

# MR CHIP IN SPACE

Marie Stuttard

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**Marie Stuttard**

**Illustrated by Greg Whitecliffe**



**HODDER AND STOUGHTON**  
AUCKLAND LONDON SYDNEY TORONTO

To the *real* Matthew and Timmy

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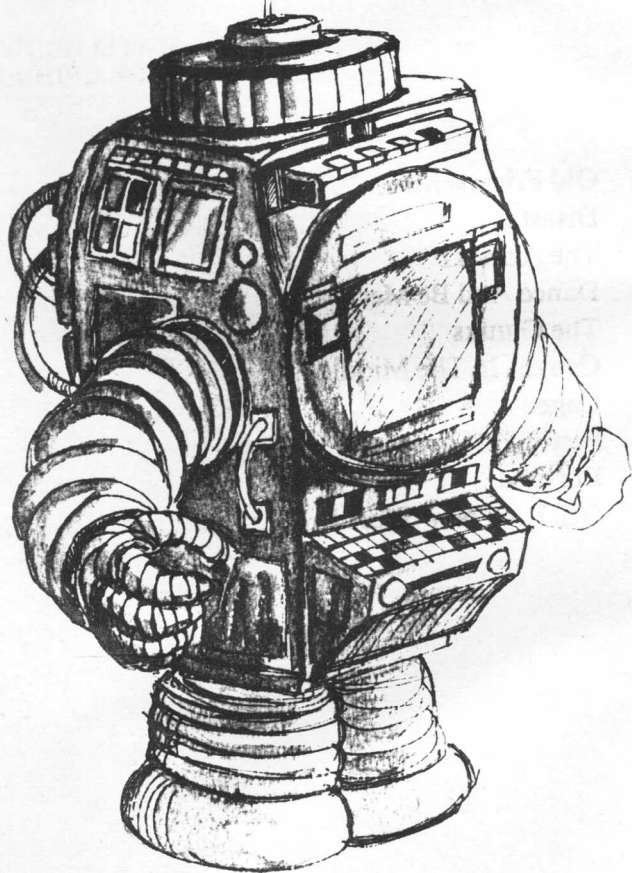
# MR CHIP IN SPACE

**By the same author**

**FASHION IS FUN  
MR CHIP AND THE ALIENS**

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## 1. OLD FRIENDS MEET

Matthew was angry. He'd looked everywhere — in his desk, in all the cupboards, under his bed — but it definitely wasn't in his room. He stomped to the door. 'Timmy!' he growled — no answer. 'Tim-my!' He sounded quite fierce.

From the room at the end of the corridor came a peevish 'What do you want?'

'Where's my watch?'

'How should I know?'

Matthew went quickly to Timmy's room. It was a mess — toys, games and drawings were all over the floor and the bed. There was hardly room to move. Matthew stood over Timmy, who was sitting on the floor trying to put back a wheel that had come off a toy tractor.

'Where is it?'

'Leave me alone, Matthew — I'm busy.'

'I want it *now*, Timmy,' said Matthew.

The tone of his voice made Timmy get up, open a drawer, and hand Matthew his watch. It was a very special watch. As well as telling the time, it incorporated video games. Matthew had got it for Christmas. He was extremely proud of it. He snatched it from his young brother. 'I hope you haven't broken it.'



'Don't be silly,' said Timmy, looking away, his face flushing.

Matthew tried it. 'You have!' he yelled. 'You have broken it. It won't go!'

'I'm sorry,' said Timmy in a small voice. 'I didn't mean to break it, Matthew — honest!'

Matthew was almost in tears. 'You horrible boy!' he shouted. 'How could you break it? It was mine — you shouldn't have touched it.'

'Well, you shouldn't have been so mean with it.' Timmy was fighting back. 'You should have shown me how to use it properly.'

Matthew was enraged. He got Timmy by the shoulders and shook him. Timmy began to cry. 'Mum!' he wailed, forgetting that his mother was out. Then he began to hit Matthew with his fists. They were so busy fighting that they didn't hear someone call out, 'May I come in?' Suddenly, at the door, a girl stood there — laughing.

'What *are* you two doing?' asked Sue, their friend and neighbour.

They broke away from each other, embarrassed.

'Timmy's broken my video watch,' muttered Matthew, feeling ashamed of himself.

'I said I was sorry,' said Timmy. 'I'll pay to get it fixed.'

'What's got into you these days? You don't usually fight,' said Sue.

Matthew sat down and looked miserable. 'Oh, it's the long holiday,' said Matthew. 'It's so boring. There's nothing to do.'

'Yes, it does seem to be going on forever,' said Sue. 'Even school would be better than this.'

Matthew sighed and said, 'It probably would.' Timmy made a face.

'Remember last holiday?' said Sue. 'When we went to

Computer World with your Uncle Bill?’

‘And met Mr Chip,’ smiled Matthew. ‘What a computer!’

‘I gave him his name, because he had a silicon chip for a heart, didn’t I, Matthew?’

‘Yes, Timmy, you did, and what a heart he had! He was so brave and kind — and what an adventure he took us on...’

‘I think of him a lot,’ Sue said. ‘I was really very fond of him.’

‘So were we,’ the boys agreed.

‘And Al,’ added Matthew. The others nodded, and thought about the lovable old American computer who had helped them so much.

‘I wonder if we will ever see them again?’ Sue voiced the feelings of them all.

‘Perhaps,’ said Matthew, ‘if we think about them very hard — really concentrate — they might come and see us.’

Sue was dubious. ‘I don’t think it would work.’

‘But remember how we saved Mr Chip’s life, when he was shot with the ray gun,’ persisted Matthew. ‘We stood in a circle, holding hands, and said “I give my power to Mr Chip” — and he got better, saved by the power of love, he told us.’

Sue brightened. ‘That’s right! He also said that love was the strongest power in the world.’

‘Let’s do it!’ said Timmy, already excited about seeing his dear friend Mr Chip again.

‘Yes, let’s,’ said Sue. ‘Right away — now.’

Matthew, Timmy and Sue stood in a circle and held hands. Matthew said solemnly, ‘Mr Chip — we want to see you. We want you, Mr Chip.’

‘Please!’ added Timmy.

Nothing happened. They were disappointed.

‘Once isn’t enough,’ said Sue. ‘We must keep on say-

ing it, and we must all say it together.'

'Mr Chip... We want to see you... Please come,' they said again and again.

But there was no response. The children sat on the floor and wondered what other way they could get a message to Mr Chip.

'Perhaps we should be more respectful,' said Matthew.

'What do you mean?' asked Timmy.

'Well, you know how proud he was — we could say something like — "Honourable, courageous, brave Mr Chip, please come to see us". How would that do?'

'Or, "Mr Chip-with-a-sense-of-humour, please come!"' added Sue. At the mention of a sense of humour, the children got a fit of the giggles.

'He was such a funny fellow.' Sue laughed at the thought of his jokes. They were so busy remembering all the amusing times they had had together, they didn't hear the soft whirring noise.

Suddenly, Mr Chip was there beside them. They stared at him, unable to believe it really was him. He was real enough, in his handsome robot form, polished and shining.

'Well,' said Mr Chip in his strange metallic voice. 'Aren't you pleased to see me?'

Timmy recovered first. He threw himself at his old friend. 'Oh, Mr Chip!' he cried. 'I knew you'd come. I wanted you to come so much.'

Mr Chip laughed. 'Wait on a minute little boy — don't dent my new suit!'

At his joke Matthew and Sue came out of their trance, and they too put their arms round the computer and hugged him. Mr Chip beamed.

'You heard us calling you?' asked Sue.

'I didn't actually "hear you",' said Mr Chip, 'but I was just about to set out on a great adventure when I got

this very strong urge to take you all with me.'

'It worked!' Matthew said to Sue with a wink.

'Are you still at Computer World?' asked Timmy, holding Mr Chip's hand.

'Not any longer,' the robot replied, then added proudly, 'I've been promoted.'

'Promoted?' the children echoed.

'Yes — promoted. I am now second-in-command to the Commander-in-Chief.'

'Mr Chip — that's wonderful!' said Sue, thrilled to hear about her friend's high position.

'How is the Commander?' asked Matthew politely.

'Very fit,' answered Mr Chip. 'A great leader — a great and wise leader. I am honoured to serve under him.'

'How did you get to be second-in-command?' Timmy wanted to know.

Mr Chip walked up and down the room, trying not to step on Timmy's games and toys. He stuck out his chest and said arrogantly, 'Because I led the Allies to a magnificent victory against the evil Aliens, who were trying desperately to vanquish us all. Because I was responsible for the demise of their leaders Terminus and Diablo, and because...'

Sue tapped him on the shoulder and said softly, 'We know, Mr Chip — we were there!'

Mr Chip stopped suddenly and said quietly, 'What must you think of me? If it hadn't been for your help — all of you — I never could have done it. I'm afraid I have become very proud, and very silly.'

He extended his long arms and gathered them to him. 'Please forgive me,' he said, sounding as though he might cry.

'We love you, Mr Chip, no matter what you do,' said Sue. 'We understand.'

'Really?' he brightened. 'Humans really are incred-

ible — very forgiving. I must try to be more like you.'

'Tell us about the Allies,' said Matthew, changing the subject.

'There are Allies no longer.'

'What?' The children were amazed. 'What's happened to them?'

'We are all one now,' said Mr Chip, 'the Allies and the Aliens. Now that their leaders have gone, we are united in the World Federation of Computers.'

'Gosh!' Matthew was impressed. 'And is our Commander leader of them all?'

'He is.'

'And do you live at what used to be the Allies' headquarters?' asked Sue.

'No, we have a new headquarters now, very large and grand, and so many new computers that already we are finding it cramped. As a matter of fact, that's why I have come to see you,' said Mr Chip seriously.

'What do you mean?'

'We've decided to look for a new world. We need to spread beyond this one. I was just about to look for a suitable place.'

'And we could come with you?' Timmy's eyes were bright with excitement.

'Why not?' said Mr Chip, ruffling the little boy's hair. He looked at his three friends. Matthew was twelve and seemed taller than when he had seen him last. He was blonde, with curly hair like Timmy. Sue, a year younger, was dark with bright blue eyes. Little Timmy, too, looked more grown up than before.

He smiled. 'You would really like to come with me?'

'Oh yes!' They were thrilled at the thought of another adventure with Mr Chip.

'That is,' said Matthew, always cautious, 'if we can be in a time bubble like before. I don't want to worry Mum and Dad.'

'Don't worry,' Mr Chip replied. 'You entered it as soon as I arrived. Human time stopped still and will only start again when you get back. No one will know we have gone.'

That settled it. They were ready to go immediately.

'But,' said Mr Chip, 'not until we are joined by another computer.'

'Another one?' Sue was disappointed. She didn't want their group to be larger, it was such fun to be on their own.

'You'll like him,' said Mr Chip, 'and we *need* him. He does very specialised calculations. I'll tell him to come now.'

In the so-familiar way, Mr Chip's silver body began to click, sending instructions to his colleague.

'He's ready,' Mr Chip announced. 'Make a space for him.'

Timmy quickly tidied away some of his possessions, and before he could blink, a large, square, golden computer was in its place. The children looked at it in wonder. It was covered with flashing lights, and looked quite magnificent.

'How do you do, Sir,' they said formally.

The computer began to rock with laughter, a strange musical laughter that somehow sounded familiar, but it wasn't until he spoke that they knew for sure.

'You don't know me? Shame on you!'

The children looked at each other, then gleefully shouted, 'Al! It's Al!'

'I thought you'd never guess,' he replied in his soft American drawl.

'But what's happened to you?' asked Matthew. 'You look so different.'

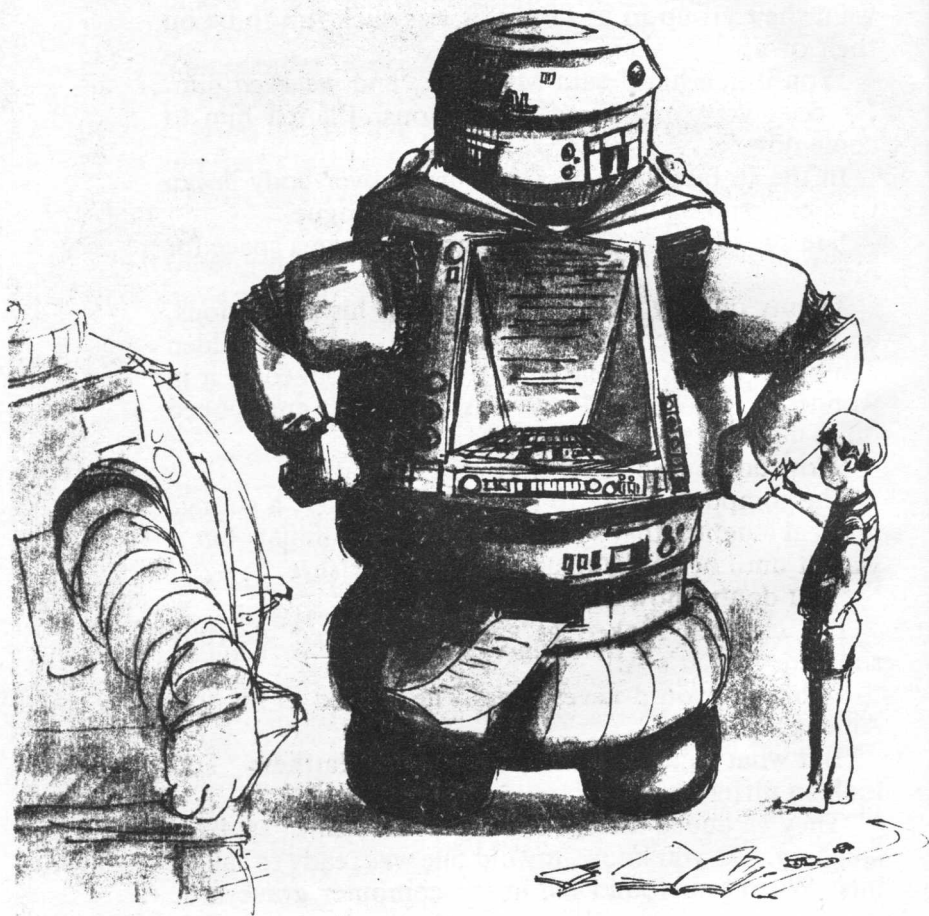
'They've duded me out in a right fancy suit,' said Al, laughing. 'As you know, my old one was ready to fall to bits. When you found me in the computer graveyard,

why, I was nearly dead.'

'Because he was of such service to us,' broke in Mr Chip, 'we not only made him *look* better, but we gave him the most up-to-date computer equipment too.'

'That's fantastic!' said Matthew.

'But I'm just the same old AI underneath,' said the computer. 'Nothing can change that.'



'Oh, Al — we're so glad to see you,' said Sue, speaking for them all.

'Now,' said Al, getting down to business, 'about our journey. Mr Chip has told you we want to find another planet so we can expand our activities?'

They nodded.

'Well, I've worked out a direction to take. We may have to drop down on several before we can find the right one, but it will be such fun, won't it?' He smiled at them. 'You won't get sick, Timmy, will you?'

Timmy hung his head and said quietly, 'I hope not!'

'Well, don't worry,' said Al. 'I've got special medicine for you if you are.'

'You have?' Timmy was relieved. He had hated being sick — it was so babylike.

'Yessiree,' said Al. 'We are going to have one great time flying through space.'

'How do we go, Al?' asked Matthew.

Al produced a small bar. 'This is the latest transporter. It's very small, but it will take all of us with no trouble. You only have to hold it — and we will take off together. Now, gather around, and whatever you do, don't let go.'

Mr Chip, Matthew, Sue and Timmy put their hands on the bar. Al went into a frenzy of clicking. His computer panel flashed, first dark blue, then purple. When it turned to a deep glowing red, they all began to soar into a misty atmosphere. It was a strange, eerie feeling floating through space, but the children felt safe with the computers. They were also very excited — the adventure had begun.



## 2. DISASTER

Once they got used to the extraordinary sensation of drifting through the soft, misty darkness, the children began to relax.

‘How long will the journey take?’ asked Matthew, still a little scared.

‘Who knows?’ Al, for all his brilliance, didn’t know himself. This was new to him too. ‘Just keep holding on,’ was all he said.

Suddenly, the blackness cleared away, and they were in the middle of hundreds, maybe thousands, of dazzling stars.

‘Oh!’ gasped Sue. ‘Did you ever see anything so beautiful?’

‘It’s incredible!’ Matthew felt an overpowering feeling growing inside him. He felt a part of the universe — this great, sweeping heaven of stars and planets.

‘Out here,’ said Sue slowly, ‘I feel as though there is nothing I couldn’t do.’

‘But that’s exactly how I feel too,’ said Matthew quietly. He couldn’t have expressed it better, but that was it — the sensation of gliding into a new world in a way no human had gone before.

‘Look over there,’ said Mr Chip, who was thoroughly