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opening extract from

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# THE FLYING FEELING

by

Rose Casson

Class 4

# The Flying Feeling

Today I fell asleep in class. School had hardly begun (it was Literacy Hour). Miss Farley, my class teacher, touched me on my shoulder to wake me up.

'NO, NO,' I shouted very loudly, and fell on the floor and crawled under the table to escape.

Then I realised where I was, so I came out and sat down again as quietly as I could. I hoped that if I was quick and quiet enough Miss Farley almost would not notice I had done anything unusual. But she did.

Miss Farley said, 'Rose, is there anything wrong? Here at school? Or at home, perhaps?'

I could tell by the way she looked at me that she had not forgotten about yesterday.

# Why I Fell Asleep In Class
# A Long Thought
# By Rose Casson
# Class 4
# (Part 1)

Miss Farley has a big cheek asking me if there is anything wrong like that. In front of everyone. How would she like it if I did it to her? On one of those days when she comes in with little eyes and no lipstick and snaps, 'Right Class 4, we will separate these groups of tables into lines, since you cannot seem to behave as you are! Rose Casson, what is so interesting out of that window?' (Sky.) 'Also, Rose, since when have tie-dyed T-shirts been school uniform, may I ask? And before you do anything, go to the office and take out that earring and ask them for a recycled envelope to put it in, please.'

On those days, do I ask, 'Miss Farley, is there anything wrong at home? Or at school, perhaps?'

No.

Luckily, she has not noticed my earring today. It is a gold hoop with dangling red crystals on gold links. My sister Saffron gave it to me this morning.

There is a clean patch on the carpet in the Reading Corner where one of the carpet tiles has been shampooed. So nobody in the class can forget about yesterday either.

Also Ghost Club has been banned.

# Ghost Club

On wet lunch breaks at our school you can either go to the hall and play, or stay in your classroom and be as quiet as mice. (If mice are like hamsters, they are not very quiet.) That is when we do Ghost Club – Kiran (who used to be my best friend) and me and some of the others.

For Ghost Club we turn off the lights and pull down the blinds as far as they will go and sit in a circle on the floor, on the carpet tiles in the Reading Corner. Then we very, very quietly, very quietly, really quietly take turns to tell ghost stories.

Yesterday was a rainy day, and so we did Ghost Club. First Molly told us about her grandad whose false teeth slid out when he fell asleep watching football.

'I don't think that sounds very scary,' I said.

'Yes, well, OK, it is only slightly scary,' agreed Molly, 'but admit it is totally gross!'

I admitted this at once, and then I told about the strange scratchy noises in our house at night which cannot be my sister Caddy's escaped hamsters because they would have died ages ago. According to the Hamster Book.

Everyone at Ghost Club said their houses made strange noises at night too, which their mothers told them were caused by Central Heating. I explained that we did not have Central Heating.

Kiran hummed like she was bored and picked at a carpet tile and said, 'All houses creak a bit and you can get false-tooth glue to keep them in, they advertise it on daytime TV when they know old people are watching. You know my cousin? No, carry on talking about Central Heating! Maybe I shouldn't tell you!'

So of course we made her tell us.

Kiran's stories are the worst because they are true. They are all about people in her family.

I used to think, Thank goodness I am not related to Kiran. If I was related to Kiran I would not feel safe.

Terrible things happen all the time to that family.

'Which cousin?' we asked Kiran, because her family (as well as being unsafe) is enormous.

'My cousin who doesn't go to this school with the pink jacket,' Kiran told us. 'You know that one?'

'No,' we said.

'Well, you know my auntie who came on visitors' day who had to have all the windows opened very quickly?'

'Yes,' we said.

'That's her mother. She bought my cousin the pink jacket. From the market stall next to the mobile ear-piercing van. And anyway, you know that place by the park near Rose's house where no one is allowed to go?'

'No,' we said.

'Yes you do, it is all fenced in and a notice says: DANGER. HIGH VOLTAGE.'

'It is an electricity substation,' said Molly, who always knows stuff like that because she goes on Intelligent Quality Time Walks with her mother. (I don't.)

'Well,' continued Kiran very quickly, before Molly could start telling us about substations, 'my cousin with the pink jacket was walking past that place and it was winter and it was nearly dark and you know how if you hold your hand up very close to your face and it is nearly dark, all the fingers look thick and black and not real?'

We said no, and then we tried it with our own hands sitting in the nearly-darkness of the Reading Corner, and then we said, 'Oh yes.'

'A hand like that but much bigger,' said Kiran. She is speaking very quietly indeed now, like she does not

really want us to hear. 'Over her shoulder. And no footprints. No sound of footprints. And not quite touching her. My cousin. And the fingers very thick and dark like a thick dark leather glove. Not smooth leather. Reaching over her shoulder, just at that place by the park where you are not allowed to go. She saw it out of the corner of her eye.'

Nobody said anything.

'She just caught sight of it for a moment. The first time.'

You could hear the clock and the sound of people being told off in the hall and you could hear us breathing.

'But she saw it for longer the next time.'

'Did she look around?' whispered Molly.

'Only once.'

'What did she see?'

'She won't tell me.'

'Ki … raaan!' we wailed.

'So now she won't wear her pink jacket and my auntie says it is a waste because it was nearly new and she says I can have it and wear it with a scarf. Because they won't wash off; they are burnt on.'

'*WHAT* ARE BURNT ON?' shouted several people.

'The fingermarks,' said Kiran, sounding very

surprised that we did not know. 'The thick burnt-brown fingermarks on the shoulder of the jacket.'

We didn't say anything.

'I'm not having that revolting jacket,' said Kiran.

Still nobody said anything. We were thinking. We knew the place by the park where you are not allowed to go. We knew Kiran's auntie who bought the jacket, and we knew the market stall it came from. We even knew the mobile ear-piercing van; my sister Saffron had her nose pierced there. When I thought about it, I thought I even knew Kiran's cousin who doesn't go to this school. And I knew, exactly as if I had seen them, what the thick dark fingermarks looked like scorched on to the shoulder of that pink jacket.

Someone grabbed my shoulder very hard and shouted, 'ROSE'S TURN!'

I jumped so badly I felt sick and dizzy, and I shouted, 'Not me!' without even meaning to shout, but I don't think it sounded very loud. Everyone was laughing so much.

Kiran said, 'I am sorry Rose, I am sorry Rose, I am sorry Rose!' but I will never forgive her.

If I had a choice between dying and wetting myself in class, I would choose dying.