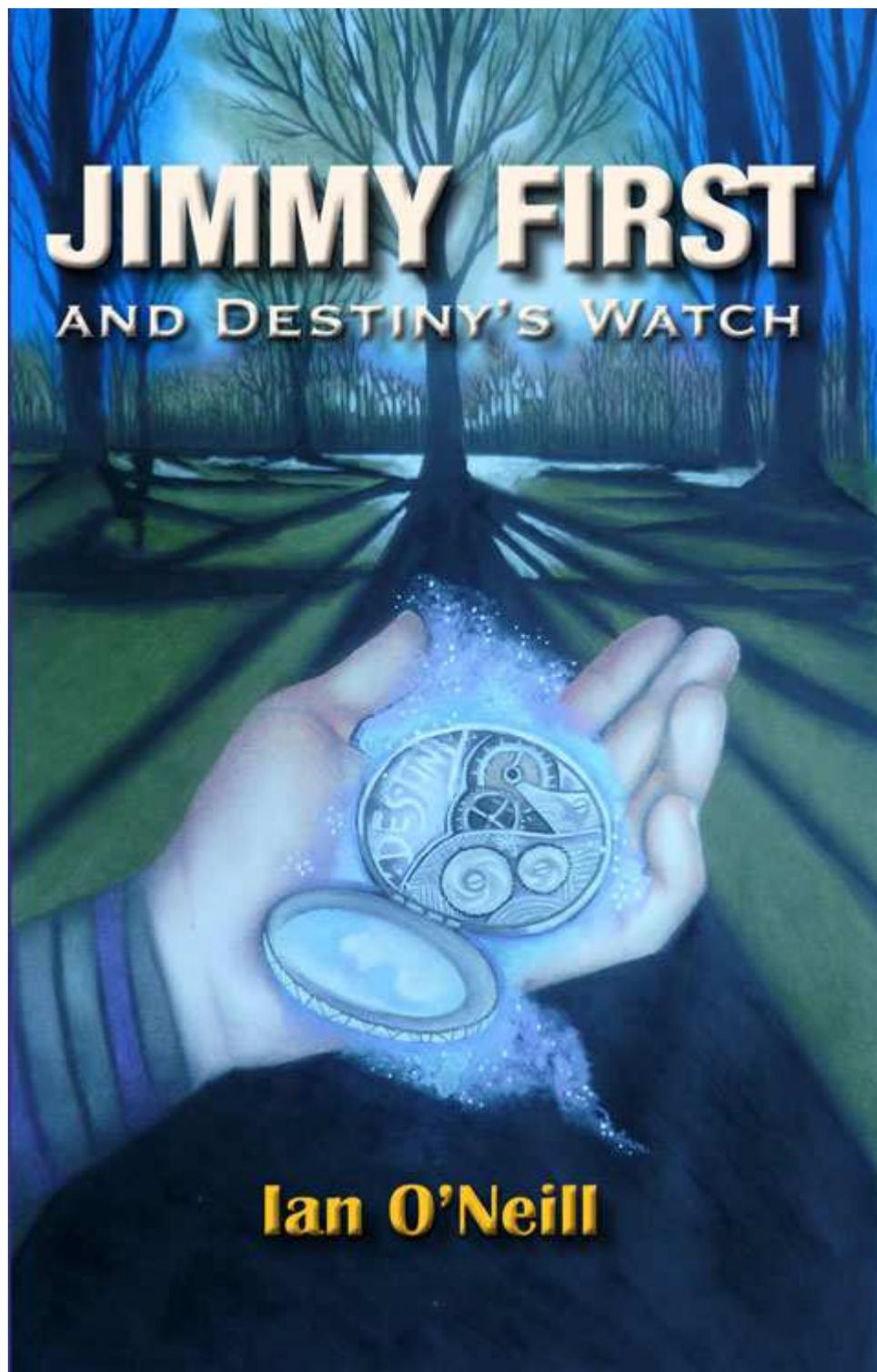


JIMMY FIRST

AND DESTINY'S WATCH



Ian O'Neill

Jimmy First and Destiny's Watch

By

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Chapter One - Jimmy First

'Run, Jimmy, run!'

Jimmy turned and ran, the laughter ringing in his ears.

'My gran can run faster than that and she's eighty years old,' shouted Nathan.

His mates cackled like a pack of hyenas.

A pretty dark haired girl was running behind them. 'Why don't you leave him alone? You know he can't defend himself!'

But the gang continued to chase Jimmy. Panic burned through him like a raging fire. His arms flailed like windmills as he fought to keep his balance.

Keep going, Jimmy ... just keep going ...

His foot caught a divot and he stumbled forwards and ended up face down in the damp grass. As he scrambled to pull himself up, he saw the legs surround him.

'Tired already?' said Nathan sarcastically. 'Having a lie down are we?'

Nathan's friends laughed hysterically. A hand grabbed Jimmy's hair and yanked his head back. He looked up into Nathan's twisted face. The girl ran up and pushed him away from Jimmy. 'I said, leave him alone, Nathan. You're nothing but a bully!'

Nathan grabbed her arm and threw her to the ground. 'Get off me you witch.'

Jimmy struggled into a sitting position. He mustered as much conviction as he could and shouted, 'Leave her alone!'

Nathan turned on him. 'Why, what are you gonna do? Hit me with your gammy hand?'

Nathan's gang laughed on cue as he pushed Jimmy back on the ground and placed his foot on his chest. Jimmy struggled to breathe as Nathan put his full weight onto him. 'I don't remember giving you permission to use the park,' he hissed.

Jimmy lay there helpless and didn't answer. The girl climbed back to her feet and ran towards a middle-aged man who was walking his dog in the park. 'Please, help me!' she screamed. 'They're beating Jimmy up.'

The man immediately ran towards them. 'Oy, you lot! Leave him alone!'

Nathan looked across and was about to tell him where to go, but one of his mates stepped forward. 'That's Tommy Bowe – he's as hard as nails. I'm off.'

He turned around and ran in the opposite direction to the man and the rest of the gang followed. Nathan lifted his foot from Jimmy's chest and leant over him. 'Don't think I've finished with you ...' And turned tail and ran after his mates.

The girl ran over to Jimmy and helped him into a sitting position. 'Jimmy, are you OK?'

Jimmy was still struggling to catch his breath. The man came up to them.

'Are you all right, son?'

Jimmy nodded.

'You're Jean First's boy, aren't you? Come on, son, I'll give you a lift home.'

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'Thanks, Tommy. I owe you one.'

'That's all right, Jean. I can't stand bullies. I'll give their backsides a good kick if I see them again.'

Jean shut the front door and took Jimmy into the kitchen. She pulled a chair from under the table, sat him down, and flicked the switch on the electric kettle and rinsed two mugs under the tap.

‘What you need is a good strong mug of tea.’

Jimmy just wanted to go to his bedroom and change out of his damp jeans, but he knew there was no point in arguing with his mother.

‘Look at the grass stains on your new T-shirt and jeans. I don’t know about Tommy, but I’ll kick their backsides if I get my hands on them! Was it that Nathan Green again?’

Jimmy didn’t answer and gazed down at the floor.

‘I’ll go around to see his mother. I’m not putting up with this.’

‘No!’ said Jimmy. ‘You’ll only make it worse.’

‘So it was him.’

She put her arm around his shoulder and gave him an affectionate kiss on his forehead.

‘He shouldn’t be allowed to get away with it, son, especially you being handicapped.’

Handicapped – why did she have to use that word? He had cerebral palsy. His coordination was impaired; if he ran, he fell over. His right arm was thin and weak and hung limply by his side – he hated it. He hated cerebral palsy. Why couldn’t he be normal just like the other kids?

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‘Come on, Jimmy, you’ll enjoy yourself.’

Jimmy stood on his front doorstep surrounded by his three mates.

‘You’ll have a great time.’

Danny opened his jacket to reveal a large bottle of cider.

‘You can help us drink this on the way.’

‘Yeh – come on, Jim,’ said Sean.

‘Yeh, come on, mate,’ urged Lee.

Jimmy’s mum shouted from the kitchen. ‘I don’t want you staying in tonight! I’ve got Joe coming round!’

Decision made – Jimmy was going to the party with his mates.

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He was feeling a lot happier by the time they arrived at the party. The cider had worked. It was Chloe James’s fourteenth birthday, and her parents had laid on a party at their house for her. A pretty, dark-haired girl opened the front door. It was the girl who helped Jimmy in the park. Lee held out a small shiny, blue gift bag.

‘We’ve all chipped in to buy you something. Hope you like it.’

‘Oh thank you, boys, that’s really sweet of you.’ Chloe stood to one side and pointed them towards the kitchen. ‘Help yourselves to drinks.’

She followed them into the kitchen and took out a small silver box from the gift bag and opened it. She held up a gold chain.

‘Oh, that is just so beautiful.’ She turned to Jimmy. ‘Can you put it on for me?’

There was no way that Jimmy would be able to open the clasp. Danny stepped in to save his mate’s embarrassment.

‘Give it here, Chlo, I’ll do it for you.’

Danny placed the chain around her neck and secured the clasp. Chloe gave him a hug and a peck on his cheek. Lee and Sean weren’t about to miss out, and both of them kissed her. Jimmy was never comfortable around girls, so he stood back and poured himself a drink. But Chloe didn’t want to leave him out, so she kissed him full on his lips. She whispered in his ear, ‘make sure you save me a dance for later.’ Then the doorbell rang and she disappeared into the hall.

Danny slapped Jimmy playfully on his back and winked at him. Jimmy blushed as he always did but felt good. And as they walked into the living room, his spirits rose even more. Vicky Smart was there.

‘Hi, Jimmy.’

She put her arm around his neck and kissed him on his cheek. He went bright red again but hoped no one noticed in the low light. He’d known her since he was five years old when they started school together. He thought she was gorgeous. She had long, silky blonde hair, crystal blue eyes and a smile like a summer’s day. What would he give to be her boyfriend?

Anything.

‘Hi, Vicky. You look nice.’

What a pathetic thing to say – you look nice.

Why couldn’t he chat to her like Danny? He would say cheeky things like. ‘That skirt’s so short it’s hardly worth wearing’, or ‘play your cards right and I might dance with you later’.

He cringed inwardly ... *you look nice* ...

And then there was the main reason why he hated going to parties – sooner or later his mates would start dancing. His lack of coordination and balance made it almost impossible for him to keep time to the music or stay on his feet. But Vicky asked him anyway.

‘Come on, Jimmy.’

She grabbed his hand and dragged him into the middle of the living room and started to dance. Jimmy called upon all of his powers of concentration and tried to dance in time to the music, but it was hopeless. The messages from his brain just weren’t reaching his feet. Danny and Sean came over and danced on either side of

him to make sure that he didn't fall. Slowly but surely, his confidence grew, and he really started to enjoy himself. It could have been the cider or the company, but the truth of it was that it didn't matter; he was having a great time. Vicky was dancing with him, and he was floating on air.

It was ten o'clock before he knew it, and he wanted the night to go on forever. It was quite possibly going to be the best night of his life until he heard a familiar, but unwelcome, voice from behind him.

'I didn't realise we were coming to a freak show.'

He looked around into the sneering face of Nathan and the cronies surrounding him. Jimmy froze.

'Don't stop because of us, Jimmy. We were enjoying the spectacle.'

Danny turned the music down and pushed Nathan away from Jimmy.

'Why don't you find someone else to bully? You're not wanted around here.'

Danny was well built and could look after himself, and Nathan looked wary of him. His trademark sneer momentarily disappeared.

'We're just here to have a good time. We'd have come earlier if we'd known there was entertainment as well.'

He turned to his cronies and joined in their sycophantic laughter. One of them turned the music back up and started to imitate Jimmy's dancing, cueing them all to join in. Danny was about to go for Nathan, but Jimmy stopped him.

'Leave it, Danny. We don't want any trouble. I'm going outside for some fresh air.'

Jimmy walked through the kitchen and out into the back garden. He found a secluded bench behind the fence next to the pond and sat down. He just wanted to be on his own. He leant back and looked up into a star-filled sky and sighed deeply. Why

did Nathan have to come? He was having such a good time. He heard voices from the other side of the fence – it was Chloe and Vicky.

‘Whatever made you invite Nathan, Chlo? You know what a complete idiot he is.’

‘That’s just it, I didn’t. Someone must have told him, but I don’t want any trouble. I hope Danny doesn’t kick off.’

‘He won’t have to, Chlo – Nathan’s frightened to death of him. But I feel so sorry for Jimmy, he was really enjoying himself. I’ve never seen him dance so much.’

‘I know,’ said Chloe, ‘he’s usually so self-conscious.’

‘I hope he’s OK,’ said Vicky, her voice thick with concern.

Jimmy felt a warm feeling building up inside. He liked the nice things Vicky was saying about him.

‘You do know that Jimmy’s got a crush on you,’ said Chloe.

‘I know. I’d never hurt him, but I couldn’t go out with him.’

‘But he’s really lovely looking,’ pressed Chloe. ‘And he’s one of the coolest dressers in our class.’

‘I know, but ...’

‘He’s got lovely blond hair, and those sexy blue eyes could make you do things you shouldn’t.’

They both started to giggle; Jimmy squirmed with embarrassment. He’d never heard anyone say that he was good-looking before.

‘It’s just his funny arm,’ said Vicky. ‘I couldn’t stand the thought of it around me.’

Her words cut through him like razor blades. How could she say that? He smiled weakly and shook his head at the irony. She was only saying what he thought

about himself. He stood up and walked disconsolately to the end of the garden and crept silently out of the back gate.

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For more information and to read the rest of this book please visit:
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