



Mr Benn, Queen' s Guard





It was a hot sunny day on Festive Road. People were mowing their lawns and children were playing soldiers, pretending to march in a parade. Mr Benn was reading a history book about Queen Victoria's Coronation. He wondered what it would be like to be at the palace on such an important and exciting day. Then he thought about the special costume shop that he knew. I think it's time for another adventure, thought Mr Benn, and he set off for the shop.





Inside the shop, as if by magic, the shopkeeper appeared.

"Good morning, Sir," he said. "What would you like to try today?"

"I'd like to try the Queen's Guard outfit," replied Mr Benn.

"Certainly Sir," said the shopkeeper, and pointed to the changing room.

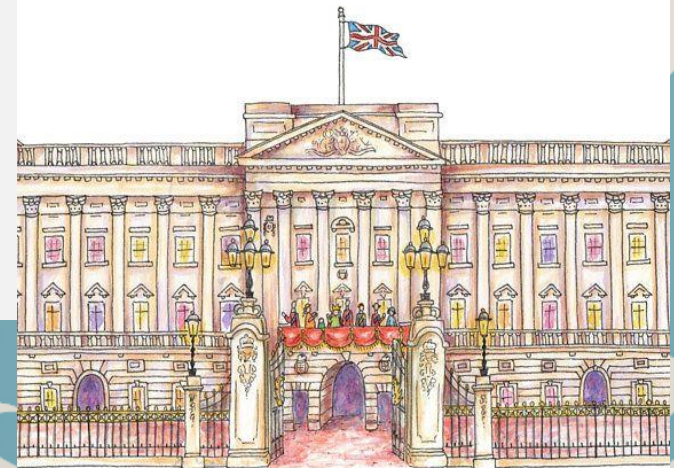
Mr Benn changed into the Guard's outfit. He looked at himself in the mirror and then headed for the door that always lead to adventures.



The Shopkeeper



On the other side of the door, Mr Benn found himself in a huge courtyard, as large as two football fields. At one end of the courtyard was a tall and beautiful building. It had stone statues standing along each wall, and an enormous doorway which towered above Mr Benn's head. "That must be the Royal Palace," thought Mr Benn. The whole courtyard was surrounded by tall, black and gold railings. Beyond the gates, Mr Benn could see that the streets were full of people, cheering and waving flags.





As he looked around the courtyard, Mr Benn noticed that guards wearing the same red coat and bearskin hat as he was, were rushing about, shouting orders to each other and looking very worried.

Mr Benn marched up to one of the guards, who was standing near the gates. "Why is everyone rushing around looking so worried?" he asked.





"Don't you know Sir?" replied the guard. "The Coronation parade to Westminster Abbey, where Victoria will be crowned Queen today, is supposed to start in five minutes, but not one of the horses will stand up!"

The guard explained that they had been practising so much for the great parade, that now all of the guards' horses were exhausted. "Without the horses," said the guard, "none of us guards will be able to ride, and there will be no way to pull the Queen's carriage to the Abbey!"





Mr Benn thought carefully for a moment. "I wonder", said Mr Benn. Do you happen to have any fishing rods at the palace?"

"Why yes Sir" said the guard. "Prince Albert and his friends love to go fishing on the lake, so we have plenty".

"And, I wonder if the palace kitchens have any fresh carrots that they could spare?"

"I shall go and ask right away" replied the guard, and he marched off at top speed.





The guard soon returned with everything that Mr Benn had asked for, and they set about following Mr Benn's instructions. In no time at all, Mr Benn's plan began to work. Each guard sat on his horse and held out a fishing rod, with a carrot dangling off the end. Immediately the horses showed an interest and stood up. Fresh carrots were their absolute favourite treat, so they each began to walk forwards, towards the carrot that was hanging in front of them.





All the guards had to do was to dangle the carrots just far enough in front of the horses, that they could not quite reach them, and so would continue walking forwards. The plan was that as soon as they arrived at the Abbey, the guards would allow their horses to eat the carrots.

Mr Benn heard the Royal band begin to play. He watched as first the guards on their horses, followed by Queen Victoria herself, in her carriage, paraded past him, and off towards the Abbey.

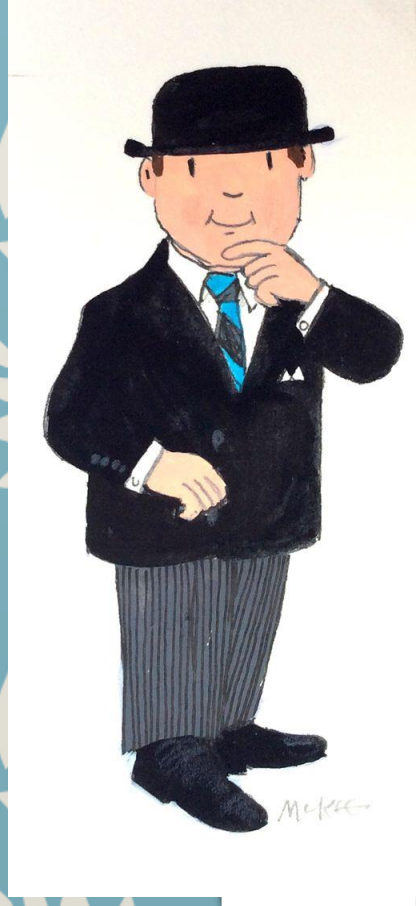




Mr Benn was just thinking to himself how lucky he was to have been at the palace on such an historic day, when suddenly, as if by magic, the shopkeeper appeared. "You seem to be the only person left to guard the palace sir", he said with a smile. "Why not step inside this empty guard's box for a moment". Mr Benn stepped inside, and just as he had expected, he found himself back in the changing room of the shop. He put his own clothes on and handed over the guard outfit.



The Shopkeeper



"Look, there appears to be a medal pinned to the uniform," smiled the shopkeeper. "A medal for great service to Her Majesty Queen Victoria". "Gosh, what an honour", said Mr Benn. "I will keep this safe. It's just what I need to help me remember."



