

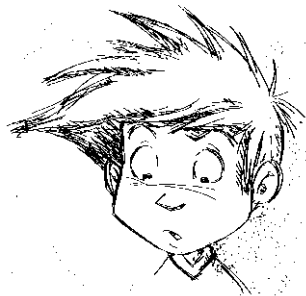
CHAPTER 1

THEY'RE LATE

'Alfie! Stop looking out of the window,' said Mrs Green crossly. 'Sit down and finish your breakfast. It's almost time for school.'

'But where are the trucks, Mam?' Alfie asked. 'Why hasn't the chocolate arrived?'

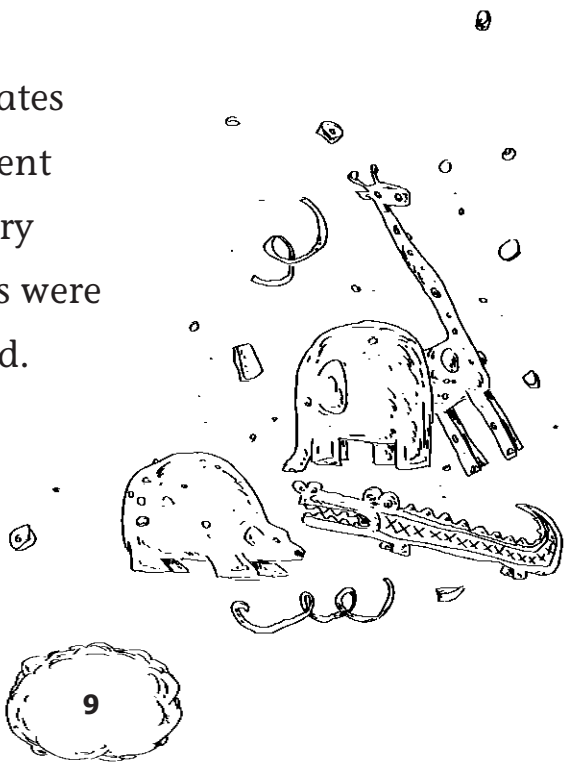
Every year Budsville held a special fair in memory of Harry 'Chockie' Chaplin



who was born on Budsville Avenue.

Harry's chocolate factory was the most famous in the world, and every year two HUGE trucks would arrive with boxes and boxes of chocolates for the fair.

The chocolates came in different shapes for every fair; last year's were animal-shaped.



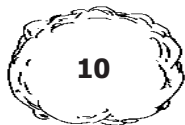
It was Alfie's job to arrange the chocolates on the stalls set up on the green beside his house.

'They're late,' said Alfie.

'Don't worry, Alfie,' said his mother. 'I'm sure the chocolate will be here when you get home from school.'

But when Alfie and his pal Fitzer raced back from school there were no trucks. And there were no boxes of chocolates.

Lucy was standing at the front door, with a piece of paper in her hand.



‘This came for you,’ said Lucy as she handed it to Alfie.

Alfie noticed that the edges of the paper were nibbled and damp.

‘Mammy says it’s really bad news. So I tried to get Posh and Becks to eat it!’ Lucy explained.



‘Oh no!’ Alfie gasped as he read the note. ‘This is awful.’



‘What does it say?’ Fitzer asked anxiously.

‘The chocolate fair is cancelled,’ Alfie said sadly. ‘There was a flood at Mr Chaplin’s factory and all the chocolates for the fair were ruined.’

Fitzer's face fell. 'I was really looking forward to it,' he said. 'I LOVE Chockie's chocolates, especially the white chocolate polar bears from last year. They were my favourite.'

Just then, Mrs Butler from next door appeared.

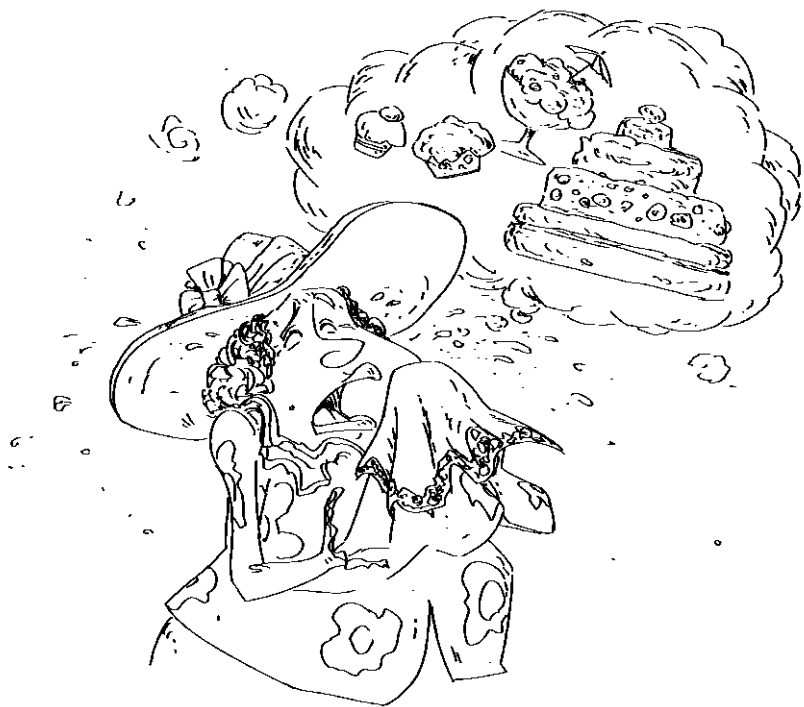
'This came through the letterbox,' she said. 'Is it true, Alfie? Will there be no fair this year?'

'I'm afraid so, Mrs Butler.'

Poor Mrs Butler! Her face got very old and wrinkly all of a sudden, and a small tear ran down her cheek.



Now she would have no Chockie's chocolates to make her famous chocolate cake and the special sauce for her strawberry ice-cream.



As she walked back to her house, Alfie could see her sniffing into her handkerchief.

It's not FAIR, he thought. Then he made up his mind.

'I'm going to do something about it!' he said out loud.

'But what can you do?' asked Fitzer.

'I don't know yet,' Alfie said, 'but just you wait and see.'

