

JACK ROBERTS AND THE ISLAND OF IDEAS

By Rob Dalton Smith

(First 4 chapters)

Chapter 1
IDEAS DAY

After checking no one was around, Jack picked one of the chocolate bars growing on the small tree in the corner of the greenhouse. The tree had grown from a single bar planted a year before and sprinkled with top secret plant food he had invented. A few drops of this special solution once a day could make a tree grow from almost any food you could think of!

Suddenly, a monstrous silhouette appeared at the door. Without hesitation, he reached for a sweet in his pocket and popped it in his mouth. Almost instantly his skin changed to match the pattern of the chocolate tree. Jack was now completely camouflaged. The figure moved towards him. His heavy breathing made him accidentally suck the sweet into the back of his throat which, in turn, made him cough violently. After a few gags, he managed to spit it out onto the stony floor and it rolled along, collecting small particles of dirt as it did so. Without the camouflage candy, his skin returned back to how it looked originally and he was now completely visible. He gulped hard.

“Jack! You know the rules....hand me that chocolate!” said his Mum, “You know to eat your veggies before pudding!”

What made things worse was that he saw his Mum have a nibble of the chocolate before stuffing it in her tracksuit pocket.

Of course, this wasn't real. Once again Jack had been staring out of the window of his classroom, daydreaming about his inventions and what they *would* be like if they *were* real. Jack Roberts was the sort of boy who, one minute, would sit and think, and the next be scrambling to find a pen...or crayons... even paint, whatever he could write or draw with because Jack had an incredibly creative mind. Getting his thoughts down on paper wasn't always easy because his head worked faster than his fingers. If there was one thing he wanted right now, more than anything in the entire world, it was to be an inventor! That said, he faced two problems;

One - He was only in Year Six

Two - At the end of the school term, some of his drawings were thrown in the bin to make space for the next topic

Being in Year Six was only a minor stumbling block compared to not having copies of his work. After all, how could he be an inventor if he didn't have any inventions to show?

Well, he didn't know it yet, but from now on all of that was going to change.

Before school, the monotonous morning routine had started out in the usual way with his sister complaining the whole time about various things, such as; why she had to walk Jack to school, having goose bumps on her legs, getting her hair wet, why the west coast of England always had horrible weather and why she couldn't have a lift to school. Their Mum and Dad had to remind her that she would be incredibly lazy to be chauffeured to school because you could get to anywhere across town, on foot, in less than twenty minutes. Jack's school could actually be done in 4.36 minutes – Jack knew this because he'd timed it on the Smart Watch he got for his birthday a month before. It

was a cheap one from China but it did the job. He also knew that Izzy's school was only an extra 3.19 minutes which would be even quicker for her because year nine's have longer legs.

Despite his sister's negative start to the day, Jack was in a good mood. He always looked forward to Monday mornings because it was the day that his teacher, Miss Peterson, allowed the class to get their minds moving. Monday was "*Ideas Day*". After a weekend of fun Miss Peterson felt it was the best time to think of different ways of doing things. She understood that something as simple as an empty box, with the help of your imagination, could be transformed into absolutely ANYTHING!

The classroom was buzzing with activity; paints, crayons and PVA. Jack imagined this is what it would be like to work for Google, or even NASA! Some were wearing aprons to protect their uniforms. Jack thought this made his classroom look even more like a secret laboratory. Most were working in small groups but Jack preferred to sit by himself, his brain like a firework, tiny sparks of ideas ready to explode in a cascade of spectacular colour.

Miss Peterson moved over to the side of the classroom and stapled a selection of the class' work onto the noticeboard. Then she made her way through the gaps between the desks looking over the shoulders of her pupils, occasionally asking questions and complementing on what she could see – everyone loved Miss Peterson. She stopped at Jack's desk and hovered her head just above his.

"Very interesting" she said intriguingly.

Jack didn't respond. He wasn't being rude, he was just daydreaming again.

"Jack?" she called as she placed her hand on his shoulder.

“Oh I’m sorry Miss” Jack apologised “I was just thinking”.

“What’s this?”

She gently tapped one of his drawings.

“They’re *Memory Goggles*! You see, every time you look at something, it gets stored in the brain, a bit like a computer. There’s a scanner in the goggles that looks at the part of the brain where those memories are stored. I looked it up over the weekend....look, here’s a map of where the memories travel.”

Miss Peterson’s eyes lit up.

“Think of a memory and the goggles will get it for you! Older memories are stored here,” he continued whilst pointing to the map of the brain “and newer memories, the goggles search here. They play them back in 3D and you can even download them to a computer!”

“Wow!” Miss Peterson then lowered her voice so that no one else could hear. “Listen, I’ve just heard about a competition to find the country’s next generation of inventors. How do you feel about entering? It would be great to get Port David Junior School on the map!”

Jack almost burst with excitement. Miss Peterson smiled.

“But there’s just one problem” he said with a frown.

He reached into his bag which was so large, he could quite easily fit inside it himself.

“You see miss. I’m just not sure which piece of work to enter – I have so *many* ideas!”

Jack pulled out an enormous folder bursting with plans, papers and diagrams.

“I’ll take the lot!” she excitedly giggled and assertively grabbed the folder. With her other hand she picked up the drawing of the *Memory Goggles*.

Jack leaped out of his chair “But Miss Peterson! They were my *only* copies”

Just then Mr Simpson, the head teacher appeared at the door. Old Man Simpson was nice enough, nobody knew how old he was but Jack knew that he had taught his Dad and, according to reports, was ready to retire even then. By the smell of his breath, he hadn’t brushed his teeth since then either!

“Mind if I have a word Lucy?” he said with a wink.

The class giggled because he always used Miss Peterson’s first name.

“Of course Mr Simpson” she replied and they disappeared into the corridor together.

Jack didn’t notice her come back into the class. He was too busy scribbling down more ideas, spurred on by the thought of winning the competition.

Chapter 2

JACK'S INVENTION

The crumbling paint on the outside walls, the pokey windows and drafty fireplaces gave Jack's house a bit of character. He wished it was slightly bigger and less spooky at night time but on the whole he was happy there and anyway, it was all his parents could afford.

By 6pm the whole family had finished their dinner and were all busy doing different things; Izzy was at the kitchen table sending messages from her phone (though she was meant to be doing her homework), his Mum was in the bath singing along (badly) to old music and his Dad was watching a program about building new cars from bits of older ones whilst loudly sucking an out-of-date Werther's Original. It was one of many sweets his Mum often brought home from work, given to her by the elderly people she looked after. Jack decided *not* to have one as he was sure that bits of fluff or dried snotty tissue from an elderly persons pocket might be stuck to them. Instead, he took a sip of orange squash and asked if he could borrow his Dad's phone so he could watch his favourite YouTuber; an American called Zayn Hudson.

At the last count, Zayn had created three hundred and seventy nine videos about various things such as playing Minecraft, reviewing the latest toys and doing practical jokes. Jack's favourite joke was where Zayn had secretly swapped the jar of dirty water

which was used to wash paintbrushes in his art lesson, with a jar filled with orange juice and green food colouring; the murky concoction looked exactly the same! He then drank it in front of his classmates who all thought he was crazy for gulping down such disgusting liquid.

Jack wished he had his own video channel but couldn't even stand up in front of the classroom without getting wobbly knees and a dry throat so didn't want to risk the embarrassment.

Zayn was just demonstrating how to make six fidget spinners balance on top of a huge ball of bright green slime when Jack's concentration was broken by the adverts on TV (for some reason, they always seemed to be louder than the main programme).

Mr Roberts pushed himself up off the sofa and announced "Back in a minute".

Jack nodded, put the phone down and stared at the screen. At this time of year he made sure he watched the adverts because he liked to see which new toys, games and inventions were in the shops. First of all there was an advert for a new board game. Jack thought this looked interesting.

"It's NEW!" boomed the voice from the TV speakers "Play with the family this Christmas!"

The object of the game was to roll the dice and move around the board picking up cards as you went along. All of the cards had musical notes on them and you had to save the ones which made up musical chords. Once you had a chord you had to place them in the middle of the board where the special computer chip inside each card would sound them out. If a correct chord played, then you were the winner.

"Awesome!" mumbled Jack to himself.

Next was an advert for a ride which was due to open at a theme park in the springtime....this advert sent a shiver through Jack. His eyes squinted, then widened and then he jumped up still staring at the TV shouting; “That’s mine! That’s mine Dad!”

He spun around to the empty sofa, he’d forgotten his Dad had nipped to the kitchen, or the toilet...or probably both. He sighed and turned back to the TV.

“What’s yours son?” said his Dad as he came back into the room.

Jack sprang to life once again and blurted out; “Dad! *The Z-z-zip* Roller Coaster, I just saw it on TV”.

“Wooo, slow down son” said Mr Roberts calmly.

“I designed it, at school, a few years ago. I did this wicked drawing of a new ride and it went up on the classroom wall. Then it was thrown away. Now the ride is going to open at *Scream Theme World*, I just saw the advert!”

“Oh Jack, I’m sure it’s just a coincidence” reassured his Dad.

Jack’s face turned from a look of disbelief to a look of anger, followed by a look of disappointment and sadness. His eyes began to water.

“I may be small but I can do BIG things!”

“I know Jack but...”

Before his Dad could even finish the sentence, Jack had raced out of the room and upstairs pushing passed his Mum on the way.

“What’s happened now?!” she barked, confused at what was happening.

Mr Roberts explained what had just happened and then looked thoughtful as he stroked his chin.

“The weird thing is, the same thing happened to me when *I* was his age. I was convinced I’d come up with the idea for *The Haunted House Hotels*, you know, those

places where businesses send their staff on team building weekends and you get greeted at the door by a butler who looks like your Uncle Pete?”

To be fair, Uncle Pete (Jack’s *Great* Uncle Pete) wasn’t the best looking man in the world. His bony arms always stuck out of the end of his sleeves because he struggled to find clothes to fit him and he always looked ill. He was a friendly chap though and useful for Halloween.

“The Haunted House Hotels? Your idea? If only! We could’ve retired by now!”

Mr Roberts agreed with a small laugh and continued; “Hey, I must’ve just had the same idea at the same time as the big boys, just like Jack. He’s obviously a chip off the old block”.

Jack was now hiding underneath his Dr Who duvet. His eyes were red, puffy and watery. Izzy, after hearing the commotion, had left the kitchen table to follow him – she revelled in any opportunity to tease him!

“Jack, you so did not invent the new ride at *Scream Theme World* – you’re eleven years old!”

Jack flicked the duvet from off his head.

“I DID! And technically I was seven when I invented it! Now get out of my room!”

He jumped out of bed to chase her but accidentally lost his balance and fell against a cupboard door. It sprung open and out fell a telescope, five hundred and twenty three Dragon Adventure Trading Cards (most were swapsies) and an old digital camera.

Jack’s face suddenly froze and he wiped away a tear “My camera! I remember, I took a photo of the drawing. I’ll prove it!”

“You take photos of your work?” mocked Izzy.

Admittedly, it did sound silly so he felt he needed to explain; “I don’t always get my pictures back from the teacher so, this way, I get to keep my drawings forever”.

He scrambled over to the floor where his camera had fallen and frantically tried to switch it on.

“Come on! Work you stupid thing!”

This made Izzy laugh once more.

“Try using a charger Einstein” she said sarcastically.

She had learnt about Albert Einstein and how intelligent he was in a physics lesson and thought that, by using his name, it would make *her* sound clever. But it didn’t.

“When I get this thing working, you’ll be sorry!”

Jack was now hitting the camera in frustration.

“Yeah, I can’t wait to see the geniuses work. Mind you, being creative obviously runs in the family”.

Izzy's face was now smug. Jack looked up from the camera.

“What do you mean?”

“Oh I wrote a poem for a school project years ago and I got the head teacher’s award for it. It was inspired by you actually, it was called *My Brother Is A Monster....* I wonder where it is?”

She dashed off to her bedroom to try and find it. Meanwhile, Jack’s mission was to hunt for the camera charger. Once he had this, he would have proof because the photos on the camera would have the date digitally stamped on them.

Just then, another thought pinged into his head; "The memory card! I'll just take it out and put it in the computer - why didn't I think of that before?"

The messy room looked like a giant toy-eating monster had sneezed the contents of its mouth all over the floor but he spotted the laptop half sticking out from under his science kit. He raised the lid, pressed the power button and tried stuffing the fiddly memory card into the side of the machine.

Jack couldn't believe it - it *didn't* fit! This was even more annoying than trekking to the park to play football only to find the ball was flat. In fact, on an annoyance scale, it was almost the same as opening your biggest present on Christmas day only to find out it was a years' supply of socks, pants and vests.

He decided to spend the next hour trying to redraw the roller coaster, but he couldn't get it looking as good as when he first drew it a few years before. Besides, without the photos, he couldn't *prove* he was the actual inventor of the newest and best roller coaster ride in the whole wide world!

He lay on his bed to sulk once more. The rhythm of the pelting rain and the whistling wind screaming past his window sang him an enchanting song, sending him into a zombie-like trance as his eye lids grew heavier. A short while later his Mum popped her head around his bedroom door to check that he was OK. She could've quite easily woken him to get him to put his pyjamas on and clean his teeth, but she decided to be kind and not disturb him. Besides, she was enjoying listening to the sound of him mumbling random sentences in his sleep such as; "*No, I prefer prawn cocktail flavour*" and, "*I like picking my nose*".

She listened for a few minutes, kissed him on the cheek and giggled to herself as she quietly closed the bedroom door, leaving him to sleep.

Jack woke up to the sudden noise of Izzy squealing like a chimpanzee down in the kitchen, then he heard her thunderous footsteps running up the stairs and she came bounding into his room.

"No school today!" she announced.

"What?" asked Jack sleepily, "Is it morning?"

He was slightly confused why he was still wearing his school uniform in bed.

"Take a look outside" said Izzy raising her eyebrows as if pointing them towards the window.

Jack pulled the cord to open the blind. He squinted and then flinched to dodge a mass of white light streaming into his room, like a million torches which had been switched on right outside his window.

"Mum's just had a text message to say that both of our schools are closed because of the snow" Izzy said excitedly.

Jack's eyes readjusted to the light and just for that moment, he'd forgotten about his roller coaster and camera from the night before. So, just for that moment, he became a little bit excited himself.

"Oh, by the way, I couldn't find my poem" said Izzy whilst tapping the small plastic aquarium of Sea Monkeys sat on a shelf.

Jack looked at her confused and still didn't utter a word.

"Y'know", she continued, "*My Brother Is A Monster*....the one I told you about. Still, at least I've now got all day to look for it!"

She gave a silly little laugh and left the room.

“Sisters are so annoying!” mumbled Jack.

He looked around his room and spied his R2D2 money box. He had an idea.

"Yes!" he shouted triumphantly.

His plan was to see how much he had saved and, either buy a new charger for his camera, or a card reader for his computer big enough for the camera's memory card - depending on which he could find in the shops first. He grabbed his camera and bolted downstairs.

"Mum, can I go out?" he asked as he rushed into the kitchen with his coat half on.

"Someone's excited for the snow" replied his Mum "Of course you can but..."

"Thanks mum" interrupted Jack and he slid out the back door being careful not to skid on the ice in his haste.

"What about your breakfast? And your teeth?" called his Mum as her words faded into the distance "JACK!"

Despite being younger, his mum secretly trusted him more than Izzy. Not only that, but he was bound to bump into at least ten people he knew so there was always someone to keep an eye on him. In Jack's mind, she had nothing to worry about (even though she will be worrying about him for the rest of *her* life).

He trudged his way towards the centre of town and, instead of taking the slushy main road, he turned up Drury Hill - a steep and narrow cut through.

The shops here were much smaller and old fashioned than the high street ones but they seemed more interesting to him which is why he always went this way. Mind

you, it meant he had to dodge the odd patch of yellow snow around the bases of the lamp posts because the early morning dog walkers also liked this route.

“I bet you don’t get *that* in Narnia!” he chuckled to himself.

He passed “Mrs Jennings’s Wool Shop”, a small hardware store called “Nick’s Nacks” and an antique clock shop appropriately called “The Second Hand” (though Jack thought a better name would’ve been “Antique Clock Wise”). The shops looked magical with their window displays full of decorated trees, fake wrapped presents and twinkling fairy lights.

Attempting to get to the shops quickly on the slippery ground reminded him of a dream where he was trying to fly; the faster he moved his legs, the faster he was *supposed* to fly but, despite kicking hard, he only managed to float slowly. One good thing about the dream, was that he couldn’t fall over. In real life though, he was becoming more unstable and ended up nosediving into a pile of freshly laid snow. He pushed himself back up, checked that nobody saw him make a complete idiot of himself and used the nearby shop window as a mirror to make sure he looked brave enough to carry on. He was about to leave when, instead of looking *at* the shop window, he started to look *through* it. He couldn’t believe his eyes. Perched on a shelf in this small shop was a book which made him creep closer to the glass. Clear as day he could read the words on the front. It said; “*My Brother Is A Monster*”!

Chapter 3

MR BENSON'S BOOKSHOP

Jack was cold already but seeing his sister's book in the shop window made him shiver even more. Could this be the poem Izzy was looking for? Maybe she'd already seen it in the window and was just pretending she'd written it to annoy Jack? At that moment, the owner of the shop, Mr Benson, unlocked the front door. Jack rushed inside and was greeted by the familiar and satisfying smell of newly printed books. Rows of different coloured spines were sandwiched together on varnished wooden shelves which reminded Jack of the library at Hogwarts, only much smaller.

Mr Benson wore a brown jumper stretched tight over his belly, a bow tie and a pair of small round glasses which made him look like a mole, or some other woodland creature. Some of the kids at school had given him the nickname of *Penfold*. Jack thought this a bit cruel as Mr Benson often came in to talk to the class about the newest books. What they didn't realise, was that he did it to get them interested in books in the first place, then hopefully they'd buy the books from *his* shop.

"No school today Jack?" asked Mr Benson looking at his watch.

"No, it's the snow".

Mr Benson started chuckling whilst shaking his head.

"In my day, schools were open even if the snow was ten foot deep!"

Jack thought that this was such an *old person* thing to say. He nodded and pretended to agree then pointed to the window display.

"That book, can I see it?"

Mr Benson shrugged and said "If you like, I've got loads more over here."

The old, dark floorboards creaked as he waddled over to a brown box and pulled one of them out.

"They only came in on last night's delivery so no-one's read them yet. I must warn you, they look like they've been written by a child".

He tutted as he flicked through the pages.

"Listen to this", he began reading in a sarcastic voice; "*My brother is a monster, his name is Terry Fie, he has big hands and big feet too, and one big pair of eyes.*"

With that he threw the book down and muttered; "What utter nonsense, it doesn't even rhyme properly".

"Who wrote it?" asked Jack sheepishly.

"Let's have a look..." Mr Benson adjusted his glasses and continued; "It says here....*Rozz Stirbey*. Never heard of her."

"Rozz Stirbey?" Jack sounded confused "Are you sure no one has seen this yet?"

"Absolutely!" Mr Benson announced "In fact I was one of the first bookshops to receive them!"

He smiled smugly and turned to place some of them on the shelf behind him.

"Anyway, do you want to buy one?"

He turned back, and Jack was gone.

Jack had now forgotten all about his camera and memory card rattling around in his pocket. He was just desperate to get home and speak to Izzy. Usually he'd have his scooter so it would only take him a few minutes but today, it was dangerously slippery. Using his foot as a brake wouldn't make a difference and he didn't fancy being squashed up against the lounge window of the house at the bottom of the hill while they watched a talk show (as his Mum called it) *The Jeremy Vile Show*. Instead, he took advantage of a piece of cardboard sticking out of a nearby recycling bin and used it as a sledge.

"I've found your camera lead!" cried Izzy with a beaming grin as soon as he opened the front door.

She was surprised that he didn't seem excited about it.

Instead he asked; "Have you found your poem?"

"No" she said "but I think I can remember it.....*My brother is a monster...*"

Jack interrupted "...*His name is Terry Fie...*"

Izzy seemed a little taken aback but continued with the next line anyway "...*He has big hands...*"

Now it was Jack's turn "...*and big feet too...*" and then, as if they had been rehearsing for hours, they both said together confidently "...*AND ONE BIG PAIR OF EYES!*"

"You found my poem Jack, where was it?"

"Eerr, Mr Benson's bookshop!"

As he said it, he realised how silly it sounded.

Izzy, thinking that Jack was joking, became slightly annoyed.

"Very good Jack. Where *was* it?"

"Goodbye mum, we're just going to the shops again." shouted Jack grabbing Izzy's hand and almost pulling her arm off "Come on Iz, hurry up, I'll show you".

She shrieked with surprise as she wasn't used to him being so forceful but she decided to go with him anyway as she was intrigued.

"Izzy, make sure you have your phone with you!" called their Mum, but they were gone.

They were soon slipping and sliding up Drury Hill towards Mr Benson's bookshop. The snowflakes splattered against their faces and one even landed on the end of Jack's nostril. As he breathed in, it shot up his nose and then down his throat which made him cough. The splodges of snow all over their coats could've easily been mistaken for an unfortunate incident with a seagull spraying them from above.

When they finally arrived, Mr Benson was surprised to see them.

"Oh hello again young man, do you want the book this time?"

"Yes please" said Jack out of breath.

He watched Izzy's face with anticipation as Mr Benson handed over a copy.

Izzy, for once, didn't have a word to say. She just flicked through the pages with her mouth open wide. The last time she did this she was sat in a dentists chair.

"Are you OK Izzy?" asked Mr Benson sounding concerned "You look a bit peaky".

"It's *her* poem" interrupted Jack "She wrote it when she was younger".

Mr Benson chuckled "No, no, no Jack. This is brand new. I told you earlier. It came in yesterday. Look, written by Rozz Stirbey".

Mr Benson looked pleased with himself and pointed confidently at the name below the title.

“No, seriously Mr Benson. I *DID* write it.” said Izzy in a shaky voice “A few years ago”.

Because Izzy was older than Jack, and because of how uneasy she sounded, Mr Benson took notice of her. Soon his chubby, sausage-like fingers were pounding away on the keyboard of the shop’s computer. His hands looked like two overweight octopuses tap dancing.

“Let’s Google it and see what it says about the person who wrote it”.

Mr Benson paused, “Well that’s odd! It’s come up with nothing about Rozz Stirbey at all!”

Mr Benson frowned.

Jack could tell that he was now reading to himself because his eyeballs were ping ponging from side to side whilst his head stayed still.

“This is interesting though...*strangely* interesting in fact”.

The tone of his voice now sounded more concerned.

“What’s wrong?” quizzed Jack.

“Well...” he said scratching his head, “One of the websites it's suggesting, is an anagram website which says that Rozz Stirbey is an anagram of Izzy Roberts.”

He looked at Izzy with a raised eyebrow, “How very strange!”

Jack and Izzy stared at each other. It was the longest time they’d done so, in silence, without pulling silly faces.

“Well, coincidences like that don’t happen every day do they?” joked Mr Benson, hoping to lighten the mood.

Izzy finally spoke but found it difficult because her throat had become dry.

In a soft and slow voice, she said; “Jack. Do you have your camera with you?”

Jack nodded gently and, because he was in shock too, his reply was also slow; “Do you have the lead for it?”

Izzy nodded gently back to him and then, simultaneously, they both turned to Mr Benson.

“Do you have some power we can borrow?” asked Jack.

Mr Benson looked confused but showed Jack to the nearest wall socket. Izzy handed Jack the charging lead and he plugged it in. After a few seconds a red light began to glow on the camera and it made an electronic *pinging* noise.

Jack switched it on and the screen flickered a few times. His eyes grew wider with anticipation. Which picture would he see first?

The first image appeared. It was a picture of his classroom from about a year ago. In the background were various boys who could be seen acting silly and, in the front of the shot, a girl called Emily Pinehurst. She wasn't looking at the camera because she appeared to be talking to one of her friends but it was quite obvious that Jack had taken the photo just to get a picture of her. He felt embarrassed and quickly pressed the button to scroll to the next picture. It was another picture of Emily. Jack, now feeling even more embarrassed, pressed the button repeatedly and the pictures whizzed by until he found some shots of his work. These images were now much older.

“Here it is!” Jack announced.

His face was lit up with excitement and also by the glow of the screen on the camera.

“This...is *The Z-z-zip!*”

He pressed another button which made the image zoom in slightly.

“It's very small” said Mr Benson, squinting.

Jack's face turned to disappointment and he quickly defended himself.

"Small? This roller coaster is *massive!*"

"No, no, no Jack! I mean the camera screen is small, I can't see anything!"

Jack and Izzy looked at each other and giggled.

"Why don't you plug it into my computer?"

Mr Benson held out his hand so that Jack could pass him the camera.

Once the image was finally on the computer screen (and they could all see it clearly) Mr Benson asked; "So what's this got to do with Izzy's book?"

Jack started to point to the screen.

"The TV advert says that this ride is just about to open at *Scream Theme World* but I invented it. Look, I took this photo of my drawing of the same ride four years ago!"

Sure enough the date on the photo showed that it *was* four years old. Izzy gasped and Mr Benson looked confused.

"So, what you're saying is that Izzy wrote a poem and somebody stole the idea, and you invented a theme park roller coaster and somebody stole that idea too?"

"Exactly!" announced Jack with a huge sigh of relief.

"Ha..." Mr Benson laughed "That's the problem with this time of year, too much excitement before Christmas...*and* too much sugar in all those sweets!"

Jack pushed in front of Mr Benson and started tapping away on the computer keyboard desperately searching around *www.ScreamThemeWorld.com*.

"Got it!" he said.

"Got what?" quizzed Mr Benson now becoming slightly annoyed.

Jack turned around to face Mr Benson.

“The address for *Scream Theme World*, I want to go there to find out how they got hold of my drawing. The address says it's quite far away though.”

“But that’s probably just the address of the actual park, not the head office of the people who own it” Izzy chipped in cleverly.

Jack looked back at Mr Benson.

“Is it the same address on Izzy’s book?”

Mr Benson tutted, picked up the book again and flipped it over so that he could see the back.

“How odd!” he remarked, confused.

The wrinkles across his forehead had the same pattern as somebody running a comb along a big lump of Play-Doh.

“It has a post office box address on the back which is here in town. And then underneath some strange numbers”.

“Yeah this website has some numbers near the address as well” Jack added “And what’s a post office box address?”

Mr Benson brought up a map on the screen and pointed.

“It’s just the address of the local post office which this company is paying to use – people do it so that they can still receive mail but hide their *real* address – it’s like having a *virtual* address”.

“So it means that the company who stole my poem, they’re actually here, in Port David?” said Izzy studying the screen.

“Quite possibly” agreed Mr Benson.

Izzy tugged at Jack’s arm.

“Come on, we need to get going”.

Jack grabbed the camera and politely thanked Mr Benson for letting them use his computer.

“That’s OK” said Mr Benson who thrust the book forward “Here, take this. My treat”.

“Are you sure?” asked Jack.

“Positive!” said Mr Benson “They won’t sell very well anyway”.

He paused and, realising what he’d just implied, said “No offence Izzy”.

But Izzy didn’t care that he’d just insulted her book; she just wanted to get back to the safety of home.

Chapter 4

SECRETS OF THE SCHOOL

Jack and Izzy's route took them passed the gates to Jack's school, which were locked by a hefty chain and padlock. Jack stopped.

"You go ahead Iz" he said.

"No Jack, come on. Its freezing".

"I won't be long" he said whilst thrusting the book into her arms.

"But Mum will be expecting us together and it'll be me who gets into trouble" she pleaded.

"Just tell her I wanted to have a quick go on the swings. Honestly, I'll be home in five minutes".

She tugged his arm to try and prise him away but Jack was determined.

"Go on Iz or I'll tell her that it was *you* who lost her expensive lipstick!"

She huffed and stormed off.

Jack stared at his school through the metal bars of the main gate. He was trying to piece everything together in his mind. Something wasn't quite right. After a while his daydream was interrupted by something he thought he saw moving inside one of the classrooms. He looked harder but, whatever it was, had now gone. Of course, even though the school was closed to the children, it was possible that the teachers still had to work (despite the weather).

A sudden clanging noise startled Jack and he peered towards the side of the building where the large school bins were standing. He saw a white van with a small red logo printed on the side which said the word “*Nelots*”.

It was then he saw Mr Flanagan, the school caretaker. Jack couldn't quite see what he was doing but it looked like he was moving boxes between the van and the school. Two men stood around watching, or maybe even keeping guard. They were wearing baseball caps and sunglasses which looked strange because it wasn't even sunny....maybe the snow was too bright for them? Maybe they were part of a street dance crew and were using the hall for rehearsals? The boxes could be props? Jack dismissed that idea because the one on the left looked too old and unfit to do street dance. Unless it was something to do with a *Dancing Dad* competition?

Mr Flanagan eventually closed the van doors and watched the men skid out of the carpark and up the road. Then he disappeared back inside the school.

An icy blast blew across the playground and a piece of paper danced in the air before getting stuck to the bars of the gate. Jack retrieved it and was surprised to see it was one of his drawings from the folder he'd handed over to Miss Peterson the day before.

“This was meant to be for the competition!” he cried out loud.

Jack was furious that Mr Flanagan had been a bit *too* keen to tidy the classroom. How *dare* he throw away his work so quickly and without his permission!

He wasn't surprised though, Mr Flanagan had one of those faces you just didn't trust. His eyes were small, his lips were thin and his nose and chin were pointy. If there was ever a goblin-themed fancy dress competition, Mr Flanagan would get the first prize based on just his looks.

Jack wanted to find out if the rest of his work had also been thrown away. He took a quick look behind him to check there was no one about then climbed over the pronged gate hoping not to snag and rip his trousers to reveal his Ninja Turtle underwear. He wasn't normally the sort of kid to do something as reckless as this, but something was driving him to do it. He had a gut instinct this is what he *should* be doing; to find out the truth. For that reason, he thought his actions were justified.

To his surprise, when he pushed the main front door, it opened just as easy as it did when the school was officially open.

Inside, the corridors were cold, grey and lonely, a complete opposite to the previous day when the place had been alive with colour and noise.

Suddenly somebody wearing a leather glove grabbed Jack on the shoulder from behind. He froze, his heart felt like it was in his mouth, beating so hard and loud that he thought his ear drums would burst.

“Jack” came a soft whisper from behind him.

It was a familiar voice.

He slowly turned and found himself facing his teacher, Miss Peterson.

“Jack what are you doing here? If Mr Simpson finds you then he won't be very happy now will he?”

Before he had time to come up with an excuse such as; *I was really keen to do more maths* or *I'm sleepwalking, can you show me the way to the kitchen as I really fancy some pickled onions covered in peanut butter*, his thought process was interrupted by male voices echoing from a nearby corridor.

Miss Peterson pushed him towards a dark corner where there was a door he'd never noticed before. He'd probably seen it every single day of his school life but, subconsciously, dismissed it as being a storage cupboard or something similar.

“Quick, this way” she said, sounding nervous.

She fumbled with a bunch of keys, opened the door and forced him inside.

For a few seconds Jack couldn't see anything. Then Miss Peterson's face appeared. It was glowing a ghostly blue colour caused by the light of her phone. Nothing else was visible, just her face. If he hadn't felt so confused and a teeny bit scared, Jack would have laughed because it looked like her head was floating.

“Jack. I need you to do me a favour” she said half-whispering.

She rummaged in her handbag, pulled out a tiny torch and switched it on.

“Take this, follow the passage in a straight line and keep going till you see daylight. Only the caretaker comes in here and he's busy mending a burst water pipe in the staff room”.

“But Miss” interrupted Jack.

“Sssshhh, just go”.

She opened the door and let herself out leaving Jack behind. All he could see was the vapour of his breath bellowing out through the narrow beam of the torch like a dragon firing a white hot laser.

What Miss Peterson had forgotten to warn him about, was that he was standing at the top of a small flight of steps. He hadn't noticed them as he was too busy pointing the torch at the brick walls to check that no spiders were about to abseil onto his head. He edged forwards and lost his footing which made him crash down on his bony

bottom. The torch crash landed next to him, its light shining towards a piece of paper on the ground.

Jack rubbed his stinging, grazed hands and picked up the torch. He shone it onto the piece of paper and, at the top, it clearly read: “*Lucy Peterson (Ms) – employee number 120247*”.

Jack didn’t read all of it but it was obvious that it was something to do with her job which must have fallen out of her bag when she was looking for her torch. He knew he couldn’t follow her to give it back, so decided to stuff it in his pocket and climbed to his feet to begin his escape through the passageway.

This time he was taking no chances and made sure he could see exactly where his feet were going by pointing the torch towards the ground. He tried to remain brave by pretending the circle of light illuminating the uneven brick floor was a spotlight shining on a stage. To make it even less frightening, he imagined three mice dressed in sunglasses (one with miniature DJ decks) and performing a hip hop version of *Three Blind Mice*. He laughed out loud himself.

His shoes crunched as he quickened his pace. Every so often he passed open doorways on either side of him. He wasn’t brave enough to investigate where they led right now; his main focus was to keep going towards the daylight that Miss Peterson had promised.

It was only a matter of minutes before he reached the foot of another short flight of stone steps. At the top he could see an old metal gate and beyond that, overhanging trees and bushes surrounded by bright white sky. He switched off the torch and scrambled to the top. Luckily, it had the type of lock which could only be opened from

the inside so he would have no trouble getting out. He squeaked open the gate and stepped through the trees.