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I reading

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opening extract from

Jiggy McCue: Neville the Devil

written by

Michael Lawrence

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Chapter one

We were just pulling in to a motorway service station for a widdle-and-fodder break when I had this sudden feeling we were in for a bad time. There were seven of us in two cars, Mum and Dad and me in one, Pete and Angie and his dad (Oliver) and her mum (Audrey) in the other. The dads were driving. My mother says dads like to drive because the car is the only place they can feel in charge. When we pulled in, I rushed over to Pete and Angie and told them about my sudden feeling.

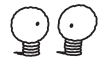
'You always have a feeling we're in for a bad time,' Angie said cheerfully.

'Not this sudden,' I said.

She pushed past me. 'Well this time you're wrong.'

'I wouldn't be so sure about that,' I said to her back.

She spun round, still cheerful. 'One more word,' she said, 'and I stick your head in the nearest litter bin. That'll be your bad time.'



'Relax, Jig,' said Pete, also cheerful. 'Nothing bad's going to happen. Not this time. I feel it in my armpits.'

I sighed. Maybe they were right. Maybe I was worrying about nothing. I dumped the nervous frown and switched back to Cheerful Mode. Berk. I should learn to trust my bad feelings. Specially the sudden ones.

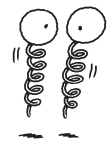
I'd better tell you why we were so damn cheerful. We were going on our summer hols. Yep. And not just anywhere this time. This time we were going Abroad. I'd never been Abroad. Nor had Pete and Angie. Best of all, we were going by plane. We'd never been in a plane before either. We had this ten o'clock flight to catch, that's ten in the morning, and we had to check in at the airport two hours before takeoff, which had meant getting up with the birdies. Our big shiny plane would fly us over water and some land to JoyWorld. You've probably heard of JoyWorld. Amusement park the size of a small country, with hotels and lakes and all sorts of rides. We were going to stay in one of the hotels and walk round the lakes and go on things we hadn't even imagined yet. Some of the things we hadn't even



imagined yet would swoop right up into the sky before crashing right down into the ground and give us the galloping hysterics just before we tottered off to throw up over a parent. We were really looking forward to that.

Like I said, there were seven of us, including the four Golden Oldies. I thought there should have been eight. Stallone had never been Abroad either, or in a plane. Stallone's our cat. But Mum said that if we took him out of the country he might have to go into quarantine when we brought him back and we wouldn't see him for ages. 'Let's take him with us,' said Dad, who's not a huge Stallone fan. We didn't of course. We left his bowl with Janet Overton next door. Stallone's, I mean, not Dad's. Stallone always goes where his bowl is. One of Stallone's favourite pastimes, bowling.

But I'm going to tell you something now, and I want you to pay attention. Are you listening? Right. Here it is. Do not, whatever you do, go on holiday with parents. Any parents. In fact, any adults. Ban them. Leave them at home handcuffed to freezers. Take them with you at your peril. You can let them pay for the tickets and all the rest, that's



OK. You can let them organise everything, and give you a big fat wad of the folding stuff, or better still a credit card with your name on it, but never ever let them go with you. When they're not yelling at you, or smoothing your hair, or making plans for you to visit model villages, they're embarrassing you in public places. My mother is especially good at this.

'JIGGY!' she bawled at the motorway widdle-and-fodder joint, so loudly that every head for miles turned to stare at me coming out of the Gents. 'DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER GOING TO THE TOILET?!'

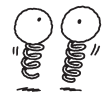
It's parents that should be put in quarantine. Permanently.

It was as I was exiting the Gents and my mother was screeching that something unexpected happened. A big stripy beach ball bounced out of nowhere – bounce, bounce, bounce – and stopped dead at my feet so I had to jump over it. When I jumped I flung my arms out to save myself. They closed around a two-metre-high plastic rabbit with a weight problem and tombstones for teeth. The Big Fat Bunny wobbled and started to fall forward. I held



on, I don't know why. And over we went. It was a slow fall. You know, one of those slo-mo moves you see in action films. When my back finally smacked the ground, Big Fat Bunny was on top of me. He was heavy enough for me to feel kind of flat about things, but not so heavy that it stopped my ears working. I mention this because my ears heard this rattle-rattle-clink-clink sound all around. But then I noticed two Big Fat Bunny eyes staring into mine and stopped harking to rattle-rattle-clink-clink-type sounds. Up close those eyes were terrifying.

The BFB and I stopped staring into one another's eyes when security men hauled him off and jerked me to my feet. It was then that I realised what all the rattle-rattle-clink-clinking had been about. It had been about a million coins hitting the floor and rolling around looking for holes to drop though. These were the coins that had been put in the slot in Big Fat Bunny's plastic chest only to shoot out of a flap in its bunniferous bott when it flattened me. People were scrabbling like maniacs for the coins. Even Pete was on his knees filling his pockets until Angie grabbed his collar and lifted him into a twitching crouch.



And then my parents were there, and my mother was apologising humbly to the security men – apologising for me, her terrible son – and Dad was saying 'Well done, Jig,' with a smirk. When the Big Fat Bunny was upright again a few of the coin collectors came over guilty and formed an orderly queue to drop the coins back in his chest slot. I ducked under some arms and between some legs and scurried to the food counters to give people a chance to talk about me behind my back. Angie was just two steps behind.

'What happened there?' she asked at the first food counter.

'The Big Fat Bunny fell on me,' I said.

'You must have nudged it.'

'I didn't nudge it. I threw my arms round it.'

'What did you do that for? Love at first sight?'

'I was jumping over a ball. Grabbed the BFB to save myself.'

'What ball?'

'That ball.'

A young kid had caught up with the ball and was walking away with it held to his chest, a happy grin separating his cheeks. I wanted to shout,



'There's the culprit! Stare at him, not me!' But I didn't. I said: 'Great. Hash browns.'

I was struggling to pick up a hash brown with the big tweezers provided when Pete shunted up.

'It's not fair,' he said. 'Dad told me to put the money back.'

'I hope you did,' Angie said.

'I gave it to him to put back. Most of it.'

'You mean you kept some?'

Pete tapped his pocket. 'The odd bit and piece.'

'Peter Garrett,' she said, 'that is charity money.'

'I'm a charity, didn't I mention that?'

'Go and give the rest to your dad.'

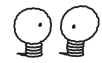
'Why should I?'

She pasted her nose to his. 'Because I'm telling you to.'

Pete knows better than to argue with Angie Mint when she's nosing him. He shuffled off, grumbling.

It hadn't been easy, but I'd managed to tweezer three hash browns on to my plate by this time. Beans next. I dipped the giant spoon in the baked bean bucket.

'That must have been your sudden bad feeling,'



Angie said, examining wrappers for E-additives. 'That a charity bunny was gonna pulp you.'

'No, that wasn't it,' I said.

'It wasn't?'

'No. Don't think so.'

'You think the sudden bad feeling was for something that hasn't happened yet?' I nodded. 'What?'

I shrugged. 'Dunno.'

'Jiggy, we're heading for an airport.'

'I know.'

'And a plane.'

'I know.'

'Which will fly up into the air.'

'I know.'

'With us in it.'

'I know.'

'Maybe we should mention your bad feeling,' she said.

'I know. I mean who to?'

'The Golden Oldies, who else?'

'Tell our parents I had a sudden bad feeling as we're about to get on a plane?' I said. 'I don't think so.'



She grabbed a bundle of E-additives and we left it at that. Something was going to happen, something bad, but we couldn't tell a soul. We would just have to see if we survived. Or not.

