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Opening extract from

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang 3: Over the Moon

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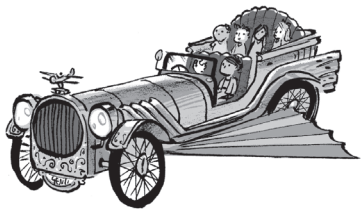

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Most cars are just cars. Four wheels. An engine. Some seats. They take you to work or to school or on holiday. They bring you home again.

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.’

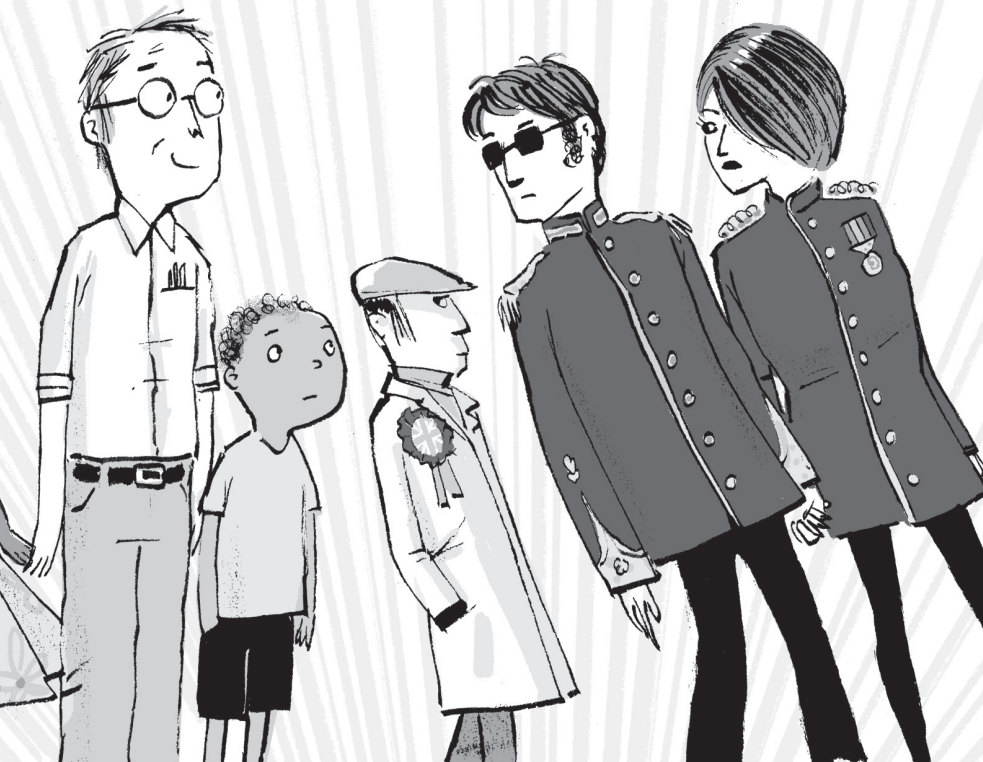
By now they had reached the turnstiles. ‘Tickets please,’ said the man in the kiosk.

‘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 . . .’

‘Psssst.’ 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.’