



There was a time when Felicity Frobisher could not have told a Three-Headed Aldebaran Dust Devil from a newly wedded Capellan toast weevil. But that all changed the morning she awoke to see a patch of her flowery bedroom wallpaper wavering like a mirage on a hot summer's day.

Her first thought was that she had strained her eyes by watching too much

TV the night before. But, when she put on her glasses, the wavery patch did not go away. On the contrary, it remained exactly where it was, hovering about halfway between the floor and the ceiling, about the size and shape of a dustbin lid.

Curious rather than concerned, Felicity pushed back her covers and stepped out of bed. However, the tips of her toes had hardly touched the carpet when the wavery patch stopped wavering. *Thank goodness for that*, she thought, relieved.

But her relief was short-lived.

Though the wavery patch had stopped wavering, it had not, as Felicity fully expected, changed back into an ordinary, well-behaved piece of bedroom wallpaper. Far from it. It had

transformed itself into the mouth of a long black tunnel. A long black tunnel, what's more, with stars twinkling at the far end!

Now, nobody expects a long black tunnel to open up in their bedroom wall – especially one filled with stars. But this, as it turned out, was just the first of many surprising things that the day had in store for Felicity Frobisher. As she stared, eyes wide, mouth so agape that a squadron of bees could have flown in, looped the loop and flown back out again, there was the most appalling commotion.

It sounded like a badger falling down a chimney. Only badgers don't fall down chimneys. And, if they do, they certainly don't shout 'OoOoOoO!' and 'Whoaoaaaa!' and 'Look owwwwttt!'

In a panic, Felicity threw herself under her bed. Seconds later, peering out from behind a corner of overhanging duvet, she saw something shoot out of the mouth of the tunnel like a champagne cork from a bottle. She couldn't actually tell what it was because it was shrouded in a thick cloud of dust. But whatever it was, it hit the floor with a thud so hard it made the windows rattle.

'Felicity!' came her mother's voice from downstairs. 'What in heaven's name are you doing up there?'



Felicity was too shocked to answer. And, even if she hadn't been too shocked, thick dust had got into her eyes and up her nose. Instead of screaming, which is what she desperately wanted to do, she sneezed violently.

'Bless you!' said a squeaky voice.

*Oh, my goodness!* thought Felicity. *Someone is in my room!* Not only had they burst from a tunnel in her bedroom wall but they were *actually* talking to her! Felicity sneezed again, this time so fiercely it almost blew her glasses off.

'Bless you!' said the squeaky voice again.

*Oh, my goodness,* thought Felicity. *Where is it coming from?* By now, most of the dust in the air had settled on the carpet. But, even though the air was clear again, from her vantage point

under her bed Felicity could still see nobody at all in her bedroom.

“‘Bless you’ *is* the expression used on Earth, isn’t it?’ said the squeaky voice. ‘I mean to say, this *is* Earth?’

‘Er, yes,’ croaked Felicity from under the bed, stunned that she had actually responded to such a ridiculous question – and from someone she couldn’t even see either.

‘Well, thank goodness for that,’ said the squeaky voice. ‘For a moment I thought I’d taken a wrong turning at the Horsehead Nebula. It’s so much harder than you think, you know, making wormholes go where you want them to.’

‘Wormholes?’ said Felicity, still frantically trying to locate the source of the voice. Was it in her wardrobe? Or

hiding behind her chest of drawers? Or hidden in her collection of fluffy animals?

‘Short cuts through space-time, of course,’ the squeaky voice replied, as if it was something absolutely everybody knew. ‘Look, you can come out from under there. I really am quite harmless.’

‘But where are you? I mean, *who* are you?’

‘Flummff,’ said the voice.

‘*Flummff?*’

‘Yes, Flummff. *Who* are you?’

‘Felicity,’ said Felicity.

‘Fel-ic-it-y,’ said Flummff. ‘What a peculiar name.’

‘No more peculiar than Flummff!’ said Felicity. ‘I’ve never heard of such a name.’

‘You obviously haven’t travelled. It’s

the third most popular name where I come from.'

'And where is that?'

'Aldebaran-4.'

'I've never heard of it.'

'You really haven't travelled, have you?' said the voice. 'It's a small, extremely dusty planet orbiting the red giant star Aldebaran. I think you'll find it's in your constellation Taurus, the Bull.'

It was all too much for Felicity. She couldn't have been more confused if she'd been asked one of those maths questions about it taking two men three hours to dig a hole four metres deep. 'But *where* are you? I can't see you at all.'

'Of course you can't. I'm a Three-Headed Aldebaran Dust Devil. And, as everybody knows, Three-Headed



Aldebaran Dust Devils are completely invisible – apart from all the dust they kick up, of course. Look, Felicity, I really am totally harmless. *Please* come out from under there.'

Slowly and cautiously, Felicity emerged from her hiding place. When she saw the terrible state of her bedroom she groaned. Dust coated absolutely everything – the furniture, the windows, her favourite stuffed toys. The carpet looked as if it hadn't been hoovered in the past thousand years. What in the world would her mother say?



As if on cue, a muffled voice came from downstairs. 'Felicity! What *are* you doing up there? You'll be late for school. If you don't come down at once, I'm coming up to get you.'

'Look, I really must go,' said Felicity, snatching up her dust-covered school clothes and heading for the bathroom.

'Ouch!' squeaked Flummff. 'Watch where you're walking!'

'Sorry!' said Felicity, stopping dead in her tracks.

'We're always being trodden on,' said Flummff, resentfully. 'It's the biggest drawback of being an invisible Three-Headed Aldebaran Dust Devil.'

'Yes, I expect it must be,' said Felicity, not very sympathetically. Something suddenly occurred to her. 'You haven't *really* got three heads, have you?' She

would have asked the question before but, what with all the other peculiar things she was seeing and hearing, she had let it pass.

‘Of course we have,’ said Flummff. ‘Why do you think we’re called Three-Headed Aldebaran Dust Devils?’

‘Well, I thought it was just a name . . . I didn’t think you *really* had . . .’ She trailed off, overwhelmed at having to take on board so many impossible things before breakfast. Finally, she said, ‘But why *three* heads?’

‘Isn’t it obvious?’ said Flummff.

‘Not to me.’

‘Three heads are better than one.’

‘Of course. How silly of me,’ said Felicity, unable to keep the sarcasm out of her voice.

‘Felicity!’ came her mother’s voice on

the stairs. 'Have you got someone up there?'

'Look, I have to go,' hissed Felicity. But, before she could get across the room, her bedroom door burst open. The dust, which had only just settled onto the carpet, was whipped once more into a mini-tornado.

'*Felicity!*' screamed Felicity's mother. 'What the devil have you done to your room?'

