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Jiggy McCue: Ryan's Brain

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Chapter One

Y'know, some people think it's a real laugh being Jiggy McCue. They do, honestly. Laugh? Ha! They know nothing. My life's a tragedy, day in, day out. Take what happened the week before my thirteenth birthday. Bad enough that my biggest birthday so far was set for a Tuesday during term-time (my parents' warped idea of family planning) but that was nothing compared to what happened in the days leading up to it.

It all started the Wednesday before, at football practice. There I was, that cold, miserable afternoon, shivering in my shorts, fingers crossed over my chest that the ball wouldn't stray my way, no *idea* my life was going to take one of its regular nosedives into the mud in just a few minutes. What kicked the whole thing off was–

No. Wait. Back a bit.

Afternoons have mornings, and I ought to mention the morning of that afternoon because it



was the morning of my great experiment. It's a well-known fact that really brilliant people are always misunderstood in their home towns. It probably isn't such a well-known fact that when really brilliant people are kids they're even misunderstood in their own homes. That Wednesday morning is a good example. The scene is my bedroom, my house, the Brook Farm Estate, the crack of seven forty-five. Any time now, my mum will be yelling for me to get up because I'm going to be late AGAIN, then telling me not to gulp my breakfast, to brush my teeth THOROUGHLY, wash my rotten neck, get off to school, and not answer back. You'd think I was some sort of contortionist.

I'd been having a spot of bother getting up recently. Nothing new there, but lately it'd been even harder because the mornings were so dark, and who wants to trade a nice warm bed for a cold dark morning, and school?* It was because of my problem hauling the McCue bod out of the McCue pit on school mornings that I hit on this wheeze to avoid the regular rise-and-shine ear-bashing from the tyrant I'm forced to call Mother, and the



* Personally, I don't see why schools can't organise things so lessons begin after lunch, but don't get me started.



ticking-off from Face-Ache Dakin when I'm late for registration. Half my trouble is finding the extra minutes to kick my PJs into a corner and slot myself into my stupid uniform, so what I thought was, what if I delete the switch from night-clothes to day-clothes? I don't mean go to school in my pyjamas, I mean be already dressed when I wake up. Save quite a wad of time, you have to agree.

Well, that's the plan I put into action the night before that Wednesday. My school jacket and shoes were already downstairs, and my school tie (still knotted) was round the neck of Roger my gorilla, so that in the morning I could just slip it off him and on me. But I was still in everything else when I got into bed that Tuesday night, and wishing I'd thought of it years ago. What I didn't count on was being so snug and warm when my *Nightmare Before Christmas* alarm went off in the morning that I would cover my head and shunt right back to dreamland. Or that my mother would run in to wake me without waiting for a 'Yes, please, fine, do come in, you're so welcome.'

'Jiggy!' she screeched. 'You'll be late again!'

Then she tugged the duvet back. And saw...





'Jiggy, you didn't go to bed in your *school* clothes!'

I screwed my bright morning eyes into place.

'Are you kidding?' Course not. I was up ages ago, got dressed, then thought I'd just lie down for a sec…'

She wasn't buying it. Sometimes you can fool my mother easy as gooseberry pie, other times you might as well leave the room and let her get on with it. Except I couldn't leave the room yet because she might have noticed she was just nagging herself.

'I can't believe you went to bed fully dressed,' she said.

'Fully dressed?' I said. 'No, look. No jacket, no shoes, and Roger's wearing my tie.'

'Don't play games with me, young man,' she chuntered. 'You're in bed in your school clothes. Have you any idea where those things have *been*?'

'Well, they've been to school a few times. Apart from that, ask me another.'

'I just don't believe you've done this,' she said.

'Yeah, I got that,' I said. 'Can I go down for my Super Choco Bombs now?'

'There'll be dust on them.'



'Why? Dad left the packet open again? I've told him not to do that. I've also told him not to *eat* my cereal, but there's no reasoning with that man.'

'I'll have to change the sheets and duvet cover,' Mum said. 'They'll be filthy.'

'They're filthy anyway, you're always telling me.'

'I don't understand you, Jiggy, I really don't.'

'I can speak more slowly if you like.'

'You actually wore your school clothes to *bed*.'

'This is where we came in,' I said. 'Where you came in. Which was for…?'

'To get you up so you wouldn't be late for school.'

'Hey, that's the reason I was wearing my togs in bed!' I cried. 'Great minds, eh?'

She shook her head slowly from side to side. 'School clothes in bed,' she said, 'school clothes in bed,' like her voice was on a loop.

'I'll say it again,' I said patiently. 'I only wore these few things. Not the full shebang. To save *time*.'

'Whether you wore all your clothes or just some of them in bed is quite beside the point,' Mum said.

'What point's that then?'





'You know very well what point. The point under discussion.'

'People are always saying that,' I said.

'Saying what?'

'That things are beside the point. Everything can't be beside the point. If everything was beside the point there might as well not *be* a point. The point would be out of a job. It would feel pointless. Have to go out and look for new work, as a window cleaner maybe, or a nagging mother.'

'Jiggy, you do talk nonsense.'

'It's a gift,' I said. 'Now are we done here or is this going on till bedtime?'

She let me go, but all through breakfast she went on about me wearing my school clothes in bed. Even when I went to the bathroom she had her mouth against the door, saying 'Jiggy this, Jiggy that, I just don't believe you, school clothes, bed, filthy, blah, blah,' and when I went downstairs again she wouldn't let me out of the house till she'd gone through the whole scene a wackillion times more. And guess what.

I was late for school.



