

SIMON CHESHIRE

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THEY MELTED  
HIS BRAIN!

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Cheshire is the author of many hugely popular books for children, including the bestselling Saxby Smart detective stories. He writes in a tiny little office which used to be a cupboard, and which is bursting at the seams with books, old chocolate wrappers and letters from his readers. All his stories are based on fact - only names, dates, places, descriptions and events have been changed, to make them more believable. He lives in Warwick, but spends most of his time in a world of his own.

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# EPISODE 1

*The fate of the entire world hung in the balance. The situation looked hopeless.*

*“Nothing’s hopeless,” said Dirk, Hero and Saviour Of The Planet. “Let’s give these tentacled horrors from the stars a taste of their own medicine!”*

*“You mean,” gasped Penelope, Space Pilot and Tough Cookie, “we reroute the energy bypass flow through the neutron accelerator, thereby causing explosive feedback into their intergalactic transport pod?”*

*“You bet,” said Dirk. “Let’s kick their teeth in!”*

“Cut! Stop! No!” cried Matthew Bland, Director, Maker Of Movies and Schoolkid. “Lloyd, for goodness’ sake, you’re playing a scientist. You’re a top genius in nuclear stuff. You are not going to kick anybody’s teeth in!”

“I think my character would say that,” said

Dirk, or rather Lloyd Martin, Schoolkid, Actor and Friend Of Matthew. He scratched his thick mop of dark hair, pulled his glasses out of his top pocket and put them back on. He could now focus past the tip of his nose.

“No,” said Matthew, “I think your character would say what’s in my carefully written and lovingly prepared script, thanks very much.” He switched off the video camera and started scribbling in his ring binder marked ‘Production Notes.’

“It really doesn’t matter either way,” said Penelope, or rather Julie Custard, Schoolkid, Actor and Other Friend Of Matthew. “These are dribbly monsters from the depths of space. They haven’t got teeth to start with.”

“Can I smack their faces in?” said Lloyd.

“No you can’t,” grumbled Matthew. His stomach grumbled too. “Let’s get this scene in the can, and go home. I want my tea.”

Lloyd had a different idea about what Matthew wanted, but said nothing. He took up his position, crouching in the bushes. His glasses were whipped off and popped back into his pocket. He could now no longer see past the tip of his nose. Matthew switched on

the camera, and checked the battery level.

Lloyd tried to look heroic, peering warily around leaves in case he was spotted by something with a laser gun. Julie scrambled up through the undergrowth behind him.

“Take two! Action!”

*“It’s hopeless, Dirk,” said Julie. “The entire research station is in the slimy grip of those fiends!”*

*“Nothing’s hopeless,” said Lloyd. “Let’s give these tentacled horrors from the stars a taste of their own medicine!”*

*“You mean,” gasped Julie, “we reroute the energy by-pass flow through the neutron accelerator, thereby causing explosive feedback into their intergalactic transport pod?”*

*“You bet,” said Lloyd. “Let’s go save this crazy old world of ours!”*

“Cut!” shouted Matthew. “Brilliant! Fabulous!”

Camera, scripts, and home-made neutron accelerator were all packed away into a huge, battered canvas bag, which Matthew got Lloyd to carry: “Because you’re the one with the

longest arms.” Lloyd didn’t see why it shouldn’t be the one with the fattest stomach who carried the bag, but said nothing.

“We could be stuck here forever,” mumbled Matthew, as they waited for a gap in the flow of cars. Lloyd wiped his glasses with his thumb. They all wondered if perhaps they should have found a better location than the island in the middle of the huge roundabout next to the Homefit DIY Superstore.

They waited patiently on that roundabout, on that Saturday afternoon. One of them was short and round, one of them was tall and walked with a slight stoop, and one of them was as completely medium-sized as it’s possible to be. At that moment, crossing the road seemed like a really complicated and challenging problem. However, it would soon be the least of their worries. They would have run home and hidden under their beds if they’d had the slightest idea what was going to happen to them.

# EPISODE 2

Matthew's house stood at the end of a long terrace of late Victorian dwellings. It looked out onto a wide street, with sycamore trees sprouting at regular intervals from the pavements. It certainly wasn't the sort of place that might be, for example, the landing site for an alien invasion, or a hideout for double agents on the run from international assassins. This irritated Matthew quite a lot.

Once Lloyd had deposited the equipment bag by Matthew's front door, and sloped off home muttering about somewhere else he'd like to deposit the equipment bag, Matthew dragged it into the hall. There it stayed, lurking by the radiator, waiting patiently for Mum to trip over it some time later.

C-RUMP!

"Matthew Bland! Move this junk!" she yelled up the stairs, with a spatula in one hand and her bruised toes in the other.

“I’m busy editing,” called Matthew from his room.

“You’re busy moving this junk! Timothy will be home in a minute!”

*Cut to: face of M.Bland! thought Matthew. Anger! Terror! Loathing! Checks fiendish plan. Cut back to hall: key unlocks front door. Ka-boom. Timothy turns into little black crisp. M.Bland cackles horribly as he is carted off in police van.*

Timothy was indeed home in precisely a minute. He was seventeen, and had inherited a more impressive set of genes than his younger brother. He was also smartly dressed, had beautifully white teeth, and twenty-four minutes earlier he’d scored the winning goal in the semi-final of the Inter-Schools Football Challenge Cup.

“Don’t worry, Mother, I’ll get the bag shifted,” he said, hanging his blazer up on a peg, and flicking a speck of fluff off the shoulder.

“You hear that?” yelled Mum up the stairs. “I’ve got one son who’s good to his mother!” She turned to Timothy who produced, from behind his back, a small but perfectly wrapped

bunch of flowers for her. “Oh Timothy,” she cooed, adoringly. “Are you in for tea?”

He was. The three of them sat around the kitchen table. The flowers took pride of place in a vase next to the ketchup. Timothy had made the vase in his pottery class.

“I think my hay fever’s coming on,” grumbled Matthew, giving the vase a hard stare.

“Timothy, I nearly forgot,” said Mum suddenly, holding up her hands in alarm. Her face shone in the light from the lamp that Timothy had made in his metalwork class. “There’s another letter for you from the college.”

“I keep telling them I don’t want a teaching job, Mother. I’m doing my A-levels. Anyway, I’ll be busy with rehearsals for the school concert this evening. Then I’m taking Chloe and Alison for a pizza. I should be back around 9:45, but I’ll ring if I’m going to be late.”

“They’re lovely girls,” smiled Mum, her eyelashes fluttering proudly. “There you are, Matthew, you ought to find yourself a nice girlfriend —”

“Muuuum!”

“— instead of wasting your time making silly films.”

*Cut to: 15 years in the future, thought Matthew. M.Bland wins third BAFTA Award For Extreme Talent. Mum interviewed watching live coverage of ceremony. “I was wrong. He was right. If only I’d listened to him.” Bursts into bitter tears of regret.*

“Why can’t you be interested in numbers? The world will always need accountants.”

“Muuuum!”

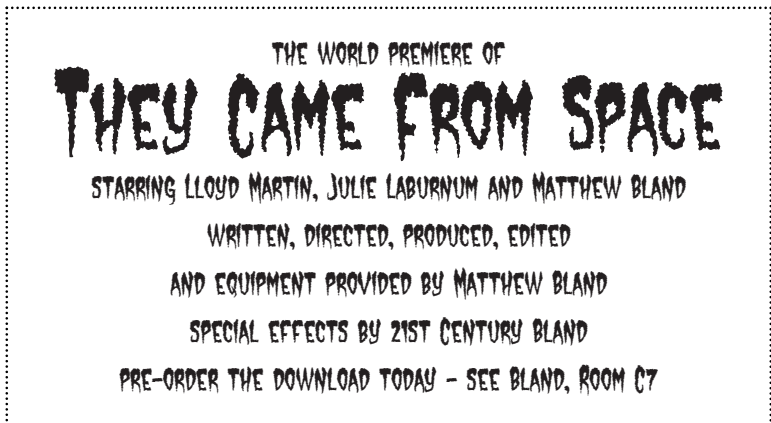
“It’s unhealthy. There’s Martin Lloyd —”

“Lloyd Martin.”

“— thin as a rake, never eats. I know he can’t help the way he looks, but at least you’d think his mother would keep him indoors more. And there’s you, slowly inflating! I don’t know how you manage to put on so much weight. Finish your pudding.”

# EPISODE 3

The following Monday lunchtime, Matthew pinned home-made posters to notice boards around the school, announcing:



The posters included a small wiggly graphic representing the chilling mystery of them from space. *Great poster!* thought Matthew. *Terrifying movie! Another milestone in serious cinematic brilliance from M.Bland!*

Matthew pinned the last one to the notice board outside the Staff Room. Then he

realised he'd forgotten to mention the venue for the premiere, went around the school changing the posters with a biro, returned to the Staff Room, changed the last one, and stood back to admire it. It was next to the hockey team fixture list and an old dog-eared diagram of the nearest fire exits. Matthew felt a strange wave of emotion welling up in his chest. This was probably pride at his artistic achievement, but possibly indigestion.

The door of the Staff Room sneaked open, letting out a low murmur of voices, and a thick fog of coffee smells and despair. Mr Prunely, from the Geography department, emerged picking at his fingernails. His brown jacket had leather patches on the elbows, and his tie displayed an impressive range of food stains.

"Hallo there, Mr Bland," he said with a cheery nod. Mr Prunely was the sort of well-spoken teacher who would always address Matthew as 'Mr' and other teachers by their first names. He pointed to Matthew's notice. "Ah, your latest cinematic spectacular is ready to entertain us?"

"Yes, sir, well done."

"'They Came From Space.' Sounds jolly

dramatic. Science fiction?”

“Nothing gets past you, sir, does it?” said Matthew.

“Room M12, Thursday donkey break.”

“That’s dinner break, sir. My handwriting’s like a spider dipped in ink.”

“Ah. I shall look forward to Thursday, then, especially the latest performance from the talented Miss Custard. She’s still adopting a stage name, I see.”

“That’s movie stars for you, sir.”

Mr Prunely chuckled amiably, and sauntered off down the corridor. He was still chuckling amiably as he sauntered up the corridor outside M12 on Thursday donkey break. He chuckled amiably about many things.

Mr Nailshott, Head Of Modern Languages, had switched on the PC and overhead projector in Room M12. His moustache looked like the business end of a toothbrush. It bristled, livelier than a military base on red alert. He was only staying to attend the premiere because he didn’t trust these little swine. They’d have his beloved classroom equipment listed on eBay if he so much as left

the room for a wee, he was sure of it. He would have insisted that Bland use his own machines, but the rule about not bringing valuables to school was very strict. He knew it was. He'd written it himself.

Matthew's shaking hands fluttered over the laptop. Everything booted up, all set. *And the Golden Lens Cap for Best Picture Made By A Young Genius On A Budget Of £9.49, goes to...* His heart was chattering, and his teeth were pounding. He seemed to have lost all control over what his heart and teeth were up to.

"OK, Matt?" said Lloyd.

"Yeah, I feel much better than usual. Got a good feeling about this one."

The room was rapidly filling with pupils, mostly from Matthew's year, but with a generous helping of older and younger kids. There were more than had come to see 'Volcano Town,' and many more than had attended 'Kevin Johnson: Midfield Surgeon.'

"My fame is spreading," said Matthew.

Lloyd gave him a quick thumbs-up sign and went to the back of the room to sit next to Julie. He had his best pen tucked away in his blazer pocket, in case he was asked for an

autograph. Nobody had ever asked him for one, but he had his pen with him anyway.

Mr Prunely wandered in, and sat at one of the desks. Mr Nailshott marched over to him, and whispered sharply. "Watch these little swine. I need a wee."

He was back in time to witness the moment when the blinds were shut, the lights went out, and Matthew pressed the 'PLAY' button. Thirty-five pupils cheered, six booed, and two made rude noises.

"Shut it," growled Mr Nailshott.

The opening titles of 'They Came From Space' started, accompanied by the dan-dan-daaaah music Matthew had also used for one of his early works, 'Giant Bacteria Ate My Brother.' The names of the cast appeared on screen.

From near the back there was a cry of "Julie who? That's Julie Custard of B7!" followed by a swift smack around the ear from Julie Custard of B7. The title appeared in sizzling red letters (*shapes cut out of card and filmed in front of Mum's flame-effect gas fire*). It was then that the giggling got underway. Matthew took his movies very seriously. But

nobody else did.

They sniggered as the aliens' spacecraft descended to Earth (*highly detailed model Matthew had spent hours on, slid along cotton threads*). They cackled as Dirk fought the mutant spider the aliens had hidden in his fridge (*black wool wound around a wire frame, fired out of a tub of coleslaw with the aid of an elastic band*). By the time Dirk and Penelope had found the horribly scarred body of Josh, the hapless tramp (*Matthew with ketchup and rice crispies on his face*), the dialogue was almost inaudible beneath the howling. Two little Key Stage 1 juniors ran out clutching the front of their trousers.

Matthew, crouched beside the TV, tried not to listen. He kept his eyes on the screen, watching his creation.

*Stirring music on soundtrack swells into a whirlwind of emotion! Heroically, Dirk delivers a fearless call to action for the whole human race! "Nothing's hopeless."*

"Except this load of old poo!" quipped an anonymous wit from the audience.

"That's the roundabout by Homefit!"

"Is that Martin Lloyd? You can't tell

without his glasses on!”

The twenty-five minutes of ‘They Came From Space’ reached their explosive climax (*model building set alight by Lloyd’s dad*) surrounded by hoots, cheers and cackles. The lights went on, the laptop went off. Pupils shuffled back to their classrooms, wiping tears from their eyes.

As reactions to Matthew’s films usually went, this one had been pretty positive. Lloyd and Julie emerged from the desks they’d hidden under. Mr Prunely shook Matthew’s hand warmly, while Mr Nailshott checked over his beloved equipment.

“Splendid!” said Mr Prunely. “Lots of imagination and technical know-how on display there, Mr Bland. Jolly well done! And well done to you too, Miss Custard, Mr Lloyd. Super acting.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Lloyd and Julie weakly. They went back to their classrooms, where they would enjoy a few minutes of superstar status amid cheers and raspberries.

Mr Nailshott finished sliding the laptop back into its storage case. “Pity you’re not like your brother, Bland,” he barked. “Why a

talented young actress like Custard there gets involved in your ridiculous drivel is beyond me.”

“My adoring public seems to have trouble understanding the complex genius of my cinematic vision,” said Matthew through gritted teeth.

“They certainly enjoyed themselves,” said Mr Prunely. “I’m sure that’s a really encouraging sign.”

“I care not for encouraging signs, sir,” said Matthew, confidently. “I shall be sending ‘They Came From Space’ to a number of movie production companies, along with a selection of highlights from my recent work. The artistic savages in this school will be completely gobsmacked when I start getting offers to direct major motion pictures.”

# EPISODE 4

Dear Mr Blend

Thank you for sending us your showreel of work. This has been viewed with great interest and amazement by our Creative Director, Reg Benbow-Crisp.

Unfortunately, nothing on your disc gives us any confidence that you are suited to a career in film production. But all is not lost - your tape will provide many hours of amusement at our next office party.

Yours sincerely

Mary Ann Bright, Secretary to the Creative Director

Dear Mr Blond

Thank you for sending us your disc of sample work. This has received close attention from our Production

Manager, Fred Wallaby.

Mr Wallaby has asked me to assure you that you need never worry about whether or not you'll make it in the world of film-making. You won't. Mr Wallaby states that he has never seen such a load of old poo in all his life, and has flung it out of the window of his office in case it contaminates any real work, done by professionals.

Yours sincerely

Jubilee Lyne, secretary to the  
Production Manager

Dear Mr Blind

Thank you for submitting your disc to me. I've always been told that if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. So I won't say anything at all about your scripting, your editing, your technical ability, or indeed your photographic style, which only the 'video diary' type of documentary film-maker would find appealing.

Yours sincerely  
Hugh Andeye, Managing Director  
P.S. However, your actress is  
talented.

The other twelve letters had said similar things. Matthew read the last one again. Documentaries? *Documentaries?*

“Must be mad,” he mumbled to himself.

He put the letters into a ring binder, labelled ‘Get Lost File.’ He pushed the ring binder into the tight cram of stuff under his bed, next to the very dusty cuddly rabbit which had been there, nose down, ever since the day his Auntie Pam had given it to him six years earlier.

He made a mental note to have a clear-out under that bed one of these days, but making mental notes was a pointless thing to do. If all the mental notes he’d made about having a clear-out under the bed (or tidying on top of the wardrobe, or sorting out the pile of grubby T-shirts by his desk) had actually been written down, he’d have had enough paper to line the entire house, and still have enough left over to seal next door’s cat in four metre thick papier

mache.

His room was a tip. Even dirt felt unclean in there. Germs would throw themselves on bottles of bleach rather than end up in Matthew Bland's room.

It might have been easier to move around if the place hadn't been crammed with second hand camera accessories, video equipment and tellies, plus the digital editing gear he'd bought with 30,000 years' worth of pocket money. The miles of spaghetti-like cable which linked them all together made a dangerous assault course for unwary feet. He had inherited his video camera, the start of his whole techno-mountain, after his dad had run off to join the circus during a family outing to Weston-Super-Mare.

Matthew liked to think that his room was simply too small to contain his creative brilliance. Few people ever contradicted this idea, mostly because they were afraid to go in there in the first place.

It was 11:36pm on Friday night when he squashed his Get Lost File into the stuff under the bed. Pushing in the file popped a 500-piece jigsaw out the other side, but he had more

important things to think about.

He quickly set Editing Computer no.3 to record what promised to be a fascinating TV programme on East European cinema of the 1930s. Why they were putting something so interesting on at quarter past three in the morning was beyond him. He made a mental note to say something withering about it in his first major TV interview.

*M.Bland introduced by host, audience cheers! Standing ovation eventually subsides. M.Bland tells hilarious anecdotes about recording programmes at quarter past three in the morning.*

With the machine set, he flipped off the light, jumped into bed and pretended to be asleep, before Mum had a chance to sneak upstairs and shout “Go to sleep, young man, I don’t care if it’s the weekend!”

The door flew open. “Go to sleep, young man, I don’t ..! Oh. Night night.”