

The Cutthroat Diamond

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Chapter One

MONDAY BLUES AND POISONOUS COCOLATE

The morning sun shone brightly on the town of Chillville, perched on the north coast of the South Pole. The sun eventually found its way through a narrow gap in the bedroom curtains of a young penguin who was fast asleep.

As the sun's light fell directly onto his closed eyes, he half woke, opened his left eyelid and immediately let out a cry. He quickly shut both eyes tight, rolled over out of the direct sunlight and cried out, 'Mom, quickly, come here!'

His mother, who was already up and about, rushed into his room. 'What is it, dear?' she asked in a panic.

'Can you close my curtains properly, there is some naughty light getting in!'

Mrs Pong slowly walked over to the curtains and pulled them fully open with one graceful movement.

The young penguin let out a blood-curdling scream and pulled the pillow over his head. 'How could you do that to your only and best son?' he squawked in a muffled voice, from under the pillow.

'Pong, it's eight o'clock, get out of bed otherwise you will be late for school,' said his mother.

'But today is a holiday day. I don't need to go to school!'

‘What holiday is it?’ asked his mother with her hands on her hips.

Pong had to think quickly. ‘It is the special sacred day of the holy lord child saint of the confused and bewildered.’

‘If you don’t get out of bed now, it is going to be the special sacred day of the young penguin with a sore bottom,’ replied his mother.

Pong slowly took the pillow off his head and rolled out of bed. ‘I will have to work on my made up holidays,’ he thought to himself.

He walked into the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror. He smiled and waved at himself. He washed his face, brushed his teeth and spent a long time trying to get his tuft just right. He always made a little more effort on a Monday morning to start the week off on the right foot (even though it was on his head).

‘Right,’ he said out loud. ‘Time for the rhyme!’

Pong you are so special

I think all know that’s right

If any dare to question it

I’ll set their pants alight.

Pong had to have his morning rhyme. He was mind was normally as quick as a turtle on crutches, but he did have a way with rhymes.

He made his way back into his bedroom put on his school tie and blazer and then headed into the kitchen.

The first thing he saw was his best friend Ping sitting down at the table eating some fish cereal.

‘What are you doing here?’ Pong asked, a little confused. It was normal for Ping to call round, but later in the morning, after Pong had finished his breakfast.

‘I couldn’t sleep last night and was up at five o’clock this morning. So, as I was up, I thought I would come round a little earlier.’

‘Five o’clock in the morning?’ said Pong. ‘Is that a real time?’

‘It is for some,’ said his mother, smiling at her son. ‘But it’s not a time that you have come across in your world.’ She put out a couple of fish in front of him on the table. Ping looked on in amazement as his friend ate his breakfast without taking a breath.

‘How can you eat and not breathe?’ Ping asked when Pong had cleaned his plate.

‘Practice,’ replied Pong, wiping his mouth on his sleeve.

‘Use a napkin,’ said his mother, putting one in front of her son.

He picked it up and blew his nose on it. His mother just tutted and took away his plate.

‘Do you have any chocolate dearest mother?’ asked Pong, in his ‘I really need something’ voice.

‘Yes thank you,’ replied Mrs P.

‘Well, could I have some please?’ asked Pong, smiling. ‘I need some breakfast pudding.’

‘No, I don’t think so. It is special chocolate that is poisonous to the young,’ she replied.

‘Really,’ replied Pong, a little shocked. ‘Why did you buy that? I might have eaten some by mistake and died a horrid wriggly death.’

Mrs Pong wagged her finger at her son. ‘Well, you need to be careful what you eat,’ she explained.

Ping looked on shaking his head. ‘Boy, you are dumb,’ he said to his worried friend.

‘Come on, let’s be early and get into Mrs BOO’s good books.’

Mrs Bowl-Of-Onions was the young penguins’ form teacher at the Snow Falls Elementary School. She was a very kindly fur seal, and was generally very difficult to upset. However, Ping and Pong somehow managed to find ways to do just that.

Ping got up from the table and thanked Mrs P for his second breakfast.

Pong picked up his school bag and followed his friend towards the back door.

‘Have a nice day,’ said his mother, kissing him on the head.

‘Not on the tuft,’ Pong cried. ‘You are trying to kill me with poisonous chocolate, and now you have got spit all over my perfect tuft creation. What a great start to the week!’ With that he walked out of the house in a very dramatic way.

‘Love you too,’ his mother called after him.

He caught up with Ping and the two penguins headed off in the direction of school.

They were the first into the classroom, which caused Mrs BOO to nearly fall over as she saw them walking in.

‘Goodness gracious me,’ said Mrs BOO, sitting down and putting her hand on her forehead as if she was performing in a local amateur dramatic production. ‘I feel a little faint. Is this Ping and Pong I see before me?’

‘It certainly is Miss. Keen to get the week started,’ said Ping, in his best teacher’s pet voice.

‘Ditto,’ said Pong with a very long face.

‘Can’t wait to get stuck into this week’s learning Miss,’ continued Ping.

‘Ditto,’ followed Pong.

‘Fantastic, you can help me hand out this history test.’

‘Oh, great,’ said Ping, trying to sound positive.

‘Ditto,’ said Pong, looking at his friend in an ‘I want to push your head into the toilet’ type of way.

Mrs BOO gave the friends an armful of papers and asked them to put one on each desk.

‘Great,’ said Pong as they went about their task. ‘Not only am I early into school, which as you know is against my religious beliefs, I have extra work to do, giving myself a history test. What a great start to the week.’

‘Oh stop your whining and get on with it,’ replied Ping with a noticeable lack of sympathy.

They finished their task, and took their seats at the back.

As the rest of the class came into the room they all looked surprised that Ping and Pong were already in.

Sally Seal came over and asked if they had been in detention all weekend, to which Ping just replied ‘Ha, very funny.’ Pong just smiled and looked a little embarrassed.

Sally was Pong’s girlfriend, although she didn’t know, as nobody had yet told her.

When everybody had arrived and the normal Monday morning chatter had died down a little, Mrs BOO said, ‘Good morning class.’ ‘Good morning Mrs Bowl-Of-Onions,’ everyone replied.

At that point Pong noticed that there was somebody he didn’t recognise sitting on the front row.

‘What is that in the scarf?’ he whispered to his friend, pointing at the strange creature.

After looking at the new arrival from a couple of different angles, Ping replied, ‘It looks like a mole!’

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