

NEVER ASSUME

**UNCUT**



THE ABSURD TALES OF MR GRIFFS

By J & K Joseph

## **About *Never Assume***

*Mr Griffs loves everything his neighbour hates.*

While Mr Griffs enjoys wearing baggy clothes, Steve Moran only dresses in designer suits. Mr Griffs relishes his privacy and Steve regularly snoops on people. Mr Griffs appreciates wildlife whereas Steve sees wild animals as pests.

Their long standing rivalry escalates when Steve accuses Mr Griffs of digging holes in his garden. In response, Mr Griffs uses a particularly hot batch of his wife's spicy nuts to get back at Steve.

Mr Griffs and Steve Moran rarely see eye to eye, but they do have one thing in common. They're both guilty of assuming.

Absurd and quirky – this is just a typical day in the life of Mr Griffs.

*Confirming his suspicion that Steve had in fact been spying on him the other day, Mr Griffs said loudly, 'Next time you decide to snoop around my garden, you ought to change your cologne. It's a dead giveaway. It's so stinky!'*

Visit [www.mrgriffs.com](http://www.mrgriffs.com)

## **Dedication**

*To the Griffs of tomorrow*



## ***Never Assume: Uncut***

When we pitched the idea of creating *Never Assume: Uncut* to Mr Griffs, he was unimpressed. He didn't see the point of it and, as this uncut version wasn't in his contract, he didn't feel obliged to do it. Plus, he claimed that his schedule was stretched far enough. Apparently, his daily trips to local cake shops, his pile of unfinished Sudoku puzzles and his favourite radio programs take up most of his time. Not to mention Ruby and Lucy's frequent visits and the fact that Mrs Griffs has been on his back lately about spending more time with her.

It wasn't until we approached Steve Moran with the idea of creating a behind-the-scenes look into *Never Assume* that there was an unexpected opening in Mr Griffs' calendar. Mr Griffs called us up, suddenly interested in our proposal. He asked us, and we quote, 'When do we start filming? My schedule is wide open.'

Despite Mr Griffs' assumption, this special edition is not a film by any means. Instead it's an opportunity to delve into some of the back stories and behind the scenes moments of *Never Assume*, the first story in *The Absurd Tales of Mr Griffs* series. *Never Assume: Uncut* will also contain exclusive bonus material and a preview of *Cool as a Cucumber*, the next story in the series.

Unlike Mr Griffs, Steve was immediately on board with this project as he didn't think that he had been given a fair portrayal in *Never Assume*. This uncut version was an opportunity for him to tell his side of the story and get things off his chest. Particularly about his neighbour, Mr Griffs.

Suffice to say, we couldn't interview Mr Griffs and Steve at the same time. To avoid any confrontations, all interviews had to be conducted separately. All studio visits were arranged at different times and we tried our best to keep our interviewees from crossing paths. But this was easier said than done.

## **The story behind *Never Assume* – the serious stuff**

In everyday life, we tend to make assumptions about things. We are quick to notice when other people make them but seldom recognise when we ourselves are assuming. This contradiction inspired *Never Assume*. We wanted to write a story where several characters would jump to conclusions about something or other, and to explore the consequences of this.

Mr Westerbeak's guest appearance on *The Garden Report* introduces the notion that having positive energy around plants can directly impact their growth. Although Mr Griffs views this as holistic 'rubbish', the state of his petunias is symbolic for how both he and Steve Moran make negative assumptions about each other. Though neither of them believe in the power of positive energy, they are both quick to endorse the idea when it suits them.

The relationship between Mr Griffs and Steve is also central to *Never Assume*. The two characters have many differences but, at their core, they are quite similar to each other. This story had to subtly express this. Throughout this story we were also trying to define Mr Griffs' character and some of his idiosyncrasies – for example, his love for food and routine, and his tendency to intentionally mispronounce words. We wanted to show that Mr Griffs, though a complex and quirky person, can be quite simple and straightforward.

In *Never Assume*, Steve accuses Mr Griffs of digging holes in his garden. This paves the way for Mr Griffs to get back at his neighbour by using a batch of his wife's spiced nuts. In doing so, however, he makes a key assumption of his own (that all turkeys like nuts). The story finally ties together when Steve assumes that Mr Griffs' petunias are dying because his neighbour is so negative.

Even though other characters also make assumptions, Mr Griffs and Steve's contentious relationship is always brought forward.

*Never Assume*, as the first story, sets the tone for *The Absurd Tales of Mr Griff's* series and brings to light the personalities and attitudes of several key characters. Though the story is absurd, ultimately we wanted *Never Assume* to be relatable to the everyday person. After all, there is a Mr Griff's in all of us.

## Pressing questions from *Never Assume*

### Why bush turkeys?

Rather than featuring more common barnyard or suburban animals, we decided to include bush turkeys in *Never Assume* as we felt that they were better suited to the quirky nature of the series.

In *Never Assume*, we use turkeys to explore the way Mr Griffs relates to animals in comparison to humans. Although Mr Griffs finds turkeys aggravating, he ironically has a healthy respect for them. We contrasted this with Steve's view of turkeys – he knows nothing about them and doesn't bother to make an effort to understand them. There is no nuance to the way Steve views people or turkeys.

When we asked Mr Griffs for his opinion of bush turkeys, he replied, 'They're quite annoying, aren't they? They strut all around Cornville as though they run the place.' He thought for a moment before breaking out into a cheeky smile. 'Hmm, sounds a bit like Steve, doesn't it?' Then his face turned serious. 'But, anyway, I've had turkeys build their nests in my garden and scratch my roof. Then again, any creature that likes nuts can't be too bad. As long as they stay away from my pistachios. They're not cheap, you know?'

We tried to wrap up the session, but Mr Griffs wouldn't stop going on about how the turkeys were introduced to Cornville years ago. He rambled on about how he thinks that the council should have done more to contain them. Right then and there, Mr Griffs decided that he was going to do something about it himself and conduct his own independent research on wild bush turkeys.

I guess we're going to see more of these turkeys in the second story – *Cool as a Cucumber*.

### **What was the point of introducing the Rubik's cube?**

Well, in truth, the Rubik's cube was a way for us to hint at the many layers to Steve and Mr Griffs' relationship. How they relate to one another doesn't always have to be centred on big events or major points of conflict – they can be random and puzzling. There's always tension brewing between the two.

Additionally, the Rubik's cube was a way for Steve to show his superiority. And we all know how much he loves to do that.



## Interviews with your favourite characters

**{A sit down with Mr Griffs}**

**Author 1:** Hi Mr Griffs, thanks for coming in today.

**Mr Griffs:** No problem. Do you know when they'll be bringing out lunch?

**Author 2:** Soon, Mr Griffs, soon. We've organised a bowl of mixed nuts for you [gestures towards it]. I'm sure it will tide you over while we ask you some questions about *Never Assume* and yourself in general.

**Mr Griffs:** [Starts munching on nuts] Sure, sure. Go ahead.

**Author 2:** So Mr Griffs, we've noticed that you like to give people nicknames. Is there a reason why?

**Mr Griffs:** [Shrugs] To all those critics out there that think I'm being a bully; I'm just having a bit of fun. You know, livening up the conversation.

**Author 1:** Oh, is that why you prefer to be called Mr Griffs then?

**Mr Griffs:** [Cracks open a pistachio nut] Next question!

**Author 2:** I'm curious, what about your habit of mispronouncing words? Like 'yiz' for 'yes' or 'cotch' for 'ouch.' Has that got anything to do with why you give people nicknames?

**Mr Griffs:** No, that's just to test whether people are listening to me. Oh, and sometimes my mind just wanders.

**Author 1:** So it's not your selective hearing?

**Mr Griffs:** [Eyes squint suspiciously] What's Mrs Griffs been telling you?

**Author 2:** [Coughs] Moving on, what about Steve? Do you have a nickname for him?

**Mr Griffs:** [Sighs heavily] When I first met him, I instantly knew what he was about. So I called him 'Golden Boy.' But Steve took it as a compliment and I was having none of that. The name was wasted on him.

**Author 1:** But that was years ago!

**Author 2:** If you could give him a nickname now, what would it be?

**Mr Griffs:** [Holds up a finger] No. No nicknames for Steve. You have to deal with him directly. It's the only way to get through to him.

**Author 1:** Sure, Mr Griffs. Now, I've got a question for you about petunias. What is it about them that you love so much?

**Mr Griffs:** Ahh, they're just so beautiful. They're easy to grow, aren't prone to diseases and they come in so many different varieties and colours.

**Author 2:** Yes, speaking of which, one might even say that they are as multi-coloured as your personality.

**Mr Griffs:** [Frowns] You've been spending too much time around that Mr Westerbeak.

**Author 1:** [Clears throat] So we asked Mrs Griffs why she thought you liked petunias and she said that your mood always improves when you tend to them.

**Mr Griffs:** [Chews on a macadamia thoughtfully] I don't know about that. I tend to be positive all the time. By the way, so much for mixed nuts – where are all the pistachios? [Grouchy expression] Don't tell me that the turkeys have been at it again.

**Author 2:** Ah yes, sorry about that. Maybe we can move away from nuts and talk about something else.

**Mr Griffs:** Like what?

**Author 2:** [Looks down at notes] How about we talk about yoghurt? Why is Yeleena your favourite brand?

**Mr Griffs:** [Narrows eyes] How do you know that?

**Author 1:** Ah, it's in the story, Mr Griffs? You told us about it? When you gave Ruby and Lucy some of Mrs Griffs' spicy nuts?

**Mr Griffs:** Well, you two seem to know everything. Tell me, what do I have to do to get some privacy around here?

**Author 2:** C'mon, Mr Griffs. This is for all your fans out there. They desperately want to know about you! You're a celebrity now.

**Mr Griffs:** [Face remains stony]

**Author 1:** If it helps, Steve told us all about his extensive shoe collection.

**Mr Griffs:** [Brushes imaginary fluff off his shoulder] Well if you must know, I only eat Yeleena because the name is fun to say. I'm only admitting this for the fans mind you, but the yoghurt itself is a bit average. [Scrunches up his face] A tad too sour for my taste.

**Author 2:** Well thank you for that. I'm sure all your fans will appreciate it.

**{A sit down with Mrs Griffs}**

**Author 2:** Hi, Mrs Griffs. Before we start, I've got to ask: why exactly are you wearing gym clothes?

**Mrs Griffs:** You know me; I love being active. I'm going to go for a walk after this, maybe down to the local park. I've got my spandex, my headphones and my coconut water – that's all I really need.

**Author 1:** That's nice. Do you and Mr Griffs go on walks together?

**Mrs Griffs:** [Exasperated sigh] We used to, but he's just too slow! He always has to check out everything. It's exhausting when he stops every two seconds to gawk at houses and their gardens. I got sick of him lagging behind and making me lose my pace – I always have to keep moving.

**Author 2:** So, Mrs Griffs, speaking of fitness, how did you get into roller derby?

**Mrs Griffs:** Well, as you know, I used to be a semi-professional figure skater. I was quite good at it, actually. And roller blading has become a hobby for me – a way to keep my skills sharp. But I like to change it up and try different things every now and again.

**Author 1:** What does Mr Griffs think about all your fitness hobbies?

**Mrs Griffs:** Oh, he always encourages me. In fact, he often tells me to go as many times as I want during the week. [Chuckles playfully] Though I suspect it's just to get me out of his hair.

**Author 2:** [Laughs with her]

**Author 1:** This is a bit off topic, but we have a question from a reader. In *Never Assume*, Ruby and Lucy spend the night at your place. Where exactly were their parents, Mike and Ellen?

**Mrs Griffs:** Oh, they were away for the weekend. Mike's an architect who specialises in designing tiny houses and, from what I understand, he was always planning on attending

this Tiny House Conference out of town. Ellen was supposed to look after the girls. But, when one of the guest speakers pulled out at the last minute, the conference organisers asked Ellen if she could fill in. She's a renowned mycologist, you know.

**Author 2:** What's a mycologist? And what's that got to do with tiny houses?

**Mrs Griffs:** [Pulls out her phone] Hold on a minute. I bought this just the other day and I never switch it off – it's just so great. [Types in mycologist] Oh, that's right. She's a biologist who studies fungi. [Puts her phone away] Actually, I remember her telling me about how prevalent fungi issues are in tiny homes and how she was speaking at the conference about fungi prevention. You know, about ventilation and that type of stuff.

**Author 1:** Do Mike and Ellen often ask you and Mr Griffs to babysit?

**Mrs Griffs:** Well it's not usually that last minute, but Mike and Ellen know how much Mr Griffs and I love Ruby and Lucy. We don't need an excuse to look after them.

**Author 2:** Last question, Mrs Griffs: are you still worried that Mr Griffs might corrupt Ruby and Lucy?

**Mrs Griffs:** [Puts hands on hips] What's he done now?

**{A sit down with Steve Moran: Part 1}**

**Author 1:** Good morning, Steve. You're looking sharp today.

**Steve:** [Adjusts ties] Oh, yes. Thank you.

**Author 2:** So Steve, about those holes in your garden. Did you ever find out how they got there in the first place?

**Steve:** I'm not sure actually. It could have been those wretched turkeys in the first place, or it could have been Englebern, my gardener. There's just something shifty about that guy. But I've learnt my lesson about assuming, so I won't say any more.

**Author 1:** [Looks at notes] Hold on a second, Steve.

**Steve:** What's going on? [Crosses legs]

**Author 2:** Well, it seems like we finally have an answer for you about the holes in your garden.

**Steve:** [Fists clench] Well go on, tell me.

**Author 1:** According to our source, there was some unauthorised work done to the water pipes in your garden while you and Victoria were away a few years ago.

**Author 2:** Apparently, someone in your neighbourhood dug up their own pipes and followed the line into your garden. The repair work wasn't effective and so over time the soil just gave way, making your garden unstable.

**Steve:** GRIFFS! I knew it. [Storms off]

**Author 2:** Steve, come back. You're assuming again – it might not have been Mr Griffs.

**Author 1:** Actually it was. In *Never Assume*, didn't Mr Griffs say, 'Cotch. Oh no, I've hit the pipe again'?

**Author 2:** [Sighs] You know we're going to have to bring him in again? We have so many questions left to ask him.

**Author 1:** Okay. But we're going to have to be easier on him. He's been under a lot of stress lately.

### **{A sit down with Steve Moran Part 2}**

**Steve:** I'm glad you two called me in again. There's something I've been meaning to discuss with you. I'm not happy with the title of the series.

**Author 2:** What do you mean?

**Steve:** Well, why is it all about Mr Griffs? I mean what good has he done? Why don't you call it *The Practical Tales of Steve Moran*? Or better yet, Mr Moran. Yes, that has a nice ring to it.

**Author 2:** [Looks at Author 1 horrified]

**Steve:** You two are brilliant authors. I'm sure you can work it in.

**Author 2:** Are you trying to flatter us, Steve?

**Steve:** Oh, of course not! I would never resort to that. [Scratches left ear] Bribery and blackmail are beneath me.

**Author 1:** Well, we'll take it into consideration. Maybe we can write up a special for you. Now, we wanted to ask, why do you feel that you were unfairly represented in *Never Assume*?

**Steve:** [Clears his throat] Everyone talks about Mr Griffs. He gets all the sympathy – his flowers wilting, his bag of nuts breaking. [Fake whimpers] Poor Mr Griffs! Well forget about that, what about me? You two made a mockery out of my suits and then dressed me in my

wife's robe. It was comfortable and all, but I have an image to uphold. And it's been three weeks since the turkeys attacked my roof and no one has been around to fix it.

**Author 1:** I hear what you're saying Steve, but the word on the street is that people love you.

**Steve:** [Sits up] Of course they do. I expect nothing less. [Plays with cufflinks] Well, at the very least, in the next story, please make sure that I don't run out of suits.

**Author 2:** [Nods in agreement] So, Steve, in *Never Assume* we introduced Mr Westerbeak and we thought that we'd get your opinion of him. I mean, you certainly seemed to have mixed feelings about his advice when you spoke to him on the radio.

**Steve:** I don't believe in that positive energy nonsense.

**Author 1:** So you weren't a fan of his holistic advice? I seem to recall you complaining that Mr Griffs had too much negative energy.

**Steve:** Why are you asking me so many questions about Mr Westerbeak? Is he coming back?

**Author 2:** You'll just have to wait and see.

**Steve:** [Stands up aggressively] Well he's not getting any of my scenes.

**Author 2:** Of course not, Steve. We would never do that to you. You're the star of the series. Just relax. Settle down. I think there are some nuts left if you want a snack.

**Steve:** [Sits down tentatively] Nuts? Don't talk to me about nuts. Next time you call me in, have some caviar ready for me.

**Author 1:** Okay, we have a question for you from one of our readers. Nancy, Sophia's grandmother, is a renowned jam maker in Cornville and we know that your relationship with her is strained. What exactly happened between you and Nancy?

**Steve:** I'm not sure, actually. Nancy's a lovely lady and I've heard that she makes the best jam. We might have had our differences but I truly want to repair that relationship. Who knows? Maybe, one day, I'll be invited for tea and jam at her place.



**Author 1:** [Softly mumbles] Yeah, I'd like to see that happen.

**Author 2:** Okay, well, we've got a surprise for you, Steve. [Raises voice] Nancy, Sophia come on in.

**Steve:** [Head jerks to the side] What? An ambush?

**Author 1:** We just want to clear the air, here. [Turns to Nancy and Sophia] Thanks for coming in. Nancy, what's your take on Steve?

**Nancy:** You silly man. You silly, silly man. How dare you accuse my granddaughter of bribing Mr Griffs?

**Sophia:** Don't get angry, Nana. [Juts chin out] I'm not afraid of him.

**Steve:** [In an aggressive tone] No one asked you anything, little girl.

**Nancy:** Well, I never. [Lifts her handbag and hits Steve on his arm] How dare you speak to her like that?

**Steve:** [Cowers]

**Sophia:** Don't worry, I'm used to his foul mouth. Besides, Mr Griffs taught me that I had to deal with Steve directly.

**Nancy:** Mr Griffs! Now there's a charming young fellow.

**Steve:** [Winces in pain and clutches his arm] What do you have in that bag? Jam?

**Author 2:** Nancy, Steve, please. The readers want to know – where's all this hostility coming from?

**Nancy:** I'll tell you where. This muppet yelled at Sophia when she accidentally crashed her bicycle into his car last year. He shouted at her and demanded that she pay for the damages, not caring at all that her ankle was sprained. When I confronted him about it, he called her a hooligan and ranted on about his expensive car.

**Steve:** [Yells] I'm still waiting for my cheque.

**Nancy:** [Speaks over Steve] I'm not done, Steve. [Turns to the authors. Her tone softens]  
And then when he found out who I was and what I did for a living, you know jam and all, his attitude completely changed. He started fawning over me. How disgusting! How despicable!

**Author 1:** Steve, didn't you say earlier that you wanted to repair your relationship with Nancy?

**Steve:** [Pleads loudly] What do I have to do around here to get some jam?

[Door opens]

**Mr Griffs:** Jam? Did someone mention jam? The croissants back there are a bit dry. I could definitely use some.

**Steve:** [Points at Mr Griffs] You stay out of this Griffs.

**Mr Griffs:** Nancy? Sophia? So good to see the both of you.

**Sophia:** Hi, Mr Griffs, what's up? We brought you some more jam!

**Steve:** [Goes red] Hey, that's my jam. [Grabs Nancy's bag]

[Chaos ensues]

**Author 2:** Okay, we're going to take a quick break now.

## Final thoughts from the authors

**Author 1:** The interviews went pretty well, didn't they?

**Author 2:** [Hesitates] If by well you mean that they descended into complete and utter chaos, then yes, they went well.

**Author 1:** [Chuckles] Yes, exactly what I was hoping would happen. We need to do this after every story.

**Author 2:** Oh, no. We forgot to ask Mrs Griffs about her spiced nuts recipe! What do you think she puts in them, anyway?

**Author 1:** I'm not too sure – but I know Mr Griffs thinks that they're always too spicy. So there must be chilli in them.

**Author 2:** Well, we'll just have to try and get the recipe from her at some stage. Everyone's talking about her spiced nuts.

**Author 1:** Yeah, and we have to ask Mr Griffs if his mouth is still on fire. Or did the grapes end up helping?

**Author 2:** [Chuckles] We should probably end this with a discussion about all the times someone in *Never Assume* made an assumption. There are a lot of them.

**Author 1:** Nah, that's boring. Besides, I'm sure everyone will figure it out.

**Author 2:** Well, let's at least talk about *Cool as a Cucumber*, the second story in the series. Can we give any sneak peeks away?

**Author 1:** Do you think we should tell them about the new characters? Carl, Mr Higgins, Gritta and John Parker?

**Author 2:** Or maybe they want to know how Mr Griffs likes to eat his cucumbers?

**Author 1:** [Sighs] We could be here all day – just read the excerpt below.

## **About *Cool as a Cucumber***

*When there's a cockroach outbreak in the town of Cornville, only one man is as cool as a cucumber.*

Mr Griffs isn't at all fazed by the cockroaches – not when he has a garden full of cucumbers. When news of his alternative remedy gets out, Mr Griffs is faced with an angry mob. Led by Steve Moran, Mr Griffs' arch nemesis, the cucumber thieves will stop at nothing to get what they want. Mr Griffs is forced to put aside his scientific research on wild bush turkeys and must do whatever is necessary to protect his flowerbeds, his garden, his house and his friends. Even if it means teaching Steve a lesson or two and setting the local council straight.

*'Yes, the rumours are true. I do have home grown cucumbers and their skins deter cockroaches. They're also quite delicious, if I do say so myself. You can pickle them, put them in salads or even just eat them whole.'*

Continue reading for a sneak peek of *Cool as a Cucumber* – the second story in the *Absurd Tales of Mr Griff* series.

## *Cool as a Cucumber*

### **Chapter 1**

Checking that her husband wasn't anywhere nearby, Mrs Griffs reached into her apron pocket and pulled out an unmarked jar. She opened it and smelt its contents. 'Hmmm, it's got a nice kick to it.'

Although the secret dressing was merely a blend of mayonnaise, soy sauce and vinegar, Mrs Griffs knew all too well that her husband hated these ingredients. Despite this, she carelessly splattered half of the mixture into a large salad bowl. Even that was too much; the salad inside drowned.

Needing a way to conceal the dressing, Mrs Griffs threw a handful of fresh herbs into the salad. In her hurry she forgot to cut the woody stalks off the herbs or to wash the leaves. 'That'll soak it up,' she said.

Only then did she notice that the pungent salad dressing had splattered all over the kitchen counter. She let out an alarmed squeak. 'Whoops!'

Mrs Griffs grabbed a bunch of paper towels and cleaned up her mess. Once the spilt dressing had been soaked up, she tossed the soggy towels into a nearby bin. Moving to the dining table, she placed the salad bowl next to the fish and beans her husband had made earlier. 'I hope he flavoured that fish. He always skimps on the spice.'

She, on the other hand, was always liberal with her seasoning. In fact, she often made extra.

Returning to the kitchen, Mrs Griffs opened the freezer door and moved aside some frozen packages. This revealed a line of jars filled with leftover salad dressings. 'One day I really should clean up the freezer and use up some of these mixtures.' Shrugging, she said,

‘Oh well,’ and then placed the greasy jar of salad dressing beside its counterparts and covered them all up again.

She banged the door shut.

Several objects that had been sitting on top of the fridge thudded to the ground. Grumbling under her breath, Mrs Griffs picked the random items off the kitchen floor and shovelled them into a side drawer. ‘That’s better, I like it when things are tidy.’

The drawer, however, caught on a protruding object and bounced back. Mrs Griffs sighed. ‘This house is so cluttered! Why Mr Griffs insists on buying junk from yard sales, I’ll never know.’ As she tried to flatten the object back into the drawer, she heard a tinkling sound.

Digging into the drawer, she found the source of the noise. ‘How did a cow bell get here?’ Truth be told, though, nothing her husband bought surprised her anymore.

All of a sudden, an idea took shape in her mind.

Mrs Griffs looked over her shoulder to make sure that she was alone. Then, lifting up the cow bell, she shook it like a maraca. She even started doing a little jig to the sound, swaying her hips from side to side and kicking out her feet.

At that moment, Mr Griffs opened the kitchen door and burst in. Mrs Griffs let out a squeal, embarrassed that he’d caught her dancing so inelegantly.

They paused and looked at each other.

Mrs Griffs noticed that her husband’s grey short-sleeved shirt was torn around the collar and that his loose pants had brown and green splotches on them. Though Mr Griffs’ clothes were usually baggy, as he claimed to enjoy the airiness and the freedom of movement that loose-fitting clothes gave him, this was messy even by his standards.

Mr Griffs was the first to speak. His lips quirked upwards and he said, ‘Why did you stop? You don’t have to be embarrassed around me.’ His Northern English accent was very

strong and, even after thirty years of marriage, Mrs Griffs still wasn't fully used to it. She had to concentrate when her husband was speaking.

When she didn't reply, he continued. 'What's with the bell? I was studying the bush turkeys, trying to figure out how to keep them from digging up our garden, when the noise made them run away.'

Not knowing whether Mr Griffs was being serious or not, a confusion shared by many, Mrs Griffs decided that he was being rude. She snottily replied, 'Get a grip. I wasn't being that noisy. Did you at least bring me any cucumbers from the garden?'

Handing over the home grown cucumbers, Mr Griffs looked suspiciously around the kitchen. He sensed something was out of place; his face contracted and his lips thinned. 'What's that smell?' he asked. He ran his fingers along the sticky countertop. 'You didn't put any vinegar in that salad, did you?'

As was her usual tactic when she was questioned about her cooking, Mrs Griffs tried to distract her husband. 'Look, dinner's ready. You've kept me waiting long enough and we don't want the meal to get cold.'

Shaking his head, Mr Griffs said, 'What are you on about? Nothing needs to be heated up. The fish and beans are meant to be served at room temperature.'

He made his way to the dining room, sat down and peered cautiously into the salad bowl. He saw that it was filled to the brim with wilted herbs that hadn't been tended to properly. An unpleasant aroma came from it. Grunting under his breath, Mr Griffs said, 'Not again with the vinegar.' He sighed loudly. 'I'll have to eat around it.'

'Stop complaining,' Mrs Griffs retorted. 'There's nothing wrong with my salad dressing. All my friends love it.'

Mr Griffs' eyes widened. 'They must be really good friends. Really, I'm not joking.'

'Okay, fine,' Mrs Griffs said. 'Next time, you make the salad and I'll do the mains.'



Never one to shy from a challenge, Mr Griffs straightened in his seat. 'Sure. But I'm having none of this fancy salad dressing. Maybe a squeeze of lemon juice, but that's it.'

Mrs Griffs' lips twitched. Both she and her husband enjoyed a good game of wits.

They began eating in companionable silence and, after a while, Mr Griffs turned on the radio. The two of them would often listen to it as they ate, and Mr Griffs' favourite program, *The Garden Report*, was about to begin.

However, the usual programming was interrupted by an urgent local news broadcast.

*Attention all citizens. We apologise for the inconvenience; unfortunately The Garden Report has been cancelled for this evening as we bring to you a special news bulletin. Cornville's Council has just received some alarming news from an unidentified source. Our beautiful town is now in a state of emergency due to infestation problems. We have an outbreak of cockroaches on our hands and our local shops are not able to keep up with the demand for cockroach poison. An emergency call has been made and the council is negotiating with the proper authorities to restock Cornville's supplies. Meanwhile, we urge everyone to stay calm and maintain order. These creatures are especially attracted to unclean areas, so please ensure that you clean up all scraps and food related messes.*

The radio broadcast cut off abruptly.

Mrs Griffs switched off the radio. 'Oh no! Did you hear that, Mr Griffs?'

His fists clenched. 'I can't believe it. Why did they cancel *The Garden Report*? Tonight's episode was going to be on managing your compost. I've been looking forward to it all week and now I'll never hear it. Who gives the council the right to cancel *The Garden Report*? Bloomin' bureaucrats.'

He picked up one of his home grown cucumbers and bit into it. Immediately, he felt calmer. There was nothing like a good cucumber, fresh from the garden.

‘Who cares about your silly program!’ Mrs Griffs cried out. ‘Didn’t you hear what the announcer said about the cockroaches? Why aren’t you doing anything?’

Mr Griffs squeezed some lemon juice over his half eaten cucumber. ‘Beautiful. Fresh. Crispy. Just the right amount of crisp.’

‘What? Why are you going on about cucumbers?’ Mrs Griffs just couldn’t understand why her husband wasn’t more concerned about the cockroach outbreak. ‘Quick, close all the doors!’

Looking up at Mrs Griffs, he rolled his eyes. ‘You do know that cockroaches can creep under doors? Isn’t it obvious?’

Mrs Griffs hated it when her husband said that – not everything was as obvious as he made it seem. Fuming over his insensitive comment, she heatedly replied, ‘Why is it obvious, Mr Griffs? Not everyone was brought up on a farm like you, you know.’

Mr Griffs took another bite from his uncut cucumber. Juice ran down his chin. He didn’t understand why people always insisted on cutting them up when you only got the full flavour of the cucumber when it was eaten whole. After wiping the excess residue from his face with the back of his hand, he said, ‘If you’re that worried, you should really stop spilling salad dressing everywhere.’

Mrs Griffs blushed. To hide her embarrassment, she firmly said, ‘I cleaned it up, thank you very much.’ Her tone turned light. ‘Well, if you aren’t going to do anything about it, I’ll just go and ask Steve for his help.’

Knowing that his wife was just trying to get back at him for his earlier comment, as any mention of his arch-nemesis would generally rattle him, Mr Griffs continued to munch on his cucumber. He kept his body relaxed and his legs crossed. Taking one final bite, he held up the tip and waved it in the air.

‘There’s no need for that; we’ve got everything we need right here.’ He flicked the cucumber tip and watched it as it sailed in the air before it landed in the corner of the room. Chuffed with his perfect throw, Mr Griffs smiled cheekily.

Then his face became serious. ‘Hmm, are cucumbers a fruit or a vegetable? I must look it up.’

We hope you enjoyed the first chapter of *Cool as a Cucumber*. Keep updated on the latest by visiting [www.mrgriffs.com](http://www.mrgriffs.com), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

## Acknowledgement

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For more on *The Absurd Tales of Mr Griffs*, including backstories and character profiles, please check out [www.mrgriffs.com](http://www.mrgriffs.com). You can also find us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

## **About the Authors**

Jonathan and Keren Joseph are a brother and sister team from Sydney, Australia.

Jonathan's favourite thing about Mr Griffs is his cheekiness, humour and carefree approach to life. Keren likes how other characters respond to Mr Griffs' idiosyncrasies with complete and utter confusion.

If you have any questions or feedback, or just want to say hello, please email

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