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Junkyard Jack and the Horse That Talked





ADRIAN EDMONDSON

is an English comedian, actor and writer. He has three daughters with his wife, Jennifer Saunders, and lives in London. *Tilly and the Time Machine* was his first novel for children.

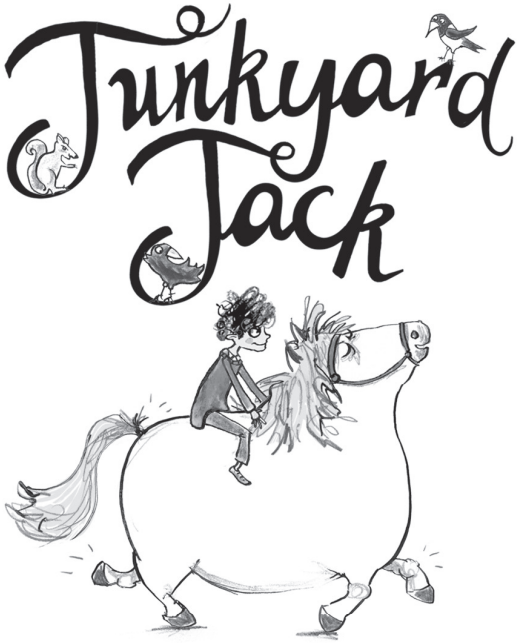


DANNY NOBLE

is a comic-making, storytelling, ink-based illustrator who regularly falls off stages with her band The Meow Meows. By day she wrangles five-year-olds and sharpens pencils.

She grew up by the sea with the most obscenely patient and wonderful family and now she lives in the city and swims with ducks.

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Adrian Edmondson

illustrated by Danny Noble

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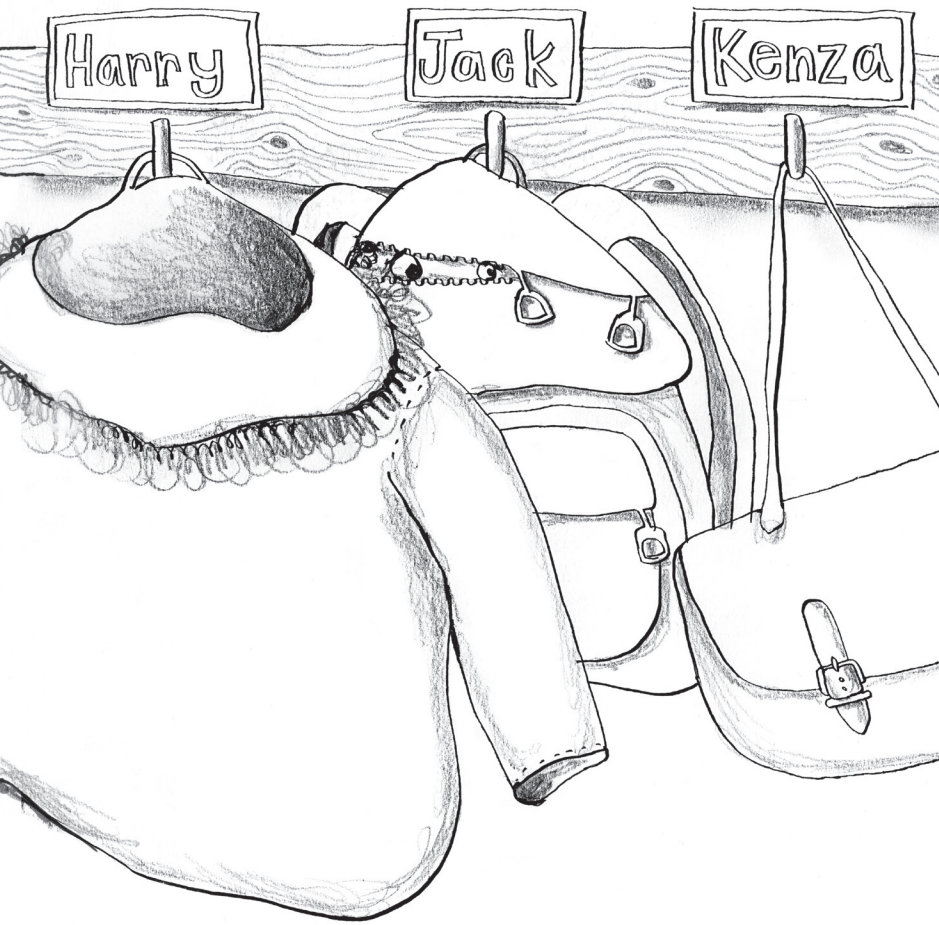
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For Fred, Bert and Ivy

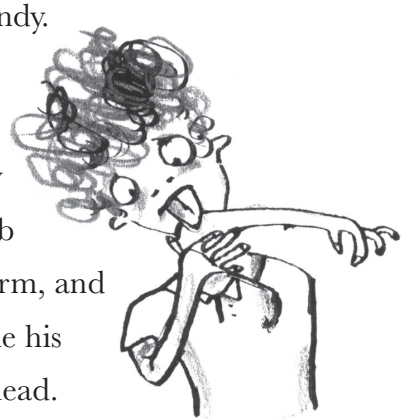



Harry
Jack
Kenza

CHAPTER 1

Jack was hiding inside his own school bag, which was hanging on one of the pegs at the back of the classroom. He'd climbed in during the lunch break and no one knew he was there.

You might wonder how someone could hide inside a school bag, but not only was Jack very small, he was also very bendy. In fact, he was double-jointed. This meant he could do all sorts of funny things, like bend his thumb back until it touched his arm, and lick his own elbows, and tie his legs in a knot behind his head.



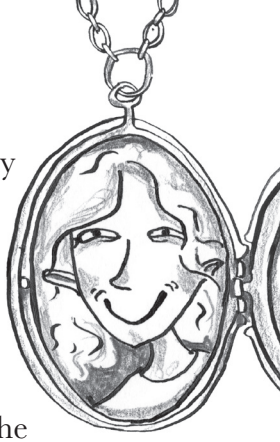
Jack liked being inside the bag because it meant he didn't have to do any schoolwork. He didn't like reading and writing. Whenever he looked at words on a page, all the letters seemed to jump about, and he could never work out what went where, or what they were trying to say.

Jack could see through a little gap where the zip of his school bag was broken. All the other children in his class were sitting at their tables, writing about '*What I Can See from my Bedroom Window*'.

This was another reason why Jack had got into his bag: he didn't have a bedroom window. He lived in a cupboard. So the only thing he could possibly have written was *nothing*.

To be honest he was a little bit bored in his bag, but he still thought it was better than doing reading and writing.

The only interesting thing he had to play with was a small locket, which contained a photo of his mum. Looking at the picture made him happy and sad at the same time. He was really happy



whenever he saw her face, but also really sad because he didn't get to see her very often. This was because she was in prison. She'd been sent there for something she swore she hadn't done, and Jack wished he could help her, but he was only a boy, and he couldn't think what to do.

'Where's Jack?' came a voice from the front of the classroom. It was Miss Tuppence, the teacher. 'Oh no, he hasn't gone missing *again*!'

Jack was always disappearing. During the previous month Miss Tuppence had found him hidden in the narrow gap between the whiteboard and the wall; behind the bucket in the cupboard under the sink; and in the drawer where she kept the large sheets of paper for artwork.

'Come on, everybody – help me find him!' she said, and the whole class scraped back their chairs and started looking for Jack.

You might imagine that a game of hide-and-seek in a single room with twenty-nine people

looking and only one person hiding wouldn't take very long, but it did. It went on for ages. And, as with any game of hide-and-seek when the hider is too good at hiding, most of the children got bored quite quickly and started chatting, and not looking at all.

Eventually someone knocked into Jack's bag. Jack froze. He looked out carefully through the gap between the zips. A boy called Archie had just banged into his bag by accident. But Jack knew they would find him sooner or later. It seemed a shame for them to discover his hiding place, because it was such a good one, so he decided to get out before they found him. Then he might be able to use it again another day.



As soon as there were enough children milling about near the pegs, he carefully



unzipped the flap, slipped out of his bag and slid down the wall behind all the coats. He was so silent and agile, and small and bendy, that no one saw him. Like a nimble ghost, he spirited his way past empty chairs and under tables, and swiftly scurried along to his own chair, climbed on to it and picked up his pencil.

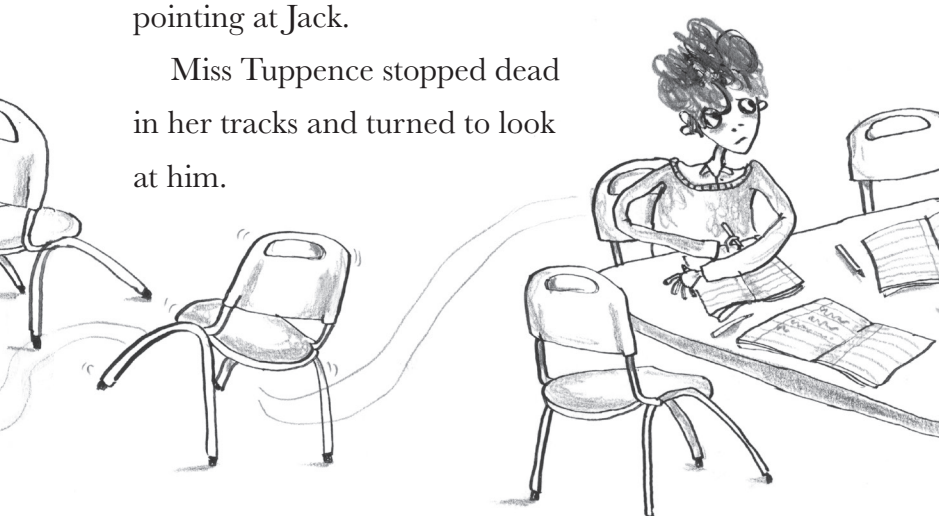
'Where can he possibly be?' wailed Miss Tuppence, beginning to sound slightly tearful.

'Who is it we're looking for again?' asked a girl called Jade.

'Well, Jack, of course!' said Miss Tuppence, looking behind the whiteboard for the fifth time.

'But he's sitting right here, Miss,' said Jade, pointing at Jack.

Miss Tuppence stopped dead in her tracks and turned to look at him.



'Jack!' she shrieked. 'Where on earth have you been?'

Jack didn't say anything. He just looked at her and grinned. Jack wasn't very confident about talking to people. He mostly got by with lots of nods and smiles.

'Maybe you just didn't notice him because he's so small?' said Jade.

All the other children laughed.

Miss Tuppence looked at her class and then at Jack. She was sure he hadn't been there a few minutes ago, but now he definitely was, and it looked for all the world as if he'd been sitting there the whole afternoon. She wondered if she was actually going mad.

'Well . . . how much have you written?' she asked.

Jack showed her his work. All he'd written was:

