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opening extract from

Jiggy McCue: One for All and All for Lunch

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Question. Where do nose bogeys come from? Answer. They're bits of brain chipping off. That's what my dad says anyway. Mum says that in his case that explains a lot.

I mention this because of the bogey man, but I didn't know about him the night I lay awake listening to Eejit Atkins snoring. Why was I listening to Eejit snoring when he lives next door? Because it was summer, and warm, and I had to have the window open or I'd have melted all over the mattress, and the little Cossack had decided to sleep in a tent in his back garden. I would have gone to the window and yelled something like 'Shut it, Atkins, you twonk, some people are trying to sleep here!', but I didn't want to wake other neighbours who can sleep through snoring but not yells. I'm considerate that way.

Because I'd turned and tossed so much in the night I felt pretty manky next morning. Manky



makes me slow, so when Pete and Angie called for me I wasn't ready. I told them to go on without me, which they did, the traitors. When I finally left the house (because Mum shoved me off the front step) who should I bump into dragging his school bag past my gate but the King of Snores himself.

'Hiya, Jig,' Atkins said. 'I got summin' ta show ya!'

'Yeah, and I've got summin' to show you,' I said, raising my fist to his eyes, then thumping his shoulder with it.

'What's this, McCue?!' bawled a depressingly familiar voice from behind us. 'You know the rules on bullying, boy!'

I turned. Mr Rice, my Pointless Exercises teacher, who, O Joy, had recently moved into our street with Miss Weeks, the Deputy Head. He was jogging to school as usual in his stupid red tracksuit.

'Atkins asked for it,' I said.

'He asked to be bullied?!' Rice bawled. (Rice always bawls, even when whispering.) 'Somehow I doubt that!'

I gave Atkins the Mean Eye. 'Tell him,' I said.

And to my amazement, Eejit got it for once

without it being written down for him in large slow capitals.

'Jig's right, sir, I arsed fer it.'

The Ricipops drew level with us and started running on the spot.

'Well whether you did or not,' he said, 'whether you *deserved* it or not, the next time your neighbour feels like playing rough he'd better pick on someone his own size – me, for instance!'

'You're not my size,' I said. 'You're twice my size.'

Even a sporty nut-job like Mr Rice had to accept this. 'Yes!' he said. 'Pity! But if I see behaviour of this sort on the way to school again, you can count on being in some pretty hot water, lad! Got it?!'

He didn't wait for a reply, which was probably just as well because I couldn't think of one that wouldn't get me hanged, drawn, quartered and sold in bits at the next Save Our Lousy School car boot.

'Now see what you've done,' I said to Atkins as Rice jogged off.

'I din't do nuffin',' Atkins said.

'I'll tell you what you did,' I said. 'You snored all night long and kept me awake from the moment my



head hit the pillow to the moment I woke up.'

'Sorry, mate,' he said. 'It's me sinuses. I'm all blocked up. Me mum fort sleepin' aata doors might clear me 'ead. 'Ere, lemme me show ya this fing I made.' He felt for something in his jacket pocket.

'Not interested,' I said, and stormed on ahead.

'Nah, but you'll like this!' he yelled after me.

'I won't! Go boil your head! That'll help your stinking sinuses!'

Even though I didn't want to know, I saw what Eejit wanted to show me during the day's first lesson, when Mr Dakin stepped out for a minute, probably to bang his head against the brick wall he was always going on about. I only looked because other kids were crowding round, and I like to know what's happening in the world. Eejit – the prat – had made this little box that looked like a coffin, and when he lifted the lid there was this man-shaped model inside. The man was greeny-brown and all knobbly, and he didn't have much of a face, and he was nude, and Atkins, because he was Atkins, had made it *absolutely clear* that he was a man, if you know what I mean. This got a few laughs, even from the girls, but even I had to admit

that it was quite funny when he took the man out of the box and made him dance.

'What's it made of, Eej – rubber?' someone asked.

'Bogeys,' Atkins said.

'What?'

'Me bogeys. From me 'ooter.'

'*What!*' said everyone, stepping back a group pace.

He then told us that he'd been lugging bogeys out of his nose for about a year. Hauling them in strips sometimes, but other times just in little knots, adding them to the rest like new blobs of chewed gum. He said the best bogey time was first thing in the morning because his nose was almost always blocked up then, and he'd been storing them in shrink-wrap to keep them moist, and last night, in his tent in the garden, by torchlight, he'd shaped the little man to go in the coffin he'd made some other time.

There were quite a few shudders and groans as he told us this, and absolutely no one wanted to touch the little bogey man. Some flew back to their desks in disgust, including me and Pete, which was just as well because as we got there Dakin barged in demanding to know why half the class were out



of their seats and not working on the ultra-boring rubbish he'd told us to get on with.

'Because Atkins is a dickhead,' Pete explained.

'What's he done now?' our beloved form tutor asked.

'Ask him,' said Pete.

'Atkins, what have you done?' Face-Ache asked Eejit.

Before Eejit could reply, several others answered for him, but as they all spoke at once Mr D couldn't make sense of it. He marched to Eejit's desk and demanded to be shown whatever it was everyone was so fascinated by. Atkins showed him.

'What's this…*obscenity* supposed to represent?' Dakin enquired.

'It's me bogey man,' said Eejit.

'Your what?'

'He made it with his own bogeys,' Kelly Ironmonger said.

Dakin stared at the thing like he didn't believe what he'd just heard or was looking at. Then it seemed to click because he said, 'Atkins, there's something seriously wrong with you.'

Eejit grinned up at him. He knew this was true

and it didn't bother him one bit. He slotted the bogey man back in the coffin and jammed the lid on.

Face-Ache held his hand out. He didn't need to speak. Even a kid as dim as Atkins knew what the silent hand meant. He handed the coffin over. He wasn't so chirpy now. He'd been looking forward to showing his bogey man off to other kids at break.

Later. Tail end of yet another yawny school day. We were packing up in the room where Mrs Porterhouse had been failing to teach us Geography when Mr Staples (who fails to teach us RE) stuck his head round the door on a stick and asked me to go to the staff room.

'What, before going home?' I asked suspiciously.

'Before would be good,' he replied.

'Why, what have I done now?'

'I have no idea, just passing on the message.'

'Do as you're told please, Jiggy,' Mrs Porterhouse said.

'What, and break my unblemished record?' I zapped back.

But I went to the staff room to see what trouble



I was in for the gadzillionth time in my stunning school career, and as it happened – woh, put out the flags! – I wasn't in *any* for a change. When I knocked, someone yelled 'Come!', and I looked in and saw a batch of teachers flopped in chairs or stuffing work in briefcases or shopping bags to take home and burn.

'I was told to come here,' I said.

'Why?' asked one of the ones I only know by sight.

'Not a clue.'

'Ah, Jiggy. It was me that sent for you.' This was Mr Dent, Lord of Resistant Materials. 'Mr Dakin asked me to give you this.' He held out Eejit's little coffin.

'Not mine,' I said.

'No, I know, but Eejit had to stay behind for some reason, and he asked Mr Dakin to ask you to take it home for him, and as Mr Dakin had to rush off to his Vegetarian Sushi course at the College the task fell to me to make sure it fell to you. Does that make any sense at all?'

'I might have to write it down and go over it slowly with my tongue between my teeth,' I said.

But I took the box in the finger and thumb of one hand.

'Why so wary of handling it?' Mr Dent asked.

'It's Atkins's.'

'Oh. Yeah.'

I put the coffin in my pocket – carefully, so it wouldn't open. Of all the things I might want to carry about my person, something crafted out of Eejit Atkins's bogeys was not up there with the frontrunners.

When I got home I went up to my room and shoved the little box under my bed. Then I forgot about it till we'd started tea and the phone rang and Mum picked up. 'It's Ralph,' she said.

I snatched the phone. 'Whaddayawant?' I said to it.

'Did yer pick me bogey man up from da starf room?' Eejit enquired daintily.

'Yeah.'

'Kin I come raand fer 'im then?'

'No, I'm having me tea.'

'When then?'

'When I've finished.'

'When'll that be?'



'When I've *finished*!'

I hung up.

'You're not very nice to Ralph, are you?' Mum said.

'I don't want to encourage him. Encourage him and he'll be round here all the time, like a rash.'

After tea I went upstairs and felt under my bed for the coffin. I couldn't feel it right away so I had to grope around for it. When I found it I pulled it out – another finger and thumb job – only to find that the lid was off and that it was empty. It must have tipped over when I chucked it under here, I thought, sticking my bum in the air and peering into the fluffy darkness. I couldn't see much apart from a stack of junk and old clothes, so I dug out the little torch I'd got in a Christmas cracker, and flashed it around. It wasn't a bright beam, but it was bright enough to show no sign of the little man. Just then I heard my latest favourite ringtone (specially chosen because it really annoys my parents). I backed out from under the bed and grabbed my phone. Eejit again.

'How'd you get this number?' I snapped. 'I only give it to people I want to hear from, which doesn't include you.'

'Garrett give it me,' he said.

'I'll be having stern words with him,' I said.

'Kin I come raand nah?'

'No.'

'Why?'

'Cos I say so.'

'So when?'

'When I say so.'

I clicked off. And then I thought, Why did I lie to Eejit Atkins? Why didn't I just say I couldn't find his crummy bogey man? Maybe it was because I was annoyed about this that I didn't go back under the bed and look further. 'Better things to do with my time,' I said aloud. Then I looked around for something to do. I couldn't find anything, so I went downstairs to watch TV. No point to that either as it turned out. The Golden Oldies were hogging it. So I started my homework. Yes, I know, you're *really* at a loose end if you do your homework without being ordered to by a snarling adult.

Later, I was sitting at the kitchen table (doodling in the margins of my History exercise book instead of writing the historical rubbish Mr Hurley had



told us to) when I heard this unholy kerfuffle of dogs barking and little kids wailing from somewhere outside. I got up and went to the window, but there was nothing to see from there, so I went to the front door. As I opened it I felt something soft slip between my ankles – our cat, Stallone. He must also have wanted to investigate the racket, but was too chicken to do it on his own. 'Stick with me, cat,' I said, and led the way up the path.

At the gate, I leaned over the top and Stallone stuck his head between the uprights to see what was happening. The howling was from kids at the windows of nearby houses. The barking was from dogs staring towards the streetlamp on the pavement across from us, which at first I thought must be casting the shadow that was getting them all agitated. It was some shadow. Huge, menacing, with a hunched back, hands raised like claws, mouth open in a silent howl or snarl. I looked down at Stallone. His fur was up. I felt the back of my neck. So was mine.

And then I saw who the shadow belonged to. He was standing so close to the wall on the other side

of the road that Stallone and I were probably the only ones who could see him apart from the dogs. He was a very small man. I mean *incredibly* small. Can't have been more than forty centimetres high. And he had nothing on, nothing at all, even socks. The enormous shadow that was terrifying the sprogs and dogs of the neighbourhood ran all the way back to his tiny feet, but it wasn't made by the streetlamp. It spread out from him without any light behind him, and just…grew. He wasn't crouching or trying to look fierce either. He was just standing there. The shadow was making its own shape, without its owner's help.

'Oh, no,' I muttered.

I said this because I've seen a whole truckload of weird stuff in my life, met a barrelful of whacko characters, experienced great twitching bunches of unnatural doings, and I'd had enough of them. I wanted a normal boring life like everyone else. So I turned my back on the street.

'Come on, Stallone. Inside.'

He didn't need telling twice. He was indoors before I was.

'What's all that wailing and barking?' my



mother asked as I closed the front door.

'What wailing and barking?'

'From outside.'

'I can't hear anything.'

'Oh, you must.'

'Is that an order?'

She sighed. 'I think it's time you went to bed, my lad.'

'I don't.'

'Don't argue, Jiggy, you know the rule on school nights.'

'It's not a school night.'

'It's Wednesday. Therefore it's a school night.'

'It's Wednesday,' I agreed. 'But I don't do school at night.'

'Don't be silly, you know what I mean.'

Of course I knew what she meant, but winding my mother up is one of my life's few pleasures. I went into the kitchen. She followed me.

'What's this?' she said, staring at the table.

'It's the kitchen table,' I said, hoping to jog her memory.

'Is that your homework?'

'It's *some* of my homework. Why?'

'You're doing it without being told to?'

'I was really keen to get on with it. Then the wailing and barking started.'

'I thought you couldn't hear the wailing and barking.'

'What wailing and barking?'

Just as I finished shoving my books in my bag so I could forget they existed for a year or two, the kitchen phone rang. I walked past it. Mum could answer it. It wouldn't be for me.

She answered it. 'It's for you,' she said.

'Who is it?'

'Ralph.'

'Tell him to get lost.'

She slapped the phone into my hand. 'Speak to him!'

I reluctantly put the phone to my face. 'What now?' I growled.

'Kin I come raand yet?' Eejit asked in his whiny little voice.

'No.'

I hung up. I didn't need to see him now. His bogey man was no longer in my possession. He was out in the street, mysteriously alive and quite a bit



bigger and scaring half the neighbourhood's pets and kids. Not my problem any more.

Or so I thought.

It was another warm night, so once again I would have to leave my window open. This meant that Eejit's snores from the garden next door would keep me awake a second night. Or maybe not. I'd dug out the old electric fan from the spare room, where we kept all the stuff we didn't know what to do with. I plugged it in, hoping it still worked, because if I could cool the room down I'd be able to shut the window and get some peace. It did work, but not brilliantly, and it was very noisy, like there was something loose inside it. Still, I left it on and jumped into my PJs.

In bed I lay waiting for the room to cool, but the fan only threw a morsel of breeze my way – better than nothing but not enough to close the window. I listened to the fan for about half an hour until I decided to turn it off and see if Eejit was snoring. He was, and his snores were even more of a pain than the rattle of the fan, so I left the window open and turned the fan back on.