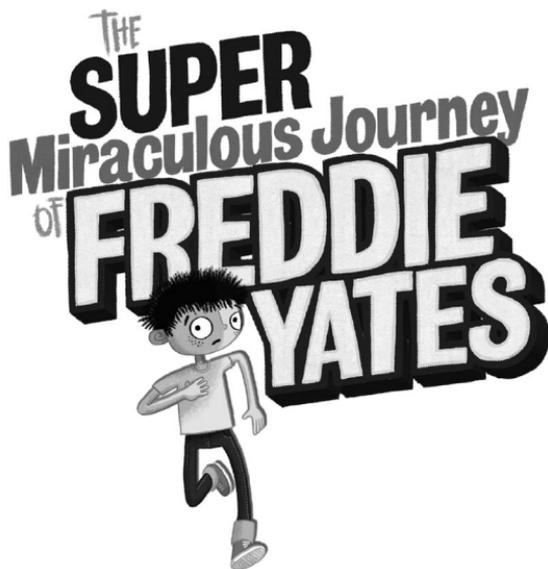


Here's what Freddie's superfans have to say about



**"A rollercoaster ride of absolute fun."
GEORGE**

**"I belly laughed, cried and experienced every emotion in between!"
GRACE**

**"This book was AMAZING."
HARRY**

**"Each time I finished a chapter I didn't want to stop reading because the story was very exciting."
THEA**

**"I loved this book because it is really funny, humorous, thrilling, yet sad at times."
FRASER**

**For William and Douglas, my miracles.
And to Andrew who helped make them.**

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THE
SUPER
Miraculous Journey
OF
**FREDDIE
YATES**



JENNY PEARSON
Illustrated by *Rob Biddulph*



**Miracles might come in all shapes
and sizes, but I'm still not convinced
they are small and furry
like Lady Gaga**

It's funny what people consider to be a miracle. After Dad had his "little accident", Grams said, "Joe, it's a small miracle you didn't kill yourself." It wasn't a small miracle though, it was Eileen from the hairdresser's and nothing about Eileen is small or miraculous. If she hadn't been walking her dog, Lady Gaga, at that exact moment, she wouldn't have seen Dad's post van roll down the hill and shouted at him to move out the way. So, as I said – not a miracle, just good timing. Well goodish timing – he still broke his leg.

Our teacher, Mrs Walker, once said that if she finished the school year without strangling one of us it

would be a miracle. At the end of Year Six all my class were still alive...at least I *think* they were still alive. Dylan Katano disappeared midway through the autumn term, but I heard he went back to Japan. Anyway, my point is that Mrs Walker was wrong. Not strangling one of 6W is not a miracle – even if we were a handful.

In the olden times miracles used to be bigger. Although there's no knowing if those miracles actually happened. Once Charlie, Ben and I tried to share a bag of fish and chips from Marley's. It stretched the very limits of our friendship – and Marley's is known for its big portions. How some bloke called Jesus managed to share three haddock and some whitey slicey with 5,000 people, I do not know. I guess people *wanted* to believe it had happened.

Dad says people like a good story and if it makes them happy then why let the truth get in the way? I suppose that's what happened in Wales this summer. People saw what they wanted to see. And they wanted to see miracles.

If you'd asked me at the beginning of July what I thought about that, I'd have told you that the truth is

important. That facts are important. Back then, facts were just about my favourite thing. Some people collect Pokémon cards, some people collect stickers, I collected facts. See, once you know a fact, it's yours to keep for ever. It can't leave you and no one can take it away. But then, this summer I saw something truly miraculous which made me question everything.

CHAPTER 1

You probably need to know a bit about Ben and Charlie to understand why they got involved in this whole thing

The summer should have gone like this – Ben was supposed to be going to America with his dad and his new stepmum Becky, Charlie was going to some vegan sanctuary with his parents and I was going to be loafing around the house with Dad and Grams (that’s what I call my grandma). But none of this happened.

On the surface you might think Ben had the best deal. But you haven’t met Becky. Even Disney World can’t cancel out Becky. Grams said she’d met women like her before. I don’t know who these women were or where she’d met them, but I got the impression Grams did not approve.

On the last day of Year Six we sang a really shouty version of “One More Step Along The World I Go” in our leavers’ assembly. Then Mrs Walker wished us and our future teachers the best of luck and led us out to the playground to be picked up by our parents. She looked pretty frazzled by then. Ben had put five packets of Mentos in a bottle of Coke at the class party and there had been a massive explosion. He said he didn’t know it would happen, but we all knew that was a lie because a lively woman with striped tights and a badge that said I Love Science had done it in assembly in Year Five.

I had permission to walk home as Dad couldn’t drive after his accident and Grams wasn’t allowed to drive after she crashed into the war memorial in the centre of town. I think the doctor said it was because she had guacamole in her eyes – which is odd because she wouldn’t eat foreign food. (She also couldn’t have driven me home because by this point she was dead – but I didn’t know that at the time. I’m telling you now so you’re prepared for the sad bit later.)

Ben, Charlie and I were walking out of the school gates – I was heading to the newsagent to buy my usual

after-school snack of a packet of Monster Munch – when Ben’s new stepmum Becky rolled up in their new Range Rover and wound down the window. She was wearing a very low-cut top which Grams would have said is “just asking for attention”.

“Hi, boys!” She smiled, revealing a *lot* of teeth. Actually, I have a fact about teeth – you might want to write this down, it’s a good one. Grown-up humans have thirty-two teeth. Which, in the animal kingdom, is not that many. Most people think sharks have the most teeth, but they’re wrong. The garden snail has over 14,000 teeth. Even Becky doesn’t have that many.

Charlie whistled and said something embarrassing like, “Your new mum is awesome!”

Ben didn’t like that, so he gave Charlie a shove – not hard though. Ben reckons Charlie doesn’t have a filter. He’ll just blurt out whatever he’s thinking. I reckon Ben’s right about that.

Anyway, Becky flicked her long blonde hair and lifted up her huge sunglasses. “Hop in, Ben, I’m taking you for a haircut before our family holiday. You’re looking shabby.”

Ben wasn’t looking shabby. He has really cool big flicky hair. Sometimes he even has zigzag lines or patterns shaved into the sides. The girls seem to like it. Well, they like it more than the haircut Grams gave me with the pinking shears that left me with a crinkly fringe. She blamed that on the guacamole too.

Ben was definitely upset by the shabby comment. He takes his hair quite seriously. He stuffed his hands in his pockets and mumbled so Becky couldn’t hear but I heard what he said. He said, “She’s not my *new mum*. She’s not even family.”

Becky didn’t like being kept waiting. Her face got a bit ugly and she shouted, “Benjamin!”

He seemed to get smaller and muttered, “It’s *Ben*.”

Everyone knows he doesn’t like being called Benjamin. But I don’t think Becky cared about what Ben liked, because she rolled her eyes and said, “Whatever, Benjamin – get in the car. We’re going to be late.”

Charlie and I shot each other a glance as Ben clambered into the back seat and slammed the door. And even though I knew he was going to Disney World, I felt sorry for him.

Becky tooted her horn and she must have forgotten that she was angry, because her big red lips stretched into another huge smile. She shouted out the window, “Have a wonderful summer, boys!” and then, with a screech of tyres, they were off.

After their car had turned the corner, Charlie did this big sigh and said, “Ben is so lucky. His new mum is really lovely.”

This is what I meant by Charlie having no filter and being a bit blurry. I glared at him and said, “Charlie, we *hate* Becky, remember?”

He puffed out his cheeks. “I know, I know, but—”

“No buts.”

After that he convinced me to skip the Monster Munch and go with him to the chicken shop. He said he wanted “one last supper” before he went off to Camp Mung-bean for the annual Anderson family detox. Charlie’s mum turned vegan three years ago and he hasn’t stopped moaning about how it has ruined his life.

He ordered a family-sized bucket at Texas Fried Chicken and as he picked the bones clean he banged

on about what a rubbish summer it was going to be for him at *Healthy Kids = Happy Kids* with only avocados to eat.

I wish I’d known at the time what was actually going to happen and then I could have put a stop to all his whingeing. But I didn’t, so I listened to his plans to sew sweets in his pyjamas and hide crisps in his sleeping bag, all the time thinking that my summer was going to suck waaaaaay harder than his.

CHAPTER 2

Okay, so I warned you about the sad bit. I have to tell you about it because if Grams hadn't died, then my SUPER MIRACULOUS journey would never have happened

When I got home, I admit I wasn't in the best of moods. I think it's understandable though – I was facing the summer with no plans and no friends. As I turned the corner to my house, I saw Eileen walking Lady Gaga. When I say walking, I mean waiting with a plastic bag on her hand while Lady Gaga did her duty on the pavement. I tried to step around her, but she had this weird look on her face – Eileen, not Lady Gaga.

She tilted her head to the side and said, “You poor lamb. Now, when you're feeling strong enough you come and see me, and I'll sort out that funny fringe of yours.”

I didn't know Eileen that well and I couldn't understand why she was suddenly so worried about my hair situation.

Then she dabbed her nose with a hanky and said, “I'm sorry, Fred, it was her time.”

I looked at Lady Gaga and shrugged. If you gotta go, you gotta go.

Obviously now I realize Eileen wasn't talking about Lady Gaga taking a dump outside Mr Burnley's bungalow, but at the time I didn't think any more about it because a surprising sight had caught my eye.

That surprising sight was my dad.

He was standing at the back gate.

This was a surprising sight for two reasons.

Number one: he hadn't left the couch since his accident.

Number two: he was smoking!

I was outraged. I wasn't going to stand by while he slowly killed himself, so I shouted, “Dad! What are you doing?”

I could tell I'd surprised him because he almost toppled over. I stormed up to our house, anger fuelling

my legs, and immediately launched into the presentation I gave in Year Five science on the dangers of smoking. “Dad, there are more than 5,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke—”

“You’re not going to list all 5,000 now, are you, Fred?” he said in this tired-sounding voice, which I thought was a bit rude when I was trying to save his life. One dead parent is enough.

“At least 250 are known to be harmful, including hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide and ammonia. And among the 250 known harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke, at least sixty-nine can cause cancer.”

I could NOT believe it when he took another puff on his cigarette. I watched the smoke billowing out of his nostrils and I thought I was going to explode like the bottle of Coke at the class party.

He must have got the picture because he said, “Sorry, Fred,” and dropped the butt onto the floor and crushed it with his good foot.

“Why were you smoking?”

“It’s your Grams.”

This confused me, so I said, “Grams doesn’t smoke.

And, frankly, it’s a bit of a low move to try and claim the cigarette you were smoking was hers.”

“No, I don’t mean that.”

“What do you mean then?”

“She’s gone.”

I didn’t know what any of this had to do with my dad’s sudden nicotine habit. “Have you tried Mr Burnley’s?” I asked, because last time we couldn’t find Grams she was there drinking sherry and playing strip-Monopoly. Well, she wasn’t *actually* playing strip-Monopoly but she’d taken off her cardy, so Dad and I teased her about it for weeks. But when she threatened to stop washing our undies and baking us cakes we stopped.

“She’s not at Mr Burnley’s, Fred,” Dad said, shaking his head slowly. “She’s *gone gone*.”

“*Gone gone*?” My mind began whirring and I did *not* like the places it was going to.

“Dead, Fred. Your Grams is dead.”

Just like that. That’s how he said it.

I don’t know why, but I laughed. Not a ha-ha-funny laugh, but a ha-ha-my-brain’s-short-circuiting-and-I-

have-no-control-over-my-emotions-right-now kind of laugh.

I don't know how much of what I said next Dad understood because my chin had started wobbling uncontrollably. What I wanted to say was, "How can she be dead? You said she'd outlast us all." But I think it sounded like, "Howeee. Dead. Dead. All, lastus!"

Dad sort of crumpled over the gate and said, "I'm sorry, Fred."

"Sorry? Why are you sorry? Did you kill her?" Obviously I didn't think he'd killed her – I was experiencing some sort of emotional breakdown.

"What? No!" Understandably Dad looked a little taken aback.

My throat started doing this contracting thing and I had to keep swallowing hard so I could breathe. "Well what happened then? She was fine when I left this morning."

"She was old, Fred. It was her time." (This was when I realized Eileen had not been talking about Lady Gaga.)

Dad reached one arm out towards me, but I took a

step back. I couldn't help it. I was really, really angry and, in that moment, he was the only person I could blame.

I yelled at him. "She's always been old, but she's never died before! How could you let this happen?" I marched past him and into the house. I could hear his crutches clattering behind me.

He started shouting things like, "Stop! Fred – wait. Let's talk about this."

But I didn't stop or wait because I didn't want to hear any more words. I threw my school bag down in the hallway and stormed into the kitchen. There was this almighty crash as he tripped over my bag. I know it's wrong but a teeny part of me wanted him to have hurt himself – just a little bit – to get him back for telling me about Grams.

He wasn't hurt but he was angry. A barrage of unrepeatable words tumbled out of his mouth. Some of them I had heard before. Others – like "dunderbod" – I think he made up on the spot. It was a good job Grams was dead, because if she had heard him he'd have been in so much trouble.

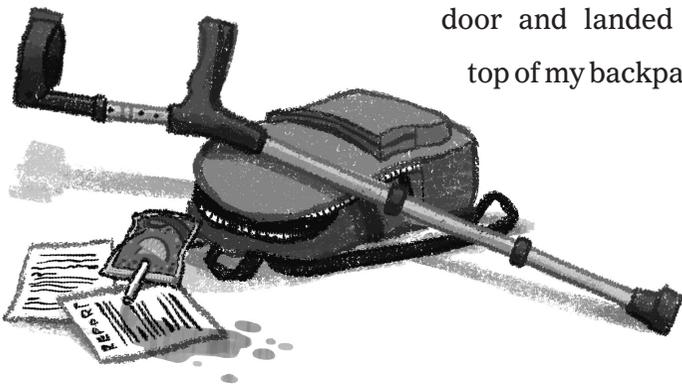
“Fred! What have I told you about your school bag? Get in here now.”

For a split second I considered making a run for it, but my conscience got the better of me. I walked back into the hallway at the exact moment he hurled my bag out the back door.

“You shouldn’t have done that,” I said. “There was a Capri-Sun in the big pocket. It’s probably burst all over my school report.”

Dad didn’t seem to care about that. He still looked really angry. He tried to get up, but he was a tangled mess of limbs and crutches. He swore again and

launched one of his crutches
and it flew out of the
door and landed on
top of my backpack.



He raised his other crutch skywards, but I grabbed it before he could send it flying.



“Stop throwing stuff outside, would you?” And then I said something Grams would have said. “What would the neighbours think?”

It was then that his head dropped down and he started making this weird snorting noise, like a dying walrus. (Oooh, maybe not the best time, but I have a fact about walruses: they weigh a tonne. That’s as much as a car. Most people don’t know that, they think

they're much smaller than they are – like otter-sized – but they're massive.)

Dad wasn't mimicking the snort of a dying walrus. He was *crying*. I'd never seen him cry before but then I'd never had a dead grandmother before. I didn't know what to do so I stood there, holding onto his crutch, with my mouth open.

When eventually the snorting and sobbing had died down, he said, "Help your old man up, would you, Fred?"

I pulled him onto his good foot, then wedged myself under his armpit and manoeuvred him back to the couch.

"I'm sorry, Dad." I lifted his bad leg and placed it on the footstool. "I shouldn't have left my bag there. I only did it because Grams is dead."

He let out a really big sigh and wiped his nose on the sleeve of his jumper, which he is always telling me not to do. I was going to point it out, but it didn't seem like the right moment. I'm just saying the double standard did not go unnoticed.

Dad then said, "No, *I'm* sorry, Fred. I didn't do a very good job of breaking the news. I've been thinking about

how to tell you all day and then...well I come out with 'gone gone'."

This was true, he hadn't done a good job, but he looked so upset that I told him it was okay. I sat down next to him. I wasn't angry any more. Just sad.

"How did it happen?"

"One minute she was sat in her chair knitting and shouting at Loose Women repeats on the TV. The next she was gone. A stroke, they reckon." Dad looked over to Grams's empty chair. I followed his gaze. I could still see the imprint of her bum on the seat. Her knitting was draped over the arm. I walked over and picked up the unfinished jumper. There was a rainbow-coloured dinosaur on the front. I held it up for Dad to see.

He pulled a face. "Another one of her masterpieces for her favourite grandson, no doubt."

I don't feel great saying this, but I can't say I was sorry she hadn't finished that one. I hadn't been into dinosaurs for ages. I placed her knitting needles on the coffee table and we sat in silence, listening to the gold carriage clock tick-tocking.

Around tick-tock number forty-six, Dad cleared his

throat. “We’re going to be alright, son. No matter what, okay?”

I nodded, but as I looked at his leg in plaster from ankle to hip, I wasn’t convinced. The most senior person in the household was someone who had run himself over with his own post van.

We sat in front of the TV for the rest of the evening. Around nine o’clock I realized we hadn’t eaten. I wasn’t hungry, so I left Dad in the sitting room with a family pack of onion rings and went to my bedroom to ponder. After some pondering, I headed to the bathroom, did my night-time wee, brushed my teeth, did another little night-time wee as I hadn’t got it all out the first time, and headed back to my bedroom.

But I didn’t end up there – I ended up in Grams’s room. I sat on her flowery duvet and breathed in the smell of her. Lavender and mint humbugs.

I sat there breathing and smelling and picturing her papery wrinkles and smiling face and my heart started to hurt. I slid open a drawer of her bedside cabinet. I wanted something of hers to have with me when I went to sleep. I thought that way I might still feel close to her.

I rummaged around through a whole heap of lottery scratch cards. I found her reading glasses, her spare set of false teeth and a few of her hair rollers. They weren’t what I had in mind as a memento, so I closed the drawer and opened the one below. Inside I spotted one of her hankies – it had little purple flowers stitched on it. I held it to my nose and as I inhaled I closed my eyes. When I opened them again, they were leaking.