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opening extract from

Jiggy McCue: The Curse of the Poltergoose

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Chapter One

Listen, don't let's waste any time here. Let's get straight to it. This story is about a dead goose. A dead goose that came back to haunt me. Crazy? You bet. But what can I say? It happened. It happened to me, Jiggy McCue. And my friends Pete Garrett and Angie Mint were witnesses.

An unlikely combination, you might think, two boys and a girl. But Pete and Angie and me, we've known one another since we were just bumps pushing our mothers' clothing out of shape. Best pals, that's us, chums, mates, buds to the last gasp. The Three Musketeers, we call ourselves, even if one of us is a woman. 'One for all, and all for lunch,' we always say. I don't know why.

Now you're probably not wondering why I'm called Jiggy, but I'll tell you anyway. It's because I jig about a lot. Always have. It can come over me any time and there's nothing I can do about it. The Golden Oldies used to think there was something



wrong with my nerves. Not so, my nerves are great, they just like to move around a little. I'm probably the only kid whose room you could go into in the middle of the night and find him doing the Cha-Cha in his sleep. Mostly, though, I jig about when I'm excited or nervous, or when I get agitated – like the day my parents told me we were moving from Borderline Way.

It was all Dad's fault. If he hadn't gone and got himself a job at last we'd still have been in the old place and I wouldn't have got myself haunted. My father had been out of work for about five years. He said it was because he knew his worth and wouldn't take just anything. Mum said it was because he's useless.

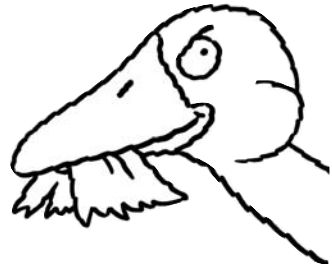
Anyway, Dad got this job (don't ask me what, it's too boring) and to celebrate he went out and got a new old car to replace the fourteen-year-old heap we used to push round town instead of drive. The new one was only five years old, sort of sky-blue with silver bits that hardly rattled at all, and you didn't have to kick little heaps of rust into the gutter every time you slammed the door, which was nice. We felt like royalty riding round in that



car. (Mum even looked a bit like one of the royals, but we didn't tell her, it would have depressed her for days.)

The only trouble with the new car was that it looked all wrong on the curb outside our cruddy old terrace house. Some of the neighbours seemed to think so too, and when Dad had replaced the hub-caps and windscreen wipers for the third time, and sprayed over 'Rich sod' in a slightly different blue, he and Mum started talking about a new house to go with the car while it was still in one piece.

So they bought a house on the Brook Farm Estate. The house where all my troubles started.



Chapter Two

The Brook Farm Estate is called the Brook Farm Estate because it's built on the place where Brook Farm used to be. Clever, eh? There's no sign of the farm now, it's all bright new houses with half-finished gardens, but back when it was still a farm Pete and Angie and I used to do odd jobs there during the summer holidays – collecting eggs, raking up cow muck, all the usual barmy farmy stuff. The farmer, Mr Brook, old Brooky, he didn't pay much and he wasn't that keen on kids, but we sort of liked going there because it was so open and all, and there weren't wheely bins and walls with bad wallpaper wherever you looked.

But then the miserable old devil spoiled everything. He retired. Sold the farm to a building firm and this new estate and shopping centre started to go up. When we moved in only about half the houses were built and the roads were still being laid and nothing much had been vandalised



yet and it felt all wrong. The new house was a palace compared to the old one, but I didn't like it at first. Didn't really want to like it. Pete and Angie came over quite often, but it wasn't like the old days when they just wandered through the gap in the fence when they felt like it. They thought the new place was cool. Envied me, they said.

'Yeah, but it's not like *home*, is it?' I said.

'That's what's so good about it,' said Ange.

We'd been in the new house about three weeks when Mum and Dad decided it should have a name. I wasn't keen. We'd always been able to find our house on Borderline Way without calling its name. I mentioned this.

'The house on Borderline Way was just the place we lived in,' Mum said. 'This one's different. It's special. It deserves a name.'

'I like the number,' I said. 'I think it's a terrific number.'

'What's so terrific about 23?' Dad said.

'I don't know, it just…has something.'

'We'll still keep the number,' Mum said. 'But a name will give the place an identity. Set it apart from all the others.'



'We've each put half a dozen in the hat,' Dad said. He shook his horrible *Help the Aged* bobble hat in my face. 'Thought we'd see what came up. Let fate decide.'

'Fate?' I cried. 'Fate? Have you any idea what fate can *do* to people?'

They just grinned, and suddenly I was very nervous. That hat could be stuffed with the kind of names I'd never live down. I leant against something to stop my knees shaking. I think it was Stallone, our cat, because something scratched my behind and it wasn't me.

'Tell you what,' Mum said, 'to make it fair why don't you put some names in too?'

Now this was a surprise. 'You'd trust me to name our house?'

'Course we would,' Mum said. 'Wouldn't we, Mel?'

Blind panic stamped itself on Dad's face for a minute, but then he took a deep breath, cleared his throat, said, 'Course we would,' and reached for Mum's hand to give it a little squeeze. He'd been doing that a lot since we moved and it was starting to make me twitch.



'And whichever one comes out is the one we use?' I said. 'Even if it's my choice?'

'Of course!' they chortled like a pair of happy maniacs.

'All right then.' I reached for a pad and wrote down six names, right off the top of my head. They were going to regret this.

I folded my bits of paper and dropped them in the bobble hat. Dad shook them all up and Mum said: 'Who's going to choose?'

'It shouldn't be one of us,' I said. 'We don't want to get the blame.'

'Well there's no one else,' Dad said.

'There's no rush. Why don't we just wait till someone knocks on the door? They can pick it out for us.'

There was a knock on the door.

'Bingo!' Dad yelled.

It was Pete and Angie. I could have killed them.

We told them about the house name deal and they said cool and I said you're out of your minds, and they tossed for it to decide which of them was going to be the one to ruin my life. Pete won, and he gave me the evil eye as he stuck his mitt in the



Help the Aged hat.

I suppose I shouldn't complain. At least the name that came out was one of mine. But when Pete read it out I said, 'No, no, do it again. That one was meant as a joke.'

'No, Jig,' Dad said. 'We made an agreement. Whatever came out of the hat was the one we'd use.' He smirked at Mum, who smirked back. '*The Dorks* it is then – agreed?'

