

CATH HOWE

ALSO AVAILABLE BY
CATH HOWE:

ELLA
on the OUTSIDE
x

Not
MY
Fault
x

HOW
to be
ME



CATH HOWE



To my parents, D and D

C. H.

xxx

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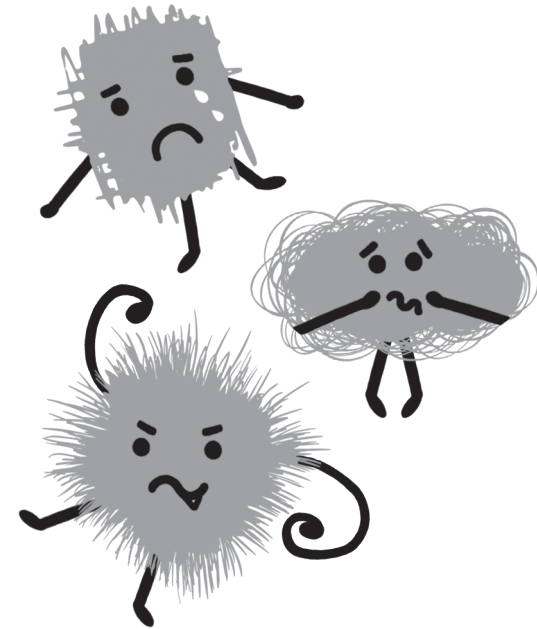
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Chapter 1

Callie

I used to think I knew my friends so well. But now I think friends are mysterious icebergs. There's so much going on under the surface.

Friends are like the family you choose. I read that on a birthday card. I don't need a bigger family, that's for sure; there's six of us. I did sort of choose my friend Ted. We've been together since nursery. We always sat next to each other and sang and played with the bricks. He's small and very quiet and he hates speaking in class. He won't ever answer a question unless the teacher says his name, and we all wait for him to open his mouth. Mostly, he's just quiet. We don't need everyone to be noisy, do we? Ted's like a cat appearing beside you, watching. You wonder what he's thinking.

Recently he's got even quieter. I often sit beside him for a chat on the planter at lunchtime, looking out over the football game, but these days it's mostly me chatting and him listening with that concentrating expression he has.

I wonder if part of the reason he got sadder was because he stopped coming round to my house after school each day. He had been coming to us for years. But this term his mum rang and

cancelled it.

Also, a few weeks ago, a big thing happened to make Ted feel much worse.

We were planning our class assembly and we were told we had to read out a letter pretending to be a soldier writing to his family from the trenches in World War One.

Ted didn't want to do it. Every time we practised, Mr Dunlop shouted at him, "Can't hear you!" and "We'll have no wimping out in my class."

Ted flushed and his voice came out smaller and smaller until it was a whisper. I wanted to help him improve but, even though he lives next door, we don't usually see each other outside of school now. I had loads of netball sessions ready for a big competition too, so I was very busy, but I did try to give Ted some tips during playtimes. We practised being louder and not looking right at the audience but at a place above their heads. But he really didn't get any better.

"I just wish someone else could read it out," he kept saying. So the whole class knew how wound up he was.

On the big day, five minutes before our assembly started, a whole group of kids from my class were

messing about, chasing each other with water bottles because our teacher had gone out of the room. Just as we were about to file into the hall, a boy called Billy Feldon squirted a carton of orange juice down the front of Ted's trousers. Ted didn't notice. Not at the time. I certainly didn't or I would have told him. Especially because of what happened next.

We lined up and walked silently down the stairs into the hall, all the way to the front. The whole school was in there. We all filed along and turned to face the audience. That's when everyone saw the dark wet patch right across the front of Ted's trousers. He looked down at that exact same moment and did a kind of terrible gasping face. So of course we all thought Ted had wet himself, because of being so nervous. It was terrible because Miss James called out, "Ted, love, let's sort you out," and Ted had to come out of the line and walk back out of the hall in front of the whole entire world!

After that, Ted wouldn't talk to anyone. His mum went to see the head teacher and THE TRUTH CAME OUT about Billy and the orange juice because some people had seen what Billy

did. We all discussed whether Billy would get suspended. But I don't think squirting orange juice was bad enough, especially as Billy just kept saying the squirting had been an accident.

My friend Ted seemed different after that. I heard a couple of kids calling him Toilet Ted one break time. School can be mean.