

Chapter 7 Matilda's Eyes

'I feel quite sick when I realize that I'm going to have you in my school for the next six years,' Miss Trunchbull told the children. She looked slowly along the lines of small faces. 'You!' she shouted, pointing at a small boy called Rupert. 'What is two sevens?'

'Sixteen,' answered Rupert, too quickly.

Miss Trunchbull walked towards him like a dangerous animal who has just found something nice to eat.

'Eighteen!' Rupert cried. 'Eighteen, not sixteen!'

'You stupid little sausage!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'You oily little hamburger!' She put one of her large hands round Rupert's beautiful golden hair and lifted him out of his chair. The boy kicked and screamed like a frightened pig. 'Two sevens are fourteen! Two sevens are fourteen!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'Say it!'

From the back of the room, Miss Honey cried, 'Please put him down, Miss Trunchbull. You're hurting him!'

'Say it, boy!' shouted Miss Trunchbull.

'T-t-two sevens are f-f-fourteen,' cried Rupert, and Miss Trunchbull opened her hand and dropped him on the ground like a rubber ball.

Rupert went back to his chair, making small noises.

Miss Trunchbull looked at the others. 'I don't like small people. Why do children take so long to grow up? I think they do it on purpose.'

A very brave boy called Eric said, 'But *you* were a small person once, Miss Trunchbull.'

'I was *never* a small person!' she shouted. 'Don't be rude! And stand up when you speak to me.'

Eric stood up.

'Spell what,' said Miss Trunchbull.

'Pardon?' said Eric. 'What do you want me to spell?'

'Spell what, you stupid boy! Spell the word "what"!'

'W ... O T,' said Eric.

'Wrong!' screamed Miss Trunchbull. She walked across and looked down at his frightened little face.

W ... H ... O ... T, ' he said, trying again quickly.

Miss Trunchbull put her hands round each of the boy's ears and lifted him out of his chair.

'Help!' cried Eric. 'You're hurting me!'

From the back of the room, Miss Honey cried, 'Miss Trunchbull, don't! His ears will come off!'

'Small boys' ears do not come off!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'You spell the word "what" ,W ... H ... A ... T... Now spell it, you little snake!'

'W ...H...A...T... spells what!' cried Eric.

Miss Trunchbull dropped him back into his chair. '*That's* the way to do it, Miss Honey!' she said. 'You're too soft with them. Read *Nicholas Nickleby*, by Charles Dickens. Read about Mr Wackford Squeers of Dotheboys Hall school. So that they learned, what did he do with boys? He hit them, Miss Honey! Hit them hard! Read it. It's a very good book.'

'I've read it,' said Matilda quietly.

Miss Trunchbull looked down at her. 'Don't lie to me, girl!' she shouted. 'Stand up. What is your name?'

Matilda stood up and said, 'Matilda Wormwood, Miss Trunchbull.'

'Wormwood?' said Miss Trunchbull. 'Are you the daughter of the man Wormwood of Wormwood Cars?'

'Yes, Miss Trunchbull,' said Matilda.

'He's a robber!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'A few days ago he sold me a car. "It's almost new," he said. But today the gearbox blew up! And it was full of sawdust!'

'He's clever at his business,' said Matilda.

'Clever? No, he's not!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'Miss Honey tells me that you're clever, too! Well, I don't like clever people, so I'm going to watch you very carefully. Now, sit down and be quiet.'

Matilda sat down and Miss Trunchbull turned and picked up her glass of water — and screamed! Then all the children saw the long, thin thing swimming round and round in the glass. They jumped up and shouted 'What is it?' 'It's a snake!' and 'Be careful, it bites!'

Miss Trunchbull was shaking. 'Wh-what is it?' she said. She did not know. She just knew that it was something very unpleasant. 'Matilda!' she shouted. 'Stand up! Stand up you dirty little rat!'

'I didn't do it!' shouted Matilda.

'Oh yes, you did!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'Your father was right to warn me about you!'

'*But I didn't do it!*' screamed Matilda.

'Shut up and sit down!' shouted Miss Trunchbull.

Slowly, Matilda sat down. She got angrier . . . and angrier ... and angrier ... 'I'll blow up in a minute!' she thought. She looked at Miss Trunchbull, then she looked at the newt in the glass. 'I want to pick up the glass and drop the newt on Trunchbull's head!' she thought.

And then, quite slowly, Matilda began to feel something strange. It was mostly in her eyes. A sort of electricity seemed to be inside them. A strong feeling ... and her eyes were beginning to get hot ...

She looked at the newt in the glass ... and the feeling in each eye got stronger and stronger... *'Push it over!'* she said very softly. *'Push it over!'* And suddenly the glass fell over, and the water and the newt went on to the front of Miss Trunchbull's dress!

Miss Trunchbull screamed and knocked the newt off with the back of her hand, and it went flying across the room. It landed on the floor near Lavender's desk, and she quickly picked it up and put it into her pencil box.

'Who did it?' Miss Trunchbull was screaming. 'Come on! Who pushed this glass over?' Nobody answered. 'Matilda! I know it was you!'

Matilda did not move or speak. She was suddenly very calm, and not frightened of anybody.

'Speak, you ugly little spider!' said Miss Trunchbull.

Matilda looked straight at Miss Trunchbull and said calmly, 'I have not moved from my desk since the lesson began, Miss Trunchbull.'

And suddenly everybody was shouting, 'She didn't move! Nobody moved! You knocked it over!'

'I did not!' shouted Miss Trunchbull.

'The children are right, Miss Trunchbull,' said Miss Honey. 'Nobody moved. You probably did knock it over. It's an easy thing to do.'

'I—I will not waste any more of my time in here!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. And she walked out of the room and shut the door behind her with a loud CRASH!