



# MYSTERY WORDS



“I’ve never felt so **flummoxed**,” Miles said, looking around him in confusion. “I don’t know how it could have happened. That golden platypus was my most precious possession, and now it’s gone!”

“You’ve been **bamboozled**,” Miss Hollymeade said decisively. “That nice young man who was claiming to help was really a **reprobate** out to trick you.”

Miles was amazed at Miss Hollymeade’s **perspicacity**. Miles had assumed the sweet old woman was a **flibbertigibbet** who couldn’t follow a train of thought if she were chained to the caboose. But now Miles saw that Miss Hollymeade was the most **lucid** person on the case. In contrast, Detective Quigley could do nothing more than **belabor** the incident with the ferret, going over it again and again with **niggling** detail until Miles wanted to **cudgel** him with the golden platypus. But the platypus was gone!

Miss Hollymeade daintily stepped over Detective Quigley’s immense **brogans**. They were all that showed of the man as he hunted under the bed yet again for the ferret.

“Clearly, this is what **transpired**,” Miss Hollymeade said, pulling Miles into a quiet corner. “That **execrable** young man distracted you with the sales pitch about his **halitosis** cure. Really, Miles, I don’t know why you were interested at all. I’ve never noticed a problem with your breath.”

Miles **surreptitiously** shifted his mint under his tongue.

“While you were examining his wares, the young man slipped your platypus into his case of samples. The ferret that landed on your neck was unrelated, simply a passerby, a **peripatetic** rodent wandering through at a bad time.”

“Hey, I think I’ve almost caught it,” Detective Quigley called from under the bed. “Could you hand me that **dingle**? You know, the whosit, the whatchamacallit? I mean, the cage?”

Miss Hollymeade idly shoved the cage under her bed with her foot. “Actually, I don’t believe it’s a ferret at all,” she told Miles quietly. “I believe it’s the same uninvited guest that **horripilated** Polly Hazelthorpe yesterday. She described it quite clearly as a **titanic**, long-toothed rat.”

“Yow!” Detective Quigley cried. “Ouch! **Deuced** ferret!”

“As for your golden platypus,” Miss Hollymeade said, “I believe you will enjoy it again shortly. I’ve instructed my man Hobbes to detain the young **jackanapes** at the Longhampton **petrol** station. He will be obliged to stop there, since I siphoned most of the petrol from his tank while he attempted to **perpetrate** the same **perfidy** on Nigel Stilton.”

A cheerful chirp came from Miss Hollymeade’s cell phone. “That will be Hobbes,” she said. “Shall we go retrieve your treasure?”

“Yes, indeed!” Miles said, **elated**. Miss Hollymeade took his arm, and together they left the room.

“I need a bigger cage,” Detective Quigley said from under the bed. “But I can’t seem to get out. Miles, could you give my feet a pull? Miles?”