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Opening extract from  
**Mad Iris and the Bad School  
Report**

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*This is for Beth.  
May all your three ostriches fly – just like their  
mother, who flies beautifully.*

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# Chapter 1

## The Animal Man

Everyone in Pudding Lane School thought it was a great idea. In a few days' time a special visitor would be coming to the school. Captain Kapow the Animal Man was going to give a talk about animals to the whole school. He was going to bring some REAL animals with him.

Captain Kapow was very exciting. He always wrote his name like this –

**CAPTAIN KAPOW!!**

With capital letters and two exclamation marks to show how exciting he was.

The Year 1s and 2s were 100% certain that Captain Kapow would bring a real giraffe.

The Year 3s and 4s were far more sensible. Anyone could see giraffes were too tall for school. They knew for sure that Captain Kapow would bring a lion.

The Year 5s and 6s told the younger children that there was no way Captain Kapow would bring a lion into school. But they had heard that he had a spitting cobra.

“What’s a spitting cobra?” a worried Year 2 asked.

“It’s a snake that spits poison at you – SPLLARGH! Like that,” Ian Tufnell said. Ian liked to scare people. He did a good job of scaring the Year 2. She burst into tears and

said she'd gone off Captain Kapow and his animals and she wanted her teddy.

In fact, none of the children really knew what animals Captain Kapow would bring with him. It was a funny thing, but it was more exciting *not* to know. In any case, the head teacher, Mr Grimble, had exciting plans of his own. He told everyone in Assembly.

“I want you to collect as many cardboard boxes as you can,” Mr Grimble told the children. “They can be any shape and size – tiny ones, small ones, big ones, *massive* ones. They will all be useful. We will use them to make some life-sized model animals. When Captain Kapow sees them he will be very impressed and think we are the best school in the country.”

“In the world!” young Max shouted. He was only just five and liked to call out in Assembly.

“Yes, Max,” Mr Grimble agreed. “The best school in the world. Now –”

“In the universe!” Max yelled before Mr Grimble could go on.

“Yes, Max,” the head teacher said, and his face turned bright red. “In the universe. Please don’t call out in Assembly.”

The older children started to snigger. They liked it when Max shouted out things and made Mr Grimble go red.

“Every class will make their own display of animals,” Mr Grimble said. “We’ll put some of the best ones in the hall where everyone can see them.”

“Even aliens!” Max called out.

“Not aliens, I don’t think, Max.” Mr Grimble sighed, but he was smiling a secret smile to himself. He said a few more things about Captain Kapow and then he told the children to go back to their classrooms.



Of course everyone was busy talking about what animals they would like to make models of.

Ross and Katie were in Mrs Norton's class. They were good friends – very good friends. Some people said that Katie was Ross's girlfriend. Ross said NO SHE WAS NOT, but just like Mr Grimble, he said it with a secret smile. (People don't always say what they are really feeling!)

"I think we should make an ostrich," Gloria said.

"We've already got an ostrich, a real one," Kelly Jessup snapped.

That was quite true. Pudding Lane School *did* have a real ostrich. Her name was Mad Iris. Mad Iris had escaped from an ostrich farm. She'd come to live at the school and the school had adopted her as their mascot.

Everyone loved Mad Iris even when she stole their packed lunches and ate them. Sometimes she ate their gym shoes too, or their ties, or their socks. Once she ate Ross's swimming trunks, and the phone in the school office. Ostriches will eat almost *anything*.

Mrs Norton, the class teacher, had an idea of her own.

“We are going to build the biggest land animal there is!” she said.

The class boggled. The biggest land animal of all? That could only mean one thing. They were going to make an elephant!