

Chapter 8 Miss Honey's Story

Later, Matilda waited until only she and Miss Honey were in the room. 'Please can I talk to you for a minute?' she asked. 'Something very strange happened to me. The glass of water ...'

'What about it, Matilda?' asked Miss Honey. 'I know you didn't push it over, and I told Miss Trunchbull.'

'But I *did* push it over,' said Matilda. 'I did it with my eyes. I was very angry, and I looked hard at the glass and my eyes got all hot and strange. Then I said "*Push it over ...*" and the glass fell over!'

'Children often get strange ideas,' Miss Honey thought to herself. But she put the empty glass in the middle of the table and said, 'Oh? Can you do it again, Matilda?'

Matilda sat at her desk and looked hard at the glass on the table. Slowly, the strange feeling in her eyes got stronger and stronger. Again and again, inside her head, she shouted the words, '*Fall over! Fall over!*'. And the glass moved ... and fell over!

Miss Honey's mouth dropped open. She looked across at the child who was sitting behind the desk.

Matilda smiled. 'I did it much quicker that time.'

Miss Honey shut her eyes to calm herself, then she opened them and said to Matilda, 'Will you come back and have tea at my little house? I want to talk to you.'



Miss Honey lived outside the village. Matilda walked next to her along the country road.

'Do you live by yourself, Miss Honey?' she asked.

'Yes, I do,' said Miss Honey. 'It's a very small house.'

Suddenly, Matilda saw it between the trees. It had very small windows, and a little green wooden door. The grass in the garden was almost as high as Matilda, and the big tree next to the house seemed to be trying to hide it from the rest of the world.

Miss Honey opened the door and they went inside. The ceilings were very low, and the kitchen was not much bigger than a cupboard. In the living-room there were three boxes on the floor. Two to sit on, and one for a table. There was no real furniture.

'Sit down,' Miss Honey told Matilda. 'We'll have a nice cup of tea.' And she went into the kitchen to make it. Matilda did not understand. Did her school teacher really live *here*? It was very strange.

Miss Honey came back with two cups of tea and two plates of bread and butter.

When they were eating, Matilda asked, 'Are all teachers very poor, Miss Honey? Do they

all live like this, with no furniture?’

Miss Honey’s face went red and she looked down at the floor. ‘No,’ she said quietly. Then she looked at Matilda. ‘Until now, it’s been difficult for me to talk about my problems, but suddenly I want to tell somebody. I know that you’re only a little girl, Matilda, but ... can I tell you a story?’

‘Yes, of course,’ said Matilda.

‘I’m twenty-three years old,’ said Miss Honey. ‘When I was born, my father was a doctor in this village and we lived in a beautiful old house. Then my mother died when I was two and my aunt came to live with us. My father was a busy doctor and he needed somebody to look after me. But my aunt was not a kind person. Then, when I was five, my father died suddenly.’

‘How did he die?’ asked Matilda.

‘That’s an interesting question,’ said Miss Honey. ‘I was too young to ask questions at the time, but later I learned that there was a lot of mystery about his death. He was a very calm and sensible man, and nobody really believed that he did it.’

‘What did he do?’ asked Matilda.

‘Killed himself,’ said Miss Honey. ‘Or it *looked* like that. So I had to live with my aunt. And my father’s house was suddenly hers! How? I don’t really know.’

‘What happened then?’ asked Matilda. ‘Was your aunt nicer to you?’

‘She was worse than before!’ said Miss Honey. ‘It was terrible. I was very frightened of her.’

‘Did you go to school?’ asked Matilda.

‘Yes,’ said Miss Honey. ‘I went to the same school that you’re going to now. But I lived at home, and I had to clean the house and do all the cooking. Then, when I grew up, I got a job as a teacher. But my aunt said, “Since you were a small child I’ve bought your food and clothes, and now you must pay me for them. For the next ten years you must give me all the money you get from your teaching, and I’ll give you back one pound every week.”’

‘That was wrong,’ said Matilda.

‘I know, but I was afraid,’ said Miss Honey. ‘She could still hurt me badly.’

‘When did you escape from her?’ asked Matilda.

‘Two years ago,’ said Miss Honey. ‘One day I saw this little house. It was empty, but it belonged to a farmer and I asked him about it. “It’s very uncomfortable and cold there,” he said, “but if you really want to live in it you can pay me ten pence a week.” So I do, and I use the other ninety pence a week to buy milk and bread and tea. I have my lunches at school because I don’t have to pay for them.’

‘Does your aunt still live in your old house?’ asked Matilda.

‘Yes,’ said Miss Honey. ‘I think my father wanted me to have it after he died, but nobody

can find his will. My aunt has a letter saying that he gave the house to her. It *looks* like my father's writing, but *I* don't think it is. But who will believe me? My aunt is a very important person in the village.'

'Who is she?' asked Matilda.

'Miss Trunchbull,' said Miss Honey.

'Miss Trunchbull!' cried Matilda. '*She's* your aunt?'

'Yes, but that's enough about me,' said Miss Honey. 'We came here to talk about you. I'm interested in those wonderful eyes of yours. How much can you move and push with them? We must know more about it all.'

'Not today, Miss Honey' said Matilda. 'I want to go home and think about all this. I've got a bit of an idea, and ...' She stopped, then said, 'What did your aunt call your father?'

'She called him Magnus,' said Miss Honey.

'And what did your father call her?' asked Matilda.

'He called her Agatha,' said Miss Honey.

'And what did they call you?' asked Matilda.

'They called me Jenny,' said Miss Honey.

'Thank you,' said Matilda. 'Goodbye, Miss Honey. And thank you for the tea.'

And she ran out of the little house smiling.