



ROALD DAHL'S

MATILDA

A FILM BY DANNY DEVITO

Chapter 1

The Reader of Books

It's a strange thing about mothers and fathers. Even when their child is the dirtiest little animal you have ever seen, they still think that he or she is wonderful. But there *are* parents who are not interested in their children in any way, and these of course are much worse.

Mr and Mrs Wormwood had an ordinary little boy, Michael, and a daughter, Matilda. But they were so busy with their unimportant business that they did not realize Matilda was clever — *very* clever.

By the age of *one and a half*, she could speak perfectly and knew as many words as most grown-up people. By the time she was *three*, Matilda could read newspapers. At the age of *four*, she could read fast and well.

'Daddy' she said, 'could you buy me a book?'

'A *book*?' he said. 'What's wrong with the TV? We've got a nice TV and now you come asking for a book! We're too good to you already my girl!'

Nearly every afternoon, Matilda stayed in the house while her brother (who was five years older than her) went to school, her father went to work and her mother went to the cinema.

One afternoon, Matilda walked to the library in the village. Mrs Phelps, the woman at the library, was surprised to see this small girl.

'Where are the children's books, please?' asked Matilda.

Mrs Phelps showed her. 'Shall I find you a nice one with lots of pictures in it?' she said.

'I'm sure I can find something,' said Matilda.

After that, she walked down to the library every afternoon and sat quietly in a corner reading.

'What can I read next?' she asked Mrs Phelps one day. 'I've finished all the children's books.'

'You mean you've looked at the pictures.'

'Yes, but I've read the books, too,' said Matilda.

Mrs Phelps was very surprised. 'How old are you, Matilda?' she asked.

'Four years and three months,' answered Matilda.

Mrs Phelps was even more surprised, but she was too sensible to show it. 'What sort of book would you like to read next?' she asked.

'A really good one,' said Matilda. 'A famous one.'

So Mrs Phelps gave her *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, a very famous English writer. For the next few afternoons she watched Matilda in the corner with the book on her knees.

During the next six months, Matilda read fourteen 'famous books' by different writers, and Mrs Phelps watched with surprise and excitement.

'You can borrow books from libraries and take them home, Matilda,' she said one day. 'Did you know?'

'Can I?' said Matilda. And after that, she visited the library once every week to borrow new books and to return the old ones. And every afternoon she read. The books took her to Africa with Ernest Hemingway, to India with Rudyard Kipling, " and to many other wonderful places.

Chapter 2

Mr Wormwood

Matilda's father bought and sold cars, and he seemed to make quite a lot of money from doing it.

'Sawdust,' he said proudly. 'That's the secret. And it costs me nothing. I get it from the wood shop.'

'How can sawdust help you to sell cars, daddy?' asked Matilda. 'I don't understand.'

'That's because you're a stupid little girl,' her father said. He turned to his son. 'I'm always glad to buy a car with an old gearbox, one that makes a terrible noise. I get it cheap. Then I mix a little sawdust with the oil in the gearbox and it goes beautifully — for a day or two.'

'How long will it go like that before it starts making noises again?' asked Matilda.

'Long enough for the buyer to get a long way away' her father said, laughing.

'But that's not honest, daddy,' said Matilda.

'Nobody gets rich by being honest,' he said. He was a small ratty-looking man with a thin moustache. He liked to wear brightly coloured jackets with yellow or green ties. For example, anyone who buys a car asks "How many miles has it done?" Right, Michael?'

'Right,' said his son.

'So, I buy an old car that's done a hundred and fifty thousand miles, and get it cheap. *Then* I ask myself, "How can I change the clock so that it reads ten thousand?" If I run the car backwards, the numbers will go backwards. But

who's going to drive a car backwards for thousands and thousands of miles?'

'Nobody,' young Michael said.

'Right,' said his father. 'Now this clock thing runs off one of the front wheels. So I use an electric drill on it, and when the drill turns, it turns the clock *backwards* — *very fast!* I can take fifty thousand miles off the car in a few minutes! And by the time I finish, the car's only done ten thousand, and I tell the customer, "It belonged to an old person who only used it once a week for shopping.'" He laughed loudly.

'But daddy,' said Matilda, who was listening carefully, 'that's terrible. It's not honest, and —'

'You're just a stupid little girl!' he shouted.

'That's right, Harry,' said his wife. 'Keep your ugly little mouth shut, Matilda. We want to watch the TV!'

They were in the living-room, eating their supper with their plates on their knees in front of the TV.

'Mummy,' said Matilda, 'can I eat my supper in the dining-room so that I can read my book?'

Her father looked at her. 'Supper is a family meal,' he said angrily 'Nobody will leave the table until we've finished.'

'But we don't eat at the table,' said Matilda. 'We always eat with our plates on our knees while we watch the TV.'

'And what's wrong with watching the TV?' her father said. His voice was suddenly soft and dangerous. Matilda didn't answer. She was too angry. Now it was time to do something.

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 dining-room. 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.

Chapter 4

Miss Honey

Most children begin school when they are five years old, or just before, but Matilda's parents forgot to send her. She was five and a half when she went for the first time. Crunchem Hall School had about two hundred and fifty children, and the head teacher was called Miss Trunchbull. She was a terrible woman who frightened the children *and* the teachers. When she came near, you could almost feel danger coming from her; and if four or five children got in

her way, she crashed straight through them, pushing them right and left.

Matilda found herself in a group with eighteen other small boys and girls about her age. Their teacher was Miss Honey, and she was about twenty-three. She had a pretty face, with blue eyes and brown hair. She never shouted, but she did not seem to smile. But all the children loved her.

After calling all their names, Miss Honey said, 'This is your first day at Crunchem Hall, children. The head teacher is Miss Trunchbull, and when she tells you to do something, you must do it. *Never* argue with her. If you make her angry she will break you into little pieces and turn you into fish-food. Don't laugh, Lavender! It's nothing to laugh about. Do you all understand?'

'Yes, Miss Honey,' replied nineteen little voices.

'I want to help you to learn quickly,' said Miss Honey. 'By the end of this week I want you all to be able to multiply by two. Can any of you do that already?'

Matilda put up her hand. She was the only one.

Miss Honey looked carefully at the small girl with the dark hair and the round serious face. 'Wonderful,' she said. 'Please stand up and show us.'

Matilda stood up and said, 'Two twos are four, two threes are six...' And when she got to two twelves are twenty-four, she went straight on with, 'Two thirteens are twenty-six, two fourteens are twenty-eight...'

'Stop!' said Miss Honey. 'How far can you go?'

'I don't really know,' said Matilda.

Miss Honey thought for a second or two. Then she said, 'Can you tell me what two twenty-eights are?'

'Fifty-six, Miss Honey,' answered Matilda.

'What about something much more difficult?' said the teacher. 'Something like four hundred and eighty-seven multiplied by two.'

'Nine hundred and seventy-four,' said Matilda.

Miss Honey tried to speak calmly. 'Th-that is really wonderful,' she said. 'But can you multiply by any other numbers? Three? Four?'

'Yes, Miss Honey,' said Matilda.

'Well, can you multiply all the way up to twelve?' said Miss Honey. 'What are twelve sevens?'

'Eighty-four,' said Matilda.

Miss Honey tried to stay calm. 'Multiply fourteen by nineteen . . . no, that's too difficult,' she said.

'It's two hundred and sixty-six,' said Matilda.

Miss Honey was careful not to show that she was very, *very* surprised.

'Who taught you to multiply like this, Matilda?' she asked. 'Was it your mother?'

'No, Miss Honey,' said Matilda.

'Was it your father?' asked Miss Honey.

'No, Miss Honey' Matilda said again.

'Did you teach yourself?' asked Miss Honey.

'I don't quite know,' said Matilda. 'I just don't find it difficult to multiply one number by another. It's hard to explain ... I just put the fourteen down in my head and multiply it by nineteen.'

Miss Honey was feeling quite strange. But she had to find out more about this surprising little girl.

'Well,' she said, looking at all the children. 'Let's leave numbers for a minute or two and see if any of you can spell. Hands up anyone who can spell cat.'

Three hands went up. They belonged to Lavender, a small boy called Nigel and to Matilda.

'Spell cat, Nigel,' said Miss Honey.

Nigel spelled it.

Then Miss Honey asked a question that she had never asked a group of children before on their first day. 'Can any of you three read a book?' she said.

'I can, Miss Honey,' said Matilda. 'I've read all the children's books in the library in the High Street.'

Miss Honey's voice was shaking when she asked, 'And — and what are you going to read now, Matilda?'

'I'm reading other books,' said Matilda. 'Mrs Phelps at the library helps me to choose them.'

'What... other books?' asked Miss Honey. Her legs *and* her voice were shaking now.

'I like Charles Dickens's books,' said Matilda.

Miss Honey suddenly found that she had to sit down.

Chapter 5

Miss Trunchbull

A little later, when the children went outside to play, Miss Honey went to Miss Trunchbull's office.

'What do you want, Miss Honey?' said Miss Trunchbull, in a voice like an angry dog. 'I'm busy.'

'There is a little girl in my group called Matilda Wormwood...' Miss Honey began.

'That's the daughter of that nice man who has the garage in the village — Wormwood Cars,' said Miss Trunchbull. 'I was in there yesterday. He sold me a car. It's only got ten thousand miles on the clock. It belonged to an old woman who only took it out once a year. Yes, I like Wormwood. But the daughter is a bad girl. "Watch her," he said. "If anything bad happens in the school, it will be my daughter who did it." I haven't met the little snake yet. What does she look like? Dirty, oily little thing, probably. Was it her who put those bad eggs under my desk this morning? I'm sure it was. Terrible smell — !'

'Oh, no, I'm sure you're wrong,' said Miss Honey.

'I'm never wrong, Miss Honey!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'Don't argue with me! Now, what do you want? Why are you wasting my time?'

'I came to talk to you about Matilda,' said Miss Honey.

'What did she do? Put broken glass on your chair?'

'No!' said Miss Honey. 'Matilda is very, *very* clever.'

Miss Trunchbull's face went purple. 'Don't be stupid!' she shouted. 'Her father says she's a little criminal!'

'Her father is wrong,' said Miss Honey. And she went on to describe some of the wonderful things that Matilda could do. Finally she said, 'We must put her in with the group of eleven-year-old children.'

'Oh! So she's too difficult for you, I see' said Miss Trunchbull. 'Too unpleasant! You want to send her to the top group so that she can do terrible things to them, don't you? Well, the answer is no! Matilda stays with you.'

'But Miss Trunchbull, please ...' began Miss Honey.

'Don't say another word!' shouted Miss Trunchbull.

So Miss Honey turned and walked out of the office.

'I'm going to do something for this child,' she told herself.

'I'm going to find a way to help her.'

She went to see the teachers who taught the older children, and borrowed several books from them. Then she found Matilda and asked her to come inside.

'You can't sit and do nothing while I'm teaching the rest of the children to multiply by two and to spell cat,' she said. 'During each lesson I'm going to give you one of these books to study. Then you can come and ask me any questions and I'll try to help you. All right?'

'Yes, thank you very much, Miss Honey,' said Matilda.

'What a nice child she is,' thought Miss Honey. 'I'll go and have a secret talk with her mother and father this evening. They must understand that their daughter is very special.'

Miss Honey got Matilda's address from the school office and walked to the Wormwood's house just after nine o'clock that evening. She waited until then to be sure that Matilda was in bed.

She found the house in a pleasant street and knocked on the door. A small, ratty-looking man wearing an orange and red jacket opened it. 'If you're selling something, we don't want any,' he said.

'I'm not,' said Miss Honey. 'I'm Matilda's teacher, and it's important that I speak to you and your wife.'

'Has she got into trouble already?' he said.

'No!' said Miss Honey. 'I have *good* news. Can I come in and talk to you about her for a few minutes?'

'We're watching our favourite programme on TV,' said Mr Wormwood. 'Come back some other time.'

Miss Honey began to get angry. 'Is a TV programme more important than your daughter?' she said. 'Then perhaps you aren't very good parents! Why don't you switch the thing off and listen to me!'

That surprised Mr Wormwood. 'Oh, all right,' he said. 'Come in and be quick about it.'

Miss Honey followed him inside.

'Who is it?' said Mrs Wormwood. She was looking at the TV and did not turn round.

'A school teacher,' said Mr Wormwood. 'She wants to talk to us about Matilda. It's all right, you can watch TV while we're talking.'

'My name is Jennifer Honey,' said Miss Honey. Nobody asked her to sit down, but she chose a chair and sat on it. 'Mrs Wormwood, did either you or your husband teach Matilda to read? Perhaps you're both great readers. Do you love books, Mr Wormwood?'

'No! Nobody ever got rich reading books!' said Mr Wormwood. 'We don't keep them in the house.'

'Well, I just came to tell you that Matilda is very clever,' said Miss Honey. 'But you probably know that.'

'I knew that she could read,' said Matilda's mother. 'She's always up in her room with a stupid book.'

'A five-year-old girl is reading books by Dickens and Hemingway,' said Miss Honey. 'Aren't you excited?'

'Not specially,' said Mrs Wormwood. 'A pretty face is more important than books for a girl, Miss Hunky...'

'The name is Honey,' said Miss Honey.

Mrs Wormwood pointed at the TV. 'Look at that handsome man kissing that girl,' she said. 'Do you think she got him to do that by reading books? Of course not! Now he's going to marry her, and they're going to live in a big house and have lots of money.'

'I can't believe I'm hearing this!' thought Miss Honey. 'These are terrible parents! Oh, poor Matilda!'

She tried again. 'I think that Matilda will probably be ready to go to university in two or three years from now, with the right teaching,' she said. 'And —'

'University?' shouted Mr Wormwood. 'Nobody learns anything sensible there!'

'That's not true,' said Miss Honey. 'But I can see that we're not going to agree about this.' And she got up from her chair and walked out of the house.

Chapter 6

The Chocolate Cake

Among Matilda's new friends was the girl called Lavender. A small girl with brown eyes and dark hair. Before the end of the first week, they heard some terrible stories about Miss Trunchbull. A ten-year-old girl, Hortensia, who they met in the school field, told them, 'She doesn't like very small children. And have you heard about The Chokey?'

'What's The Chokey?' asked Matilda.

'It's a very tall, narrow cupboard in Trunchbull's room,' said Hortensia. 'It's too small to sit down in, so you have to stand up. And the walls and doors have bits of broken glass all over them. So you have to stand up straight all the time when she locks you in there.'

'Have you ever been in there?' asked Lavender.

'In my first year, I was in there six times,' said Hortensia. 'Twice for a day and the other times for —'

She stopped. Suddenly all the children in the field were silent. Miss Trunchbull was walking across the field towards a girl of about ten. The girl had very long fair hair. 'Amanda Thrripp, come here!' shouted Miss Trunchbull.

'Trunchbull doesn't like very long hair,' Hortensia said.

Miss Trunchbull was now standing above Amanda like someone who wanted to put their foot down on something small and smelly. 'Cut off some of that dirty long hair before you come back to school tomorrow!' she shouted. 'Do you hear?'

'M-m-y m-m-mummy likes it long,' said the frightened Amanda.

'Do as I tell you, you little rat!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. And she put out a large hand, took Amanda by the hair and lifted the girl off the ground. Then she turned her round and round above her head — faster and faster! Amanda screamed when, suddenly, Miss Trunchbull stopped holding her hair and the girl flew up into the sky! She came down again in the next field. Then she got up on to her feet and walked back again!

Matilda's mouth fell open with surprise.

At lunch time the next day, all two hundred and fifty children in the school got orders to go into the big room, and to sit on the floor and wait for Miss Trunchbull.

When she came in, she stood at the front of them and shouted, 'Bruce Bogtrotter, come up here!'

A very fat eleven-year-old boy went out to the front.

'This thief, this robber went into the school kitchen yesterday and stole some of my special chocolate cake!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'It was not boys' cake! Cook made it with real butter and real chocolate — for me! And this selfish little snake ate it! The cook saw him.' When she spoke again, her voice was dangerously friendly. 'Do you like my chocolate cake, Bogtrotter?'

'It's very good,' the boy said, before he could stop himself.

'You're right, it is very good,' said Miss Trunchbull, then she turned to the door. 'Cook! Come in here!'

The school cook came into the room. She was carrying the largest chocolate cake you have ever seen. There was a small table and a chair next to Miss Trunchbull, and the cook put the cake on the table.

'Sit down, Bogtrotter,' said Miss Trunchbull.

The boy sat down and looked at the big cake.

'It's all for you, Bogtrotter,' said Miss Trunchbull. 'You wanted cake! Now you've got cake! And nobody will leave this room until you've eaten every bit of it!'

The boy looked at the cake, then began to eat.

'He'll be sick before he eats half of it,' Lavender said to Matilda. She was wrong. Bruce Bogtrotter ate half the cake before he stopped for a few seconds.

'Eat! Eat!' shouted Miss Trunchbull.

The boy cut another piece of cake. He didn't say, 'I'm going to be sick!' He went on eating... and eating...

Two hundred and fifty children watched. Suddenly, someone shouted, 'Come on Bruce, you can do it!'

'Be quiet!' shouted Miss Trunchbull, angrily.

The boy continued to push cake into his mouth. As the last piece disappeared, the children shouted 'Well done, Bruce!' But Miss Trunchbull picked up the empty plate and crashed it down on his head. Bruce was too full of cake for it to hurt him. He just smiled.

'Get out of here, all of you!' screamed Miss Trunchbull, and she walked out of the room, with the cook behind her.



In the middle of the first week, Miss Honey said to her group, 'Tomorrow afternoon, Miss Trunchbull will give you your lesson. You must not speak until she speaks to you, and you must stand up to answer her questions. And a large glass of water must always be on the table here when she comes in. She never gives a lesson without one. She keeps her special large glasses in the school kitchen. Now, who will see that her glass of water is ready for her?'

'I will,' said Lavender at once. She wanted to be as brave as Matilda, after hearing the stories about the glue-on-the-hat and the talking 'ghost' parrot. Like Matilda, Lavender thought that bad people needed to have something bad happen to *them* sometimes.

After school that day, she went down to the river at the bottom of her garden. There was a family of newts in the river. A newt is a very ugly animal, with greenish skin and

an orange stomach. It can live in or out of water. Lavender caught one and put it in her pencil box.

The next day, she took it to school. Immediately after lunch, she went to the kitchen and found one of Miss Trunchbull's large glasses. She put some water into the glass and took it to Miss Honey's room.

Then she dropped the newt into the water and put the glass on the table. And smiled.

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!

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.

Chapter 9

An Unpleasant Surprise for Miss Trunchbull

For the next few evenings after school, Matilda secretly practised moving things with her eyes — pens, pencils, books. Soon she could *lift* things, and push and pull them any way that she wanted to.

On Thursday, Miss Trunchbull came to teach the youngest children again. Everybody watched her lift up her large glass of water and look carefully at it. 'I'm glad to see there's nothing in it today,' she said. She looked round at them with an unpleasant smile on her face. 'Today I'm going to see if you can multiply by three. You!' She pointed at a boy called Wilfred. 'Stand up!' Wilfred stood up. 'Give me the answer to this. I have seven apples, seven oranges and seven bananas. How many pieces of fruit do I have? Quickly! Give me the answer!' 'That isn't multiplying,' began Wilfred. 'That's —' 'You stupid boy!' shouted Miss Trunchbull. 'You dirty little snake! That *is* multiplying by three. Doesn't Miss Honey teach you anything? You have three sorts of fruit and each sort has seven pieces. Three sevens are twenty-one, you ugly little spider!'

And she walked across to Wilfred, kicked him out of his chair and caught his feet in her hands.

'Say this after me!' she screamed, 'Seven threes are twenty-one! Seven threes are twenty-one!'

Just then, Nigel jumped up and pointed at the blackboard. 'The chalk!' he shouted. 'Look at the chalk! It's moving — and nobody is holding it!'

Everybody looked at the blackboard. And it was true!
A piece of chalk was moving across it.

'It's writing something!' screamed Nigel.

And it was.

Agatha...

'Who's doing it?' shouted Miss Trunchbull, when she saw her name. She dropped Wilfred on his head.

Agatha, this is Magnus... the chalk continued to write.

'No!' screamed Miss Trunchbull. 'It can't be Magnus!'

Agatha, give my Jenny back her house...

Miss Honey looked quickly at Matilda. The child was sitting very still and her eyes were bright.

Give Jenny her money...

Miss Trunchbull's face was very white now, and she was making strange noises.

... then go away from here or I will come and get you! I will come and get you, like you got me. I'm watching you, Agatha...

The chalk stopped writing and fell on the floor. Then Wilfred screamed, 'Miss Trunchbull is on the floor!'

Everyone ran to look. Miss Trunchbull was lying on her back on the floor with her eyes shut.

'Somebody go and get one of the other teachers,' said Miss Honey. Three children ran out of the room.

'My Dad says that cold water is the best way to wake up people who don't want to wake up,' said Nigel. And he took the large glass from the table and lifted it above Miss Trunchbull's head.

Everyone watched as the water went all over her, but Miss Trunchbull didn't move.

Matilda was still sitting at her desk. She had a strange but wonderful feeling inside her. 'I did it!' she thought.

Miss Honey spoke to the children. 'Please go out into the field and play until the next lesson,' she said quickly.

The children began to go past her. As Matilda went past, Miss Honey gave the little girl a big kiss.



Nobody ever saw Miss Trunchbull again after that day. She left the school and she left the village. Two days later, Miss Honey got an important-looking letter. It said: *'Dear Miss Honey, Your father's will has suddenly arrived at our office by post today. Where or who did it come from? We do not know. It is a mystery. But the will says that your father's house is yours. His money is still safely in the bank, and that is also yours. Could you please come to our office as soon as possible?'*

Miss Honey went that same day. Two weeks later, she was living in her father's beautiful old house. Matilda went there every evening after school. At school there was a new Head Teacher, and Matilda was now with the older, cleverer group of children. One evening, a few weeks later, she said, 'It's very strange, Miss Honey. This morning I tried to move something with my eyes, and I couldn't do it. I don't think that I'll ever be able to do it again.'

'Well, I'll never be able to thank you enough,' said Miss Honey. 'You've done so much for me, Matilda.'

One day, Matilda went home and saw a big black car outside. When she went in, her mother and father were pushing clothes and other things into suitcases.

'What's happening, daddy?' asked Matilda.

'We're leaving,' he said. 'We're going to Spain.'

'I don't want to go to Spain!' she cried. 'I love it here, and I love my school. When are we coming back?'

'We aren't,' said Mr Wormwood.

'What!' Matilda turned and ran all the way to Miss Honey's house. Miss Honey was in the garden.

'My mummy and daddy and brother are going to Spain, Miss Honey!' cried Matilda. 'And daddy says that we're never coming back!'

Miss Honey did not speak for a minute, then she said, 'I'm not surprised. Everyone in the village knows that your father buys stolen cars. He paints them a different colour and changes their numbers, then he sells them to people. Now he's running away to Spain before the police come for him. Someone probably told them about him.'

'I don't want to go!' cried Matilda. 'I want to live here with you. Can I stay with you? I think mummy and daddy will say yes if I ask them.'

'Well, yes, but —' began Miss Honey, smiling.

'We'll have to hurry!' said Matilda. And she pulled Miss Honey after her as she began to run home again.

The Wormwoods were putting suitcases into the car.

'I don't want to go to Spain,' said Matilda. 'I want to stay here and live with Miss Honey. She says that I can. Please say yes! Please, please!'

'It was Matilda's idea, Mr Wormwood,' said Miss Honey. 'But I'll love her and look after her carefully, and I'll pay for everything. It won't cost you a penny.'

'Come on, Harry,' said Mrs Wormwood. She pushed a suitcase into the car. 'Say yes! We have enough to worry about without Matilda.'

'All right,' said Mr Wormwood. 'If she wants to stay, she can stay.'

Matilda threw her arms round Miss Honey and kissed her. Then they watched the big black car race off down the road and disappear for ever.