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opening extract from

A Footballer Called Flip

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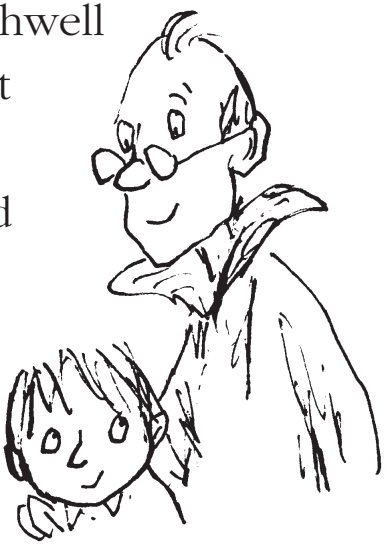
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Missing Mr Rothwell

A lot of people used to take the mickey out of me. That was before I got famous. Mr Rothwell was the one who got me famous. Well, partly. Mum and Dad helped, too.



Mr Rothwell was the only teacher in the school who didn't call me Shorty.

Or Nipper. Or "How's Little Jack, then?" Some of them called me Tiger but I knew they didn't mean it. They meant, "Aren't you a funny little lad? Aren't you *small*?"

Not everybody liked Mr Rothwell. They said he was strict. But I liked him best of all – even though I wasn't really interested in football. Not then.

People don't call me nicknames now. Only Flip sometimes, but I don't mind that. Usually they call me Jack. Or Jack Lewis. That's my name. Flip is OK, because doing a backflip is how I got my photo in the paper that first time.



My First Backflip

I found out I could do a backflip when I was four. It wasn't in a gym or anything. My mum showed me. She's full of surprises.



I looked out of the kitchen window one day and I couldn't believe it! My mum turned over backwards in the air. I ran out.

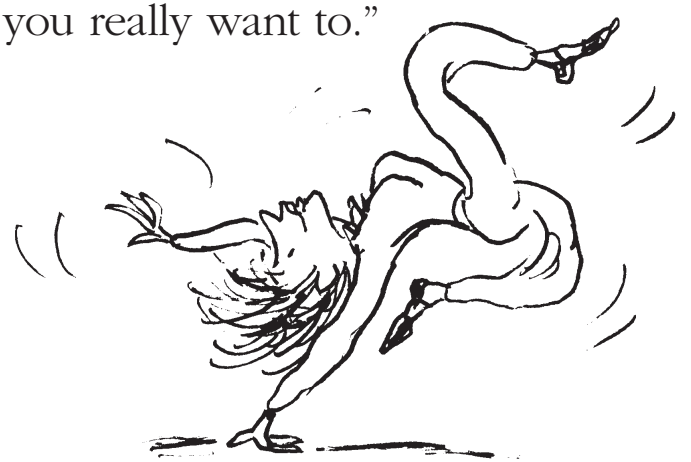
I said, "*Mu-um*!"

She looked surprised. She said, "What? What is it?"

I said, "That thing you just did! Do it again!"

She said, "What? My backward handspring? Did you like that? Here, I'll show you how to do it. It's easy."

Then Mum, my ordinary normal mum, went 1-2-3-over, just like that. She said, "I'll bet you could do it if you really want to."



It took her all afternoon, because I kept getting it wrong. But she never stopped trying. And all of a sudden I got it. I could do it. My first backflip. 1-2-3-over. Just like that. Oh yes.



It's the thing I'm famous for now. But that first time was ages ago, way before I found out how much Mum knew about football. And she knew *loads*.