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Opening extract from

Robot Girl

Written by

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To Neil and Lizzy
With love
As always

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CHAPTER 1
DATA

“Come on, Mum, you must know.”

Mum groaned. “Claire, how many more times must I tell you?” she said. “I don’t know what your dad is working on. You know he doesn’t like to show us a project until it’s finished and he’s happy with it. It has to be perfect before he’ll let anyone else in the lab.”

“But what d’you think it might be?” I asked. “I mean, why did he need all that data about me? Like how long my fingers are and how far I can see and how tall I am and all that?

And why did he scan my mind for my brain patterns? What's that got to do with ...?"

"Claire, read my lips – I don't know." Mum raised a hand to swot away a fly that was buzzing around her. She made contact and it fell dead at her feet.

I decided not to push my luck. It was clear that Mum was getting more than a little annoyed. She almost had sparks flying out of her eyes.

"Look, Claire," Mum said, "your dad said he'd show us his project later today and he will. Until then you'll just have to wait." She seemed a bit calmer now. She picked up the fly and dropped it into the bin by her chair.

I stood up.

"Where are you going?" Mum asked.

"To do my homework."



"To do your homework or to play on the net?" Mum asked.

"I don't play on the net," I told her. "I work, I study, I gather data, I support my learning …"

"But most of the time you play!" Mum said with a laugh.

I had to laugh too – because it was true!

"Well, I'm not going to play now," I said. "I'm going to talk to my pen pal."

"You've found one at last, have you?" Mum asked.

"Mum, where've you been?" I said. "I've had a pen pal for three weeks now. Her name is Maisie. And we've got so many things in common. It's amazing."

"What about all the other people who messaged you?" Mum asked.

"It's all right," I said. "I told them that I've found a pen pal and I only want one for the time being."

"I hope you were polite," Mum said.

"Always!" I said. "You know me!"