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THE DAY MY SCHOOL GOT FAMOUS



Jen Carney

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For Bob, Lucy and Clare



Major Chaos

I wake up with a slobbery tongue in my ear and a terrible smell wafting up my nose.

To be fair, I only have myself to blame. I mean, I didn't ask my best friend to wake me by foraging for earwax, but I *am* the big softie who let him sleep in my bed last night. He deserved a reward for helping me to dispose of the huge bowl of bean casserole my mum dished up for supper. I should have realized:



Aldo + beans = guaranteed stink bomb.

Aldo's my dog, by the way. You might have heard of him. He went viral on YouStream a few weeks ago.

I reach for my phone. 6.55 a.m. 'What's up, boy?' I whisper. 'It's too early for breakfast. Need a poo?'



Aldo cocks his head to one side, then side-eyes my door as an almighty CRASH comes from downstairs.

The crash is followed by a CLATTER and Aldo's back legs start to shake.

Oh no. There's only one person who'd be up at this time on a Sunday morning. Aldo doesn't need a poo. He's warning me that my foster brother, Nile, is up to something.

Sigh. For reasons I'll explain later, I promised my mums I'd be in charge this morning so they could have a lie-in. I just wasn't expecting to have to start so early . . .

Sliding out of bed, I tiptoe on to the landing and see my three-year-old foster sister, Keely, peering round her bedroom door. She looks up at me with a cute little frown as she draws a circle

in the air round her ear: her way of asking, 'What's that noise?'



Keely sometimes uses Makaton sign language to communicate because she can't talk very well yet.

She has no problem hearing or understanding though, so I put a finger to my lips, then offer her my hand. 'Don't worry,' I whisper. 'It's only Nile. Let's go and ask him to be quiet.'



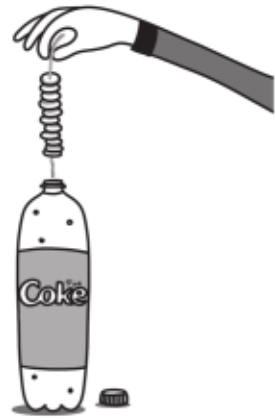
The odd banging noises stop as we reach the kitchen. Unfortunately, they're replaced with the sound of my foster brother shouting:

'FIVE . . .

FOUR . . .

THREE . . .'

I fling open the door, intending to ask Nile to keep his voice down, but am met with an alarming sight: he's about to drop a long string of Mentos into a two-litre bottle of Diet Coke. Over the five weeks Nile's been fostering with us, I've got used to his obsession with explosions. But I need to stop him before he tries *this* experiment. Not because I'm a fun-thief, but because the petition for an indoor play area, the one me and Cal (my best mate) spent ALL LAST WEEK collecting signatures for, is lying directly in the Danger Zone.



You know what happens when you mix Mentos with Diet Coke, right?

Nile grins at me.

'. . . TWO . . .

ONE . . .'

Keeping quiet is suddenly the last thing on my mind.

'NOOOOOOOOO! NILE, WAIT!'



'BLAST-OFF!'

I drop Keely's hand and make a grab for my sheet of hard-earned signatures a second too late . . .



SPLUUUUURGE!

'And THAT,' says Nile, throwing a salute towards his phone, which is propped up against the microwave, away from the mess and clearly recording, 'is how you explode Coke with Mentos!' He presses stop then flashes me a grin. 'Best homework assignment ever!'

Without a word, I peel my soggy petition from the table. Coke drips off it and most of the signatures are so smudged you can't read them. There's no way Mr Yee, my head teacher, will take any notice of *this*. (Me and Cal are not trying to stop anyone playing outside, by the way. We just feel strongly that staying indoors during breaktimes



should also be an option for kids – like it is for teachers.)

Oblivious to my despair, Nile bounces around the room like Tigger at a tea party. 'Epic or what, Ferris?!' he shouts, as he watches his recording back.

I gaze around the kitchen and shake my head.



Most of the cupboards are ajar, and there's STUFF on every surface: scissors, string, empty Mentos packets, cutlery, discarded funnels and pans, muffin cases, toothpaste, vinegar, baking soda . . . even my mum's sewing box has been moved and is now splattered with Coke. Nile obviously tried a few different experiments before he settled on the old Coke and Mentos trick. Not that that's what our homework was, by the way; how does videoing an explosion 'explain a fact about gases'?













I grab the mop. 'No, not epic, Nile. Look at this mess!'

I'm trying to stop Keely from swooshing her bare feet through the brown puddles all over the floor when I hear footsteps on the stairs. Great, that'll be my mums coming to investigate the cause of this early morning commotion. I mean, they'll probably already have guessed. Since the minute he arrived to be fostered, all Nile's done is cause chaos.

He turned up late one evening. An emergency placement, Mum called it. Before that, he and his little brother, Lewis, had been staying with a foster carer called Irene. According to Nile, the reason *he* had to move but his brother stayed put was because Irene was 'mega old' and 'only liked quiet kids'. At the time, I thought Irene must be really mean.

But over the past five weeks, though I've never stopped feeling sorry that Nile's been separated from his brother, I have begun to understand why Irene couldn't cope.


Major
MC
Chaos
CRACK!
nile woz
eer
SPLAT!
RIP