



Robert's envelopes

Robert lived in a flat in a tall grey building in the city centre. From his window, he could only see other enormous skyscrapers, lots of taxis and other noisy traffic in the busy streets, and far away, the motorway.

Sometimes this made Robert feel unhappy. He liked watching television programmes about exploring countries where there were waterfalls, lakes or wonderful beaches. His favourite stories were about sailing across the ocean to have adventures with people who lived on amazing islands or in other unusual and exciting places.



'Why must we live in the middle of a city?' he asked his mother.

'Because my job at the hospital is here, Robert. But perhaps we can have a quiet holiday somewhere in the countryside next summer. Would you like that?'

'Oh yes,' Robert laughed.

After Robert put on his pyjamas and got into bed that night, he thought about going on holiday. But then he remembered something. Last year, his mother said the same thing, but they spent the summer at home in the city again because they didn't have enough money to buy tickets or to stay in hotels. 'Oh well,' he thought. 'One day, perhaps.'

On the school bus the next morning, Robert looked through the window and saw a boat on the river.



'I'd like to travel down the river on a boat or across the sea on a huge ship one day, perhaps,' he thought. Then he saw a train on a bridge near the city station. 'I'd like to go over a high bridge on a fast train one day, too,' he thought. Then he looked up into the sky and saw a plane. 'I'd like to fly on a plane one day as well. I could look out of its windows at the woods and mountains below,' he thought.

When school finished, Robert didn't want to go home by bus. He decided to walk. He walked past the shoe factory, the chemist's and then past the police station and around the corner at the bottom of the hill. But after he walked past the sports stadium, too, he began to feel tired so he sat down for a minute on the low wall outside the post office.

Then a strange thing happened. A black and white bird flew down from the sky and dropped an envelope between Robert's feet and then flew away again. Robert picked it up. On the front of the envelope, it said, 'Read me,' so Robert did.

Robert opened the envelope. There was some writing on a blue piece of paper inside. Robert read it very carefully.

'If you find this message, go and look in your biggest, oldest book.'

Robert couldn't understand the message so he put it in his pocket and when he got home, he read it again.

'In your biggest, oldest book. What does that mean?'

Robert decided to try something. He got a chair from the kitchen and carried it into the living room and stood on it. Their biggest and oldest book was on the top shelf of the bookcase. It was really heavy.



When Robert opened the book, a thin envelope fell out. Inside the envelope was a strange card. It looked really old. When Robert opened it, he saw lots of numbers inside. Robert jumped off the chair and went to show the card to his mother.

'What's this, Mum?' he asked.

'It's the kind of card that banks wrote in a long time ago,' she said. 'This person was rich. They saved lots of money. Oh look! There's a name on the front – Helen Bird. This is amazing! That was my grandmother's name. We must go to the bank tomorrow and show this to Mr Flag.'





When Mr Flag saw the card the next day, he picked up his telephone and spoke to someone in an excited kind of way. He had a big smile on his face.

‘Well,’ he said to Robert’s mother when he finished talking on the phone, ‘you must thank your son for finding this. Your grandmother left all this money in our bank for you a long time ago, but we didn’t know that until now. What would you like to buy with it?’

Robert’s mother smiled, too. ‘Something that Robert wants very much.’

When Robert came home from school later that afternoon, he found a bigger envelope on the kitchen table. ‘Open it if you want,’ his mother said.

Inside the envelope, there were two plane tickets and two train tickets and two boat tickets.

‘Mr Flag says we’ve got enough money now. We can have a really great holiday.’

‘Because of your grandmother’s little bank card?’ Robert asked.

‘Yes,’ his mother said.

Robert looked out of the window at the beautiful sky. He couldn’t see the black and white bird high in the clouds, but he knew it was there.



‘And all because of the big black and white bird,’ Robert smiled.

‘What do you mean?’ his mother asked.

‘That’s my special secret,’ Robert answered.