

Chapter One

You wouldn't want to meet Harriet the Horrible. Everybody thought that Harriet was a lovely little girl. She was a kind of teacher's pet. She was clever, hard working and very polite.

Harry's metamorphosis started one day when her mum told her that they were going to have to move house. This also meant that Harry would have to move school. She was very settled where she was and didn't much like the idea of moving at all.

Harry's teacher, Miss Short, was upset to find out that she was leaving school, and was further upset to find out that she was leaving that very day. Her teacher asked her why she was leaving in such a hurry, but Harry couldn't answer. Harry had asked her mum, but her mum wouldn't give a reason. She just said that they had to leave and that they had to leave straight away and that was that.

Miss Short was so upset that she decided to pay a visit to Harry's mum. She wanted to explain that Harry was very settled where she was and that a sudden change, like moving

house and school, would upset her and that it could have a bad effect on her schoolwork.

She was quite surprised when she arrived at the house where Harry lived with her mum. In the front garden there was a sink, a broken down car, some old wet newspapers and some black bags of rubbish that had obviously been torn apart by local dogs. Harry's teacher peered through the window and she could see that there was just as much rubbish in the house as there was in the garden. This was not at all how she had expected Harry's house to be. Harry was such a well turned-out little girl. Her school uniform was always neatly pressed and her schoolwork was beautiful.

Miss Short knocked and waited but there was no reply. Eventually, a window opened

from upstairs. It was Harry's mum. She was quite rude to Miss Short.

Although Harry's teacher



tried to explain how important it was for Harry to stay where she was settled, it was no use. Harry's mum said that she had to go and that was that.

Miss Short felt ever so sorry for Harry and when she returned to school, she told her what had happened. Harry was mortified. She told her teacher that she never should have done that without asking. Harry stamped her foot and folded her arms. Her teacher was rather surprised to see this as she had never seen Harry behave in such a way before.

Harry's teacher gave her a letter. In it, she had written her address and her phone number. She told Harry to get in touch with her if she ever wanted a chat. Harry took the letter but she was very unhappy. She didn't smile and she didn't even say goodbye properly.

Later that day, Harry gathered her favourite things together and left in a taxi for the train station. She quizzed her mum, asking her why they had to leave in such a hurry, but her mum still wouldn't say. She just said that they had to leave and that was that.

Harry's new flat was an upstairs part of a Victorian house. It wasn't as big as their old house, but it did have a proper garden with a fence. When they arrived, Harry had to go to the garage on the corner and buy some tea and milk. Then, she had to make the tea, whilst her mum lay on the settee and had a rest. Harry was used to that kind of thing. It was the way it had been ever since she could remember.

Harry's new school was all right, but it wasn't the same as being with her old friends and her old teacher. Her new teacher was a little man with bony fingers and glasses that were too big for his head. He kept pointing at Harry and looking at her over his glasses. She didn't like him at all.

Harry didn't like the children in the new class either. They were nasty to her and they called her names. They teased her about her accent because it was different to theirs. They had a gang and the gang members naturally picked on anyone who wasn't in their gang. Harry had heard that the gang met down by the river after school and one of their favourite tricks was to push children into it. Harry had to

walk a long way home just to avoid them. Harry was more concerned than most children about keeping her uniform neat and tidy because she did all of her own washing and ironing whilst her mum lay on the settee, and so she certainly wanted to avoid being pushed in the water.

The one good thing about their new home was that it was near the seaside. In fact, it was a bit like being on holiday at first. Harry and her mum used to go and lie on the beach at weekends. The other people who lived there didn't bother much. They just took the beach for granted.

Harry and her mum were wandering round the shops one day when Harry spotted something that caught her eye. It was a packet of itching powder. Harry stroked her chin. A wonderfully wicked plan came into her mind.

There was a boy at school who was the leader of the gang. His name was Jake, and he bullied Harry and got other children to bully her as well. Harry bought the itching powder and bided her time until the moment was right for revenge.

Their teacher was called Mr Blowitt. The children called him 'Old Snot Nose' behind his back. Mr Blowitt made the children do lots of running in PE lessons. He liked to get the children really tired out. It was during a PE lesson that Harry decided to get her own back on Jake. Before the lesson, Harry sneaked into the class and poured the itching powder into his shorts. She sprinkled some on his vest and in his trainers. She stroked her chin again. It was time for her wonderfully wicked plan.

When the children discovered what she had done to Jake, he would be the laughing stock of the class. In fact, he would be the laughing stock of the whole school. Harry would become the most popular girl in the school, with everyone except Jake, and she didn't care about him anyway.

Mr Blowitt got all the children to do stretches and to jump up and down at the start of the lesson. Harry became a little disappointed. It didn't look as though her plan was going to work. Soon though, a delicious smile spread across her face as the itching powder began to do its work. The class bully started rolling his

shoulders and scratching his neck. Then he started scratching his back and pulling the most peculiar faces. Mr Blowitt told him to stand still, but he couldn't. He thought he felt something tickling in his sock, so he started scratching his foot. Mr Blowitt asked him if he had ants in his pants. All the other children started laughing. Then it occurred to him that he might have ants. So he kicked off his shoes and socks. Mr Blowitt told him to stop it at once. He was making an exhibition of himself. But he couldn't stop. In fact, he got worse. He started jumping up and down and screaming, "Help! Help!" he said, "I've got ants in my pants. Help! Help!" He jumped up and down and hopped around the room. He pulled his vest off and shouted some more.

"Help! Somebody help me. I've got ants in my pants! Help! Help! Somebody help!"

Harry loved it. Everybody was pointing at Jake and laughing. Then he started scratching his bum.

"Oh no!" he said, "I've got ants and they're in *my* pants!"

Then he pulled his shorts off and threw them in the air. The children were all falling about laughing at him. Just then, the head teacher walked in and asked what all the commotion was about. When she saw Jake dancing in his underpants, her eyes nearly popped out of her head.

“What on earth is going on?” she asked. She heard a voice running off into the distance shouting, “Help! Help! My bum’s on fire.”

He ran out of the hall and into the playground. All of the children ran to the window to look at him. He ran over to the pond and sat in it.

“Ahhh!” he said, “That feels better!”

Harry told all of the children what she had done and they gave her three cheers. She was right. It did make her popular. She stroked her chin again. She liked being popular and she liked getting equal. She went home contented that day.



Nice little Harriet had been left behind
and Harriet the Horrible had been born!

Chapter Two

Harry liked her new status. She no longer had to walk the long way home. She had earned the respect of the school gang. Nobody would think of throwing her into the river now, because she was too well liked.

One evening when Harry was walking home from school she was asked if she wanted to join the gang. Harry had never been in a gang before, but then, she had never actually been asked to join a gang before. She thought it over for a while and soon decided that she would join their gang. It was the kind of thing that the old Harriet would never have done, but it was just the kind of thing that Harriet the Horrible would do.

The next day Harry walked down by the river and told them that she would join their gang. It was then that they told her about the initiation ceremony. Before she would be allowed to join, she would have to throw a younger child into the river. They warned her, though, that the teachers and the parents at the school became very angry when a young child

was thrown in the river. Harry said that she would have to think about it.

That night, when she was cooking tea, Harry began to think about the initiation ceremony. She didn't mind picking on that bully, Jake. He had picked on enough people in his time, so he deserved it. She didn't like the idea of picking on younger kids, though. She decided to think of a wonderfully wicked plan so that she could get out of the initiation ceremony and still join the gang.

At Harry's new school, most of the children wore school uniform. Sometimes though, children turned up in ordinary clothes and nothing much was said to them. The next day, Harry wore an old tracksuit to school. When she arrived at the river on the way home, the children asked her if she was going to do the initiation ceremony. She told them she was going to do something even better. She said that she was going to throw herself in and have a good old splash about in the water. The kids in the gang didn't believe her. They told her that the river was out of bounds and that nobody was allowed to go near it, let alone in it. Harry said

that she would do it anyway if she could join the gang. The gang got into a huddle and quickly agreed. Without any more ado, Harry took a run and jumped with a mighty splash into the water. Then she opened up her school bag and took out a piece of paper. She called out to the kids on the side, “This is what I think of school rules and of Old Snot Nose.” Then she blew a big raspberry into the paper and threw it into the water. All of the children on the side cheered and then they started chanting her name.

“Harry! Harry! Harry!”

One by one, Harry took other pieces of paper out of her bag. She screwed them up and threw them into the water. The children gave a bigger cheer with every piece she threw. Then she tipped her bag upside down and emptied the whole bag of papers into the water. The children roared her on. Harry jumped up and down and splashed about in the water. Then one of the boys joined her, then another, and then another. Then one of the girls jumped in and started splashing about. Soon the whole gang was in the water. They were wringing out their school jumpers and throwing their homework away.

The following morning was a special one at their school. There were about twenty irate parents outside the Head Teacher's office. They could be heard shouting from all the way down the corridor.

"My child has got a dreadful cold," said one.

"My child was wet through. We could wring her knickers out when she got home!" yelled another.

"All of my child's homework is floating down the river," shouted yet another angry parent.

They were all asking the poor Head Teacher what she was going to do about it. She told them all how sorry she was and how nothing like that had ever happened in all her years of experience.

"Oh dear me," she said. "What am I going to do? I don't know what to do. What can I do?"

Harry listened from around the corner. She was stroking her chin. She loved it when a plan worked quite as well as this.

Harry decided that this was definitely the school for her. She was happy here. The first

thing that Harry did when she joined the gang was to change the initiation ceremony. In future, anybody who wanted to join would have to throw an older child into the water, and it had to be someone who had done something against a gang member. Harry liked this initiation ceremony much better.

One day, shortly after the river incident, Harry was settling down for a nice daydream during a maths lesson when her mum burst into the classroom. She called out to Mr Blowitt,

“Sorry, Mr Snot Nose, but I need to take Harriet out of school.”

All of the children laughed. Harry told her that this was not his real name, but she only said,

“Well, I’m sorry, Mr Whatsyourname, but I’ve still got to take Harriet out of your school.”

Harry asked what the matter was and her mum said they were leaving again and that was that. Harry’s mum had a rucksack on her back that was stuffed with clothes. She had two black bin liners and a holdall that had clothes and everything she could carry in it.

Harry asked if she could go home and make sure that she had everything that she needed, but her mum said that she couldn't.

Again, Harry asked her mum why they were leaving in such a hurry but her mum said that they just were and that was that.

Mr Blowitt said that he must object. He said that this was all very irregular. Harry's mum said that he could object all he wanted but they were still going.

Harry said goodbye to her friends and they each hugged her, one by one. They were really sorry to see her go. Nobody had been as much fun as she had. Even Jake shook her hand. They had become friendly since Harry had taught him the error of his ways.

Harry and her mum caught a bus, then a coach, and then another bus. Their new flat was in a high-rise block. The lifts didn't work and there was graffiti everywhere. There seemed to be more children running about than could possibly fit in all of the flats. There was a peculiar smell on the stairs as well.

On Harry's floor there was a family with more than its fair share of children. There

seemed to be a never-ending supply of children with dirty faces walking in and out of that flat. Some of them called her names and teased her a bit. Harry just smiled to herself and stroked her chin. She thought that they would be making a mistake if they were to make an enemy of Harriet the Horrible. Harry unpacked the clothes and made a cup of tea. She didn't like being on the run, but at least she was more used to it now.

That night, she lay in bed and had a good long read of her book. From time to time, she stopped reading and just lay with her hands behind her head, wondering what her new school would be like.