

## CHAPTER THREE



By now it was quite late. The rush-hour was over. The shops were shut. All was quiet. I'll wait, thought Max, and then when a car or lorry comes along I'll cross in front of it.

Soon he saw something coming. It was a lorry. He was halfway across when he suddenly realized that the lorry hadn't slowed up at all and was almost on top of him, blinding him with its brilliant lights, deafening him with its thunderous roar. It was not going to stop! Lorries only stopped for people – not hedgehogs!

The lorry driver, who, until he was almost upon the crossing, had been quite unaware of the tiny pedestrian, did the only possible thing. With no time to brake or swerve, he steered so as to straddle the little animal. Looking back in his wing-mirror, he saw that it was continuing on its way unhurt, and he grinned and drove on into the night.

The sheer horror of this great monster passing above with its huge wheels on either side of him threw Max into a blind panic, and he made for the end of the crossing as fast as his legs would carry him. He did not see the cyclist silently pedalling along close to the kerb and the cyclist did not see him until the last moment. Feverishly the man twisted his handlebars, and the front wheel of the bicycle, suddenly wrenched round, caught Max on the rump and catapulted him head first into the face of the kerbstone.



The next thing that Max recalled was crawling painfully under his own front gate. Somehow he had managed to come back over the zebra crossing. He had known nothing of the concern of the cyclist, who had dismounted, peered at what looked like a small dead hedgehog, sighed and pedalled sadly away. He remembered nothing of his journey home, wobbling dazedly along on the now deserted pavement, guided only by his sense of smell. All he knew was that he had an awful headache.



The family had crowded round him on his return, all talking at once.

'Where have you been all this time?' asked Ma.

'Are you all right, son?' asked Pa.

'Did you cross the road?' they both said, and Peony, Pansy and Petunia echoed, 'Did you? Did you? Did you?'

For a while Max did not reply. His thoughts were muddled, and when he did speak, his words were muddled too.

'I got a head on the bump,' he said slowly.



The family looked at one another.

'Something bot me on the hittom,' said Max, 'and then I headed my bang. My ache bads headly.'

'But did you cross the road?' cried his sisters.

'Yes,' said Max wearily. 'I hound where the fumans cross over, but -'

'But the traffic only stops if you're a human?' interrupted Pa.

'Yes,' said Max. '*Not if you're a hodgeheg.*'

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1) What was Max waiting for?

2) What did the driver do when he saw Max?

3) Why did the driver grin?

4) What is a pedestrian?

5) Which words describe the lorry?