

CHAPTER FIVE



What Max had not bargained for, when the bunch of people moved off at the peep-peep-peeping of the little green man, was that another bunch would be coming towards him from the other side of the

street. So that when he was about halfway across, hurrying along at the heels of one crowd, he was suddenly confronted by another. He dodged about in a forest of legs, in great danger of being stepped on. No one seemed to notice his small shape and, indeed, he was kicked by a large foot and rolled backwards.

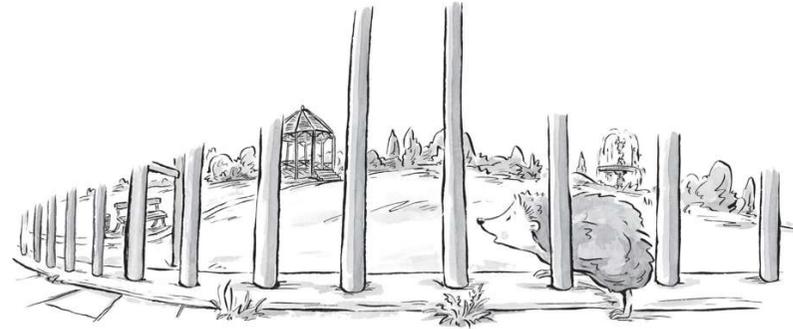


Picking himself up, he looked across and found to his horror that the green man was gone and the red man had reappeared. Frantically, Max ran on as the traffic began to move, and reached the far side just in front of a great wheel that almost brushed his backside. The shock of so narrow an escape made him roll up, and for some time he lay in the gutter

whilst above his head the humans stepped on to or off the pavement and the noisy green man and the silent red man lit up in turn.

After a while there seemed to be fewer people about, and Max uncurled and climbed over the kerb. He turned right and set off in the direction of home. How to re-cross the street was something he had not yet worked out, but in his experience neither striped bits nor red and green men were the answer.

As usual he kept close to the wall at the inner edge of the pavement, a wall that presently gave place to iron railings. These were wide enough apart for even the largest hedgehog to pass between. Max slipped through. In the light of a full moon he could see before him a wide stretch of grass and he ran across it until the noise and stink of the traffic were left behind.



‘Am I where?’ said Max, looking round him. His nose told him of the scent of flowers (in the Ornamental Gardens), his eyes told him of a strange-shaped building (the Bandstand), and his ears told him of the sound of splashing water (as the fountain spouted endlessly in the Lily Pond). Of course! This was the place that Pa had told them all about! This was the Park!



‘Hip, hip, roohay!’ cried Max to the moon, and away he ran.

For the next few hours, he trotted busily about the Park, shoving his snout into everything. Like most children, he was not only nosy but noisy too, and at the sound of his coming the mice scuttled under the Bandstand, the snakes slid away through

the Ornamental Gardens and the frogs plopped into the safe depths of the Lily Pond. Max caught nothing.



At last he began to feel rather tired and to think how nice it would be to go home to bed. But which way was home?



Max considered this, and came to the unhappy conclusion that he was lost. Just then he saw, not far away, a hedgehog crossing the path, a large hedgehog, a Pa-sized hedgehog! What luck! Pa had crossed the street to find him! He ran forward, but when he reached the animal he found it was a

complete stranger.

‘Oh,’ said Max, ‘I peg your bardon. I thought you were a different hodgeheg.’

The stranger looked curiously at him. ‘Are you feeling all right?’ he said.

‘Yes, thanks,’ said Max. ‘Trouble is, I go to want home. But I won’t know the day.’



‘You mean ... you don’t know the way?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, where do you live?’ asked the strange hedgehog.

‘Number 5A.’

‘Indeed? Well now, listen carefully, young fellow. Go up this path – it will take you back to the street – and a little way along you’ll see a strange sort of house that humans use. It’s a tall house, just big enough for one human to stand up in, and it has windows on three sides and it’s bright red. If you cross there, you’ll fetch up right by your own front gate. OK?’

‘KO,’ said Max, ‘and thanks.’

As soon as he was through the Park railings, he saw the tall, red house. He trotted up close to it. It was lit up, and sure enough there was a human inside it. He was holding something to his ear and Max could see that his lips were moving. How odd, thought Max, moving very close now, he’s standing in there talking to himself!

At that instant the man put down the receiver and pushed open the door of the telephone booth, a door designed to clear the pavement by about an inch, the perfect height for giving an inquisitive young hedgehog – for the second time in his short life – a tremendous bang on the head.



Task-please answer the following questions.

1. What did Max not know about the pedestrian crossing?
2. What words did Max use to express his excitement at being in the Park? What did he mean to say?
3. How did Max find his way back from the Park?
4. Look at the way Max describes a telephone box. Imagine that you are a hedgehog. Describe what a post-box would look like. Remember – you don't know that it's called a post-box!*