

# IT'S A TRICK!

LEWIS JONES



Collins English Library

# Collins English Library

Series editors: K R Cripwell and Lewis Jones

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Collins English Library Level 1

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**LEWIS JONES**

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# 1

It was a grey day in the High Street. I walked along and looked in all the shop windows.

Something touched my hand. It was water, and I looked up.

It was the rain.

I had no coat, so I looked round for a dry doorway. I was in front of a shop – *The Animal Shop* – and the door was open.

Before I was halfway in, a fat woman in a red dress came and touched my arm.

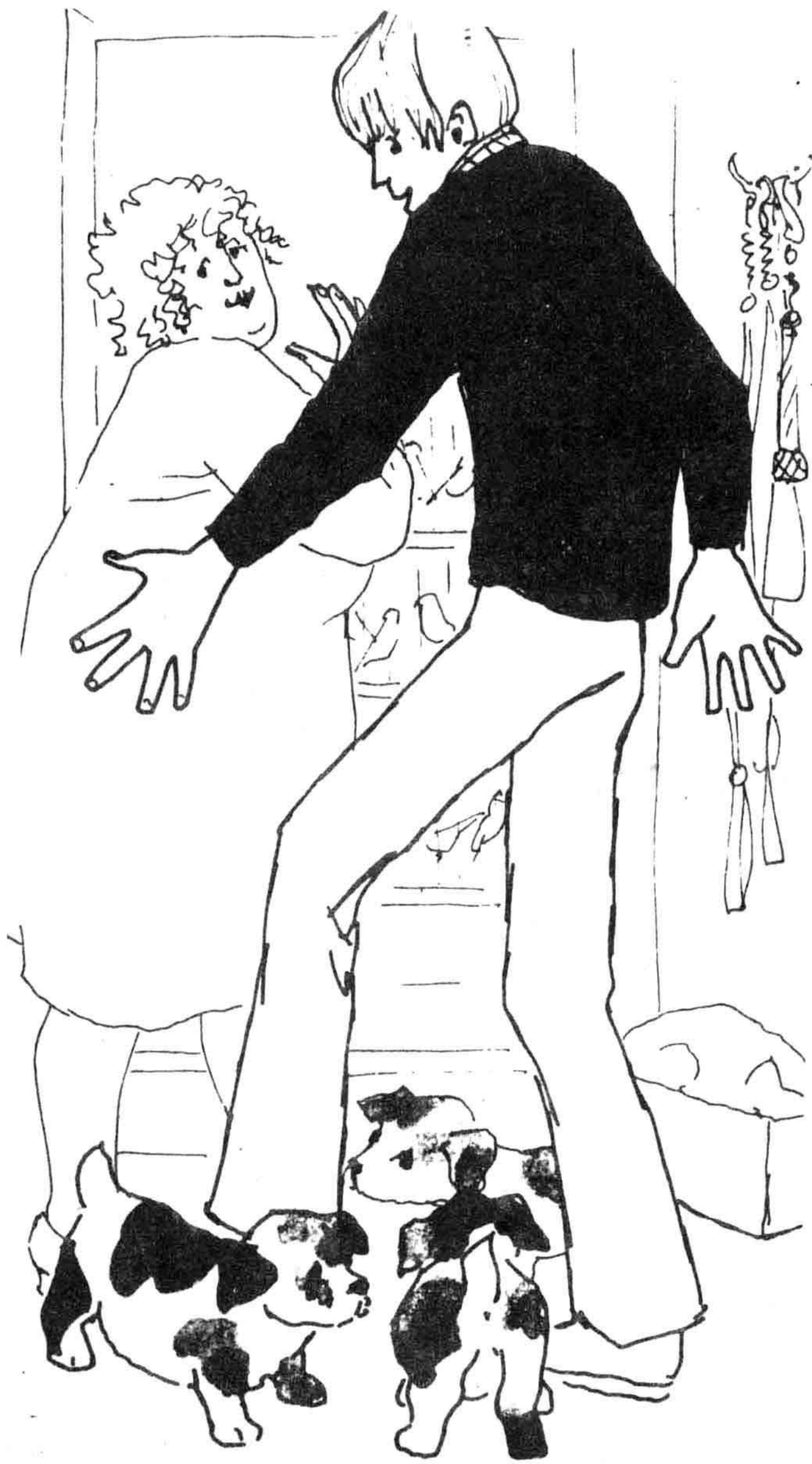
“Hello, love,” she said. “Come in. What can I do for you?”

“Well....” I said.

“I know. You’re like me – you love animals. And you want to take one home. **Right?**”

“Well, no. It’s.... It’s wet out there.”

“Oh, is it beginning to rain again? Well, you’ll be all right here. Now – which animals do you like? Don’t you know, love? Perhaps I can help you. Look at this.”



A white cat was asleep in an open box. The woman touched the cat's head, and her fingers ran along its back.

"She's not going to wake up. But isn't she beautiful?"

"Er.... yes, but I don't think...."

"Oh, I know."

She went to the back of the shop, and she came back with three little brown-and-white dogs in her arms.

She put them down on the floor, and they played round my feet.

"They run round and round like that all day," she said. "They're not fighting – they're playing games. They're very small. Poor little things! But I love them. Don't you?"

"Oh yes," I said, "but I don't want...."

"Which one do you like? This one with the white ears?"

"No, no! I came in here because of the rain. Not for an animal."

"Oh, I'm sorry! Well, that's all right, love. I'll get a chair for you. And you can sit down and talk to me. OK?"

"Well...." I said, "I'm not here for a cat or a dog. And that's true. But now I'm thinking. Do you have any birds?"

A happy look came to her round face.

"Of course! Come this way."

We went through the shop, and into the back.



“There,” she said. There were a lot of little birds – blue and green and yellow.

“But tell me,” I said. “Do they talk? I always wanted a bird like that.”

“Some of them talk.”

“And how much are those? I’ve got a pound.”

“Oh, I’m sorry, love. I can’t sell one for that. A good talker is two pounds.”

“Oh. All right. Perhaps I can get some more money, then I’ll come back again.”

“That’s right, love. You do that. Oh, look. The rain’s stopping.”

“Right. Goodbye.”

“Come again. Goodbye.”

## 2

The sun came out, and I walked all along the High Street. At the end of it, I stopped, and looked at a small man.

He had a big box like a table in front of him. And there were a lot of people round him. I went close and listened.

“I have three cups,” he said. “You see? One, two, three. At home, I drink tea out of them, like you. But there’s no tea in them today.”

He put a cup into my hand.

“What’s in it now, young man?”

“Nothing,” I said.

“And in these two?”

“Nothing.”

“Right. Can you all see that? Three cups with nothing in them. Now I put them in a line on my table here. With their mouths down. One on the left, one on the right, and one in between. All right?”

A woman behind me said yes.

“Thank you. Now look at this. I take from my coat a little green ball. And I put it under this cup on my left.”

Then he asked a man, “What’s under the cup on my left?”

“The green ball.”

“And what’s under these two cups?”

“Nothing.”

“And in my hands?”

He opened his hands.

“Nothing.”

“Very good. Now come close, all of you.”

We all went close to the table.

“I’m going to change the places of the three cups,” he said. “Not fast. But your eyes must be open all the time. Look at the cups. Then I’m

going to ask you a question. Ready?"

We said yes. Then he changed the places of the cups.

Left in between. Right to left. His hands were slow, and all our eyes were on the cup with the green ball under it.

He stopped and said, "Right. Here's the question. Where's the green ball?"

"Under the cup on the right," said a man near me.

A woman in a yellow coat said, "Yes. On the right."

The man behind the table looked at me. "And what do you think, young man?"

"Me? On the right," I said.

"You all have good eyes," he said. "Now, one more time."

And the slow hands changed the places of the cups again.

"OK? Who knows the cup with the green ball this time?"

Four people put their hands up.

"Good. You want to make some money? You know the right place? Put a pound in the right place, and I give you *two* pounds. Put it in the wrong place, and you get nothing. How's that?"

Two pounds! A blue-and-yellow bird from *The Animal Shop*!

The ball was under the cup on the left. I wanted to put my pound there. But I was slow. A man put



his pound on that cup before me.

The man behind the table said, "Look under the cup."

There was nothing there. The ball was under the cup on the right.

"Sorry," said the man behind the table. "I'm the Banker, so I take the pound. But we can do it again. Find the green ball, that's all. Stand close to the table, so you can all see the cups."

The Banker changed the places of the cups again. And again. And again. Every time, we were wrong. And every time, the Banker put a pound into his coat.

After a time, he said, "And that's the last time. You look, but you don't see. I take up the cup on the left. Look – nothing there. Now the cup on the right. Look – nothing. Now tell me – what's under the last cup?"

The woman in the yellow coat said, "The green ball."

The Banker said to her, "Take the cup off the table."

There was no ball. But there was a little blue-and-yellow bird.

"Thank you all," said the Banker. "Perhaps we can play again tomorrow. That's all for today."

The people walked away, but I still looked at the little bird.

I said, "Do you sell birds?"

"Sometimes. Why?"



"I've got one pound."

"Well! That's the right money for this one! His name's Jacko. He's yours for a pound."

"But does he talk?"

"Talk? After he hears you, he says the same thing. Do you want him or not?"

"Yes, please. Here's the pound."

That afternoon, I put Jacko on my hand and said, "Hello. How are you?"

He closed one eye and opened it again.

I talked to him for a long time. I said, "Hello" and "Goodbye" and "My name's Jacko" and "It's bed time".

Jacko closed his eyes and said *tchk*.

Perhaps it was bird-talk, but it wasn't English.

"All right, Jacko," I said. "I'm going to take you to *The Animal Shop*. You can't speak a word, so I'm going to sell you."

The fat lady was still there.

"I'm sorry, love," she said. "I don't want any more birds for now. Who was this man? The Banker, you said? Perhaps my brother Laurie knows him. Why don't you go and see him?"

### 3

Laurie's place was a shop. Its name was over it in big black letters – *The Open Door*. But it wasn't an animal shop.

There were long red noses and big orange ears. It had boxes of matches (YOU CAN'T LIGHT THEM!), and big yellow flowers (THEY SEND RIVERS OF WATER INTO YOUR EYE!).

There was a black-and-green box with a little door in the back. There were pens and pencils (THEY DON'T WRITE!). There were cups and balls like the Banker's game.

There was a red-and-white-and-blue bottle (TWO LITRES FROM A ONE-LITRE BOTTLE!). And a little black bag (IT CAN CHANGE A FISH INTO A FLOWER!).

A tall man came out from the back of the shop.

"Hello," he said. "That's right. You look round the place."

"Well," I said, "I'm here about this little bird."

"Oh," he said. "You were at *The Animal Shop*."



