

The Names

"Miss Trunchbull!" Matilda cried, jumping about a foot in the air. "You mean *she* is your aunt? *She* brought you up?"

"Yes," Miss Honey said.

"No wonder you were terrified!" Matilda cried. "The other day we saw her grab a girl by the pigtails and throw her over the playground fence!"

"You haven't seen anything," Miss Honey said. "After my father died, when I was five and a half, she used to make me bath myself all alone. And if she came up and thought I hadn't washed properly she would push my head under the water and hold it there. But don't get me started on what she used to do. That won't help us at all."

"No," Matilda said, "it won't."

"We came here," Miss Honey said, "to talk about you and I've been talking about nothing but myself the whole time. I feel like a fool. I am much more interested in just how much you can do with those amazing eyes of yours."

"I can move things," Matilda said. "I know I can. I can push things over."

"How would you like it?" Miss Honey said, "if we made some very cautious experiments to see just how much you can move and push?"

Quite surprisingly, Matilda said, "If you don't

mind, Miss Honey, I think I would rather not. I want to go home now and think and think about all the things I've heard this afternoon."

Miss Honey stood up at once. "Of course," she said. "I have kept you here far too long. Your mother will be starting to worry."

"She never does that," Matilda said, smiling.

"But I would like to go home now please, if you don't mind."

"Come along then," Miss Honey said. "I'm sorry I gave you such a rotten tea."

"You didn't at all," Matilda said. "I loved it."

The two of them walked all the way to Matilda's house in complete silence. Miss Honey sensed that Matilda wanted it that way. The child seemed so lost in thought she hardly looked where she was walking, and when they reached the gate of Matilda's home, Miss Honey said, "You had better forget everything I told you this afternoon."

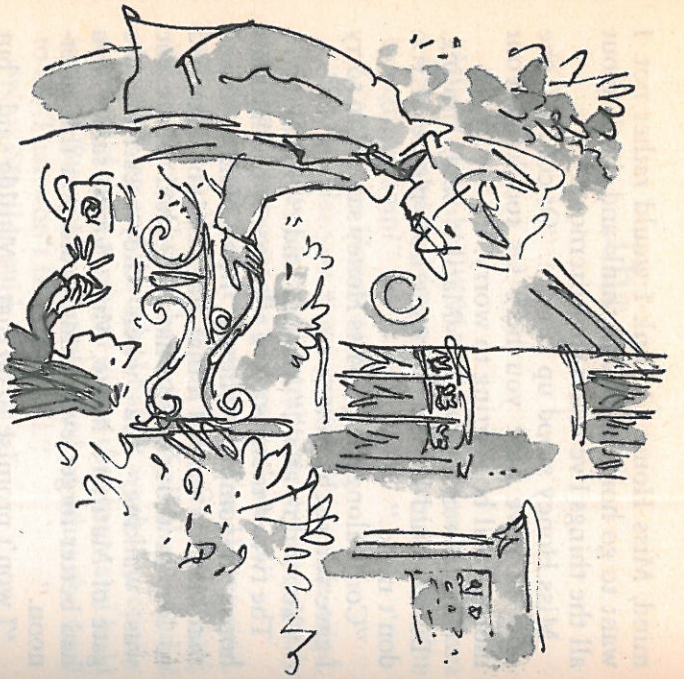
"I won't promise to do that," Matilda said, "but I will promise not to talk about it to anyone any more, not even to you."

"I think that would be wise," Miss Honey said.

"I won't promise to stop thinking about it, though, Miss Honey," Matilda said. "I've been thinking about it all the way back from your cottage and I believe I've got just a tiny little bit of an idea."

"You mustn't," Miss Honey said. "Please forget it."

"I would like to ask you three last things before



I stop talking about it," Matilda said. "Please will you answer them, Miss Honey?"

Miss Honey smiled. It was extraordinary, she told herself, how this little snippet of a girl seemed suddenly to be taking charge of her problems, and with such authority, too. "Well," she said, "that depends on what the questions are."

"The first thing is this," Matilda said. "What did Miss Trunchbull call your father when they were around the house at home?"

"I'm sure she called him Magnus," Miss Honey said. "That was his first name."

"And what did your father call Miss Trunchbull?"

"Her name is Agatha," Miss Honey said. "That's what he would have called her."

"And lastly," Matilda said, "what did your father and Miss Trunchbull call you around the house?"

"They called me Jenny," Miss Honey said.

Matilda pondered these answers very carefully.

"Let me make sure I've got them right," she said.

"In the house at home, your father was Magnus, Miss Trunchbull was Agatha and you were Jenny. Am I right?"

"That is correct," Miss Honey said.

"Thank you," Matilda said. "And now I won't mention the subject any more."

Miss Honey wondered what on earth was going on in the mind of this child. "Don't do anything silly," she said.

Matilda laughed and turned away and ran up the path to her front-door, calling out as she went, "Good-bye, Miss Honey! Thank you so much for the tea."