



Chapter 7

A Changing Place

The next day, Benji told Freya about his new plan, expecting her to protest and need some persuading. Instead, she hardly stopped talking all the way to school, nodding vigorously and gesturing wildly all the time. The reason for her eagerness became clear when she told him about Mr Jay's fake watch and the message he had received on it. Naturally, this excited Benji too. They agreed to put the next plan into action that lunchtime. Rather than focus on Miss Higgins and risk being caught in the classroom again, they would turn their attention to Mr Jay.

Mr Jay had told his class that he would not be around to teach them that afternoon, which was not totally out of the ordinary, but aroused their suspicion. Secondly, Benji argued that Mr Jay had no storage cupboard in his classroom, unlike Miss Higgins, so he probably wouldn't change there. The only obvious place for him to slip from his normal teacher clothes into the secret superhero outfit was the toilet for the male teachers, which was just around the corner from the staffroom. If the two could loiter somewhere near there in the corridor, they could possibly catch him in the act.

It wasn't easy, though. Not only were they not allowed unsupervised down the little part of the corridor between the staff toilets and the P.E. equipment, but they weren't supposed to be in the corridor at all without good reason at lunchtime. As they leant against the wall and tried to look invisible, Freya's heart began to pound and her face felt very hot.

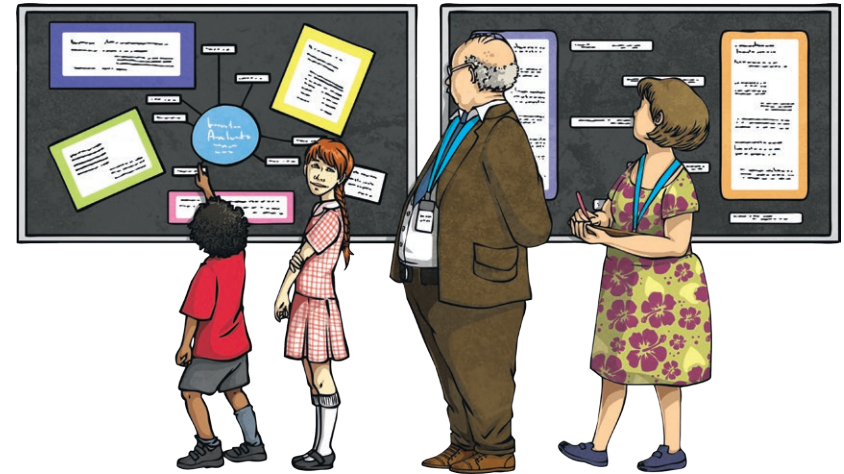
First, the year 6 teacher, Mr Wilstead, walked by in his usual brown jacket and asked them what they were doing. Freya's face became a furnace and she responded first, blurting out before she could stop herself that they were the new register monitors and were just about to deliver the registers to each class.

“What did you say that for?” hissed Benji as they walked away. “Now we’ve actually got to deliver the registers.”

“Sorry, it was just the first thing that came to mind,” said Freya as they collected the registers under the watchful eye of Mr Wilstead, and dashed around in double-quick time as soon as he had disappeared.

Returning to the tall plant which stood opposite the staffroom, they stood with their backs to the corridor, pretending to look at the display shelves, hoping that no other teachers would question why they were there. Meanwhile, each time the staffroom door opened, they snatched a quick glance inside to see whether Mr Jay was still sitting down.

The next person to visit the staffroom was the school secretary, Miss Schofield. She was only inside for a matter of seconds. When she came back out, she was followed closely by Mr Jay, who glanced up and down the almost empty corridor. Benji coughed and nudged Freya but she had already seen him. Unfortunately, the teacher had already seen them, too.



Chapter 8 A Super School

“Freya and Benji,” Mr Jay announced as he strode over to them. Freya’s heart was in her mouth and Benji stood as still as a statue. Caught wandering the corridors twice in one lunchtime! Freya closed her eyes and held her breath, waiting for the inevitable.

“A job for you two,” Mr Jay continued, just as Freya was deciding what she wanted on her headstone. “I’m sure you’re both up to the challenge.”

Freya opened her eyes and listened; Mr Jay didn’t sound angry or even disappointed to find the pair outside

the staffroom. He continued to explain: apparently, a couple of important visitors had just arrived in school and the headteacher had asked for some sensible pupils to show them around. Miss Schofield had been to the staffroom to see whether anyone had been chosen, and Freya and Benji were the first to be spotted for the role.

“I really can’t,” pleaded Benji. “I wouldn’t know what to say. I get all nervous with people I don’t know.”

Mr Jay had already made his decision. Calmly, he reassured them that they would be fine ambassadors for the school and that he was sure they’d do a great job. Ushering them towards the reception, he said that he had to dash and was leaving them in Miss Schofield’s capable hands.

It turned out that the visitors – a man and a woman from the local council – were a very friendly pair. Benji had indeed been a little nervous at first, letting Freya do all the talking, until about halfway round when his confidence grew. Enthusiastically, he began pointing out the artwork on the walls, explaining who had created it and what it was about. Just around that time, something strange occurred.

Walking back towards reception with the visitors, they

spotted Mr Jay disappearing into the staff toilet. Not too strange in itself, but as the door was closing behind him, Freya and Benji both caught sight of a flurry of yellow and blue in the narrowing gap before the door clicked shut. Was this the moment they had been trying to catch? Was Mr Jay changing in a whirlwind motion into his superhero costume? Mouths agape, they collected their thoughts as the council visitors paused in slight confusion.

“Shall we go down here next?” One of the visitors pointed in the opposite direction to where Benji really wanted to focus his attention. “I’d love to see the rest of your classrooms.”

Benji racked his brain for any reason that he could come up with to stay exactly where they were and see who – or what – would come out of that bathroom. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the area which would be of any interest to two important visitors.

“Er, yes, of course,” Freya stepped in. “There’s no point standing here showing you the toilets and the P.E. equipment, is there?” She forced a little laugh and shot Benji a glance.

By the time they were back at reception, Freya had

got the tour back on track and Benji had regained his confidence and tour-guide skills, but there was no sign of Mr Jay.

“Well, what a super school you have here!” the lady visitor said as she thanked the children once again before being guided away by Miss Schofield towards the headteacher’s office. Freya and Benji looked at each other.

“*Super!*” they both burst out at the same time and giggled.

That afternoon, Benji reflected on another seemingly missed opportunity in their search for evidence as he daydreamed his way through his fractions work. He had enjoyed speaking to the visitors; maybe he was not as nervous as he had thought with people he didn’t know. Freya confirmed later that there had been no sign of Mr Jay for the rest of the afternoon. The supply teacher had been kind and friendly, but just wasn’t quite the same type of *super* as her usual teacher.

Chapter 9 Dilemma

Benji sat in Freya’s garden with her, throwing a tennis ball up into the air and catching it again and again. Every now and then, he launched it at the wall above Freya’s head, making her jump before it bounced back into his hands.

“Stop doing that, Benji!” she finally snapped at him.

“Sorry. I was just thinking,” he apologised.

“Well, can you think without nearly taking my head off?”

“Alright, sorry! But listen, here’s the thing I was thinking. Maybe we shouldn’t be trying to expose the teachers’ true identities after all. If we reveal their secret, do you think it could ruin what they do?”

“They’re our teachers – we have a right to know!” Freya insisted, not really answering the question.

“Well, you’ve changed your tune. Aren’t they just doing good? Maybe it’s none of our business!” said Benji.

“Maybe it’s everyone’s business!” retorted Freya.



The discussion continued after tea that evening until Benji had to go home. They decided to give it one more try to catch the teachers and agreed that the perfect time would be the coming weekend. It was the school summer fair on Saturday, and they would be able to watch the teachers' every move from across the school field without getting into trouble. Each class had been designing fundraising ideas for a couple of weeks and Freya and Benji had volunteered to be in charge of a 'Splat the Rat' stall. Benji was looking forward to dropping a cuddly toy rat down a pipe for paying customers to try to hit with a rounders bat as it dropped out of the bottom. He would also be keeping a close eye on Miss Higgins and Mr Jay.