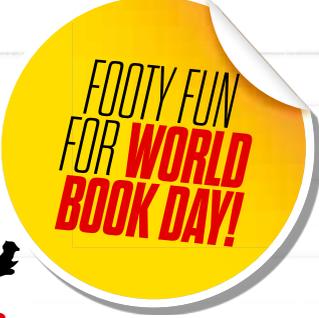


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MISTER MANIAC

Part five



Suddenly, Jimmy felt a thud in the pit of his gut as if he'd taken some sort of invisible punch to the stomach.

Charlie hadn't shown up. Charlie had never not shown up. He was as regular as clockwork, like a watch that had been put together by the finest engineers in Switzerland.

This was bad. Jimmy feared the worst and he ran. Fast. He ran out of the park and up the high street, skidding to a halt outside Mr Wooding's sweet shop, where he and Charlie sometimes stopped after school.

He craned his head inside and quickly scanned the aisles lined with jars of gobstoppers, bonbons, cola bottles and more. No Charlie.

Jimmy ran on. He ran on past the charity shop, where he glimpsed Mrs McGavigan, the part-time, foul-smelling dinner lady, ploddingly folding cardigans in the window. No Charlie.

He swung a sharp left into Everton Terrace, with its smart row of uniformed, red-brick terrace houses on either side.

With sweat now trickling down his neck, and at a faster pace than his legs could carry him, Jimmy stopped outside No.24, Charlie's front door.

An overwhelming sense of dread engulfed him as he rat-a-tat-tatted at the door with the knocker.

The door swung open before he'd even had chance to let go, jolting Jimmy straight into the scowl of Charlie's older sister, Suzie.



"Dirt-weasel isn't here," she hissed at him like a deadly serpent.

"But... you don't understand," Jimmy quivered back.

"Don't. Can't. Won't. Goodbye."

Suzie closed the door on Jimmy with a cold calmness that told him if he was to save his best friend, he'd have to do it alone.

Later that night, Jimmy went to bed as usual, but he had no intention of sleeping. He waited for the familiar sound of his mum switching off the TV and rousing his dad from his nightly sofa slumber.

Once the agonising creep up the stairs, the toothbrushing and the click of the lamp on the bedside table had gone, Jimmy knew it was safe.

Safe to assemble his kit of binoculars, balaclava and a rolling pin borrowed from his mum's baking drawer.



He hoped that he wouldn't have to use the rolling pin - but he knew there was a chance.

As the clock struck eleven, he jimmied open his bedroom window, shimmied down the drainpipe, slipped on his balaclava and headed off to Elm Field Avenue, where he'd heard, from various sources throughout the school, Mister Maniac lived.

To be concluded next week...

NOW YOU CONTROL THE PLOT!

What does Jimmy do next?
Confront Mister Maniac alone
- or get his friends involved?
You decide! Tell us at
motdmag.com