

# ANIMAL BOY

## Chapter 4

Josh couldn't concentrate at school. He usually enjoyed art class but he just couldn't get any work done. Suddenly, he felt something hit the back of his head. He looked down to see a screwed-up piece of paper lying next to his feet.

Josh turned to see Dave's big, grinning face behind him. Josh knew that Dave had written a nasty message on it but he thought he would play along. Any sort of distraction was welcome – even a mean message.

Josh opened up the note. It read: *HA! Heard you fell off your bike and bumped your sweetcorn head. Did Mummy kiss it better?*

Josh looked up from the note and gave Dave a hard stare. Dave just sat back and laughed.

"Thanks, Dave," Josh said. "I'm fine. Thanks for asking."

"HA! Sweetcorn Head fell off his bike," Dave laughed. Either side of him, his friends began laughing, too. Josh felt himself getting angry.

"Quit it, Dave. Without that helmet I may have split my head open!" snapped Josh.

"Shame," whispered Dave.

"Is everything OK, Josh?" asked the teacher, Miss Chang.

Josh hadn't realised that the whole class was now watching him.

Josh turned back around to face her. "Yes, Miss. Everything's fine." He felt his cheeks reddening and his hands shaking.

Miss Chang looked behind Josh. She could see Dave and his friends giggling. "David. Do we have a problem here?" she asked.

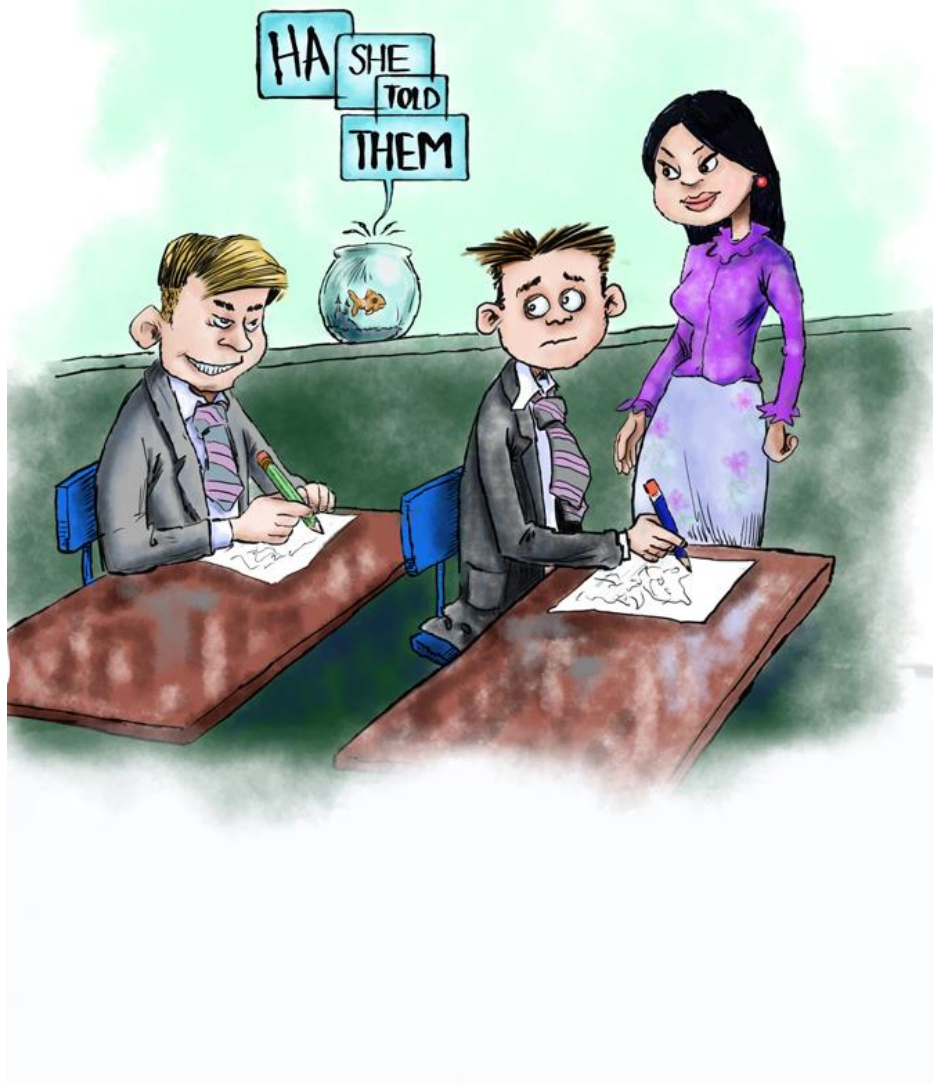
Dave quickly straightened up in his seat. "No, Miss Chang. No trouble here."

"Good," she replied. "I wouldn't want to start dishing out detentions."

"Ha. She told them," came a quiet voice from the corner of the classroom.

Josh was sure Miss Chang would go mad at that comment but she didn't say anything. In fact, no one in the class seemed to react to it.

Josh looked hard at the corner of the room from where he thought the voice had come. He could only see the lonely class goldfish swimming around in its bowl. "Oh no," he whispered. "Not again."



Miss Chang looked at him again. “Sorry, what was that, Josh?”

He flicked back from the bowl to her. “Nothing, Miss. Sorry. I thought I heard something.”

The school bell rang for the end of the day and everyone sprung from their seats and headed for the classroom door. Everyone but Josh. He stayed till everyone had left the room.

As soon as he knew he was alone, he slowly made his way over to the fishbowl. It was surrounded by awful paintings of goldfish and a few attempts at clay sculptures.

He could see the small goldfish pecking at the tiny stones at the bottom of the bowl. It was facing away from him as he approached. The fishbowl looked a bit sad; it contained only a single plant and a Disney princess castle in the middle.

Josh studied the goldfish closely. “Hey. Can you hear me in there?” he asked the fish.

The fish ignored him, still picking at the little stones.

Josh moved closer to the bowl. “Hello,” he said as he tapped the bowl.

The fish stopped and turned. “HEY! YOU!” it shouted. “Stop that banging! I am trying to clean up in here and that noise isn’t helping!”



“Arghh!” Josh screamed.

He made a sprint for the door and banged his knee on a table. Though the pain was intense, he managed to drag himself through the door, opening it with an outstretched hand. He crawled along the corridor before he finally picked himself up and legged it towards the school exit.

His day *had* just got a whole lot weirder.