

X Torneo Escolar de Lectura en Público

Extract from The Twits

Roald Dahl

Mr Twit was one of these very hairy-faced men. The whole of his face except for his forehead, his eyes and his nose, was covered with thick hair. The stuff even sprouted in revolting tufts out of his nostrils and ear-holes. Mr Twit felt that this hairiness made him look terrifically wise and grand. But in truth he was neither of these things. Mr Twit was a twit. He was born a twit. And now at the age of sixty, he was a bigger twit than ever. The hair on Mr Twit's face didn't grow smooth and matted as it does on most hairy-faced men. It grew in spikes that stuck out straight like the bristles of a nail brush. And how often did Mr Twit wash this bristly nailbrushy face of his? The answer is never, not even on Sundays. He hadn't washed it for years.

Mrs Twit was no better than her husband. She did not, of course, have a hairy face. It was a pity she didn't because that at any rate would have hidden some of her fearful ugliness. But the funny thing is that Mrs Twit wasn't born ugly. She'd had quite a nice face when she was young. The ugliness had grown upon her year by year as she got older. Why would that happen? I'll tell you why. If a person has ugly thoughts, it begins to show on the face. And when that person has ugly thoughts every day, every week, every year, the face gets uglier and uglier until it gets so ugly you can hardly bear to look at it. A person who has good thoughts cannot ever be ugly. You can have a wonky nose and a crooked mouth and a double chin and stick-out teeth, but if you have good thoughts they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely.

THE GLASS EYE

You can play a lot of tricks with a glass eye because you can take it out and pop it back in again any time you like. You can bet your life Mrs Twit knew all the tricks. One morning she took out her glass eye and dropped it into Mr Twit's mug of beer when he wasn't looking. Mr Twit sat there drinking the beer slowly. The froth made a white ring on the

hairs around his mouth. He wiped the white froth on to his sleeve and wiped his sleeve on his trousers.

‘You’re plotting something,’ Mrs Twit said, keeping her back turned so he wouldn’t see that she had taken out her glass eye.

‘Whenever you go all quiet like that I know very well you’re plotting something.’

Mrs Twit was right. Mr Twit was plotting away like mad. He was trying to think up a really nasty trick he could play on his wife that day.

‘You’d better be careful,’ Mrs Twit said, ‘because when I see you starting to plot, I watch you like a wombat.’

‘Oh, do shut up, you old hag,’ Mr Twit said. He went on drinking his beer, and his evil mind kept working away on the latest horrid trick he was going to play on the old woman. Suddenly, as Mr Twit tipped the last drop of beer down his throat, he caught sight of Mrs Twit’s awful glass eye staring up at him from the bottom of the mug. It made him jump.

‘I told you I was watching you,’ cackled Mrs Twit. ‘I’ve got eyes everywhere so you’d better be careful.’

THE FROG

To pay her back for the glass eye in his beer, Mr Twit decided he would put a frog in Mrs Twit’s bed. He caught a big one down by the pond and carried it back secretly in a box. That night, when Mrs Twit was in the bathroom getting ready for bed, Mr Twit slipped the frog between her sheets. Then he got into his own bed and waited for the fun to begin. Mrs Twit came back and climbed into her bed and put out the light. She lay there in the dark scratching her tummy. Her tummy was itching. Dirty old hags like her always have itchy tummies. Then all at once she felt something cold and slimy crawling over her feet. She screamed.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ Mr Twit said.

‘Help!’ screamed Mrs Twit, bouncing about. ‘There’s something in my bed!’

‘I’ll bet it’s that Giant Skillywiggler I saw on the floor just now,’ Mr Twit said.

‘That what?’ screamed Mrs Twit.

‘I tried to kill it but it got away,’ Mr Twit said. ‘It’s got teeth like screwdrivers!’

‘Help!’ screamed Mrs Twit. ‘Save me! It’s all over my feet!’

‘It’ll bite off your toes,’ said Mr Twit.

Mrs Twit fainted. Mr Twit got out of bed and fetched a jug of cold water. He poured the water over Mrs Twit's head to revive her. The frog crawled up from under the sheets to get near the water. It started jumping about on the pillow. Frogs love water. This one was having a good time. When Mrs Twit came to, the frog had just jumped on to her face. This is not a nice thing to happen to anyone in bed at night. She screamed again.

'By golly it is a Giant Skillywiggler!' Mr Twit said. 'It'll bite off your nose.' Mrs Twit leapt out of bed and flew downstairs and spent the night on the sofa. The frog went to sleep on her pillow.

THE WORMY SPAGHETTI

The next day, to pay Mr Twit back for the frog trick, Mrs Twit sneaked out into the garden and dug up some worms. She chose big long ones and put them in a tin and carried the tin back to the house under her apron. At one o'clock, she cooked spaghetti for lunch and she mixed the worms in with the spaghetti, but only on her husband's plate. The worms didn't show because everything was covered with tomato sauce and sprinkled with cheese.

'Hey, my spaghetti's moving!' cried Mr Twit, poking around in it with his fork.

'It's a new kind,' Mrs Twit said, taking a mouthful from her own plate which of course had no worms. 'It's called Squiggly Spaghetti. It's delicious. Eat it up while it's nice and hot.'

Mr Twit started eating, twisting the long tomato-covered strings around his fork and shoveling them into his mouth. Soon there was tomato sauce all over his hairy chin. 'It's not as good as the ordinary kind,' he said, talking with his mouth full. 'It's too squishy.'

'I find it very tasty,' Mrs Twit said. She was watching him from the other end of the table. It gave her great pleasure to watch him eating worms.

'I find it rather bitter,' Mr Twit said. 'It's got a distinctly bitter flavour. Buy the other kind next time.'

Mrs Twit waited until Mr Twit had eaten the whole plateful. Then she said, 'You want to know why your spaghetti was squishy?'

Mr Twit wiped the tomato sauce from his beard with a corner of the tablecloth.

'Why?' he said.

'And why it had a nasty bitter taste?'

'Why?' he said.

'Because it was worms!' cried Mrs Twit, clapping her hands and stamping her feet on the floor and rocking with horrible laughter.