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Opening extract from

The Wrong Pong: Holiday Hullabaloo

Written by

Steven Butler

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THE WRONG PONG

HOLIDAY HULLABALOO

STEVEN BUTLER



Illustrated by Chris Fisher

PUFFIN

For Shirley, Ron, Jenny, David and Ava . . .
A potato family of great jubbliness



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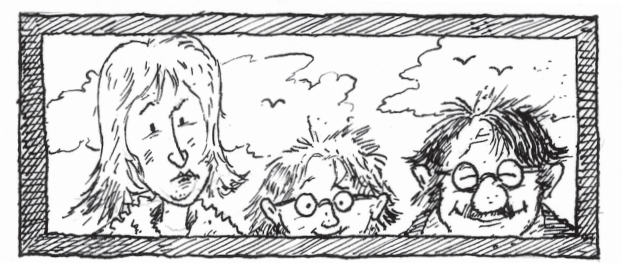
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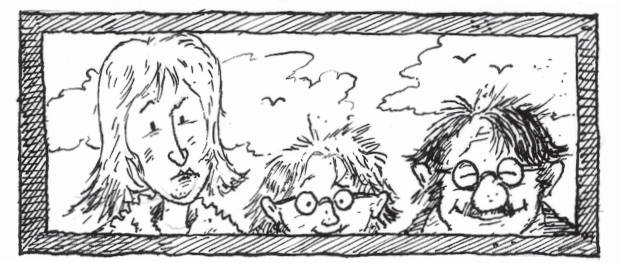


A Note

Neville stared, wide-eyed, into the toilet bowl. His mouth twitched into a smile and the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end.

There floating on the surface of the water was a single square of toilet tissue. On it in scruffy handwriting were the words:





Unwelcome Guests

Neville peeked through the crack in the kitchen door. It was lunchtime as normal in the Brisket house. Marjorie stood baking with a pink, sparkly apron and matching rubber gloves. She was singing to herself in her shrill voice like a parrot with a cold.

'Erm, Mum?' Neville said, edging into the kitchen. His mum was going to go crazy. She turned and glared at him.

'What?' Marjorie snapped. 'I'm cooking.'

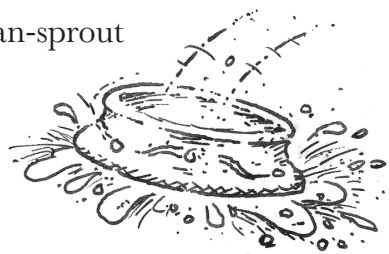
'I got a letter,' Neville said. 'I . . . erm . . .'

'Neville Brisket, what are you talking about? I'm trying to get ahead with supper. Can't you see my soufflé needs me right now?'

'I think . . . erm . . . I think you should read it.' Neville held out the piece of toilet tissue and waited for Marjorie to explode. *The Bulches, here?* he thought.

A family of galumphing, toadstool-covered trolls were coming to stay. Neville was excited at the thought of seeing his other family from down the toilet, but even he couldn't imagine what would happen if they were let loose in Victoria Avenue. Neville started inching away as his mum read the note.

'AAAAAAAAGGGGHHH!' Marjorie dropped her freshly baked bean-sprout soufflé on to the kitchen floor. It landed with a sticky *SLAP* and splattered all over Neville's slippers.



'WWWWWHHHHHAAAATTTT?' she screamed. 'THEY CAN'T!' Marjorie started running on the spot and flapping her arms like a demented rooster. 'THOSE THINGS? THOSE THINGS IN *MY* HOUSE?'

'But they're family now, remember?' Neville said, shrinking away from his flailing mother. He wasn't feeling very brave for an honorary troll.

'No, I don't remember,' Marjorie shouted back. 'Do you know what is happening today? *DO YOU?*'

Neville opened his mouth to answer, but his mum wasn't listening.

'Today is the most dreadful day in the history of the world,' she said, fanning herself and looking dramatically at the ceiling. 'This evening your rich grandma Joan is coming to stay. Do you know how bad that is? That vicious old weasel is horrible enough to us, and we're her family. She'll scream the house down if she sees trolls here. She'll call the police, and probably the fire brigade as well. All the neighbours will know our secret and no one will speak to us ever again!'

Marjorie looked like she was going to take off like a rocket. She actually might have done if Herbert hadn't walked in through the back door with Napoleon the dog trotting behind him like a poo on a lead.

'Oh dear,' he said, seeing Marjorie's face. 'Anything the matter?'

'AAAAAAGGGHHH!' Marjorie threw the toilet tissue at Herbert, dived into the living room and snatched up a cushion from the sofa.

'The Bulches are coming to stay,' Neville told his dad.

'What? Them . . . them troll things? Staying here at the same time as your grandmother?' Herbert's

face turned pale. 'Your mum's not going to like that.'

'No,' said Neville.

In the living room, Marjorie screamed again.

'Maybe one of my whale music CDs would help?' said Herbert, peeking round the living-room door at Marjorie rocking back and forth on the carpet.



Either that or a bucket of cold water poured over her head, thought Neville.

'Trolls,' Marjorie blubbed. 'NAIL DOWN THE TOILET SEATS!'

‘Steady on, love,’ said Herbert.

‘BRICK UP THE DOORFRAMES!’

‘They won’t be any trouble,’ Neville said from the doorway. ‘Honest.’ He thought he’d better not fetch the bucket just yet.

‘Trouble? They’re thieving, stinking, filthy trolls – they’re made of trouble!’

Neville shuffled a little bit closer to his mother. ‘I promise I’ll hide them up in my room when Grandma Joan arrives,’ he said. Deep down inside, Neville secretly wished the Bulches would frighten the nasty old bat away forever. ‘She’ll never notice them.’

‘What about that little one – Plop? He’s bound to wreck my home.’

‘His name’s Pong,’ said Neville.

‘Pong, Plop, what does it matter? WE’RE DOOMED!’

‘I’ll keep an extra eye on him,’ Neville said. ‘I promise nothing bad will happen.’

‘You’d better hope you’re right, Neville Brisket,’ Marjorie hissed, pointing a skinny pink rubber finger at him. ‘If those monsters rear their ugly heads while Joan is about, she’ll make curtains out



of them. How would you like that? Waking up each morning to a lovely set of troll-skin curtains?'

Neville had butterflies in his stomach. The more he looked at his mum, the more she reminded him of a slurch – a wailing gnashing monster from the land of the trolls, complete with teeth like screwdrivers.

'You'd better keep them out of my sight, Neville Brisket,' snarled Marjorie.

'I promise,' he said with a gulp.