Hi . . . About Me . . .

MY NAME IS MIA. I'M ten years old and I have a secret.

Honestly, I'm a completely ordinary child, just like you, but I have a special skill that makes me quite different to other people. Are you ready?

I can speak to inanimate objects. What's an inanimate object? It's something that is

not living, like a book, or a rock, or a chair. A candle or a table or a bed or a wall. A pillow or a football. A pencil or a scooter. A *thing*. You get the idea?

Everybody can speak to inanimate objects, though, so that's not the weird part. The odd thing is that objects *speak to me*. All objects have different voices and personalities. Some sound like boys and girls, some like men or women. Sometimes they're happy, sometimes they're sad, sometimes they're scared, or excited.

At first I was very confused when it happened, but now I'm used to it. I see it as a skill. Some people are good at singing or playing football, or drawing, or doing cartwheels. Me? My talent is in hearing objects speak.

If you want to know what it's like for me to have conversations with things like buckets and spades, tables and chairs, stinky socks and bicycles, and if you're wondering what I can possibly do with this skill, then keep reading . . .





TODAY IS A BIG DAY.

A very big day.

Today I'm moving into a new foster home with my new foster mother, Detective Lucy. Detective isn't her first name. She's actually a real-life detective who solves crimes.

What's a foster home, Mia? I hear you ask. Fostering is when someone welcomes you into

their house if you can't live with your birth parents. It can be for a short time or a long time.

I've known Detective Lucy for a while because she looks out for me. The day I learnt that she would be fostering me was the happiest day of my life. Or at least I thought it was until I woke up this morning. Now I think actually moving in with Detective Lucy is the happiest day of my life. That's the thing about Detective Lucy – being with her makes every new day even better than the last one.

Since I can't live with my birth parents, I've been in a few different foster homes, but I've never really felt like I fit in. In one house I lived in, I told a boy that I could hear objects talking, and he told all the other kids and they teased

me so much I learned to never tell anybody ever again.

Because I'm afraid that my secret will spread, and to make sure the secret doesn't slip out by mistake, I don't talk to people very much, and I don't have friends.

I'm very shy, and sometimes I can't say anything at all, but when I'm with my objects, I can't stop talking!

When I said I don't have any friends, I meant I don't have any *people* friends. All of my friends are objects. I understand objects and they understand me. They don't think I'm weird for being able to hear them.

My best object friends are my mum's collection of hats. Whenever I remember her,

I picture her wearing a hat. I keep them safe in my backpack and I take them out of my bag when no one is looking, to hold them, wear them and smell them. They make me feel like I'm close to her. The hats are in my backpack right now, excited about the big move.



Backpack and I have been to a lot of places together, and he's my oldest and dearest friend. Backpack thinks of himself as my fiercest protector and guardian of all my precious things.

'Where to now?' Backpack asks as we

sit in Detective Lucy's car. 'Are we under arrest?'

'It's going to be okay,' I whisper.

Detective Lucy looks at me in the rearview mirror and smiles.

She thinks I'm talking to myself.

Neither me nor Backpack speaks for the rest of the journey. We're both a little bit nervous.

'Okay, let's do this,' Detective Lucy says, turning the key in the front door of her house and pushing it open.

Even though I've known Detective Lucy for a long time, I've never been in her house before. It smells of her. Like peaches and vanilla.

We walk into a living room, with a TV and a

really cosy green couch with squishy cushions. There is a pair of glasses on a crossword puzzle book on a coffee table. A door leads to a kitchen, and I see a big sliding door that opens out into a small garden. There are stairs in the living room.

I must be looking up because Detective Lucy says, ‘Do you want to go and see your bedroom?’

I nod excitedly because sometimes I don’t say words when they’re all in my head and won’t come out. I’m so excited, I run up the stairs.

‘It’s the bedroom on your right at the top of the stairs,’ Detective Lucy says, following me.

I push the door open and I’m greeted by lilac paradise.

I turn to Detective Lucy in shock with my mouth wide open.

‘That’s why I asked you what your favourite colour is,’ she says, grinning.

The room is small and perfect.

It has a cabin bed – a single bed on top and a desk beneath.

‘You can draw the curtain across, so you can have a secret private space,’ she says, pulling the curtain across the desk area beneath the bed. ‘I would have loved one of these when I was a child.’

I like this secret space because now I have a place to huddle when I’m talking to my objects.

The best thing of all about the room?

There’s a hat stand in the corner. Detective

Lucy remembered how much I treasure my mum's hats. To others they just look like dusty old hats, but to me they're like precious jewels.

I'm so happy I think I could cry.

'Is everything okay?' Detective Lucy asks, looking at me worriedly.

She's nervous, I can tell. She's been nervous since the moment I got into her car. But that's okay; so am I. Since I woke this morning, I've felt like butterflies are fluttering around my tummy. Nerves are good because they mean you care. I'm nervous because I want this to work, and so does Detective Lucy.

I don't have any words for her. But that's okay too sometimes. Actions speak louder than

words. I run to her and hug her so tightly.

'Yep,' Backpack says, 'I think we're going to be very happy here.'