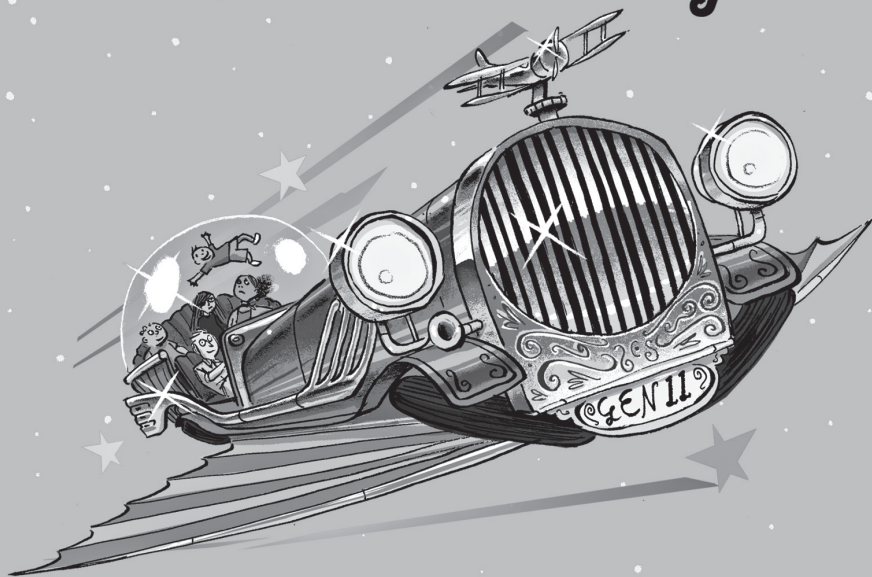


Frank Cottrell Boyce

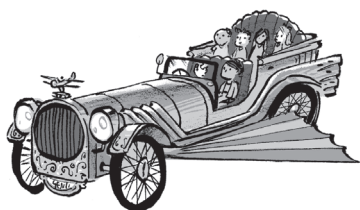


Chitty Chitty BANG BANG

OVER THE MOON

Illustrated
by Joe Berger

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS



1

Most cars are just cars. Four wheels. An engine. Some seats. They take you to work or to school or on holiday. They bring you home again.

But the Tooting family didn't have a car.

The Tooting family were Mum, Dad, Jem and Lucy and the baby – Little Harry. They used to have the most beautiful car in the world – a perfectly restored Paragon Panther called Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. She had silver wheels that flashed in the sunshine. Her seats were soft as silk. Under her long



golden bonnet was an engine so powerful that she could fly, not just through the air, but through time itself. In her, the Tootings had travelled through the dinosaur swamps of prehistoric Earth. They had seen the Ice Age come and go. They had partied in jazz-age New York and looked upon El Dorado, the fabulous lost city of gold.

But now Chitty Chitty Bang Bang had been stolen.

If an ordinary family car is stolen, its owners might have to walk home, or wait for the bus. When Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was stolen, the Tootings were stranded where no bus could help them.

They were stranded . . .

. . . in the past.

In London in 1966, to be precise.

Just outside Wembley Stadium on 30 July at ten minutes to three, to be very precise indeed.

‘Everyone stay calm,’ said Jem. ‘I have a plan to get us out of here and back to our own time.’

‘Not now, Jem,’ said Mum.

‘Not now?! What do you mean, not now? We’re stuck in a time fifty years before we were born. Meanwhile in our own time Tiny Jack – the greatest thief in history – has got his hands on Chitty Chitty Bang Bang – the greatest car in history. Imagine what he could steal with Chitty as his getaway



vehicle. He could go back in time and steal all the gold in El Dorado. He could steal the *Mona Lisa* while the paint is still wet. He will be the richest and most powerful person on Earth. Imagine that – a planet ruled by evil supervillain Tiny Jack!’

‘Jem,’ said Mum, ‘do you realize what’s about to happen in this stadium? Only the most important game of football ever played, that’s all. Tell him, Dad.’

‘The word today,’ said Dad, ‘is *World Cup Final, 1966*. England win four–two, thanks to a hat-trick from Geoff Hurst. The only time England have ever won the World Cup. The greatest day in the entire history of our nation, and we are going to see it!’ He squeezed Mum’s hand and pulled her towards the queue of flag-waving supporters who were filing through the turnstiles.

‘We can’t watch the match – we’ve got to get back to our own time!’

‘After the match,’ said Dad.

‘Enjoy the moment,’ said Mum. ‘It’s 1966! It’s not just the World Cup Final. It’s swinging London, miniskirts, the Beatles.’

Dad surveyed the scene – the football fans with their brightly coloured rosettes and wooden rattles covered in ribbons; the old men in flat caps; the young men in long fur coats and top hats, some

in strange antique army uniforms. There were girls in tiny dresses – some covered in black and white zigzags, others with orange flowers, one with mirrors.

‘People are staring at us,’ muttered Lucy. ‘They think our clothes are weird.’

‘They’re not weird,’ said Mum. ‘Just a bit ahead of their time.’

‘Look at these cars,’ sighed Dad. ‘MGs, Rovers, Rolls-Royces, Jaguars, Triumphs . . . I don’t know about the rest of you, but I could live like this.’



‘And I would rather,’ said Lucy, ‘freeze to death in the Ice Age and be eaten by a mammoth that thought I was an ice lolly, than wear a miniskirt.’

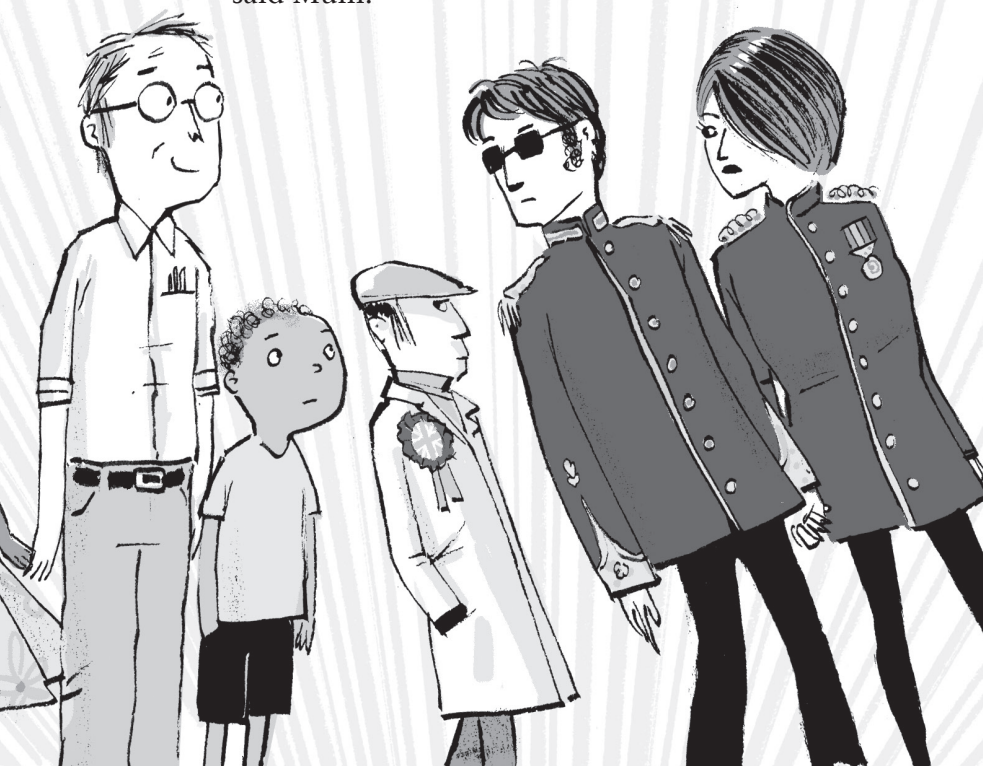
By now they had reached the turnstiles. ‘Tickets please,’ said the man in the kiosk.

‘Tickets?’ Dad gasped. ‘We don’t have any tickets!’

‘Tickets!’ Mum wailed. ‘What will we do?’

‘No tickets, no entrance,’ said the man in the booth. ‘Step aside, please, and let legitimate ticket holders pass.’

The children followed Mum and Dad as they moped back into the street. ‘What will we do now?’ said Mum.



‘Save the world?’ suggested Jem. ‘I do have a plan. You see, Commander Pott, the man who first restored Chitty Chitty Bang Bang—’

‘Commander Caractacus Pott is a very busy man,’ said Dad. ‘He’s probably busy doing secret work of national importance. We couldn’t disturb him. Let’s just enjoy the match.’

‘That’s just it, he’s here at the match. We saw him. All we have to do is . . .’

‘Pssst.’ A man in a Union Jack bowler hat was hissing at them from behind a lamp post. ‘Wanna buy a ticket?’

‘We certainly do,’ said Mum. ‘We want five.’

‘Only got two.’

‘Oh,’ said Mum. ‘Never mind. Lucy and I will watch the match. Dad can look after Jem and Little Harry.’

‘Or a better idea,’ said Dad. ‘Jem and I will go to the match and you look after Lucy and Little Harry.’

‘Or what about—’

‘If it’s no trouble,’ interrupted the bowler-hat man, ‘could we settle the money matters first and your family problems later? It’s two guineas per ticket.’

‘Two guineas!’ said Mum. ‘That’s two pounds and ten pence. That’s so cheap!’

‘Two guineas each, mind,’ said the man.



In 1966 £4.20 was a lot of money, but to Mum and Dad it sounded like next to nothing. Last time they'd gone to a football match they'd paid ten times that, and England hadn't even won the World Cup! Their chests swelled at the thought that suddenly they were rich. If £4.20 could buy you two tickets for the World Cup Final, then the twenty-pound note in Mum's purse was probably enough for a luxury family holiday.

'Honestly,' said Dad, 'we'll give you twice that. More. Here's a tenner.'

He whipped a ten-pound note out of his pocket while the man slid a pair of World Cup Final tickets out from under the crown of his bowler. But when he caught sight of Dad's money the man snarled, 'What do you call that?'

'I call it a ten-pound note,' said Dad. 'Keep the change.'

'A ten-pound note?!' said the man. 'Why, it's hardly bigger than a postage stamp. Who's this hairy geezer on the back?'

'That is Charles Darwin!'

'Charles Darwin?! Where's Her Majesty the Queen?'

'Here on the front, look.'

'That big old boiler? That's not Her Majesty. Her Majesty's a slip of a girl. That is not a tenner.'



‘It certainly is,’ says Dad. ‘Look, it says so.’

‘Saying so doesn’t mean it is so. I’ve got a parrot can say so. That doesn’t make it legal tender. A parrot’s a parrot and money is money. This –’ he pulled out a piece of paper the size of a tablecloth, decorated with a picture of the Queen as a pretty young woman – ‘is money. And that –’ he pointed to Dad’s banknote – ‘is a very small portrait of a Victorian scientist. That’s all. I’m not swapping World Cup Final tickets for that. You must be mad.’

Dad was frantic. He had to have those tickets. He rummaged through his wallet. ‘Would you take a credit card?’ He held out his credit card for the man to see.

The man gave the small square of blue plastic a look so withering that Jem was amazed the card didn’t curl up from pure shame. ‘Oh, of course I’ll take that,’ he smirked. ‘Why, of course I will. The moment I got a hold of these tickets for the most important game of football ever played, I thought to myself: I wonder will anyone ever swap them for a small piece of plastic such as I can pick my teeth with or use as a bookmark? That was my dream, but I never dared hope that my dream would come true.’

Dad looked hopeful until Lucy whispered, ‘Just to be clear, Dad, he’s being sarcastic.’



'Oh,' said Dad. 'That's a pity.'

'What about a cash machine?' said Mum.

'Oh, a cash machine?' said the man.

'You know, a hole in the wall. Cash comes out of it.'

'A hole in the wall that cash comes out of? Yes, of course, there's lots of them over there just behind the money bushes. See where the road is paved with gold?'

Mum looked where the man was pointing, but then Jem whispered to her, 'He's being sarcastic again. We're in 1966. Cash machines aren't invented yet.'

Mum was rooting in the bottom of her handbag. 'Look!' she whooped. 'Gold! Real gold! We got it in El Dorado.' She scraped a few curls and scraps of gold out from the lining of her bag with her fingernails and opened her hand so the man could see the little heap of shiny shavings in the middle of her palm. 'There must be a hundred pounds' worth there at least,' she said. 'Surely you'd swap the tickets for real gold?'

'I'll swap them for two guineas each,' he said. 'No more. No less. Now move along and stop wasting my time. I've half a mind to go to the coppers and tell them about those forged banknotes of yours.'

'They're not forged,' said Dad, stuffing the

money back in his wallet. 'They're just a bit ahead of their time.'

But Mum and Dad did move off, just in case.

'We need to find Commander Pott and his family,' said Jem. 'We need to explain that we are from the future and that in the future their car – Chitty Chitty Bang Bang – has fallen into the hands of an evil genius who is planning to use it to—'

'Maybe we could shin up a drainpipe!' said Mum. 'What?'

'Or find an old fire escape? There must be some way to see this game.'

There was a terrible groan from inside the stadium. 'Germany's first goal,' said Mum. 'A header from Helmut Haller. That means we've missed twelve minutes already.'

'The word today,' said Dad, 'is *five goals to go*. We must not despair.'

'Are you listening to me?' asked Jem. But Mum and Dad were staring at the tall white impenetrable walls of the stadium. They seemed to think that if they just stared hard enough they would be able to see the match.

'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!' yelled Little Harry.

'Yes,' said Jem. 'That's what we really need. We need Chitty back.' The truth was that Jem missed Chitty – the smell of her seats, the dazzle of her

wheels, the music of her engines, the noise of her Klaxon – more than he missed his home in Zborowski Terrace, Basildon. As long as Chitty was with them, he didn't really care where in the world or when in history they were.

'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!' insisted Little Harry.

'I know,' sighed Jem. 'How could she let herself be stolen like that?' For the truth was it seemed to Jem that Chitty never did anything she didn't want to do. She would never start on a cold morning unless you gave her vintage champagne, and no matter how carefully you planned your journey, you always somehow ended up not where you had intended to go, but where Chitty wanted to be. Deep inside Jem suspected that Chitty could only be stolen if she wanted to be stolen. Could she have just got bored of the Tooting family?

By now Mum and Dad had found a newspaper seller who had a transistor radio. They huddled around him, listening to the match. Jem and Lucy sat forlornly on the edge of the kerb while Little Harry played in the gutter.

'Chitty,' yelled Little Harry. 'Chitty,' he shouted. 'Bang!' He tugged at Jem's sleeve. 'Bang!'

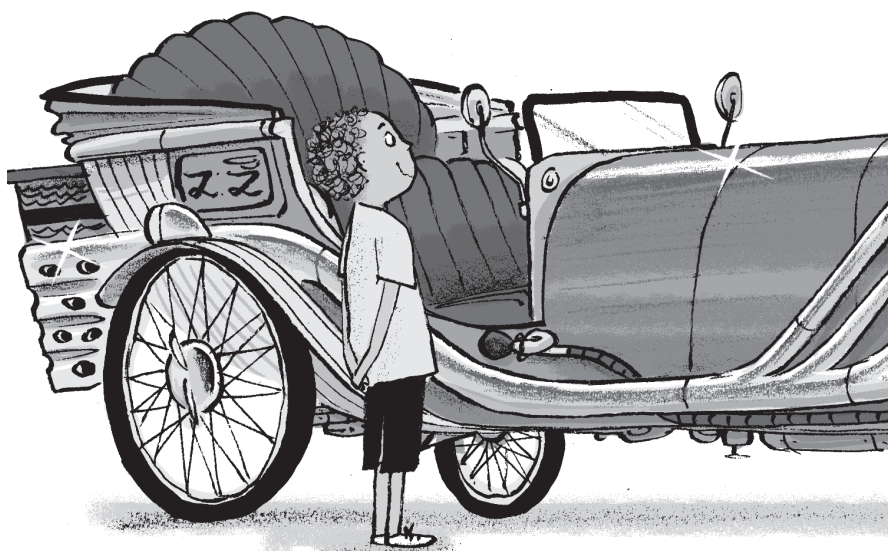
Something about the way Little Harry was tugging his sleeve reminded Jem of this very important fact:

Little Harry is never wrong.

Which reminded him in turn of the absolutely important Little Harry Rule, which is . . .

Never ignore Little Harry.

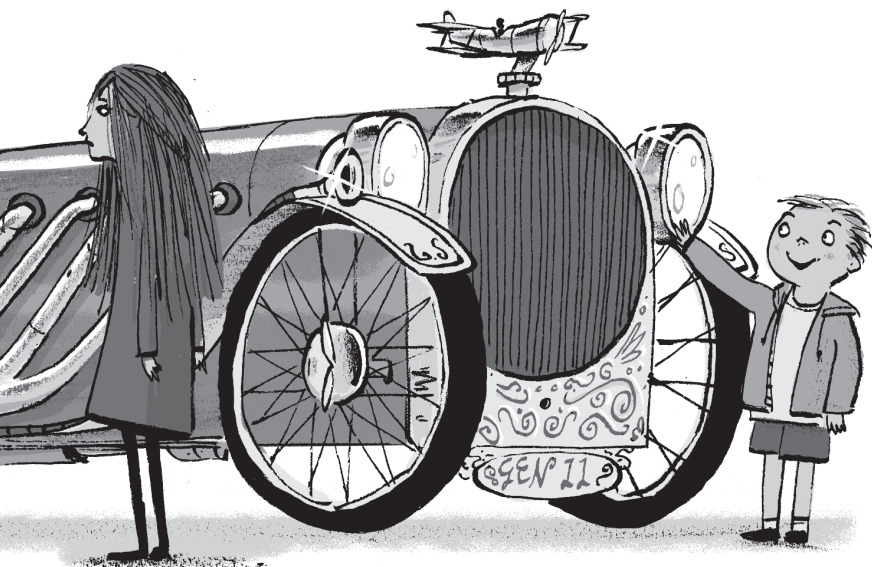
Jem let Little Harry tug him across the pavement, past the hot-dog sellers. Lucy trudged after them. From here they could see a line of parked cars. Jem gasped. Lucy smiled. For there – parked neatly in a side road just to one side of the stadium entrance – was a car. And what a car. A twelve-cylinder, twenty-three-litre racing-green Paragon Panther with brand-new red leather upholstery and a cream-coloured collapsible roof. The afternoon sunshine blazed from her huge silver exhausts, and



the polished chrome of her snarling boa-constrictor horn glowed.

‘It can’t be,’ said Lucy. ‘It can’t be Chitty, just standing there.’

‘I knew she wouldn’t let us down,’ said Jem with a smile, not particularly truthfully. He half expected that twenty-three-litre engine to roar a welcome as they drew near. Maybe Chitty would fling open her doors or flash her headlights in greeting. She didn’t. But that didn’t matter. Jem was happy enough for both of them. He just wasn’t sure how to say so. If Chitty had been human, there would have been hugs and handshakes, but those don’t really work on cars. How do you greet a long-lost car? Do you pat her on the bonnet? Shake her by the gearstick? Perched on top of Chitty’s radiator was her famous mascot – the Zborowski Lightning – a little model



of an aeroplane. Jem sometimes thought that flicking the propellers of the little plane was a bit like tickling her under the chin. He flicked them now. Then he whispered 'Good to see you, Chitty' into the radiator.

'GA GOOO GA!' Chitty Chitty Bang Bang sounded her Klaxon so loudly and fiercely that Jem's brain went numb. 'Ow! What did you do that for?' In the past he had heard Chitty blast her cry at dinosaurs, gangsters and traffic wardens, but never at him. They were supposed to be friends! What was going on? 'Chitty,' he said, bending down to the radiator again, 'don't you know me? It's me. Jem.'

'Ga gooo ga!' Chitty's Klaxon spat thunder into Jem's ear again.

By now people were beginning to look over, to see the cause of the disturbance.

'If you keep this up, you'll get us arrested,' said Lucy.

'Why doesn't she recognize us? Is it not the right Chitty?'

'Nother Chitty!' said Little Harry. 'Nother Chitty.'

'Of course it's not another Chitty,' said Jem, ignoring the Little Harry Rule. 'There is only one Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. The only Paragon Panther ever built.'

‘Except,’ said Lucy, ‘last time we saw her she was gold, and now she’s green.’

‘Don’t be so superficial,’ said Jem. ‘Colour doesn’t matter. It’s what’s inside that counts.’ It was true – inside they could see all the familiar controls – the button that made her into a submarine, the handle that made the parasols go up on sunny days and – most important of all – the Chronojuster dial, which allowed her to travel through time. There was definitely only one car that could travel through the air and under the sea and through the fabric of time itself. This was their own dear Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, but . . .

‘This’ said Lucy, ‘is Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, 1966. This is Chitty Chitty Bang Bang before she ever met us, when she belonged to the Pott family. This Chitty Chitty Bang Bang doesn’t know who we are.’

Jem stared at Chitty. Everything about her was familiar. Everything about her reminded him of the fabulous adventures they’d had together in jungles and deserts. It was sad and strange that she didn’t remember him – as though he had met his very best friend in all the world but his friend didn’t recognize him. From inside the stadium came a sound that started as a cheer but then choked and turned into a loud sigh.

“Nother Chitty!” gurgled Little Harry – reaching out for Chitty.

‘No, it’s the same Chitty, but younger,’ said Lucy. ‘You’d need to have some basic grasp of the theory of relativity to understand it properly. The point is, we are stranded in time. This car can travel in time. All we have to do is steal it.’

‘Yes,’ said Jem. ‘Except if we stole it, that would be stealing, wouldn’t it?’

‘I suppose,’ Lucy suggested with a shrug, ‘we could ask the Pott family nicely for a lift back to our own time.’

‘I suppose,’ said Jem, reaching out to flick the propellers of the Lightning one last time. He was thinking – Yes, it would be wrong to steal this car, but to have to ask someone else for a ride in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang . . . That felt even wronger.

‘I think,’ said Lucy, ‘that it’s probably best to hand over this moral dilemma to our parents.’

Mum and Dad were staring at the newspaper seller’s transistor radio, hypnotized by the match commentary.

‘The word today,’ Dad sighed, ‘is *a game of two halves*.’

‘Mum, Dad,’ said Jem, ‘we’ve found Chitty Chitty—’



‘Shh,’ shushed Mum. ‘There’re just three minutes left of the first half.’

‘But, Mum—’

At that moment, there was the roar of an engine. Jem spun round. Lucy spun round. Even Mum and Dad managed to tear themselves away from the football for a moment, just in time to see a flash of brass and a flicker of silver as Chitty Chitty Bang Bang sped away from the stadium.

‘No!’ gasped Lucy. ‘The Potts are leaving! Our one guaranteed ride out of this godforsaken era with its jingly bells and horrible jolly colours.’

‘How could they leave before the end of the match?’ said Dad. ‘Why would anyone do that?’

‘Come on! We’ve got to follow them,’ pleaded Jem.

‘The idea of following a twelve-cylinder, twenty-three-litre Paragon Panther on foot,’ said Lucy, ‘is poignant but pointless.’

‘Here, mate, give my car a push, will you?’ The speaker was a man in a smart blue uniform, peaked hat and shiny boots.

‘Can’t it wait until after the game?’ said Mum.

‘Sorry, madam.’ The man shrugged. ‘This here is a national emergency.’

He pointed towards a long black limousine with a little flag flying from its bonnet. In the back seat



was a young woman fiddling impatiently with her unusually sparkly hat.

‘Is that . . . ?’ gasped Dad.

‘. . . the Queen of England?’ said Mum.

‘And lots of other places,’ added the chauffeur. ‘There’s been an occurrence at the Houses of Parliament. Got to get there at the double. But the blooming car won’t start.’

‘What seems to be the trouble?’ said Dad.

Mum curtsied and Dad bowed as they passed the royal vehicle. The Queen gave them each a slightly mechanical wave.

‘She waved at me,’ breathed Mum. Then she called, in a voice that was loud but respectful, ‘Don’t you worry, Your Majesty, Mr Tooting will have this sorted out in a jiffy.’

‘Open the bonnet,’ said Dad, ‘and give me two minutes.’

‘Really?’ said the chauffeur. ‘Don’t mind me saying, but this is an unusually complicated engine and you seem to have unusually fat fingers.’

Dad hated



anyone mentioning his fat fingers. He clenched his fists in fury, but Mum calmed things down. 'They may be fat,' she said, 'but they are attached to a mechanical genius.'

The chauffeur shrugged and unlatched the bonnet. 'I'm opening this,' he said, 'purely to demonstrate that there is no point in opening it. The engine is very old-fashioned.'

Dad stared at the powerful engine that now lay revealed in the sunlight. 'I'm used to old-fashioned engines,' he admitted. 'The word today is *teeny-tiny problem with the carburettor cooling flange . . .*' He tugged and twisted a few things. The car gave one last puff of smoke, then seemed to sigh contentedly as its carburettor cooled down. Then the engine roared.

'Remarkable,' said the chauffeur, shaking Dad's hand. 'I'm sure the Queen will give you a thank-you wave as we drive by.'

But the Queen didn't give a thank-you wave. She wound down the window and called, 'You there, Mr Tooting. Hop in.'

'Oh no, Dad, don't,' begged Jem. 'Think of Chitty . . .'



‘Shhhh, Jem,’ muttered Mum. ‘You can’t say no to the Queen.’

‘Is this your family?’ said the Queen. ‘Do tell them to hop in too.’

Mum chivvied the children into the car, warning them to smile and say thank you and telling them this was the lift of a lifetime.

‘Yes,’ said Lucy, ‘but this isn’t our lifetime. We aren’t going to be born for fifty years.’

‘Do get in,’ said the Queen. ‘Plenty of room if you all squidge up. Ready, Soapy? Step on the gas. Soapy is the name of my chauffeur, by the way. And I’m . . .’

‘The Queen of England,’ said Mum a bit too quickly.

‘. . . and Lots of Other Places,’ added the Queen sniffily.

Dad introduced himself and the rest of the family.

‘I’m most awfully grateful to you for fixing the car,’ the Queen said. ‘I don’t know how to thank you.’

‘Cash would be nice,’ said Lucy.

‘Lucy,’ hissed Mum, ‘you can’t just ask the Queen for cash like that. Do it like this: Cash would be nice, Your Majesty.’

‘The Queen doesn’t carry cash,’ said the Queen.

'Tell you what, I'll knight you soon as I have a moment. Got to sort out this dashed national emergency first of course. I'm sick as a parrot about missing the match. Did you see any of it?'

'We were listening on the radio.'

'I'm most fearfully anxious about it. Why has he picked Geoff Hurst? Surely Jimmy Greaves is the better striker. If we don't win, I'm going to pack this whole Queen thing in. I mean, really, what's the point in ruling a country that always loses?'

'Don't worry, Your Majesty,' soothed Mum. 'England will win, definitely.'

'Four-two after extra time,' specified Dad.

The Queen gave him a searching look. 'How on earth can you know that? Do you read the future as well as fixing engines? What a fascinating man your father is, children. I feel he is just the man to sort out this national emergency.'

Fast as a rocket and smooth as chocolate they sped down the A4088 to the North Circular and east towards the A5. Through traffic lights, over roundabouts, they slid through Swinging London. There were Union Jacks. Red buses. Black cabs. Policemen with dome-shaped hats riding round on bicycles.

'I love the Sixties!' said Mum.

'Yes, everything's so modern now, isn't it?' agreed the Queen. 'Look at this, for instance . . .' She twisted

a knob on her armrest. A panel opened in her door and a gloved robot hand – beautifully dressed in silk and lace – popped out and began to wave to the empty streets. ‘For centuries monarchs wore themselves out waving at people. Now that we’re in the 1960s, I’ve got this to do all my royal waving for me. Saves frightful wear and tear on the royal elbow, and allows one to get on with one’s knitting.’

‘We’ve got some terrific gadgets in our car too,’ said Dad. ‘There’s even a thing that pops wine gums into your mouth if you get stressed while you’re driving.’

‘You never mentioned that,’ said Mum.

‘I thought if other people knew about it, they might eat all the wine gums.’

‘Soapy, switch on the radio,’ said the Queen. ‘We’re missing the game.’

All the way down Regent Street the Queen’s automatic Royal Wave Machine karate-chopped backwards and forwards so fast it was just a blur, while the Queen herself leaned forward, listening to every kick of the match.

‘This is so exciting,’ whispered Mum, snuggling up to Dad. ‘You are now car mechanic by royal appointment. We really could live like this.’

When they stopped outside the Palace of Westminster the Queen peered out of the car.

‘Well,’ she said, ‘everything looks normal enough, but what’s that noise?’

The air was filled with a strange throbbing sound. Jem could see now that a huge crowd had gathered.

Dad got out of the car. The paving stones were vibrating slightly, as were the kerbstones. The water in the Thames was bubbling as though it was a giant jacuzzi. It was the unmistakable sound of something massive about to happen.

‘I don’t suppose you’ve had any warnings?’ asked Dad. ‘About earthquakes, for instance?’

‘The epicentre,’ said Lucy, ‘appears to be Big Ben. The leaves on the trees here are shaking, but in front of the tower whole trees are rocking. Look.’

The throbbing noise grew louder. First it was worryingly loud, then it was frighteningly loud. People began to run across Westminster Bridge to the south side of the river.

‘What is going on?’ asked the Queen.

‘It’s not what’s going on that’s worrying me,’ said Dad. ‘It’s what is about to go off.’

The moment he said this there was a huge explosion around the base of the tower of Big Ben. The whole tower shook. It looked as though it was going to come crashing down.

But it didn’t come crashing down.

It did something much, much more surprising.