

not hide its own smell of dust and rotting turnip.

The skull yattered under Michael's fingers again. The scarecrow spun round, gladly, and fell sideways toward it. Michael made one attempt to rescue the skull and then got hastily out of the way. For as the scarecrow fell across the bench, there came the fizzing jolt of strong magic and the skull melted into the scarecrow's turnip head. It seemed to get inside the turnip and fill it out. There was now a strong suggestion of a rather craggy face on the turnip. The trouble was, it was on the back of the scarecrow. The scarecrow gave a wooden scramble, hopped upright uncertainly, and then swiftly spun its body round so that the front of it was under the craggy turnip face. Slowly it eased its outstretched arms down to its sides.

"Now I can speak," it said in a somewhat mushy voice.

"I may faint," Fanny announced, on the stairs.

"Nonsense," Mrs. Fairfax said, behind Fanny. "The thing's only a magician's golem. It has to do what it was sent to do. They're quite harmless."

Lettie, all the same, looked ready to faint. But the only one who did faint was Percival. He flopped to the floor, quite quietly, and lay curled up as if he were asleep. Lettie, in spite of her terror, ran toward him, only to back away as the scarecrow gave another hop and stood itself in front of Percival.

"This is one of the parts I was sent to find," it said in its mushy voice. It swung on its stick until it was facing Sophie. "I must thank you," it said. "My skull was far away and I ran out of

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