

Eric's choice

A half-sucked sweet hit Eric White on the back of the head. It stuck in his hair. Everyone at the back of the bus burst out laughing. Two more sweets came flying Eric's way and he had to duck lower in his seat.

Mr Daniels was sitting at the front of the bus but he was on his feet in an instant. "Simmer down!" he bellowed. "If I've told you lot once, I've told you a thousand times. Best behaviour." The teacher glared at them. "All of you!"

Everyone went quiet. The kids on the back seat stared at their shoes or pretended to look out of the windows. But as soon as the teacher turned away and sat down again, Eric was pelted with a hail of sticky sweets. He pulled his coat over his head and tried to ignore it all.



It was cold and wet outside, the rain was pouring down, and the bus's windows had misted up inside. Eric used his finger to draw a big rectangle in the grey dampness of the window next to him. He made it look like a giant Ace of Spades. He didn't really care about the cold rain outside or the thrown sweets inside. He was feeling far too excited about where they were going.

He'd been looking forward to the trip for ages and had already made his mind up that nothing was going to spoil today.

Mr Daniels had run a competition for the whole class and the winner was allowed to choose where the class went on their end-of-term day trip. It had been a general knowledge quiz and Eric had been as surprised as anyone when he'd won. He'd thought long and hard about where he would choose for everyone to go.

Carter had told him that he should choose to go to a footy match. Carter said that if Eric didn't choose a footy match then he'd get a punch.

Penny Teller had told Eric he should choose to go shopping. She said she might be his girlfriend for a day if he did.

The trouble was, Eric didn't dream of playing for Man U or of owning a posh pair of shoes. And he knew most of the other kids called him a freak or a geek because what he really wanted was to be a magician.

Eric loved magic. Any time there was a magician on the TV, Eric watched it and recorded it. And then watched it again. He collected books that told you how to do card tricks. He'd even named his dog after his all-time favourite magician, Houdini.

