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SKOOL DAYZ AND BEYOND



NEWBY NEWTON AND THE JELLYBEAN TOWER

Newby Newton and The Jellybean Tower-Book I

Newby and his friends find themselves in a pickle after it is discovered their tickets and money to enter the amusement park are missing and the school bully, who torments Newby, is vastly approaching them, forcing Newby to hastily make a decision to assist a stranger in locating his lost Tower. Meanwhile, on the other side, Newby makes a discovery that will change his life forever, when he learns his bloodline lies in the thicket of the JELLYBEAN LAND.

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*Be on the lookout for more magic from the Jellybean land book series.

Chapter 1 Why Me

"This is it? This is as far as I get?" Newby held his arms out to his sides, palms up, irritated. "Are you kidding me? This has to be a joke, a very bad joke, I might add. Tell me this is not happening to me. It just can't be happening. It's not supposed to be happening to me!" Newby shouted from the middle of the parking lot.

Sadly, it was happening to Newby Newton. At its best, Newby's life was not much of a surprise gift of fortune on any given sunny day, more like a basket of misfortunate burned cookies. He was an excellent candidate for a pothole for dumping trouble in, on, if you ask Newby. What was not suppose to go wrong in his world went wrong and what went wrong went wrong times ten, if you ask Newby.

Newby clamped down so hard on his ears with both hands that he felt a sting and an immediate loud ringing deep within his eardrums. He wanted so desperately to block out all of the happy sounds coming from the other people he was being forced to listen to. His stick-like legs clacked his tennis ball size knees together in a clatter rhythm that sounded like marbles playing a tune, if you got close enough to hear them.

"I have absolutely no luck at all!" Newby shouted again, to no one in particular. His abnormal size chin popped out the way it did every time he got upset. Robin Parker, the only girl in the little group who called themselves, *pals*, stared at Termite as they were forced, with no other option but, to stand out in the Amusement park's parking lot.

"Auggggh! I am Newby Newton!" Newby was so sure he would one day shout those words in a meaningful way, claiming them for himself as a testament to his growth and maturity and not because of his frustration over an event he could not change even if he tried.

"Are you kidding me?" Newby withdrew from his previous confident outburst and assumed his low-key, modest, withdrawn self, an everyday tweeny.

"Who am I kidding? That'll never happen in my lifetime. I am an idiot. I have a funny shaped head with an unoriginal looking face, according to the school's student body standards, of course. I have a puffy nose with thin lips and a square chin. My arms are short, I have these bony legs and knobby knees that make me look like something awful. It's just terrible I tell you. My boat size looking feet make it seem like I bob up and down on the ball's of my feet every time I walk and my butt is round. Who the heck would want to hang around with a fella like me anyhow?

I feel like an utter and complete failure. I try, at least, to keep up with the other kids my own age academically, but it's no use. The other kid's at school get a kick out of me, or into me, depending on where they run into me, or whenever they plain-O-feel like harassing me."

"They are always laughing and making fun of me for some reason or another. They never laugh with me, never want me to have fun with them. Well, with the way I look, why shouldn't they? I hardly blame them. I would laugh at myself if I thought it would make them feel better, but then that would make me look exactly like them, a moron and that's not happening."

"I admit I am much weaker and certainly skinnier than my fellow school mates. I hate calling them that, that just means we're associates by default on account of we're all in the same school, some in the very same class. I hate that too. Even so, some of the girls have me beat. Hate it. Its no wonder everyone call's me a retarded moron. The boy's punch on me and even shove me in an empty locker, a full one sometimes, too, and even though my real friends are all smarter than I am I still share just about everything with them, not that they need it."

"Termite's even smarter than I am and he's no brainiac, let met tell you. He has been tossed out of more schools then I can name. For the most part, everything the other kid's do is 100 percent more than what I can muster, believe me, I tried, and failed, as usual. Even Ms. Robin Parker have me beat and she's a girl."

"In all due honesty, a complete nobody is who I am and probably who I'll ever be. On the bright side of thing's, if there is such a term in this situation, I am currently standing smack dab in the middle of this huge parking lot with my closest friend's, plus a ton of other people who I don't know, only, they are heading in the park, a place me and my friend's don't stand the slightest chance of getting in."

"That's the deepest downside of it all. Instead of being one of those happy and overjoyed kid's going in the park we are forced, by someone's irresponsibility and carelessness, to stand out here taking up space like we are one of the parked car's or truck's.

"Ms. Robin Parker, my very best friend, I might add, is a girl who like to hangout with the fella's, but hate when somebody call's her a tomboy, especially to her face, even though that is the best way to describe her. She's always wearing baggy clothes with a baseball cap turned to the side and a scarf underneath. And, even though she doesn't dress like the other girl's, or any girl for that matter, she is still just as pretty."

"*Don't tell her I told you that last part because I never told her so myself*, don't think I'll ever find the courage to say something like that. I mean, what would she think if I said something like that to her? What would she do? What would she say?"

"Mr. Catchins is tall and lanky, taller than most of the other kid's at school, even though most of the teacher's and the principal at Arthed Kemp are not all that tall anyway. He has a round bulb-like head and is about as awkward looking as I am. I suppose that's why we're such good friend's and get along so well. He wear's his favorite hat all the time, a crumpled looking number I doubt anyone else would even consider wearing. He would often clap his hands together and shout, "*I have an idea!*" Whenever he gets the notion in his head that he has an idea, or not."

Ms. Robin Parker hate's when he does that because the loud sound usually catches her off guard and make her jump something terrible."

"Now, Termite, well, he is something different all together. He is not that much taller than Ms. Robin Parker, which he hate's, but boy is he a mean one. I'm convinced he has anger issues. He is very muscular, like a jock, but smarter, sometimes. I believe he chooses when he wants to be smart, though, the other times he dummies up something awful."

"Termite is a true handful, but I have to honestly and thoroughly admit, he has gotten me out of a jam or two in my life, except for the times when I went out somewhere with my mom, away from the house, and he could not come to my rescue, which usually meant I got beat up. Okay, so, he's gotten me out of just about every other jam I have

ever been in, so, who's counting? Don't hold it against me, I have enough people holding things against me already."

"The thing that really always amazed me was when I did go out with my mom how complete strangers would just magically pick me out of a million and one other kid's to pick on. I had to sleep on that one for a thousand nights and the only thing I could come up with was, there have to be at least one bully in every neighborhood in this entire country. What a bummer for me, come to think of it, I hope I don't have to start worrying about that now."

"We are all currently eyeing the front gates of the Amusement park from the parking lot, thanks, come to find out, in large part to Termite, instead of being inside and enjoying ourselves like the others. This is supposed to be our fun time before graduation in two week's. It's funny, though, I never would have thought the school would put on a sixth grade graduation ceremony, just something, I suppose, to make us all feel like we really accomplished something, feel better about ourselves, whoopee!"

"It's fine by me, though, because this just means I no longer have to sit in a classroom with the same old moron's who sit around farting all day instead of doing their class assignments. I guess it wouldn't be all that terribly bad if the guy's wouldn't blame me every time they have a fart attack and the girl's laughed like silly, itchy, scratchy pads, held their nose and pointed at me causing the teacher to think I was the one doing all the farting."

"Okay, so, I farted one time, but that was only because I thought I would be accepted but boy was I wrong. Oh, I was accepted all right, but not how you think. I was made the laughing stock of the entire school still am till this day and that was a year ago. The more the moron's passed gas the more the girl's laughed and pointed at me like they were inhaling booty laughing gas. Ha, ha, ha, pooh butts, all of them. Thankfully, next school year I will be across the hall in seventh grade, unfortunately it'll be with a whole new group of moron's".

"The real unfortunate part about the whole graduation thing is that we'll have to dawn a silly cap and gown for the stupid thing that's only going to last for a few minutes at the most. It takes longer to get everyone seated for a graduation than it does for the actual ceremony itself, but, I mean, it's ok for Ms. Robin Parker to wear the silly get up, but, give me a high end break, will ya', a tassel cap and, especially, a gown, for a guy? Neva! Are you serious?"

"Me and my friends are not freaks but that's exactly how everyone else treats us. So we're a little different, what's wrong with that? That shouldn't matter, we're still people after all. Now we're suppose to climb on a stage in front of a big group of strangers, who'll hate us for no other reason than because everyone else does, just to shake the Principal's hand with germs on it and collect a ghost diploma. How original is that? They have been pulling that same old prank since the first schoolhouse was founded. There was always some sort of unhappiness for the happiness I had planned for my life."

"The sad part about my standing in the parking lot instead of in the park itself is, there are hoards of strangers, screaming children and amused adults acting like children, screaming and yelping. They are all excited just to be getting in the park, some place me and my friends don't stand a chance of getting. Despite the fact that it look's like it is about to have a very sizeable and laughable down pour any minute does not change the fact that my plans were ruined in the first place."

"You absolutely will not believe what happened when you hear it yourself, I know I couldn't. At first, I was about to act like a sap and just fart my pants over it, but I figure it just have to be a reasonable explanation for it, right? Even so, I'm still not sure Termite did not pull some degenerate move. He is known to average at least one boneheaded thing every day of the week and manage to stir someone's feathers, which is me now."

"Now, come closer. I don't wish Ms. Robin Parker to hear what I am about to tell you and I do hope that you will keep this a secret between us. Well, *I cried already*. Yes, it is a gift. Something I can do inside. I turned my head and sobbed like a baby once I found out the tickets were lost, but for all do consideration for myself, it was my idea to raise the funds through fundraising drives. I certainly reserved the right to ball, well, didn't I?"

Newby certainly had earned the right to cry, and he was irate now trying to hold it all together. It was definitely trying. The mishap was eating away at him something terrible. One of his biggest fears was making a fool of himself in front of his friends, especially Robin. He held her in the highest esteem. If she were not around it would be an entirely different story. He would just hate himself into embarrassment if Robin were to ever witness him crying.

Newby's friends were the only kid's who never laughed, teased or made fun of him. If they did so, it was all in good faith and he could take whatever they dished out because he usually dished some out himself, lightly, of course. They never even laughed when he tripped over his own two feet, something he did as often as he picked them up to walk on.

Newby is one of those clumsy kid's who fell up the stairs more times than he fell down them, and as long as he's known his friends they were never mean to him and he has never been mean to them, but of course, time and circumstances change everything.

"I swear, you are such an idiot sometimes Termite!" Newby's terrain finally burst. His head was near capacity overload. He simply could not hold it all in any longer. He had yelled so loud that a short plump woman wearing a purple dress just on her way passed the group drew back with her carry bag and almost hit him with it. That was her initial reaction, to hit Newby with her bag for nearly scaring the living wits out of her, but she tugged on her small daughter's arm instead and hurried away.

"How could you go and simply loose everything? You did not even lift a finger to help raise the money but you certainly lost it all. How is that remotely possible, Termite? You did it on purpose."

Newby squeezed his eyes together in a tight pinch. He desperately wanted to sock Termite across his jawbone, but knew that was the last of the last options he wanted to take. Not one he could take and get away with, that is, and even though Catchins and all of his near six foot frame was standing next to Newby, he knew he did not stand the slightest chance of getting away with something like that.

The two together were no match for a boy like Termite. Termite was not only strong but he was street smart. That itself meant everything in Termite's world. You have to have street smarts if you wanted to survive the streets and outsmart everything that went with it. That also meant Termite never turned down a single fight, not even one with one of his own friends. His nose flared in and out as his top lip trembled.

Newby was so irritated with Termite that his head barely moved when he shook it from side to side in discuss. He simply turned and walked off shaking his head, harder this time, so Termite could see that he was upset with him.

Before Termite had moved in the neighborhood with his mom from out of state, Newby had heard things about the new kid, how much trouble he had caused and was warned, by some of the other kid's and parents, to stay away from him. But Newby was good on giving a person a fair chance no matter their background. His mom always taught him to give a person a fair chance if he wanted them to give him one in return but Newby, even though he took this path, never got a fair chance, if you ask him. He watched Termite for two weeks before he spoke to him. He heard the kid stayed home from school for a full two and a half week's and watched TV before his mom realized how strange it was that the other kids in the neighborhood were still going to school when Termite told her school was over with, when there were still a month to go, aside from the two week's he took for himself. She ended up calling the school and found out he was playing hooky. She almost got in trouble with the truant people and they were going to make her take a two week class on parenting because when she did call the school the principle told her she was responsible for making sure he was in school and how she was neglecting her parenting duties. The principle even threatened to send a social worker to her house immediately if it happens again.

When his mom took him back to school, he ended up getting suspended that same day for fighting a girl name Deborah Long. He was an idiot. His mom registered him at Arthed Kemp and somehow lost track of his grade count or did not really care. In the registrar's office, his mom asked him what grade he was in, even though she was his mom and he was only ten years old at the time. He would have told her he graduated from high school already if he thought he could get away with it, because school administration never do a background check on a kid, especially a good kid moving in from out of state, at least that was what his mom told the clerk in the registrar's office, who was smiling at Termite, so he settled on a lie, which was that he was in the sixth grade, a grade he had never experienced before. They tossed him in a fourth grade class and he was very lucky they did that for him, because he was nowhere near passing it.

When he got in school, he was boohooing over some girl name Connie who supposedly lived in a duplex at the corner of Morton and Norfolk who was old enough to be his grandmother.

Newby stood a few feet away from the others wishing it would rain already so he could really let loose and ball it all out and not have to worry about being seen by his friends. If they saw him he would just tell them something flew in his eyes that made them red but, mainly, he stood away from Termite, especially, so he would not have to do something foul to him. Even if he did have to do it then run.

Robin walked backwards toward the direction Newby went in as she rolled her eyes hard to the left at Termite. She shook her head then squinted her eyes smaller. Of all the things this birdbrain had to go and do he had to loose the tickets for the park and that just does not sit well with Robin. She had looked forward to getting out of the house this weekend and Termite ruined it. She was thinking of not being his friend anymore, especially if she had to sit in the house all weekend doing nothing because of him. She usually followed suit when Newby got upset.

"What happened, Termite?" Catchins was shaking his own head a little irritated himself. Termite could not hold water even if it was sitting in a glass with a top on it. Catchins knew he went against his own better judgment when he tried to include Termite.

"Did you really loose the tickets and the rest of the money, Termite? Please tell me you didn't." Catchins had turned to Termite once Robin walked away. He put a hand on Termite's shoulder and peered down at him with a frown, but not too much of a frown because he did not really want to upset the kid.

"Tell me you did not go and do something stupid with those tickets, Termite."

"Stupid like what?" Termite said with his lips tight. He did not like that word, stupid, when it was directed at him in any way, shape, or form.

"I don't know, something like, betting someone they would not knock the chip off your shoulder, because you certainly seem like you have one on it," Catchins said sarcastically shrugging his shoulders.

"I don't have a chip on my shoulder." Termite eased his eyes over at Catchins' hand then brushed it off. "Anymore," he said then stepped back.

"Well you did something," Catchins said.

"Okay, fine, you know what? I lost them, all right? I lost the money and the tickets. I don't know how, where or even when I lost everything but I did, Okay? So get off my back." Termite got animated whenever he got too excited. He moved his arms like a bird and shuffled his feet back and forth sometimes, too.

"I don't know why you're blaming me anyway. I didn't want to come in the first place."

"I'm blaming you because you were responsible for it all, Termite. At least I thought you were responsible enough to handle this small little assignment. I was the one who allowed you to take that responsibility so you could come along, because I wanted you to have fun just like the rest of us instead of being stuck in the house with nothing to do. That's why I'm blaming you, Termite." Catchins was shaking his head again.

"Well if you would have just held onto the stuff yourself instead of giving me your responsibility maybe we wouldn't be in this position now, would we? Moreover, for your information, I wouldn't have been stuck in the house. I had plenty to do."

"Termite, you just don't get it, do you?"

"Sure, I get it. You should really look in the mirror sometimes, Catchins. Take your own blame at least some of the time instead of shifting it. Better yet, here's one, since you don't want to take responsibility, or even share it, blame the hole in my pocket, if you want to throw the blame, how's that? I really can't believe you're coming down on me anyway. You're supposed to be my best friend out of everybody and I can see we really haven't been on the same level lately," Termite said staring.

"This is not a joke, Termite, you messed up." Catchins stepped closer. He knew something had to have happened with the tickets even if he did not take responsibility for their loss himself, because there was a hole in every pocket of Termite's pants.

He did not actually want to believe Termite stole the money and sold the tickets, but what was he supposed to think when Termite is acting like he doesn't care about the situation. Catchins knew very well it was his fault for trying to include Termite in something he was not a part of from the start, especially since Newby was against his participation from the beginning. Catchins usually agreed when Newby said something but chose this time to overlook it because it was Termite.

"Are you standing right here calling me a liar, Catchins?" Termite said with his hands balled into tight fist. He kept them down by his sides, just incase.

"No, wait. I'm not calling you a liar, Termite," Catchins said as he threw his arms over his face in a defensive position. Even though he was much taller than Termite, Termite was much tougher and meaner than Catchins could ever dream of being. Catchins scanned the parking lot looking for a secure place to run, incase Termite decided to hit him.

Termite had accidentally struck Catchins across the jaw so hard one time, when they were play fighting, that you would have thought he did it on purpose. At least Catchins thought it was an accident, but now, looking in Termite's dark eyes, he wasn't so sure about that.

"Termite, it's just that, you know how this is supposed to be our fun time before our graduation in two weeks, well, you sort of ruined it all by loosing, not only the extra money, but our tickets to the park. All of these other people around us are getting in the park and we're not. We're stuck out here and it's about to rain like a mad dog, no offense, and it's not fair." Catchins softened his tone once he saw the tightening around Termite's mouth.

"I don't know about you Termite but I would rather be riding the rides in the rain instead of coming all this way and getting soaked in the parking lot with no ride, not even one to get back home in."

Catchins pointed back at the other people heading through the park gates. The happy screaming and yelling could still be heard, not only in the park but, also over the huge parking lot, too. The more Newby heard the strangers having fun the more he was disappointed and wanted to ball.

When a small group of kids from school walked toward her and Newby, looking like jock rejects and cheerleader wannabe's, Robin knew things were about to go wrong times ten. She knew this because she hated every single one of those prissy patch girls and the boy's who were with them. These kid's, especially the boy's, are the rowdiest kid's in the whole entire school. They called other kid's names and picked on just about every single kid they ran into, especially Newby, the teachers too sometimes.

Robin did not know any kid in their right mind who even attempted to make friends with these misfits. Half of them followed while the other half did not know where they were leading with their own two feet in front of them. It is very fair to say this group of whatnots is about as awkward as a round piece of barbeque toast with whipped cream and grilled soup, awful looking and awful tasting.

Robin was hoping once Newby see these creeps he would be able to hold it together, because he was known to curl up around them, one in particular. She wished it would rain something terrible right this very instant and wash these ungrateful mutts to smithereens, in an un-locatable zip code.

There was absolutely no way she would stand for any of his garbage if she were a boy and had a punch the size of an amusement park, then she would let him have it. He would feel like the bumper cars hit him then shot around the big roller coaster when she was done with him. See how much of a bully he would be after that.

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Chapter 2 Bully Brown

"Hey ya' tubby," the stocky, curly haired boy said. He always teased Newby with every name but his own.

Newby's shoulders immediately slumped when he heard the voice that he's had nightmares over for as long as he can remember. The boys' little entourage giggled in the background. Newby was use to hearing these kinds of sounds, he had heard them all too often wherever he went. He was use to being laughed at and made fun of, but he had always gotten the same old ugly feeling inside.

"So, tell me, how's it going little bubble butt, been out here long?" Even though there were dark clouds overhead and it threatened to rain something fierce, the boys' braces shined on his teeth like a brand new sparkly red apple, which, for some reason, made the girl's giggle even more. They thought it was real cute.

Two of the girl's even, somehow, managed to convince their parents to get braces for their perfect teeth, because they did not want to miss out on the current fad, and whatever color clothes the boy wore the girls would somehow find out about that and wear the same color the very next day. Robin called them groupies, for a better word, why else would they follow a complete nobody around who did not know where he was going half the time?

"Oh, hey little runt, almost didn't see you down there," the boy said staring down at Robin with a sheepish smirk on his face.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. You saw me, stupid," Robin said with an attitude. She wanted to kick him something good.

"Yeah, you're right. I did see you. I thought you were one of the little parking lot clean up guys," the boy said followed by a hearty laugh. He reached down then palmed the top of her head and gave it a sweep, almost knocking her hat off, as he laughed harder and looked back at his groupies.

All that little recognition did was to make them giggle harder themselves. Now there were at least four pairs of braces showing. Robin could not stand it anymore, that was the one thing she hated most, when someone made fun of her friends, and her height, especially when she was in a bad mood, which was often.

The fact that Robin wore baggy clothes and a baseball cap and acted like a tomboy in the first place did not help the situation any. Never the less, no one laughed at her friends and the fact that she was short and got away with it. That wasn't cool at all. Not if she had anything to say about it.

Just when she lunged at the boy with her face in a tight ball, Newby stepped between them facing the boy. Robin crashed into his back. At least he found enough courage to do that. One of the girls actually gasped like she had been speared in the stomach herself. She covered her mouth with one hand. She was such a prissy patch.

The other three girl's huddled behind the boy's. Before Newby could say anything in his defense, the boy shoved him hard in the chest with both hands. Newby tumbled backward over Robin. The two of them hit the ground rather roughly. Catchins and Termite immediately rushed over when they saw what had happened.

Right when they went to help their friends up from the ground the boy pushed the both of them from behind, piled them all on top of one another. The others did one of the things they did best to other kid's, laughed at Newby and his friends as they lay on the ground in a heap.

"How's that for an amusing ride since it don't look like you scrubs will be getting in the park no how?" the boy teased. Termite wanted to cream him, but the kid was known in the entire school to prove to be tough and he did not actually want to start anything with the others around, they were too soft, as far as he was concerned.

Bully Brown was like Termite in a sense. He has been tossed out of or transferred from just about every school there is. The only reason Arthed Kemp accepted him is because it was the only school he hadn't been kicked out of, yet, and it was more than likely paid a large sum of money to take him in.

Bully Brown is known to be the meanest kid on two legs. Termite was a tough cookie, but he knew when to be that way and who to be that way with. He cursed Newby for being around at the wrong time.

All of the girls think Bully Brown is cute and the boy's think he is the best athlete, even though he's never played a sport in his entire life. Newby thinks he is a drag, always looking for attention, but knew if it came down to it, half the kids at school would protect him if they had to. He was sure of it.

Bully Brown always led the charge in picking on Newby. He was always mean to him every time he saw him. It seemed like as soon as he stepped foot in Arthed Kemp he started in on Newby for absolutely no reason at all. He would catch Newby walking down the halls and clip his feet from behind, make loud jokes about him in front of everyone in the cafeteria, say stuff like Newby's family members weren't who people think they are. He would even slap Newby on the back of the head and call him a hiccup head.

Newby is a bobber; he bobbed on the balls of his feet when he walked. As if he was not awkward enough he even tripped over his own two feet most of the time. He could not balance himself upright long enough to defend himself without fear of falling flat on his face, his small group of close friends were not much help in that department.

They were all awkward in some sense or another, except for Robin, but her attitude sometimes was what made her awkward, outside of her tomboyish ways. Bully Brown pushed off and again led the charge, this time they were headed toward the park gates. His group nearly walked over Newby and his friends. They had to shuffle out of the way so not to be stepped on. Robin kicked out but managed not to kick anything but air, wished she'd kicked and tripped them all.

Newby drew his legs in as he stared up at who has to be Bully Brown's older brother, the one who must have driven them to the park. The boy kicked Newby's feet as he walked by. Yes, he was the spitting image of Bully Brown, almost but older.

Newby had gotten to his feet and walked off again. Robin found him on the other side of a truck two lanes over. She stared at Newby through squinted eyes. She was not exactly sure what he was feeling, only that he was upset over the tickets, mostly. She knew the rest of the left over money weighed heavy on his mind, too, but she wanted to punch that bully in the mouth.

Nevertheless, the fact that one of them had to call their parents to come pick them up weighed heavily also. That was a problem in itself. They were all allowed the

responsibility to oversee their own entire trip, from fundraising to transportation to and from the park and this is as far as they got.

They hated to admit, because of Termite, they came short of their goal, failed, so to speak. Calling any one of their parents was something they all agreed not to do unless under extreme emergency measures. Their parents trusted them.

"Why are you whispering?" she asked as she leaned toward Newby.

"Because I have something really important to tell you and I do not wish for anyone else to hear it," Newby said, leaning in himself.

"Well, what about Catchins and Termite? They are your friends too you know," she said looking back. Newby looked out toward them around the front of the truck and shook his head. They were still looking after the other group.

"Nah. Maybe later. I just wish to tell you for now," Newby said as he brought his attention back to Robin, but before he could get started the first cup of ice came sailing over the truck and caught him on the back of the head. As his body tensed from the cold chill and Robin jumped back, two more cups caught him off guard and splattered the back of his shirt.

At first, Robin thought it was funny and she did laugh as the icy liquid slid down Newby's shirt. The empty Styrofoam cups lay at his feet. Before the group re-emerged, from the other side of the truck Robin heard Bully Brown's giggle turn to laughter, then, they all started screaming and yelling. Bully Brown was out in front, as usual. He pushed Newby up against the side of the truck then slowly emptied the rest of his iced soda on top of Newby's head.

Newby just knew the moron's had already gone in the park, but now he was sure they doubled back, sneaking between the cars, just to humiliate him some more. Termite was fed up with it all. He was tired of giving in, Bully or no bully. He hated when anybody picked on someone else just to make themselves look big, especially when it was somebody who wouldn't fight back, like Newby.

That was the one thing Termite hated about Newby, he wouldn't stick up for himself. Catchins noticed Termite's desire to punch Bully Brown mounting and begged him not to cause trouble.

"What? I'm not the one causing trouble, they are!" Termite snapped as he stared up at his friend. His arms were flapping up and down like a bird. He reached down and scratched at his right leg like he had just been bitten.

"Yes, I agree, but if you act like that bully, then you'll only become exactly like him," Catchins said.

Termite played the scenario out in his head. He never, in a million years, thought he would ever remotely resemble someone like the likes of Bully Brown, someone he so despised. Bully Brown spent most of the school day picking on other kids, Termite spent his trying to deter people like bully Brown from bullying other kids. Most of his fights were with bullies, people he did not like much.

He could not figure out how the others came by choosing the very same activity as his group did in the first place. Now he was glad he did loose the tickets and did not care anymore that the others were mad at him. At least, now, he would not have to see that dirt bag bully Brown in the park.

The other kids at school had split into small groups and chose an activity to do together, then went out over the neighborhood to raise funds for the expenses they would

incur. Afterward they are to write a short-short story about their chosen activity or simply go before the class and give a speech at the final assembly.

Even though Bully Brown is much taller than Termite and outweighed him by, at least, thirty pounds, that did not discourage Termite from wanting to fight with the bully. The fact that Termite hated Bully Brown increased his adrenaline. His top lip was trembling terribly this time and his skin started to sweat.

Termite suddenly took off racing toward Bully Brown, but Brown stepped to the side at the right moment when his older brother stuck out his leg and clipped Termite's feet. Termite flailed forward with his arms flapping out to his sides as his feet danced all around trying to keep his balance. Nevertheless, he speared Newby in the stomach and took him to the ground with him.

Bully Brown and his groupies walked off again laughing their heads off. Everything was funny to them. If the teacher gave out passing grades for laughing no one would be able to beat them. The girls bumped into Robin one by one, as they passed by her. Catchins had to hold her back as the guy's roughly bumped him.

"Let's just leave, Newby," Catchins said pulling Newby to his feet.

"That Bully Brown has the biggest eagle and I can not stand him," Newby said as he struggled to his feet holding his stomach. He did his best to hide his pain, a technique, according to him, was just something he used to make it seem like he was doing all right, when all the while things weren't as they seemed.

Something or another always bothered him. He also hated the fact that Robin had witnessed his further embarrassment. He felt sorry for himself, that's for sure.

"Pig's," he said as he snuck a peak at the others over his shoulder as the girl's sashayed away and the boy's walked in a way Newby could only hope to.

"Pig headed idiots is what they are. They should all be cast out to an animal farm somewhere on another Island so they can roam with the other animals since they are already pig's," Robin said as she crossed her arms over her chest and she meant every word she said. Her dislike for this group of kid's was far beyond what Newby and the others could imagine. If it were up to her and she did possess any ounce of magic she would certainly make use of it and cast them into something so deep they would not begin to know how to climb out of it.

Her round freckled face waited, with no expression, for Newby to tell her what he thought was so important already.

"Why should we be the one's to leave?" Termite snapped as he bounded to his feet. "We were here before those lousy bums and I am just about sick of having to run off every time they decide they want to take over the space we are already in."

Catchins shook his head at his friend.

"I can't believe you actually said that Termite. We have to leave because *you* lost our tickets and *we* can't get in the park because, well, you certainly already should very well know why," Catchins said.

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Chapter 3 Restoring The Castle

"I have anxiety attacks, Ms. Robin Parker," Newby said. "Outer as well as inner attacks." Robin waited for Newby to finish whispering to her as they stood a few feet further away from Termite and Catchins. She was nearly laughing herself. Anxiety attacks, go figure. The only thing that stopped her from bursting with total laughter was the look on Newby's face. His eyes were downcast and he was wringing his hands together like a little kid, nervous, serious even.

"Come on, Newby, what, are you serious? Do you even know what an anxiety is? I don't. Besides, you're way too young to have an anxiety attack anyway. Are you sure? Moreover, how do you really know you have it? Robin was facing Newby, really concerned. He finally lifted his head and looked out over the parking lot. Doves of people were still streaming toward the park gates.

"Because I have the symptoms," Newby said feeling downright bad for himself and for those who may not even be aware they have the symptoms.

"What symptoms are you talking about, Newby? I haven't noticed any symptoms."

"Well." Newby stopped and leaned over and looked to make sure Catchins and Termite could not hear him then whispered even lower than before.

"For starters, I sweat more than the average person."

"Is that all? Robin said.

"No, that's not all. Sometimes I get overly excited. You wouldn't notice because it's usually inside. I feel like I have to do something extremely fast, too, when it happens. Like, sometimes I feel like leaping from a tall building..."

"In a single bound, yeah, I get it, you feel like superman," Robin said. She tilted her head more and squinted up at Newby, mostly because the sun was playing peak-a-boo in and out of the clouds, Plus, Newby is much taller. She shielded her eyes with her hand. "What boy don't feel like playing superman sometimes? My dad act's like he's superman all the time, especially if someone mess with his girl's. You can be a superhero if you want, Newby, it's ok," Robin said sincerely. But Newby was shaking his head like she just was not grabbing hold of what he was trying to say.

"I'm not trying to be any superhero, Robin, this stuff is as real as it gets," Newby said softly.

"Come on Newby, you don't believe something like that. Everyone sweats and they feel like leapfrogging some time too. Even I do. My dad says he's about to leapfrog just about every other day and my mom says it too. *"I swear you kids are going to make me leapfrog one of these days."* Robin mimicked her mom with one hand on her hip and the other wagging a finger. "My mom is a whole big riot when she say's it, too."

"So if you ask me its pretty normal to feel like leapfrogging. My parents feel the same and they are as normal as can be, wait, they can stand to be just a wee bit more normal, but anyway..."

"No Ms. Robin Parker, I don't mean like that. Not like leapfrogging over someone's back. I mean, I really feel like leaping from a very tall building when it happens, even though I am afraid of heights, Newby said sadly." Robin frowned a little, saddened even

herself. She really cared about Newby an awful lot. He is her best friend after all and he meant the world to her.

"I had no idea you were afraid of heights," Robin said.

"Yeah, just one of the things I keep to myself. No sense in feeding people more information about me than they already have. They'll just turn what I say into something negative and use it against me like they do with everything else they find out about me, even if it is not true."

"Come on, Newby, do you really mean it? Of course you don't. You can't have something like that. How did it happen anyway? And don't mind those nasty punks, they are just scrubs themselves."

"That's the thing." Newby leaned his back against the truck with the dark windows. "I don't know really, when or how it started. I just know it happens every once in a while. Everything happens to me. I simply can't find any happiness and I'm only twelve years old. I may even have an outburst once in a while, too, but I really try hard to keep it all inside."

"Someone told me once it was better to talk things out but what I have is way too embarrassing to tell anyone but you because I know you will keep it a secret. Usually the anxiety goes away in a few minutes after I eat something with sugar in it. Besides, I know it's for real because the Doctor told me so. She told me I suffer from an acute case of anxiety."

"Ha!" Robin nearly shouted as she pointed a finger at Newby. "That proves it. You can't have anxiety because you can't go to the hospital without your mom's written permission, so how did you see a Doctor?"

Newby plopped his chin down on his chest and shook his head.

"I was talking about Mrs. Crawly," he said easing his head back up. Robin was puzzled at first until she figured it out.

"You mean, Mrs. Crawly, the school Nurse?" She winced.

"Yes, Doctor Crawly."

Robin could not help herself this time. She loved her friend dearly but is he serious? Mrs. Crawly passed out aspirin, lollipops, to the good little kids, and bad advice to everyone else. She had to make herself stop laughing at the thought of the school Nurse handing out medical advice when she is only a Nurse practitioner, far from being a registered Nurse, let alone a Doctor.

"It's not funny, Ms. Robin Parker," Newby said frowning.

"I'm sorry, Newby. I don't mean to laugh but, ok, have you even told your parents you have anxiety attacks?" Robin was holding her stomach because she laughed so hard.

"No. Not yet anyway. You're the very first person I told."

"You mean, besides Doctor Crawly?" Robin said then giggled.

"Yes, Doctor Crawly. She told me on Friday that she would give me until after I return from the park to tell my Mom, or she would do it herself."

"Well, my advice to you is that you tell your Mom as soon as you step foot in the house. If Mrs. Crawly tell your Mom she'll make it sound way worse than what it really is. She'll probably make it seem like you have some sort of real disease or something." Robin suddenly became serious about the situation.

"Well, it is a real disease, I think. It feels like one," Newby said shrugging his left shoulder.

"Well, do you feel sick?" Robin placed the back of her hand on his forehead as he leaned down to her. "You don't feel sick. Every time I get sick this is how my Mom can tell if I'm lying or not. She places the back of her hand on my forehead and if it is not hot she makes me go to school, even though I don't mind going to school," Robin said.

"No, Ms. Robin Parker, you don't get it. It's not like a cold or anything like that. You can't feel it with your hand. It's like, I know it's there and then it's gone."

"Well, it's your story, Newby, if that's what you're sticking to. I guess that explains why you just up and run off sometimes, huh?"

"No, that's not why and it's not a story, it's the truth. And I run away because I don't like to be around a bunch of people all the time."

"That's crazy, Newby." Robin looked at him awkwardly. "Why would you choose to come to an amusement park of all places if you don't like to be around people? That's kind of backwards."

"Fun," Newby said.

"Yes, finally!" a strange voice said loudly.

"Whoa!" Newby shouted as he covered his head and ducked while he pushed away from the truck, nearly stumbling over Robin again. Robin shuffled backward. Termite and Catchins came running over again. They thought Bully Brown and his flunkies had made their way back again somehow. This time Termite was not going to allow anyone to get in his way. He was determined to fight.

"Sha boom, boom, boom! You know what you're missing kid, hope. That's right. You are missing the most important part of a kids life-hope all the way around," the man said as he stepped out of the rickety sounding truck Newby had been leaning against. His clothes were loud and very colorful like a circus clowns makeup.

His hat was crumpled, sort of like Catchins, and he carried an old piece of tree branch for a cane. He slammed the door shut with a loud pop and bang then he tried his best to even out the wrinkles in his clothes, whatever good that would do. His clothes were so wrinkled even his socks may have wrinkles in them.

His teeth were all rotted like the wood stick he carried and was something only his mother could stand to witness without feeling offended. He was never praised for the appearance he chose to balance out his look.

"You gotta have hope, kid," The man said to Newby as he stepped closer to him and Robin as they began to recover from their scare. Newby had gotten nervous just by looking at the man. Robin looked on herself. She was more standoffish. Both took a giant step backward.

"What do you want? She finally asked as she eyed the man.

"Why, I want the very same thing you should have-hope," the man said snapping his finger. It was loud like a rumbling roller coaster. "Zoom! The lot of you are missing hope, letting it zip right by you. It zooms over your head like a high flying kite every time." He swished his hand in the air like a plane.

Newby finally stood straight up and smiled as Termite and Catchins showed up staring at the wrinkled old man.

"Life is certainly built on hope and discovery, is it not? Don't let anyone try telling you different," the man said, then took Newby by the arm and pulled him back over toward the truck. Newby pulled Robin along with him while Termite and Catchins stood and watched.

"Are you kidnapping Newby, Mister?" Robin asked. The man stopped then spun on his heels a little off balance, offended.

"Of course not, young girl. Why would I do that?" he asked with a frown that was hardly noticeable from the other wrinkles that covered his face.

"Well, because you're pulling him to your truck and he's squeezing my arm, because he's acting like a baby. I think he's having some kind of anxiety attack," Robin said. Newby looked down at her because he trusted her not to expose his secret.

"Anxiety!" Termite and Catchins said at the same time as they looked at Newby moving in closer.

"And so I was," the man said then released Newby's arm. Newby had already let go of Robin once she called him a baby. At first, he thought there was a strange energy coming from Robin after she spilled his secret but realized what he felt had to have come from the stranger. Maybe it was a small anxiety attack, like an aftershock of an earthquake. Then again, it did feel a little magical.

"All of you kid's have some sort of dysfunction or other," the man said rather assertively looking at the group. There it was. Newby can forget about a magical feeling, he was dysfunctional.

"You," the man pointed at Newby. "Do you really have anxiety attacks, or is it your imagination? I don't know because I'm not a Doctor." Newby looked down at Robin again, a little hurt. He did not have an answer for the man because he was not a Doctor himself. He just knew how he felt inside and what Mrs. Crawly told him.

"And you, young girl." He pointed at Robin. "You hang with these boy's so much you're starting to act like them." Newby felt a small sense of gratitude for the man saying what he could not say, but wanted to say something after she told his secret. He knew Robin hated when people, especially strangers, spoke that fact about her. He thought that actually did it.

He just knew Robin was going to attack the man. He watched her but was surprised when she just stood there and did not say one word about it. She never moved a muscle. She just continued to stare at the man like she was under a spell. Newby thought maybe she was having an anxiety attack of her own and did not know it.

"You and you," the man said pointing at Catchins and Termite. "You believe you're some brute of a fella, but you're not so tough. Tall kid, you really are smart but you won't take off that silly looking cap long enough to allow your brain to receive any fresh ideas."

Catchins looked at Newby as he made sure his cap was still in place. Newby stood and monitored the entire situation. He thought what a strange twist this turned out to be. Not only Ms. Robin Parker, but also, Termite. The both of them just stood there and did not do or say anything to the stranger who just verbally insulted them all and even though he was mostly right, how does he know what he does about them? Newby knew Termite did not like the man saying he was not tough when he just knew he was.

"These really are things that you kid's should have discovered on your own. You don't need anyone to tell you this. You just have to dig deep within to discover everything you need for yourselves. Identify your own weaknesses and talents instead of being lazy and letting someone else do it for you. Find out what works for you, and I know just the place," the man said. He had sort of a gleam in his eyes.

"The Amusement Park. That's what we came here for," Termite blurted out.

"Umm, no, that's not it," the man said shaking his head. "This kid isn't so bright," he said to himself but the others could hear him loud and clear.

"That place is boring compared to what I have in mind. You have to dig much deeper than that." The man pulled open the loud rusted truck door. "Climb aboard," he said.

"Are you kidnapping us, mister?" Robin asked.

"No, no, kid, you got me all wrong. Here, take my clothes for instance..."

"No thanks. Feel free to keep them yourself sense you dug so deep within and that's what you came up with from deep inside," Termite said smartly. The others giggled, even Newby.

"Well, I suppose not, but in my own defense, this is really not who I am," the man said glancing down at his own ragged clothing.

"Sure, most people like pretty clothes, even me but, not these particular clothes. Clothes don't make people. People make clothes. My clothes are not all that pretty and I get that but, as I've said already, this is not me." The man popped his dusty looking bowtie with both hands then leaned against the truck.

"But you see, sometimes we all have to go against our own wishes. Now, I have to admit, I do have a slight problem and..." The man trailed off and went into a deep trance-like state of thought.

The kid's wondered how any of what the man said would change the fact that they still can not get in the park. He called it a bore but it was where they wanted to be. They waited patiently for the man to come back around and say what he had to say and hoped it will be that he will be able to get them in the park.

Termite was signaling them to leave by jerking his head to the side like he was pointing at something while the man was in his trance, but the others were already in disagreement with him so they ignored him.

"I have a dilemma," the man said, suddenly snapping out of his trance. "I lost my Castle and I could use your help to find it." The kid's jumped back stiffly when they heard his booming voice. Robin's mouth tightened.

"Are you serious?" asked Robin.

"I cant believe this, dilemma, we have our own dilemma," Termite said agitated.

"Mister, are you crazy? Because my dad says I should not call someone crazy unless I ask them first," Robin said.

"Hmm, well, maybe I am a little," the man said scratching his head. "I don't believe so, though."

"I have an idea!" Catchins said clapping his hands together.

"You do that to me one more time and I'm going to... just don't do it again," Robin said with her right hand balled into a fist.

"Sorry," Catchins said sheepishly, but he knew he'd scare her.

"Listen, why don't we help you with your dilemma and you can help us with ours. We can help find your Castle and you can get us in the park," Catchins said to the man.

"Now, that is a most wonderful idea," The man said clapping his own hands together. Robin twisted her mouth up at him.

"That is the stupidest thing I ever heard of in my entire life," Termite said. He turned to Catchins. "Are you crazy yourself, Catchins? I'm just asking."

Robin did not find Termite's sarcastic humor at all funny. He was making fun of her and she knew it.

"No, it is quite that simple you see. We locate his Castle and then he get us inside," Catchins said.

Newby and Robin were staring at Catchins, along with Termite, with the same thought. Catchins finally lost his brains. He was mostly, all brains but everyone faltered a time or two once in a while.

Newby had to admit, for a guy, especially a ragged looking one, the man actually had the nerve to come out and say he not only owns, but lost a Castle. He has a nerve to even ask for their help. Who's ever heard of such a thing anyway? Such lunacy?

"We still have our own problem regardless, and your dilemma does not trump ours, mister, especially if you cant get us in the park," Termite said giving in to his previous selfish thought about not caring about loosing the tickets.

The entire thing smelled like old stew to Robin. She was not convinced in the least way of this stranger's true intent. It all just sounds too weird.

The man raised a bony finger to his lips as he leaned deeper into the multicolored truck that was as colorful and ugly as his clothes. He thought again for a long while before he came to his next conclusion.

The kid's looked at one another wondering if the man really is crazy. He is a stranger after all. Termite was waving his hand gesturing for them to leave. Robin was about to do just that but the man came alive again.

"I have it!" he shouted. Newby's knee's knocked together as he reached for Robin, but she thought it was Catchins who was trying to scare her again and socked him right on the arm.

"Hey, ouch. It wasn't me," he said rubbing his arm.

"Well, I can't take it back now," said Robin sarcastically. She had been waiting to do that for a very long time. In fact, she doesn't know why she hadn't done it before. It felt very good. She could not wait to do it again.

Catchins was still rubbing his arm as he shuffled over and stood on the other side of Newby away from Robin. He had no idea she packed such a wallop. The heavy clouds overhead gathered closer themselves and made a rolling rumbling sound like a flying roller coaster as they turned darker even more

"Camp, that's exactly it, camp, the man said almost overjoyed. He was looking directly at Newby then glanced up at the clouds before he returned his attention back to Newby.

Newby did not know exactly what to make of the one hundred year old looking man staring into his eyes. He was making Newby nervous, but Newby was still trying to figure out the strange feeling he felt earlier when the man had grabbed hold of him. He wondered if the man had not touched his T-shirt, would he still have had the same sensation or would he feel normal.

Newby wanted to ask the man about what he was feeling, if he felt the very same thing, did he mean it to happen but Newby was more concerned with looking like a fool in front of Robin than anything else. Nobody else really mattered as much as she did. He was good at holding things in.

"Camp is for kid's, mister," Catchins finally said as he straightened himself and looked down at the man attempting to intimidate him with his height.

"And so you are absolutely right, very tall one with the crumpled hat," the man said straightening himself as he put a hand on Catchins shoulder, but quickly removed it, then stuck a finger in the air over his own head.

"This is not just some any old camp I'm talking about. It really is a special camp, wont cost you a thing to get in either and you will have lots of fun, more than what you would had you made it in there," he pointed at the Amusement Park. "What do ya' say?"

"Are you calling us special needs, Mister?" asked Termite.

"Thanks but no thanks, Mister, we were set on the Amusement Park, the rides and all. I really cant see how going to any little camp, special or not, is going to take the place of an Amusement Park. I don't find that amusing at all," Robin said rather sassy. The man smiled a vile crooked smile.

"That's the beauty of it all. It is what you don't see that makes this opportunity so amazingly wonderful and fun," the man said still eyeing Newby. This place, once you discover it, I assure you it will change your lives forever, all of you."

Termite was shaking his head in disagreement, which made the man literally blow out a jaw full of luminous air only Termite could see. Termite squinted at the array of fog looking air then looked at the others but they seem like they did not see it or they were not interested in its appearance. The man continued once he felt that was just enough to keep Termite quiet.

"Your problem is you're growing up way too fast, kid," he said still directing most of what he was saying at Newby. You have to slow down and live a little. I'm sure you've heard those words spoken before by some of the adults, haven't you? No matter. He waved Newby off before he could come up with the answer.

"Don't be like the adults, kid, they made mistakes and some times were never forgiven for them. Kid's can make all the mistakes they want as long as they learn and grow from them and never make them again. The adults want everything to be nice and pretty, even though, the truth is, things will never be that way. It's not meant to be," the man said glancing over at Termite.

"Is that why your clothes look the way they do, because you're not perfect and you made mistakes?" Robin asked unforgiving.

"Yes and no. Some things can be explained while others cannot. Never mind my clothes for now. You kids should stay young, grow slow and have as much fun for as long as you can. This camp is just the place to do that in, full of adventure," the man said, this time eyeing them all. Termite finally paid attention without a smart remark at all.

The boy's still seem undecided about the man while Robin did not believe a single word he was saying. She was keeping an eye on Newby. If any of them, he would be the one to give in to this craziness. Besides, they came to enjoy the rides not give in to some fairytale about some missing Castle business, plus Termite was acting weird. He was too quiet, Robin noticed.

"Okay, look kids," the man said standing up taller. "Take any piece of fruit you wish, Apple, Orange, Grapes, even a Banana, your choice. The one thing they all have in common with people is if you leave a piece of fruit sitting out for too long it will dry up. People dry up all the time. We all loose our spark and joy, our luster too. It never comes back and shines after it's left us and gone. You'd be hard pressed to find a case that does, if you can."

"You mean, like your truck?" Robin asked as she glanced at the old looking truck like it would give off something she did not want to catch and end up having to report to Mrs. Crawly, the school Nurse practitioner for treatment. Newby looked at her. Some how he knew she was secretly making fun of him.

"Yes, exactly like my truck," the man said as he leaped nearly two feet in the air and did a full twist from front to back. Newby was surprised at this. He raised his eyebrows at the feat, considering the old man looks as though he could use some assistance to walk. Newby figured that was what the stick was for, even though he doubts he needs it.

"Finally, I'm starting to get through to you kids," the man clasped his hands to his head. Termite noticed the stick standing up on its own when the man let go of it. He frowned wondering why the others hadn't seen it.

"The truck looks angry and dried up because it lost its spark, joy and luster, just like you kids did when you realized you could not get in the park without those tickets."

The man had a point. No tickets no park rides.

"And just like you, you lost your spark, too," Newby said genuinely.

"Exactly like me. Now you get it, but I reserve the right to offer that I am not at all angry. Elders do not carry on in such a manner. Not the good ones anyway. I commission you kids to assist me in getting it all back, my spark, joy, luster, the Castle, everything.

"And just what do we get out of the deal if we do decide to help you?" Newby asked.

"Well, first off, what you want get, is *in that park*. You don't have tickets, remember?"

When the man mentioned the tickets, the others looked at Termite. The last thing he needed was for someone to remind him of his screw up. Nobody wanted to be reminded that they'd screwed up, but most times that's exactly what happens, somebody reminded you occasionally, especially when they were upset with you.

Termite already felt lousy as it is without someone throwing up a reminder in his face. Reminders usually came in big bright banner size posters with loud colors that told everyone you knew, and those you don't, that you screwed up somewhere. Usually he would not care about whether he screwed up or not, because he was always expected to. But these were his friends, his only friends. Not many other kids could deal with him the way the three of his friends could, even though he always made it tough to be around him for too long at any given time.

Termite's biggest show of affection, as he called it, was when he displayed the only emotion he ever knew - aggression. That was something he did really well. It was what had gotten him thrown out of school on several occasions.

"Ok, fine, we'll do it," Termite said almost immediately changing his mind.

He feels rotten enough as it is. There was no sense in being the one who further spoiled their potential fun. Who knows? Maybe the old man has plenty to offer. He wanted to do anything to right his wrong for loosing the tickets. He had gotten it earlier when the man shouted, "I have it," The man had brushed up against Termite then, causing him to feel something he has never felt before and cannot describe, nor explain.

The rest of the group was really staring at Termite now, including the old man. They thought he had gone and lost his mind. At least that's what Robin turned and asked him.

"Termite, look at me," she said grabbing the front of his face. "Have you gone and lost our money, the tickets as well as the rest of your cotton picking mind? I'm just

asking. Robin Parker was a little too forward at times. Maybe that has something to do with her Latino upbringing.

"Hope not, not more than I already have anyway, but maybe we can earn some ticket money by helping this guy out. We can find his Castle. How hard can that be, anyway?" Termite said shrugging out of Robin's grip and looking up at the man.

"Come on guys, what do we have to loose? I admit, I screwed up, is that what you want to hear?"

"No, we want our tickets so we can do what we came down here to do," Robin said.

"Well, I lost the tickets, but I'm prepared to make up for it if you guys are willing to let me," Termite said rather convincingly. Robin squinted at him. He was acting strange. He never talked so clean and clear before, and he hardly made sense when he did.

"No tickets no park," the man said shrugging his shoulders with that vile crooked smile again. "What do you say?"

"No. I don't like it. We have plenty to loose. We cant just up and go running off with a complete stranger," Robin said.

"Yes, she has a point," Catchins said moving in closer. Newby looked over the front of the truck and saw Bully Brown and two of his cronies headed back in their direction and immediately slumped his shoulders feeling pity for himself.

"I agree," Newby quickly said, as he threw up a hand like he was in class. He was secretly trembling inside hoping he did not have to go through another embarrassing assault from that bully Brown character. He was also hoping his friends went along with him. Catchins and Termite quickly followed suit.

"What? You agree to what exactly?" Robin said raising her eyebrows. "Girls don't agree to just any old thing, especially when we don't know what we are agreeing to and I don't know what you guy's are agreeing to," she said rather smartly, this time snaking her neck with her hand on her hip.

"What?" she said sheepishly, noticing the boy's staring at her, even the old man had his arm in the air as well. She knew exactly what they were agreeing to. However, Catchins knew Newby was trying to get away from bully Brown. He had also glanced over and saw Brown heading his way. He hoped Termite wouldn't see and start in on them again. Had he been taller he would have been able to see over the truck himself.

"I agree that we should definitely give Termite a chance to at least attempt a second chance at making thing's right. After all, he is the one who screwed up. Besides, everyone deserves a second chance," Catchins said biding his time and counting how many steps in his head it would take for Brown to reach them. He was just as scared of Brown as Newby was.

Termite did not take too kindly to Catchins' reference he made about him screwing up. He already knows he screwed up, that is why he admitted it and is taking full responsibility for his actions.

Robin knew Termite was not like everybody else who was actually sincere about their second chance, at least, they made up for, or tried to make up, for their past mistakes. This will be Termite's umpteenth second chance.

"Fine," she finally said giving in. I'll help but you better do right Termite. It's not like I have a choice in the matter anyway, especially if all of you guy's are going anyway. What am I suppose to do, go home and sit around the house doing nothing while you guy's are out having who knows what kind of fun? Not going to happen lets go." She

threw her arms out to her sides and sneered at her friends. They all laughed at her then hugged her.

"Besides, it's about to rain anyway and I don't want to be the one to call my dad and tell him he has to come and pick me up. I'm sure he's sitting around the house in his robe and slippers reading a book that his friend Mophy wrote enjoying a quiet house while me and my sister are away but, that doesn't mean he don't love us. I wouldn't want to leave the house either." She pushed them off of her.

"Which one of you guy's feel like calling your parents?" She said. They looked at one another knowing Robin had a point. Parents had a thing about leaving the house on a rainy day. They rushed and piled in the truck. Newby and Robin rode shotgun while Termite and Catchins rode in the back.

"Twelve!" Catchins shouted as he laughed out loud. Termite looked at him then caught bully Brown out of the corner of his eye. He was standing nearly next to the truck.

Newby smiled as the truck raced right passed bully Brown. He knows hate is such an awful, nasty and strong word. He knows because that is what his mom taught him, told him never to hate anyone no matter what.

It is well within your right to dislike the things other people do, the bad choices they make but you should never hate another human being no matter who or what he chooses to be Newby's mom would tell him

Newby was not buying into his moms none hate rule now because bully Brown is a very bad piece of work. For all he knows his mom has never suffered from any kind of humiliation in her entire life. According to her she was a squeaky clean student in school. She doesn't know a thing about how it is to be the most awkward looking and hated kid in the entire school, to be picked on and laughed at for no reason, having to wear shabby looking clothes.

She never had to go through any of that, so how could she even begin to understand? She would not understand even if Newby did tell his mom what he was going through, how it made him feel every single day of his life and how it was partly her fault for making him go to that stupid school in the first place.

Newby hates bully Brown because bully Brown hates him twice as much. He picks on Newby for no reason. If he were big enough he would sock that bully right on the nose and would not care if it hurt or not. He had always secretly wanted to sock Brown square on the nose, but he knew that would be just one more thing Brown and his clowns would have an excuse to chase him over the school behind, the other being he did not do anything to any of them.

"I don't like anything he does and I definitely don't like who he is, an outright bully with no meaning or purpose in his stupid life. I especially don't like it when he fart's in class and I get the blame for it," Newby said in a low growl.

He was taught in school that people, kids and adults, should always Aim their own Blame at themselves, account for their Accountability, be responsible for their own Responsibility and never allow their B.A.R. to be irresistible to themselves.

"Whoever decided the sixth and seventh graders should share class periods in the first place was foolish to do so," Newby said.

He gained enough courage and confidence to at least stick out his tongue and throw up his fist as the truck rolled by bully Brown.

Robin leaned over closer to Newby first, with her ear then she leaned forward but could not see who Newby was talking to, nor hear what he was actually saying, but she knew he had said something and she was sure he was not talking to her. She hoped he was not loosing it and started talking to himself like old people do. She glanced back to make sure Termite and Catchins were still holding on and had not fallen off the back of the truck, because if they had, old man or not, she was going to give him a bomber punch sock him right in his teeth.

Brown had a large stone clutched in his right hand. He secretly envied everything about Newby Newton but would never confess to it no matter what. The best way he felt he could communicate with someone he liked was to hate him or her even more, bully him or her even. He was a bully and did not care to know anything else. Why should he? He had never been bullied before and did not know what it felt like. The closest he'd gotten to that point was when he faced off with a bigger kid, Corn fed Fred, who in the end, wound up not being as tough as he thought he originally was, even though that was the very first time in Bully Brown's life that he was actually afraid of someone, but it never showed on his face at the time and the only reason Bully Brown won that day was because Corn fed was moving out of the neighborhood the very next day to go to a Catholic school for boy's and he did not want any smut on his record about fighting.

Brown wasted no time in running, literally, through the neighborhood practically announcing that he was single handedly responsible for running Corn fed Fred from the neighborhood and no one else had better not stand up to him or they will receive the same. Some of the other kid's moved away, too, because of him, if you ask Brown.

Brown dared anyone to taunt or make fun of him or challenge him in any way, especially Newby Newton, and by sticking out his tongue and crocking his fist at him, Newby was doing just that. He was silently daring Brown to cast his stone, also calling him fatty-pie-pants, a name Brown had heard a few times when he was walking through the school halls, but every time he turned around nobody was there. He had a good feeling that Newby was behind it all. Brown even heard the name in class when Newby was not there, which meant the chump had other kids calling him that name too. The little runt was even snarling with an evil smile across his face, which boiled Brown's blood inside.

Termite watched as the stone sailed through the air heading toward the truck but it looked as though it was going to hit him instead. He stood up straight and tense, waiting for the blow to strike him. He did not move an inch. He was that type of person, stubborn.

As soon as the stone was mere inches from Termite's head, the truck disappeared with a tremendous loud pop and a heavy flash of light. The stone bounced back and cracked Brown right on the forehead. He went down grabbing at his head.

"Newby, are you having an anxiety attack?" Robin said as she tapped him on his leg. She was still trying to see around him. Her little feet were dangling off the end of the seat.

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