Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Jiggy McCue: The Iron, the Switch and the Broom Cupboard

written by

Michael Lawrence

published by

Hachette Children's Books

All text is copyright of the author and / or the illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

CHAPTER ONE

I was woken by the jolly sound of my mother throwing up in the bathroom. Good job too. That she was throwing up in the bathroom, I mean. It would have taken her ages to get it out of the carpet on the landing. Naturally, I would have preferred to be woken by the tweet-tweet of dear little birdies in the trees that aren't outside my window, but I never get any say in these things.

'Is it me?' I asked, sliding out of bed and peeking round my bedroom door as she staggered out to the landing.

'Is what you?' she gurgled.

'Well, you're always saying I make you sick...'

She smiled feebly – 'Remind me to avoid prawn curries' – and tottered downstairs.

Before I go any further I'd better tell you my name. It's McCue, Jiggy McCue, double-o-nothing, stirred, not shaken. You might know that already. If you don't know it already, it's still Jiggy McCue.



That's Jiggy, not Ziggy or Biggy or Piggy, or Wuggy or Muggy or Buggy – and *definitely* not Juggy. You have to get that straight because of the stuff I'm going to tell you about.*

Now that I think of it, there are one or two other things I ought to get out of the way first. Here they are. I go to a school called Ranting Lane and live with my parents and cat (Mel, Peg and Stallone) in a house called *The Dorks* (yes, really) on a housing development called the Brook Farm Estate, which was built on what used to be a farm (Brook Farm). We live on the cheapo side. The really terrific houses, the ones with double garages and designer poodles and columns holding up the porches, are over on Hillary Clinton Walk, Hannibal Lector Way, and a few other streets named after someone's heroes. The not-so-upmarket streets on our side have names like Crack End and Snit Close. *The Dorks* has three bedrooms and two toilets, though we only use two of the bedrooms. My next-door neighbour is a cement-head from my class called Eejit Atkins, and just across the road is the house where Pete Garrett and Angie Mint live. Pete and Angie are my best buds. We call ourselves the Three Musketeers and

* Actually my real first name's Joseph, but the only people who use it are Golden Oldie teachers you can't educate. Jiggy's been a sort of nickname since I was knee-high to our garden gnome. I got it because I have this complete inability to keep still when I'm agitated or upset or scared, which means I'm as jumpy as two frogs on a bed of nails quite a lot of the time.

we're a sort of gang. Not a bad gang, we don't trip up old ladies and stuff, but when there's three of you and you hang together you have to call yourselves something.

I'd better start by telling you what happened the evening before the morning my mother chucked up in the bathroom and woke me so thoughtlessly. I was working on the Musketeer Rule Book in my room. It was a little red notebook I'd bought out of my pathetic excuse for pocket money. On the cover I'd printed our heroic battle-cry, 'One for all and all for lunch', and inside I'd written the rules that I'd been laying out for a year. It's hard work dreaming up rules, but I was already up to Rule Four, which was...

Rule 4: Musketeers must not hug (specially one another).

This was mainly for Angie. Angie's a female, but she's always saying it's not her fault. She's more boy than Pete and me put together most of the time, even though she doesn't have our dangly bits, but she forgets herself occasionally and comes over all soppy and flings her arms round you. Let me tell you, it's



no fun inside a Mint bear-hug.

'Jiggy!'

That was my mum, calling from downstairs. She's always doing that, calling me from some part of the house I'm not in. Sometimes we're in the same room together and she hardly speaks, then she goes out and shouts for me, and I answer, and she says 'Pardon me?' and I repeat myself, and she says, 'Will you come here please?' and I sigh, and heave myself out of my chair or off my bed, and go to wherever she is, and she says something like, 'Hold the other end of this sheet,' like it's really urgent. There's quite a lot I don't get about my mother. Her whole generation in fact. The Golden Oldie universe is fifteen-point-four light years away from mine.

'Jiggy!'

'What?'

'Will you come down here please?'

'What for?'

'Because I'm asking you to.'

I tutted and passed through my bedroom door (which was open, I'm not a flaming ghost) and went out to the landing. I looked down the stairs. Mum wasn't there any more, which meant I couldn't

interrogate her further without trudging down.

Trudge, trudge, trudge.

'Where are you?' I yell from the bottom (of the stairs).

'Who?' Dad yells back from the living room, where he's watching something sporty on TV as usual.

'Not you!' I yell back.

'I'm in the kitchen!' yells Mum.

I go into the kitchen. My mother is standing there with her ironing board.

'What?' I say.

'Will you stop saying "What?",' she says.

'I'll stop saying what if you stop calling me.'

'I'm calling you because I want to show you how to iron.'

'What?'

'I'm going to show you how to iron.'

'What?'

'Clothes. It's about time you learnt.'

'Why?' I said.

'Because if anything happened to me, you wouldn't know what to do.'

'I would. I'd go for the wrinkled look. What brought this on?'



'What brought it on is that I have so much ironing to do all the time, and get no help from you or your father.'

'Why would you? Ironing is women's work, well-known fact since the dawn of Men's Lib.'

'Jiggy, this is the twenty-first century,' Mum says.

'And this is Wednesday,' I reply.

She frowns. 'What's that got to do with anything?'

I frown back. 'Haven't a clue. Can I go now?'

'No. You'll stay here and learn to iron.'

'Mother,' I said. 'I have homework.'

'Yes,' she said. 'You do,' she said. '*This* homework. Come round here.'

I went round there. I always do as I'm told when I run out of excuses or Mum gets bossy.

Now I'm going to tell you something about ironing. What I'm going to tell you is that it isn't as easy as it looks, specially when the point of the iron gets stuck in the gusset of a pair of underpants. A handkerchief would have been easier. I suggested this, but Mum said anyone could iron a handkerchief, which was why I wasn't.

'But why underpants?' I enquired.

'Underpants are just the start,' she replied. 'You take it for granted when you open your drawer and see them lying there neatly pressed. Well, now you're going to learn how they get that way.'

'Mum.'

'What?'

'It doesn't matter to me if my underpants aren't neatly pressed.'

'Well, it should.'

'Well, it doesn't. It wouldn't matter to me if they were as wrinkled as a pair of prunes. I don't care if my underpants are pressed, tied in a bow, or have tyre marks. No one in their right mind *would* care.'

'I care,' said Mum.

'My point exactly,' I said.

'Whatever you say, Jiggy, whether you like it or not, from now on you're pressing your own underpants.'

'These aren't my underpants.'

'No, they're your father's. We're using his things to practice on. If you make a mess of your dad's clothes he won't notice. He has no pride *whatever* in his appearance.'

'Well nor do I.'



'No, but just in case you develop some eventually I'm going to show you how to look smart. You'll thank me one day.'

'I'll visit the Home specially,' I said.

It wasn't just underpants either. She also tried to show me how to iron T-shirts, and shirts that weren't teed, and pyjamas, and quite a few other things. I grumbled a bit more, naturally, but after a while it got kind of interesting. Kind of a challenge to make everything smooth. I felt like I'd failed when I made a crease where there wasn't one before.

Dad strolled in while I was struggling with one of his shirt collars. 'This I do not believe,' he said, stopping in his tracks and grabbing the door to support himself.

I scowled at him so he wouldn't know it wasn't as bad as it looked. 'You don't have to believe it. I'm going to wake up in a minute and tell you all about it. Then we can both crack up.'

'I'm teaching your son to appreciate the things that are done for him,' Mum explained.

'You don't plan on teaching me too, do you?' said Dad, worried.

'Oh no, you're past saving. Lost cause, you.'

'Whew,' he said, and scooted back to the telly.

As it happened, my mother did me a favour, showing me how to iron. Why was that a favour? Because of what was coming, that's why. If you want to hear what that was, stick around. If you don't, go and press someone's underpants. And watch that gusset!

