

# Bad Boys' Pranks Dumme-Jungen-Streiche

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## *Prologue*

Don't move! Breathe slowly, so they can't see that you still feel the pain. Pretend to have lost consciousness<sup>1</sup>. Don't feel for your ribs, even if they burn like fire.

Are those guys still there? Is there any shuffling<sup>2</sup> of feet?

There is a rhythm, strong and fast. But it is not outside; it is in my body, beating painfully against my chest<sup>3</sup> and eardrums<sup>4</sup> from the inside. Apart from that it is quiet.

It seems to be over. Doesn't it?

Don't move. Breathe slowly.

The ground I'm lying on feels hard and uneven. The concrete paving slab<sup>5</sup> presses my elbow into my side. Exactly the spot where that guy's black leather shoe hit me, though I was already lying on the street. It would help a lot if I could move a bit.

Are they gone?

How long have I been lying here without being beaten and kicked?

There must have been four or five of them. They met me unprepared when I walked around the corner. Was he with them? Was it all a joke for him?

It is quiet now. I'm cold. And there is no jacket left, nothing to cover my bruised<sup>6</sup>, bare arms.

I'll have to hurry home and take care that nobody sees me. They would start asking questions.

But the last thing I need right now is curious<sup>7</sup> people.

The only thing I need at the moment is a hot tub and a wealthy<sup>8</sup> friend.

Or a bank robbery.

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<sup>1</sup> consciousness – Bewusstsein

<sup>2</sup> to shuffle – schlurfen

<sup>3</sup> chest – Brustkorb

<sup>4</sup> eardrum – Trommelfell

<sup>5</sup> concrete paving slab – Betonfußwegplatte

<sup>6</sup> bruised – blau vom Bluterguss

<sup>7</sup> curious – neugierig

<sup>8</sup> wealthy – wohlhabend

## Chapter 1

“What the heck<sup>9</sup> ...”

Sandra Dingles, the headmistress of Looe Comprehensive School pushed back her chair and stood up. The typewritten sheet of paper in her right hand trembled.

Her hands never trembled, neither when she was making a speech in front of hundreds of students and parents, nor in a council meeting<sup>10</sup> when she had to fight against the closedown<sup>11</sup> of her school and its integration into the bigger community school in Liskeard. It was not her fault that many families had left Cornwall because of the bad employment market<sup>12</sup> in this part of the country. Those children who had stayed here needed a school in the neighbourhood.

And what her children needed, apart from a school in their direct neighbourhood, was definitely not this kind of threatening letter<sup>13</sup>, which made her hand tremble this morning as if she was a hundred years old. But that was exactly how she felt.

“May I have your attention please,” she shouted into the crowd of busy teachers in the staffroom<sup>14</sup>.

“Attention please!”

Sandra cleared her throat<sup>15</sup> and put the letter onto her desk. The others must not see her hand tremble.

“I’m afraid we have a situation.”

She tapped the letter with her finger. When she was sure that the last conversation had stopped and she had the undivided<sup>16</sup> attention of her staff, she sat down and picked up the letter. But she rested her elbows on the table to steady herself.

“As in ‘Houston, we have a situation’ at the explosion of an oxygen tank on Apollo 13?” the history teacher asked.

“Well, pretty much like that,” Sandra said and frowned<sup>17</sup>. “I only hope that we can

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<sup>9</sup> what the heck – was zum Teufel

<sup>10</sup> council meeting – Ratsversammlung

<sup>11</sup> closedown – Schließung

<sup>12</sup> employment market – Stellenangebot

<sup>13</sup> threatening letter – Drohbrief

<sup>14</sup> staffroom – Lehrerzimmer

<sup>15</sup> to clear one’s throat – sich räuspern

<sup>16</sup> undivided – ungeteilt

<sup>17</sup> to frown – die Stirn runzeln

avoid<sup>18</sup> the explosion.”

As all eyes rested on her, Sandra read the letter aloud.

*“I will cause you and everybody at your school real trouble, bloody trouble. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. You will repent<sup>19</sup>.”*

There was silence. You could have heard a pin drop. After a moment somebody started laughing.

“It must be a joke, mustn’t it?”, somebody said. But he didn’t sound too convinced<sup>20</sup>.

“They can’t mean it,” a female voice could be heard, “Not in the British countryside.”

All of a sudden everybody started talking with their neighbours until Sandra called their attention again.

“I don’t think this is really – well – dangerous, you know. Not so serious that we should call the police. That would only support those in the community who want to close us down – you understand. To me it sounds like one of those bad boys’ pranks we all know so well. But on the other hand we’ll have to take steps to make sure that nobody has gone insane<sup>21</sup> and tries to hurt anybody.”

Many heads nodded.

“Exactly!”

“Aye...”

“Hear, hear!”

“That’s right!”

Sandra put the letter back on the desk.

“Well then ... let’s get everything organised before the kids come in.”

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<sup>18</sup> to avoid – verhindern

<sup>19</sup> to repent – Buße tun, bereuen

<sup>20</sup> convinced – überzeugt

<sup>21</sup> go insane - durchdrehen

## Chapter 2

Rebecca Higgin's mother Leonora slowed down her taxi in front of a traffic light and turned her head to face her daughter, who was sitting in the left-hand back seat.

"Well, I hope you will do better in today's test than in the last one," Leonora said with a sigh<sup>22</sup>. Your new hairdo<sup>23</sup> is nice. It suits you short<sup>24</sup>!"

Becca's grandmother Georgina looked at Becca from the right-hand back seat with a smile. "And who are you, my dear?"

"I'm Becca, your granddaughter, Granny. Remember? Your bedroom is next to mine. And by the way," Becca turned to her mother behind the steering wheel, "My last test was the second-best in the class, so what are you on about?"

Her mother drove on.

"Where are we going? Have the monkeys been fed<sup>25</sup> yet?" Georgina asked. Her face showed an expression of deep concern.

"Yes, everything is fine, mother, all the animals are well and we are on our way to Brighton, where the Circus will stay for two whole weeks and perform every afternoon and night. But right now you have to be quiet, dear. The lions are very restless!"

Georgina sucked in air through her teeth and pressed her lips together.

Becca knew that her grandmother would not say a word for quite a while. Mentioning the lions was the best way to silence her, especially when her mother Leonora had passengers. In the summertime, like now in early July, her mother was quite busy with her taxi business. And it sometimes disturbed the passengers when they saw the old lady sitting in the back seat. But this was the only possible way to keep Granny from running away to some faraway Circus only she could see.

Sometimes Becca and her mother wished they could afford<sup>26</sup> a care home for Georgina, but that was far too expensive as Leonora's income was only good in summer. But in the wintertime, with no tourists in the little town of Looe on the South Eastern Cornwall coast, she had little to do and time enough to take care of Grandma.

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<sup>22</sup> sigh – Seufzer

<sup>23</sup> hairdo – Haarschnitt

<sup>24</sup> to suit s.b. – jmd. gut stehen

<sup>25</sup> feed – füttern

<sup>26</sup> afford – sich leisten

Georgina had grown up as the daughter of two animal tamers<sup>27</sup>, the famous Martins from Newcastle. She had inherited her parents' passion for all kinds of animals. And for travelling. So the taxi business had turned out to be quite a good way to keep Georgina under control when she developed Alzheimer' disease several years ago.

Becca took her grandmother's hand and squeezed it lightly.

"Everything's fine," she said, and Georgina nodded.

Leonora pulled the taxi into a parking space in front of the Looe Comprehensive School to let Becca out.

"Do your best, sweetheart," she said.

And when Becca turned around to walk up to the school entrance she heard one of her grandmother's famous last anchors in her waters of forgetfulness<sup>28</sup>:

"Every cloud has a silver lining<sup>29</sup> ..."

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<sup>27</sup> animal tamer – Dompteur

<sup>28</sup> waters of forgetfulness – das Vergessen

<sup>29</sup> every cloud has a silver lining – es gibt immer einen Silberstreifen am Horizont