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Introduction

THE STORIES in this collection are for sharing, enjoying and talking about. If there's one that really works for you and your children, look for more books by the same author and even for more stories about the same character. Stories, of course, cross age groups but the ones in this book have all been tried out and enjoyed by five-year-olds.

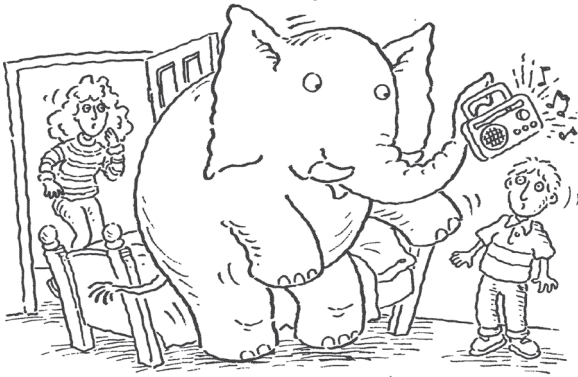
Reading with young children is a source of great pleasure and delight and this early reading helps to develop the imagination and an ear for language. Reading time is not always a quiet time as children want to talk, ask questions and become really involved in the story. Sometimes they will listen in silent wonder for a time, but

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generally children will want to share the experience of the story with you. As they begin to recognize the stories they will join in even more – children love the familiar so don't be surprised to be reading the same story again and again.

The stories in this book don't take long to read and are ideal for those spare ten minutes at any time of the day. Make reading a part of every day and enjoy the experience with your children.

Wendy Cooling



Eric's Elephant

JOHN GATEHOUSE

ERIC HAD always wanted a pet of his own. A *cat*, Eric thought, as he wandered around the Church Jumble Sale. Or a *hamster*. Or a *rabbit would be nice*.

He bought a raffle ticket from the man behind the White Elephant stall.

Eric hoped he would win something. He had never won anything before. But today he did.

‘You win first prize!’ cried the man behind the stall.

He handed Eric a rope. Tied to the other end was an honest-to-goodness, real, live, white elephant.

‘I can’t take an elephant home!’ said Eric. ‘My mum will go bonkers!’

‘You won her. She’s all yours now,’ the man said.

Eric led his elephant out of the church grounds and down the street. Passers-by stared in surprise as they went along.

‘I’ve always wanted a pet,’ Eric said. ‘But I’m not quite sure you were what I had in mind.’

Eric’s elephant didn’t answer.

She was too busy munching through the box of bananas standing outside Mr Sprout’s vegetable shop.

‘Hey! Those bananas cost money!’ shouted Mr Sprout crossly. ‘Wait until I tell your mum, Eric!’

‘Did you have to do that?’ sighed Eric gloomily, leading his elephant away. ‘Mum will go twice as bonkers when she hears about this.’

Eric’s elephant didn’t answer.

She had stopped to eat up Mrs Groggins’s prize flower patch.

Eric's Elephant

Then she sat down for a rest on PC Crumble's garden fence. It creaked and groaned and slowly fell apart.

Eric wondered how many times in one day his mum could go bonkers.

When they reached home, Eric could hear his mum in the kitchen. She was busy trying to mend the vacuum cleaner. Eric didn't think she sounded in a very good mood.

'SSSSSSSSSH!' Eric whispered to his elephant. 'I don't think I'll show you to Mum just now.'

Eric pushed his elephant through the front door. It was a tight squeeze.

Just as Eric was about to give up trying, POP!, his elephant fell into the hall.

Eric led his elephant up the stairs. With another squeeze he pushed her into his bedroom.

'Perhaps I could hide you under my bed,' said Eric.

Eric's elephant didn't answer. She was too busy dancing to the music coming from Eric's radio.

'ERIC! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?' shouted his mum. 'It sounds like there's a herd of elephants up there!'

'No, there isn't,' said Eric. 'There's only one.'