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I stood in front of those park gates and guarded them as if they were the crown jewels.

“Where is Miss Turner?” he asked as he approached me, the silver buttons on his suit jacket glinting in the early-morning sunlight.

“She’s ill,” I replied. “She’s awfully sorry but she says you’ll have to carry out the park inspection at another date.”

“I’m afraid that won’t be possible,” he replied, pulling a clipboard out of his briefcase. “I need to make a decision today.”

I looked at the clipboard. A piece of paper clamped to it had the names of every section of the park – lawns, clubhouse, children’s play area, tennis courts, etc. – and a box where you gave them each a mark out of ten.

It didn’t take a rocket scientist to realise that a whole bunch of zeros added up to a whole bunch of zeros.

“Unfortunately, she has the only...”

But before I could finish my sentence he was in that briefcase again, this time pulling out a key: a key to the park.

“Where ... where ... where did you get that?” I spluttered.

“I got the local council to send me one,” he explained, “so that if anything cropped up I’d still be able to get inside.” I gaped at him in horror as he undid the padlock.

I could have punched myself. Of course they’d have a spare key!

Mr Reet pushed the gates open. They made a loud, high-pitched creaking sound as if they were mocking me.

“WAIT!” I cried, running in front of him as he started striding down the path.

“Wait for what?” he asked irritably, coming to a halt.

“Cats!” I blurted out.

“Cats?” he replied.

“There’s... there’s been an invasion of... of... killer cats in the park. They’re everywhere. They love nice, juicy humans to chew on. So you’d better turn back.”

“This is ridiculous!” he snorted. “If the park is in a total state of disrepair and needs to be shut down then I will shut it down. A stupid, made-up story about killer cats will not stop me.”

He barged past me and hurried onwards. I ran after him, and as we reached the corner I braced myself for him to declare what a total shambles the place was.

But instead, the most marvellous sight greeted my eyes.

The park, our park, Miss Turner’s wild jungle park, had been totally transformed. The long, dying grass had been cut to reveal a smooth, green surface. The swings and slides had been cleaned and polished so that they looked like expensive silverware. The graffiti on the clubhouse had vanished and the entire outside of the building had been varnished. All of the holes in the tennis courts’ tarmac had been filled; the nets were repaired and straightened. The rubbish bins had been painted.

How on earth had this happened?

“Well, well,” said Mr Reet, gazing ahead in wonderment. He walked off with his clipboard just as I heard running footsteps behind me.



It was Vic.

“So, what do you think of my handiwork?” he panted, stopping beside me.

“YOU did this?” I asked, completely flabbergasted.

“Our ten-mile trek was cancelled last night because Mr Watson’s son was ill,” he explained. “So, instead of wasting the time, I suggested we do the big good deed part instead and get it over with. There were sixty of us. Everyone borrowed stuff from their parents – you know, lawnmowers, hedge cutters, varnish, that sort of stuff. We finished at about 3 a.m.”

“You are a GENIUS!” I grinned, throwing my arms round him.

“All right, all right, Freya,” he said, laughing. “There’s no need to go crazy.”

“Hey,” I said, letting go of him, but still smiling like crazy. “You just called me Freya.”

“You look more like a Freya than a Lemon today,” he replied.

When we caught up with Mr Reet, we could see that he was giving everything nine and ten out of ten.

“There's no way I could recommend shutting this place down and replacing it with an incineration plant,” he informed us. “It's absolutely beautiful, a fantastic place for the local community.”

And that, as they say, was that.

The park was saved.

On hearing the good news, Miss Turner suddenly felt a lot better and, by the end of the day, she was back in the clubhouse, bouncing around with the energy and enthusiasm of a teenager.

“I miss my jungle,” she said, “but now the place looks like this I reckon we'll have loads more visitors.”

And she was right.

More and more people show up here every day, which, of course, is brilliant on one level. The only problem is you now have to queue for the kiosk and you can't always get a tennis court when you want one.

But hey, you can't buy ice lollies or play tennis in an incineration plant, so you won't find me complaining.