

The Kerfuffles



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ISBN-13: 978-0-9945417-8-9

Cover Design by Maria Crocker

Edited by Neal Crocker

Dedicated to my sons

Mitchell & Cameron



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Chapter 1

Chicken Feet



“Chicken feet?” Uncle Harold immediately glanced down at his big hairy toes.

“Not chicken feet. Trick or treat!” Drake answered moodily.

Uncle Harold raised his head. His face now the same shade as a juicy ripe tomato.

“I do NOT have chicken feet, young man. How rude of you!” Uncle Harold shouted, as one eyeball concerningly grew larger than the other.

“I didn’t say you have chicken feet, Uncle Harold,” Drake sighed.



However, Uncle Harold didn’t hear a thing. He was still preoccupied by his big lumpy toes.

Cindy giggled.

“Come to the door, May. Young Jake is here. Making fun of me, of course...” Uncle Harold huffed.

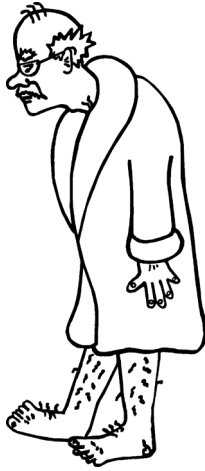
Cindy rolled her eyes. Uncle Harold was always offended by something.

Within seconds, Aunty May miraculously appeared in the doorway. Wearing her soft slippers, she barely made a sound.



Drake and Cindy gasped.

Today her new purple hairdo matched her baggy tracksuit to perfection.



“Jake said I have chicken feet. Can you believe that, May? Of all things, scrawny chicken feet!” Uncle Harold’s wiry moustache wriggled about as he became increasingly agitated.

Aunty May snorted as she glanced to the ground.

Her yellow false teeth danced about to the same rhythm as her witch-like cackle.

Soon, she froze.

A puzzled look crept across her wrinkly face.

“Chicken feet or crow’s feet?” she immediately looked up, now turning to examine her husband’s eyes.

“Not crow’s feet, May! I have CHICKEN FEET!” Uncle Harold grunted.



Drake and Cindy laughed.

Aunty May didn't quite catch on.

“Yes, of course you have crow’s feet, dear. You have wrinkles all around your eyes. They’ve been there for donkey’s years!” Aunty May shook her head, amazed her husband hadn’t noticed his laugh lines before.

“Not crow’s feet. CHICKEN feet,” Cindy corrected her.

Cindy couldn’t help but cause a little more confusion. Secretly, she found it funny.

Aunty May immediately burst out laughing.

Drake frowned at his twin.

“Who has donkey’s ears?” Uncle Harold muttered, now rubbing his large lobes.

Aunty May
ignored him.

Her beady eyes
watered as she
once again
glanced down at
her husband's feet.



“Well dear, the children seem to think you have chicken toes. And I suppose you do. I’ve never really noticed before...” Aunty May lied, shrugging her shoulders. The truth was, she couldn’t see the resemblance.

And she really didn’t care either way.

Uncle Harold continued to look incredibly offended. He didn't know which was worse, having donkey's ears or chicken feet. He was suddenly torn between the two.

Drake puffed out his cheeks as he stared at his elderly relatives. Living next door to them was a living nightmare.

Aunty May and Uncle Harold had only moved into the cottage a month earlier but it seemed like they had been living there an eternity.

"I love your lilac hair and matching eyebrows, Aunty May," Cindy tried to change the subject.



"It's not lilac, dear. It's purple. I dyed it myself this morning, especially for Halloween," Aunty May grinned.

Cindy cringed.

Today, her aunt's false teeth were not only dotted with purple lipstick but bits of food stuff. Aunty May had obviously just devoured another entire jar of stale biscuits for afternoon tea.

"Harold, today is Halloween," Aunty May tapped her husband's arm, she had forgotten to remind him earlier.

“Spring CLEAN?” Uncle Harold looked horrified by the thought. The last thing he wanted to do was dust the entire house. All he wanted was his dinner.

And preferably a meat pie.



With a lovely crispy crust.

Aunty May screwed up her nose. Spring clean? She didn't know what on earth her husband was talking about.

Drake and Cindy gave each other a look and smiled.

“We have a surprise for you, Uncle Harold. Mum asked us to give you this,” Cindy shuffled to the side.

Drake also stepped sideways to reveal the smelly velvet armchair that had been sitting in their Games Room for months on end.

Uncle Harold's jaw immediately dropped.

"My velvet throne!" he shouted.

Drake and Cindy laughed.



Tears started to well in Uncle Harold's bulgy eyes. He looked like he had just reconnected with a long lost relative.

"It's been so long..." he whispered.

Within seconds, Uncle Harold darted out the front door. His knees bobbed up and down with newfound ease, as though they had just been freshly oiled and lubricated.

He stretched out his quivering hand to stroke the musty smelling chair.

“We have no room for that filthy thing in our new house! It doesn’t even match our modern décor,” Aunty May stiffened her thin lips.

Drake rolled his eyes. Their furniture wasn’t modern at all. Far from it. It could definitely be showcased in a museum.

“My chair doesn’t smell! The only thing that smells is YOU!” Uncle Harold now glared at his wife’s green arms.

Cindy’s eyes widened.



Drake gulped.

Aunty May gasped, almost inhaling her false teeth before they strangely popped back into their normal position.

“I have never been so insulted in all my life!” Aunty May was now furious.

“Your homemade goo is putrid, May. I can barely breathe when I stand beside you,” Uncle Harold yelled before plonking himself down in his throne.

Aunty May stretched her pointy chin towards her wrist. Her little nostrils enlarged for a few brief moments.

But strangely, she still couldn't smell a thing.

Drake laughed.



Distracted by the old chair once again, Uncle Harold grinned as he patted the worn armrests. His white false teeth glistened spectacularly in the afternoon sunlight.

“Is this true, Mindicindy? Is Harold correct? Does my homemade ointment actually smell?” Aunty May turned to stare directly at her niece.

“No, not at all,” Cindy lied, her voice a mere squeak. She really didn’t know what else to say.

Drake nodded instead.

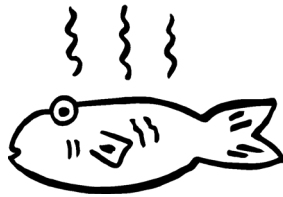
HE wasn’t going to lie.

Aunty May now focused all her attention on her young nephew.

“Jake, does my homemade lotion smell?”

“Yes, Aunty May. Stinks like rotting fish,” Drake answered.

Cindy gasped.



Uncle Harold snorted. He definitely heard THAT.

Aunty May’s mouth hung open, causing her loose false teeth to almost escape from her thin lips.

“And nobody has ever told me?” Aunty May was horrified.

"I tell you all the time!" Uncle Harold shouted.

"YOU don't count!" Aunty May smirked.



"Aunty May, perhaps you could make another batch of ointment and refrigerate it this time. It will probably stay fresh if it is kept at a cold temperature," Cindy tried to offer some advice.

"Yes, dear, I will. But I don't have any room in MY fridge," Aunty May tapped her stained front teeth with her long purple fingernail, suddenly in deep thought.

Uncle Harold sighed with relief. He didn't want his wife's festering jars of goo next to HIS snacks.

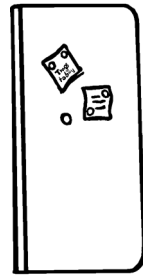
How repulsive.

"I'll have to use YOUR fridge instead, dear," Aunty May smiled cheekily.

Drake and Cindy froze.

"Our fridge?" Drake squeaked.

Uncle Harold grinned.



Widely.

Suddenly, quick footsteps from behind made them all turn.

An exhausted looking lady, pushing a pram, stood beside the letterbox. While two young trick or treaters skipped along the cottage path. Holding hands, they soon stopped beside Uncle Harold's antique chair.

The little girls stood in silence, staring at everyone individually. Then at the strange old man wriggling his big hairy toes. They couldn't seem to take their eyes off him.

They both giggled.

"Trick or treat!" they unexpectedly shouted together.

Their combined voices were deafening.

“I DO NOT have chicken feet!” Uncle Harold shouted at the top of his lungs.

The girls froze.



Within seconds, they disappeared down the path towards their horrified mother, who quickly ushered them away.

Drake, Cindy and Aunty May stared at each other in silence. Unable to believe what they had just witnessed.

“Someone is spreading rumours about my feet, May. I will put a stop to this. Mark my words!” Uncle Harold was now shaking in his seat.

"Harold, they said 'trick or treat'!"
shouted Aunty May.

"I DO NOT have chicken feet!" Uncle
Harold yelled back.

"You need your ears checked!" Aunty May
hollered even louder.

"And I do NOT have donkey's ears! How
rude!" Uncle Harold's bulbous nose now
grew redder by the second.

"Calm down, Uncle Harold," Cindy tried to
soothe her irritated Uncle.

Drake shook his head in disbelief.

Cindy tried to stop grinning. But she couldn't help herself. Her relatives were hilarious.

"Oh no, Dad is home," Drake cringed as he glanced over at the girls now running towards THEIR house.

"Dad doesn't even like Halloween," Cindy giggled.

The little girls waited beside the high weeds. Their mother stood behind them, still glaring over her shoulder at the grumpy old man who just yelled at her children.

Drake moaned.



He really didn't want Dad to answer the front door. He would definitely say something weird or awkward.

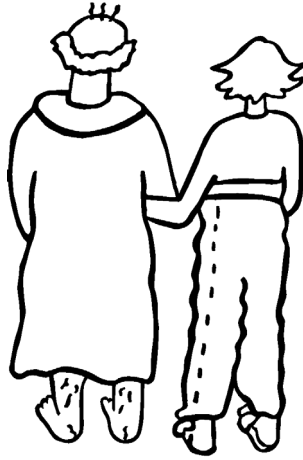
Or both.

"Let's carry your chair inside," Drake soon shouted into Uncle Harold's ear.



Uncle Harold nodded excitedly. He slowly raised his body from his throne. But, just as expected, his knees had already seized up. He slowly started to shuffle towards the front door.

Aunty May immediately grabbed her husband's elbow to help him balance. Together they walked inside. Arm in arm, they soon discussed which frozen dinner they were going to microwave later tonight.



Drake and Cindy followed behind. They carefully maneuvered the armchair through the doorway and into the small front room.

Cindy held her breath.

An offensive odour suddenly made her cringe. It was indescribable. She couldn't quite put her finger on it but it seemed to be a combination of moth balls, stale bread and boiled eggs.

Or was that just Aunty May, she soon wondered.

"Where would you like your special throne?" Drake turned towards Uncle Harold.

"Here on the rug," Uncle Harold smiled as he stared lovingly at the antique chair.

"It's not going in HERE!" Aunty May yelled.

Cindy held her nose. Weirdly no one else seemed to smell the offensive odour in the room.

Not even Drake.

“The chair is ugly,” Aunty May fumed.

“Who’s ugly?” offended once again, Uncle Harold unconsciously stroked his balding head.

Drake laughed.

“Aunty May, these chairs are popular nowadays. Everyone wants one, they’re very rare to find. And they’re very expensive,” Cindy lied.

“Really?” Aunty May raised her thin eyebrows.

Drake nodded.

“Well then, we’ll keep it,” Aunty May suddenly decided, it may actually be worth something after all.

Uncle Harold immediately plonked himself down in it.

Drake sighed with relief as he watched Uncle Harold mold himself into the stained cushion. Thankfully, he wouldn’t have to carry the gross chair back home after all.



“We had better get going,” Drake nudged his sister as he quickly made his way towards the front door.

Uncle Harold stared blankly at the black television screen.

“Where’s the remote control?” he unexpectedly shouted.

“I don’t know!” Aunty May yelled back.

She actually DID.

Cindy smiled, relieved their relatives were now preoccupied by something else to argue over. She quickly left the putrid smelling room without either of her relatives noticing.

Soon she caught up to Drake.

The chirping sound of wild birds together with the faint sound of their relatives arguing travelled in the gentle breeze. As they both reached the overgrown front yard of their home, they were distracted by the same little girls now skipping in circles on Mr

Border's property.

"Looks like Lizzy gave them some

Halloween treats," Cindy grinned.



"Did you say chicken feet? How dare you insult me, young lady!" Drake's voice was now deep and moody as he impersonated Uncle Harold.

Cindy laughed.

Drake unexpectedly looked serious.

“Cindy, I’ve been meaning to ask you something all day. Um, shall we go trick or treating to the OTHER SIDE of the lake?”

Drake’s eyes widened.

“What?” Cindy spun her head.

Drake cringed. He had a feeling she wasn’t going to take it well.

“The forbidden side?” she squeaked.

Drake nodded.

Cindy still couldn’t believe her ears.

“Cindy, everyone knows there’s an old haunted house over there but nobody has ever seen anyone on the property. We can be the first to find out who really lives there. Tonight will be a good excuse to enter it without looking suspicious,” Drake was now excited.

Cindy shivered.

“I’ve heard so many rumours about WHO lives in that old scary mansion. Mr Border always tells the kids at school to stay away from that place. It looks like it’s falling apart...” Cindy couldn’t believe what her brother was suggesting.

“I have a niggling feeling that Mr Border KNOWS who actually lives there. I think he’s hiding a secret, too. Lately, whenever that place is mentioned, he starts acting really strange. His right shoulder starts to twitch...” Drake now nodded with confidence.

Cindy’s eyes grew wide. Yes, she had noticed her teacher’s twitchy shoulder lately. What was Mr Border hiding from them? Could Drake actually be right?

“Mum will freak out ...” Cindy whispered.

“Mum won’t ever have to know. Please, Cindy...” Drake pleaded.

“Nope,” Cindy pouted her lips. Although, she was now starting to have second thoughts.

Drake immediately dropped his shoulders. He looked absolutely miserable. He turned and trudged moodily through the high weeds towards their front door.



Cindy didn't move.

She watched her brother soon disappear inside. Secretly, she was now just as curious as Drake.

Were the rumours true?

She suddenly couldn't wait to find out...

