



“We have to go there right now!” I cried.

“No way,” said Dad, “it’s dark.”

“But we must!” I insisted. “The place is still a complete dump. If we do nothing Mr Reet will close it down tomorrow and then it’ll be gone forever.”

“I know,” sighed Dad, “but sometimes bad things happen and there’s nothing you can do about them. You’ve tried hard, Freya, you really have, and I’m proud of you. But even with everyone’s help you haven’t been able to turn it round.”

“So you’re happy for it to be shut down and turned into an incineration plant and for Miss Turner to lose her job?” I asked angrily.

“Of course I’m not, but I don’t see that we have any choice.”

“Well I’m going!” I shouted.

He sighed and looked at his watch. “OK,” he said softly, “we can go there for an hour, but that’s it, no more. I’m not having you go to bed at some ridiculous hour and then being in a grump all of tomorrow because you haven’t had enough sleep.”

“I will be on top form, I promise.”

“Fine,” he nodded, “let’s get our coats. And remember: one hour, max.”

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In the end we stayed there for one and a half hours. Wearing head torches, we did what we could. Dad had a go at the graffiti on the clubhouse walls but he only managed to get rid of a small section. Then he filled some of the holes in the tarmac covering the tennis courts.



I ran around clearing up all of the rocks from the ground in the children's play park. By the time Dad said it was time to go once again we'd made virtually no difference to the overall sense of decay and brokenness that permeated the place.

"It's all over," I groaned on the way home, "Miss Turner will be unemployed and I'll have to travel miles to find another tennis court."

"It's rotten," nodded Dad, "but you did your very best."

When we got in, Vic was putting on his rucksack.

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"I'm off to meet everyone at school," he told us. "We're starting the trek at 10.30 p.m. and we should be finished by about 2.30 a.m. Afterwards I'm going back to Robbie's and sleeping over."

"Fine," nodded Dad, giving him an encouraging pat on the back. "Walk well and don't be in too much of a hurry to come first."

"Me, wanting to come first?" said Vic in fake surprise. Then he looked at me. "What's up with you, Lemon?" he asked.

"It's the park thing," said Dad. "Freya hasn't been able to get it into a decent shape. It's being inspected tomorrow morning at eight and it looks like the inspector is going to recommend the council close it down."

"Shame," said Vic, not really taking this information in. "Have either of you seen my phone?"

I had a very fitful night's sleep. I tossed and turned and turned and tossed. My dreams were full of huge tractors ploughing up the earth in the park and knocking down the clubhouse.

When I woke up and checked my clock, I yelped. It was 7.30 a.m. I jumped out of bed deciding I'd try one last-gasp attempt to save the park.

I had the key to the park. I was going to stop Mr Reet from getting in.

If I could just buy myself a few more days then maybe, just maybe, I'd manage to get more people involved and sort the place out. It was my only hope.

Dad wasn't up and Vic had stayed over at Robbie's after his trek, so I grabbed an apple and quietly let myself out of the house. It had rained in the night and the pavements were slippery. The sun had managed to fight its way out from behind some dark clouds but it wasn't very warm and I was pleased I'd brought my coat.

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It was nearly 8 when I arrived, and within a minute I spotted someone heading towards me.

It was Mr Reet. Wearing a posh blue suit and tie and carrying his large, black briefcase, he was walking fast – a man with a purpose. He'd reach me in about twenty seconds and then I would be all that was standing between him and total disaster.