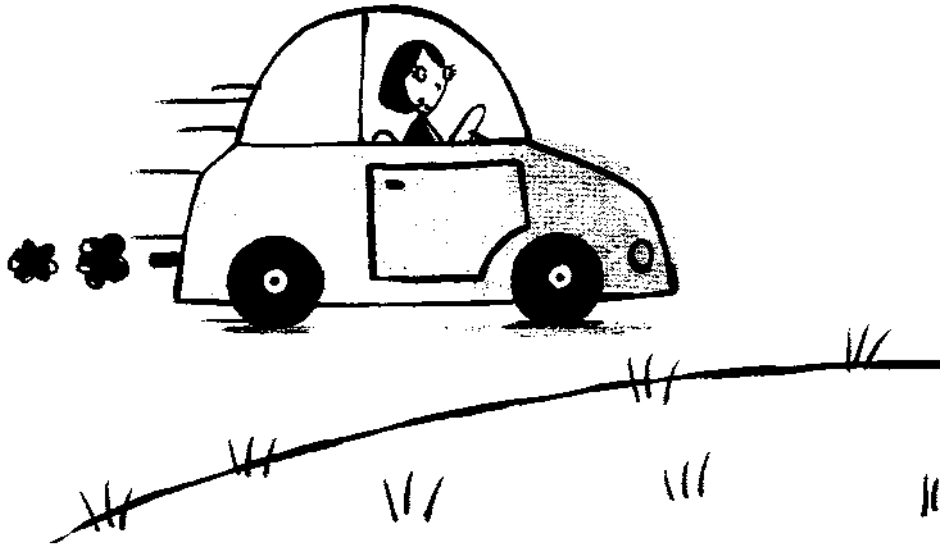
"Where's she going?" I asked Dylan, as Fiona zoomed off in her car.

"Can't remember."

"When's she picking you up?"

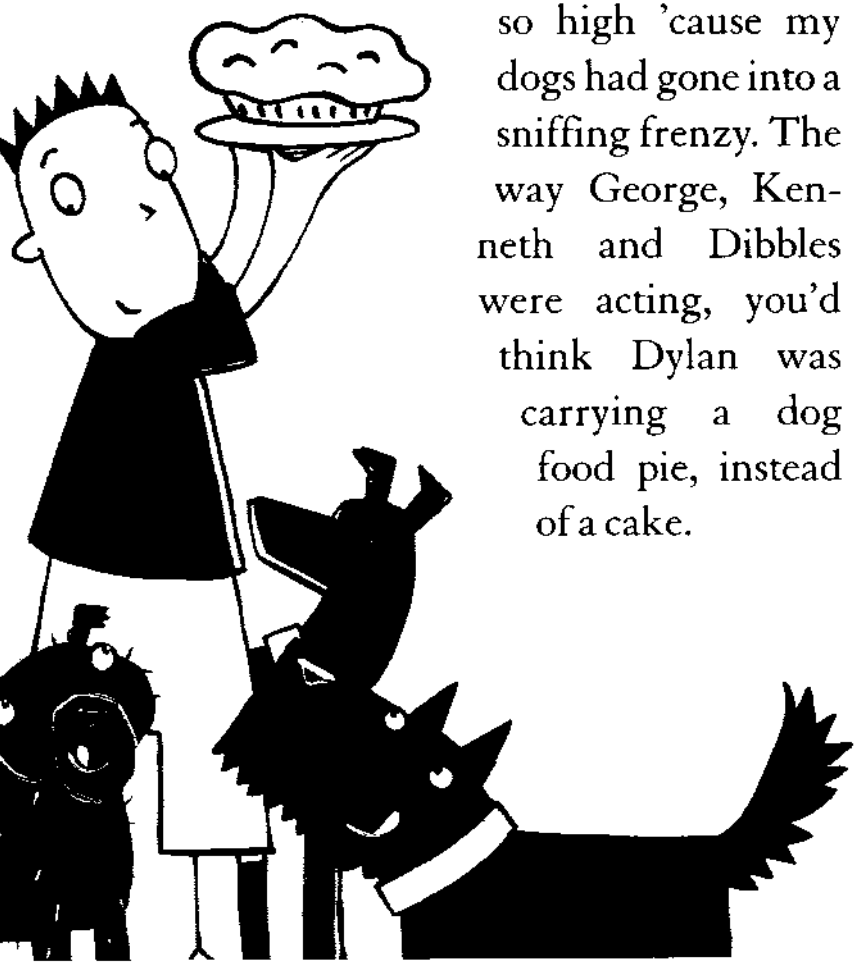
"Don't know."

Those two answers might've made Dylan sound like he's pretty dumb, but really, he's a nine-year-old brainbox when it comes to school stuff. He's just lousy at normal everyday things, like chatting and making sense.



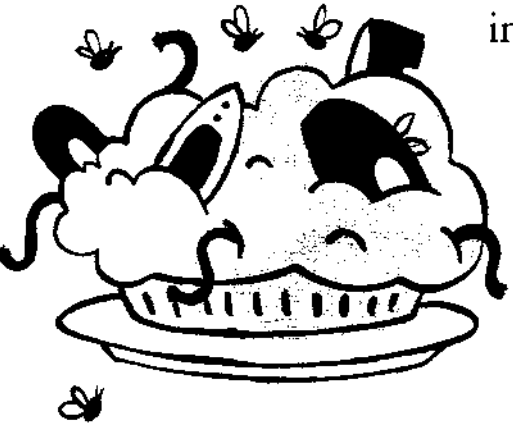
"Go on through to the kitchen," I told him, though he was already heading that way, holding the plate with the cake up high above his head.

He was holding it so high 'cause my dogs had gone into a sniffing frenzy. The way George, Kenneth and Dibbles were acting, you'd think Dylan was carrying a dog food pie, instead of a cake.



"It is a kind of *cake*, isn't it?" I checked with Dylan, as I walked behind him on my tiptoes and peeked at the suspiciously dark, gloopy filling.

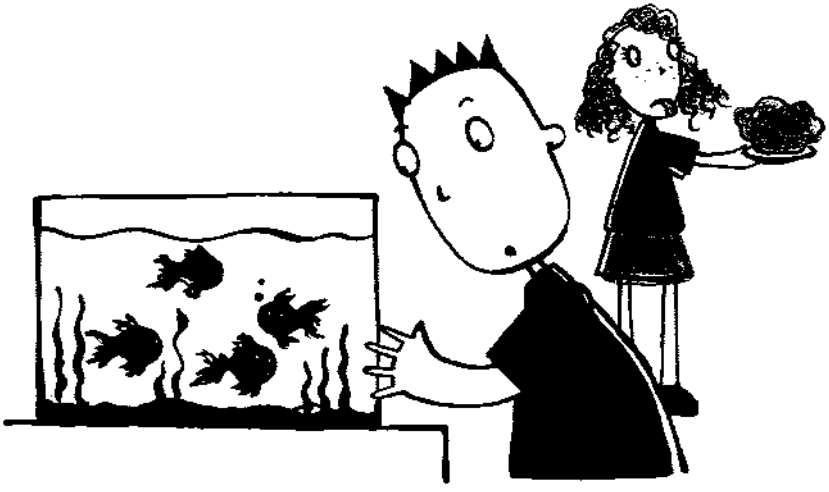
"My mum called it a ***Shoe Fly Pie***," mumbled Dylan, walking into the kitchen and handing the plate to Soph without bothering to say hello.



A ***Shoe Fly Pie***? I fretted to myself. I think I'd rather eat one made of dog food...

"What's a ***Shoe Fly Pie***?!" asked Soph, quickly shoving the plate towards Fee, as if she was playing a game of Pass the Smelly Parcel.

Fee wrinkled and crinkled her freckly nose in disgust, holding the plate out as far as her arms could stretch, and then a little bit more.



Dylan didn't answer Soph's question – he was too busy checking out the newest foster pets in our house. They were a tank of sickly fish that Mum had brought home from the *Paws For Thought* Animal Rescue Centre where she works.

"Hey, wait a minute – I know what this is!" Fee said suddenly, uncrinkling her nose and sounding strangely excited at the idea of eating the strange pie. "I had it when I was on holiday in America!"

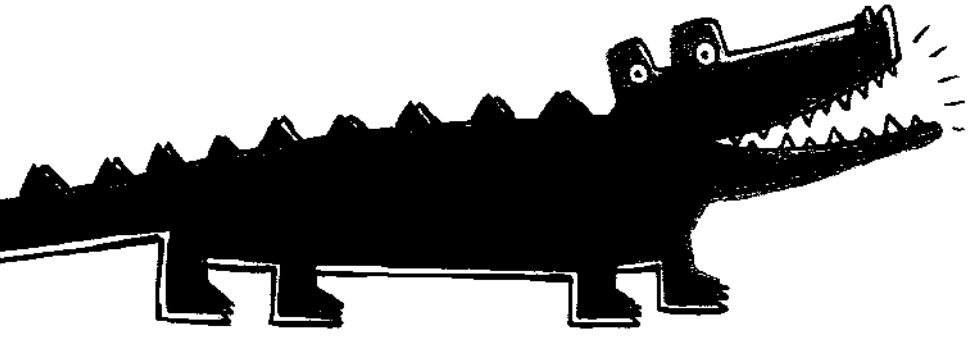
"What is it, then?" I asked.

I knew Fee had been to Florida. And I knew they had alligators in Florida. Maybe the brown gloop was some kind of alligator stew.

**Bleurghhhhh...**

"It's pastry, with a filling that's made of sugar, molasses, and, um, more sugar!"

I frowned at Fee for a second, worried that molasses was a type of alligator.



"Molasses is like treacle," Fee explained, spotting the worried look on my face.

The worried look on my face instantly changed to a *very* happy look, I was sure. A kind of cake made out of sugar, treacle, and more sugar sounded very alright to me.

"But why's it called a ***Shoe Fly Pie***?" asked Soph, looking for stray sprinklings of bluebottles or garnishes of shoelaces round the edge.

"It's '***shoo***', as in 'go away'," explained Fee. "A ***Shoofly Pie*** is supposed to be so sugary and yum, all the bees and bugs and flies swarm to it, and you have to shoo them away!"

"I'll get a knife," I said, while shooing my dogs away from the plate.

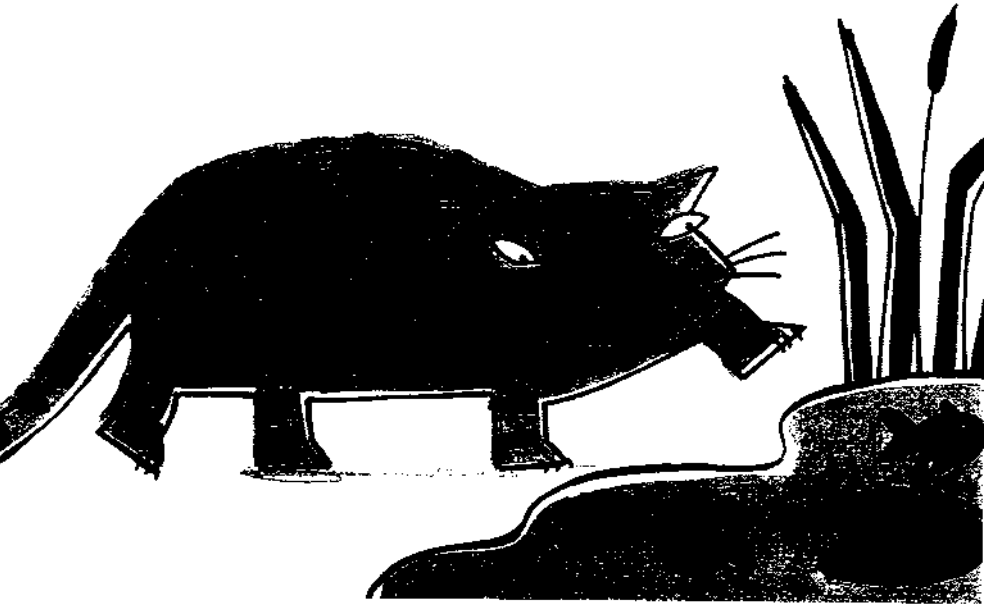
"What kind are these?" asked Dylan, still staring into the fish tank.

Weird. He was more interested in fish than food.

"Goldfish," I told him.

"Can we not talk about goldfish, please, and just have some pie?" pleaded Fee.

Fish were a touchy subject for Fee. Her **FIERCE** cat Garfield had eaten all the fish in her neighbour's garden pond yesterday.



He'd eaten all their frogs too. He must've been very hungry, or bored (in a bad way).



Fee's family had kept him locked in the house since then, till the neighbour calmed down. But it hadn't made Garfield calm down – Fee said he'd growled and hissed all night and clawed a big hole in the bathroom mat.

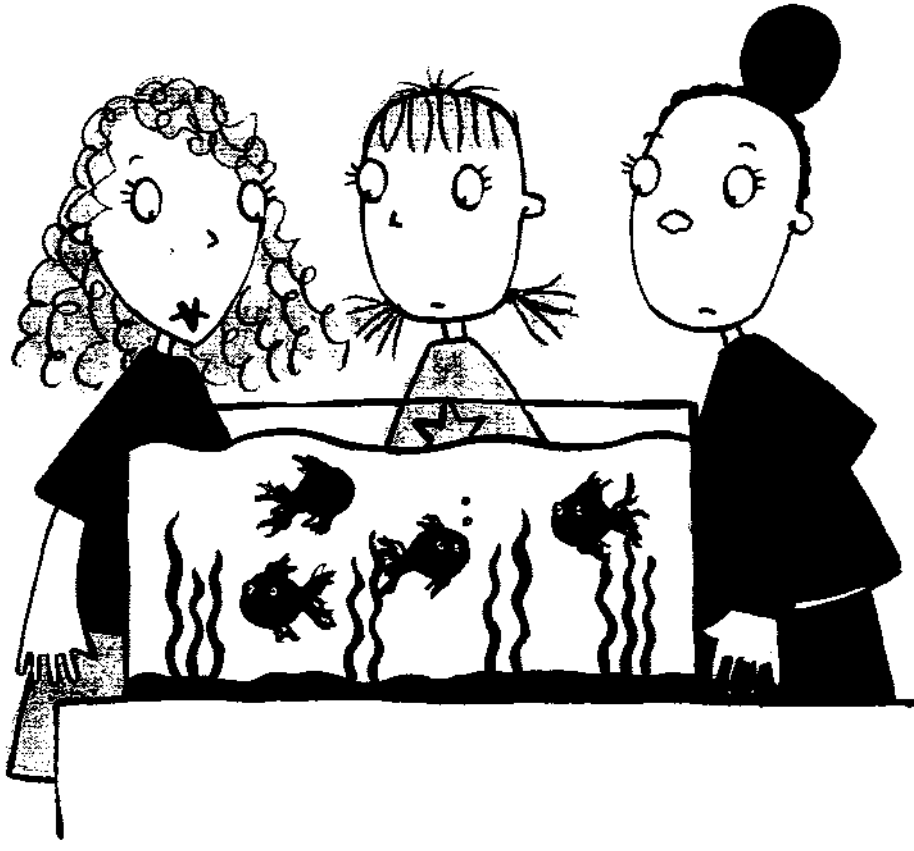
"But they don't exactly *look* like goldfish..." muttered Dylan.



He was obviously thinking about One, Two, Three, Four and Five, who lived happily and healthily in the tank in my living room,

along with Brian the Angelfish.

"No, you're right – they don't look *much* like goldfish," Soph joined in, leaning over to stare at the four fish flitting around the fake seaweed in the tank.



"Their tails and fins are all pretty and lacy!"



"Um, that's 'cause they've got fin-rot," I told my friends.

Mum said fin-rot happens when fish are stressed. I don't know what had happened to make these fish so stressed; it's not like they had to worry about homework or spots or anything.

Mum had taken them home from the rescue centre 'cause she thought it was

**TOO NOISY**

with all the barking going on there, and didn't want them to get even more stressed. The problem was, Mum seemed to have forgotten that we had three barky dogs of our own. *And* we had a lodger (nineteen-year-old Caitlin, my childminder) who played the didgeridoo.