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opening extract from

The Hundred-Mile-and-Hour-Dog

written by

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Ask Jeremy



Of all the books you have written, which one is your favourite?

I loved writing both **KRAZY KOW SAVES THE WORLD – WELL, ALMOST** and **STUFF**, my first book for teenagers. Both these made me laugh out loud while I was writing and I was pleased with the overall result in each case. I also love writing the stories about Nicholas and his daft family – **MY DAD**, **MY MUM**, **MY BROTHER** and so on.

If you couldn't be a writer what would you be?

Well, I'd be pretty fed up for a start, because writing was the one thing I knew I wanted to do from the age of nine onward. But if I DID have to do something else, I would love to be either an accomplished pianist or an artist of some sort. Music and art have played a big part in my whole life and I would love to be involved in them in some way.

What's the best thing about writing stories?

Oh dear – so many things to say here! Getting paid for making things up is pretty high on the list! It's also something you do on your own, inside your own head – nobody can interfere with that. The only boss you have is yourself. And you are creating something that nobody else has made before you. I also love making my readers laugh and want to read more and more.

Did you ever have a nightmare teacher? (And who was your best ever?)

My nightmare at primary school was Mrs Chappell, long since dead. I knew her secret – she was not actually human. She was a Tyrannosaurus rex in disguise. She taught me for two years when I was in Y5 and Y6, and we didn't like each other at all. My best ever was when I was in Y3 and Y4. Her name was Miss Cox, and she was the one who first encouraged me to write stories. She was brilliant. Sadly, she is long dead too.

When you were a kid you used to play kiss-chase. Did you always do the chasing or did anyone ever chase you?!

I usually did the chasing, but when I got chased, I didn't bother to run very fast! Maybe I shouldn't admit to that! We didn't play kiss-chase at school – it was usually played during holidays. If we had tried playing it at school we would have been in serious trouble. Mind you, I seemed to spend most of my time in trouble of one sort or another, so maybe it wouldn't have mattered that much.

14½ Things You Didn't Know About

Jeremy Strong

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1. He loves eating liquorice.
2. He used to like diving. He once dived from the high board and his trunks came off!
3. He used to play electric violin in a rock band called THE INEDIBLE CHEESE SANDWICH.
4. He got a 100-metre swimming certificate when he couldn't even swim.
5. When he was five, he sat on a heater and burnt his bottom.
6. Jeremy used to look after a dog that kept eating his underpants. (No – NOT while he was wearing them!)
7. When he was five, he left a basin tap running with the plug in and flooded the bathroom.
8. He can make his ears waggle.
9. He has visited over a thousand schools.
10. He once scored minus ten in an exam! That's ten less than nothing!
11. His hair has gone grey, but his mind hasn't.
12. He'd like to have a pet tiger.
13. He'd like to learn the piano.
14. He has dreadful handwriting.

And a half . . . His favourite hobby is sleeping. He's very good at it.

One



Streaker is a mixed-up kind of dog. You can see from her thin body and powerful legs that she's got a lot of greyhound blood in her, along with quite a bit of Ferrari and a large chunk of whirlwind.

Nobody in our family likes walking her and this is hardly surprising. Streaker can out-accelerate a torpedo. She can do 0 to 100 mph in the blink of an eye. She's usually vanished over the far horizon long before you have time to yell – 'Streaker!'

Dad refuses to walk her, point-blank. 'I've got backache,' is his usual excuse, though how this stops him from walking I really haven't a clue.

I tried something similar once myself. 'I've got front-ache,' I said. Mum gave me a chilly glare and handed me the dog-lead. She'll do anything to get out of walking Streaker too, and that is how the whole thing started. I ended up having the craziest Easter holiday you can imagine.

'Trevor . . .' said Mum one morning at the beginning of the holiday, and she gave me one of her really big, innocent smiles. 'Trevor . . .' (I should have guessed she was up to something); 'Trevor – I'll give you thirty pounds if you walk Streaker every day this holiday.'



Thirty pounds! As you can imagine, my

eyes boggled a bit. I just about had to shove them back in their sockets. I was so astonished I never twigged that what my mother was actually suggesting was MAJOR BRIBERY.

'It's the Easter holiday,' she continued, climbing on to her exercise-bike and pulling a pink sweat band round her forehead. 'You've nothing better to do.'



'Thirty pounds?' I repeated. 'Walk her every day for two weeks?' Mum nodded and began to pedal. I sat down to have a think. Thirty pounds was a lot of money. I could do loads of things with that.

On the other hand – and this was the big crunch – I would have to walk Streaker.

Now, if someone came up to you in the street and said, 'Hey! What's the worst torture you can think of?', you might suggest boiling in oil, or having to watch golf on TV with your dad, or even the nine times table – which is one of my own personal nightmares. But without doubt I would have to say – walking Streaker. This was going to be a big decision for me.

I reckoned there had to be some way of controlling Streaker. After all, she was only a dog. Humans are cleverer than animals. Humans have bigger brains. Humans rule the animal kingdom.

I seem to remember that just as I was thinking this, Streaker came hurtling in from the kitchen and landed on my lap like a mini-meteorite. We both crashed to the floor, where she sat on my chest looking very pleased with herself.



Mum carried on quietly pedalling all this time. She must have known I'd give in. 'I'll do it,' I said. Mum gave a strange squeak and one of her feet slipped off a pedal. For some reason she looked even more pleased with herself than Streaker did.

'Can I have some money now?' I asked. (See? I'm not stupid.)

'Of course not.' (Mum's not stupid either.)

'How about half now and half when I finish?'

Mum free-wheeled. 'At the end of the holiday, when the job is finished, I'll give you the money.' So that was that. I had agreed to walk the dog every day for two weeks, and that turned out to be only one of my problems that Easter. I must have been totally mad.