

### Chapter 3 Ghosts and Glue

The next morning, before her father went to his garage, Matilda secretly took his hat and put a thin line of glue round the inside. It was very strong glue.

Mr Wormwood didn't notice anything when he put the hat on, but when he got to the garage he couldn't take it off. He had to keep his hat on all day, and people thought it was very strange.

When he got home that evening his wife said, 'Come here. I'll take it off for you.' And she pulled the hat hard.

'Stop!' he screamed. 'You'll pull the skin off my head!'

'Did your head get bigger, daddy?' asked Matilda.

'Shut up!' said her father. He had to keep his hat on all through supper. Later, his wife watched him as he went round the bedroom in his purple pyjamas with his hat on his head, and thought 'How stupid he looks!'

In the morning, she cut the hat off his head. She had to cut the hair down to the skin, which left a white ring and bits of brown hat round his head.

'You must try to get them off, daddy,' Matilda said to him at breakfast. 'They look like little brown flies!'

'Be quiet!' shouted her father.

It was quiet for about a week after this. Then one evening Mr Wormwood arrived home from the garage with a face as dark and angry as a storm cloud.

Matilda was reading in a corner of the living-room. Mr Wormwood switched the TV on to the noisiest programme that he could find, then looked angrily at his daughter. 'Don't you ever stop reading?' he shouted at her.

'Did you have a good day, daddy?' she asked nicely.

'What's this stupid book?' he said, and pulled it out of her hands.

'It isn't stupid, daddy,' said Matilda. 'It's about —'

'I don't want to know what it's about,' shouted Mr Wormwood. 'Go and find something useful to do.' And he began to pull the pages out of the book.

Matilda was frightened. 'That's a library book!' she said. 'I have to return it to Mrs Phelps.'

'Then you'll have to buy a new one for your dear Mrs Phelps, won't you?' said her father.

He dropped the last few pages on to the floor and walked out of the room.

Matilda did not cry. She sat very still for several minutes. A plan began to grow inside her head. But an important question needed an answer. 'Can Fred's parrot talk as well as Fred says he can?' she thought.

She went to find out.

Fred was a small boy of six who lived just round the corner. He often talked about his wonderful parrot. 'My father gave it to me,' he said.

'Make it talk,' Matilda said now.

'You can't make it talk,' said Fred.

But suddenly the parrot said, 'Hello, hello, hello!'

'That's wonderful!' said Matilda.

'Dead man's dinner! Dead man's dinner!' said the bird, this time with a voice like a ghost. 'He's always saying that,' said Fred.

'Can I borrow him, just for one night?' she asked.

'All right,' said Fred. 'But you must promise to bring him back tomorrow.'

Matilda hid the parrot behind a cupboard in the dining-room of her house. That evening, while they were all having supper in the living-room in front of the TV, a voice came loud and clear from the dining-room.

'Hello, hello, hello!' it said.

'Harry!' cried Matilda's mother. 'There's someone in the house! I heard a voice!'

Matilda switched off the TV, and they stopped eating.

'Hello, hello, hello!' came the voice again.

'It's robbers!' cried Matilda's mother. 'They're in the diningroom. Go and catch them, Harry!'

'Let's — let's all go and look together,' he said.

The four of them walked quietly towards the dining-room door. Mr Wormwood stayed a long way behind the others. Matilda pushed open the door, and they looked round the room. There was nobody there.

'He's here somewhere!' said Matilda. 'I heard him!'

Then the voice came again - like a ghost's this time. 'Dead man's dinner!' it said. 'Dead man's dinner!'

They all jumped (even Matilda) and looked round the room. There was still nobody there.

'It's a ghost,' said Matilda. 'I know it's a ghost! I've heard it before in this room.'

'Save us!' screamed her mother. And she threw her arms round her husband's neck.

'I'm getting out of here!' said her husband, his face grey. And they all ran out of the room.

The next afternoon, Matilda took the parrot back.

'My parents loved it,' she told Fred.



Both mother and father were quite polite to their daughter for about a week. Then one evening Mr Wormwood came home and said to his son, 'Well, my boy, I sold five cars today! Sawdust in the gearboxes, the electric drill on the old clock, a bit of paint here and there, and the stupid people couldn't wait to buy.' He took a piece of paper from his pocket. 'Get some paper and a pencil, boy. I want to see if you're clever.'

The boy got some paper and a pencil and returned.

'Write this down,' said Mr Wormwood. 'I bought car number one for two hundred and seventy-eight pounds and sold it for one thousand four hundred and twenty-five. Car number two cost me one hundred and eighteen pounds and sold for seven hundred and sixty. Car number three cost one hundred and eleven pounds and sold for nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds fifty pence. Never say one thousand pounds, son. Always ask for nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds fifty. It seems much smaller than a thousand, but it isn't.'

'Very clever, dad,' said the boy.

'Car number four cost eighty-six pounds and sold for six hundred and ninety-nine pounds fifty. Car number five cost six hundred and thirty-seven pounds and sold for sixteen hundred and forty-nine pounds and fifty pence. Did you write all that down?'

'Yes, daddy,' said the ten-year-old boy.

'Right, now tell me this,' said Mr Wormwood. 'How much money did I make on each of the five cars, and how much money did your clever father make today?'

'That's difficult,' said the boy.

'I had an answer in ten minutes,' said his father.

'You mean you got' an answer without writing anything down?' said the boy, his eyes wide open with surprise.

'Well, no,' said his father. 'Nobody could do that.'

Matilda said quietly, 'Four thousand three hundred and three pounds and fifty pence.'

Her father looked at her. 'Be quiet, we're ... wh-what did you say?'

'Four thousand three hundred and three pounds and fifty pence,' said Matilda.

Her father was silent, and his face began to go red.

'I'm sure it's right,' said Matilda.

And, of course, it was.

### **Task 1. What do you know about these things?**

1. Why can't Mr Wormwood take his hat off?
2. What does Mr Wormwood do to Matilda's library book?
3. Why do Mr and Mrs Wormwood run out of the dining room?
4. In this chapter Matilda shows her father that she is very clever. How does she do this?

### **Task 2. Creative work**

Think of a good picture (illustration) for this chapter. Draw the picture and describe it to your classmates/teacher.

