A BAD DAY FOR JAYDEN



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For all the Jaydens and
Miss Wilsons everywhere

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CHAPTER 1
The First Surprise

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP!

Jayden had been awake for a long time when his alarm went off. He always woke up early and didn't go back to sleep. His clock was old, and Jayden never knew if it was going to work. He spent half the night checking it and getting worried. He waited for it to go off. *That's why I'm always so tired*, he thought. He didn't have a phone yet. "When you go to secondary school," his mum said.

He hit the alarm's off button, got out of bed and pulled back his curtains. Rain was falling from the grey sky onto the street outside the block of flats where he lived. It wasn't yet seven o'clock but people were already standing at the bus stop. There was lots of traffic too, cars and vans swishing along the wet road.

Jayden headed for the bathroom and brushed his teeth. Then he went back to his bedroom and quickly got dressed. Mum hadn't done any clothes washing for a while, so he would have to wear the same clothes as the day before. That would be OK for a bit – it was only his school uniform. But he didn't want to wear the same clothes for three or even four days ...

Maybe Mum would do the washing today. They really needed some shopping as well – the fridge was almost empty. He wanted to ask Mum if he should go to the shop, but he'd have to wake her up first.

Their flat was small, with just two bedrooms, a front room, a tiny kitchen and an even more tiny bathroom. His little sister Madison had the big bedroom. She had more stuff than him – soft toys and dolls and things like that. Mum didn't have a bedroom. She slept in the front room on a sofa-bed, and Jayden knew it wasn't very comfy.

Madison's door was half open, and Jayden saw that she was still in bed, fast asleep. The front-room door was closed, and Jayden opened it softly. Mum was on the sofa, under an old duvet. Jayden could only see the very top of her head.

"Mum?" he said. "Are you awake? It's morning, time to get up."

"What?" Mum said from under the duvet. "Oh, leave me alone, Jayden ..."

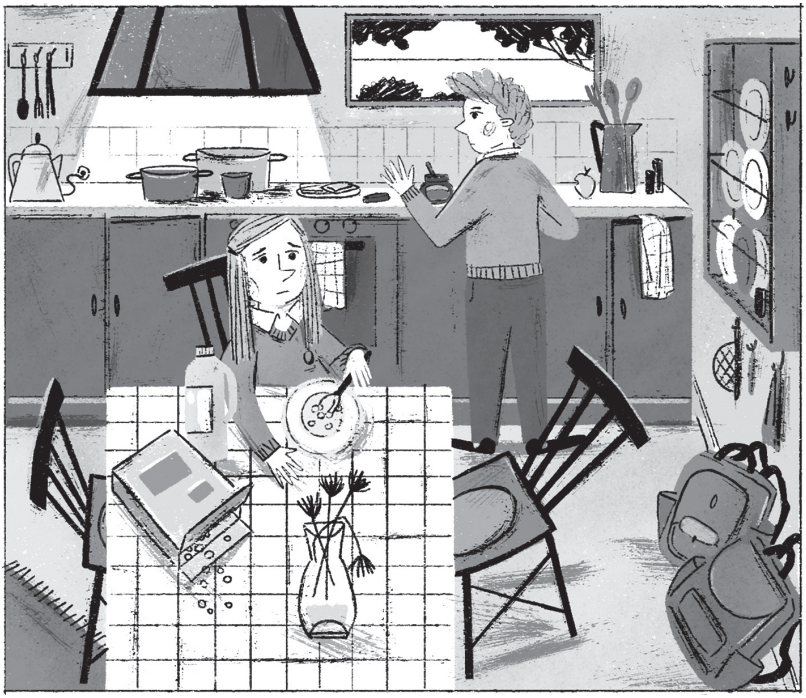
Jayden gave a sigh. Mum had been in a funny mood ever since she'd lost her job at the

supermarket. Jayden thought she'd be upset, maybe angry, but instead it was like she'd shut down. She hardly ever left the flat and spent most of her time sitting around. She wasn't looking for another job, so Jayden worried about what would happen if they ran out of money. They'd never had much in the first place.

"OK, Mum," Jayden said, and he backed slowly out of the room. Mum pulled the duvet right over her head, and now he couldn't see anything of her at all.

Jayden got on with what he had to do. He woke Madison, then made her have a wash and get dressed. She was grumpy in the mornings and it took a while.

At last she was ready, and Jayden gave her something to eat. There was just enough cornflakes and milk for her. Jayden had the last two slices of bread. They were old and a



bit stale, but he spread lots of Marmite over them.

He didn't know what they'd have for dinner later. There wasn't anything left.

"What's wrong with Mum?" said Madison. They were both sitting at the little table in the kitchen. "Why hasn't she got up again?"

"Er ... she hasn't been feeling very well," said Jayden. Madison stared at him. Her bottom lip began to wobble, and he thought she was going to cry. "Don't worry, she'll be all right," he added quickly. "Come on, we need to leave or we'll be late for school."

He sent her to put on her shoes and coat, and went to check on Mum. She hadn't moved, so he went to put on his shoes and coat too. "Bye, Mum!" he called out from the hall, trying to sound cheerful for Madison. "We're off now, see you later!"

There was no answer, and Jayden nearly sighed again. But Madison was looking at him with big eyes, and he held it in. He opened the front door, made sure his key was in his pocket, then led his sister down the two flights of stairs and out onto the street.

It was only a short walk to school along the main road. There was more traffic now, but at least the rain had stopped. The school gates

were as busy as always – grown-ups dropping kids off, the kids meeting up in the playground. Madison was in Year Two, and she ran straight over to her friends by the Infants entrance. She seemed a bit happier now, not so worried, Jayden thought, and that was good.

Jayden spotted his best friend Dylan across the playground and went over to him. Most days they met up before they had to go in with their Year Six class. Sometimes they played football, but often they just laughed and joked and messed around.

"Hey, Dylan," he said, expecting Dylan to grin and give him a fist-bump.

Dylan was talking to Luca, one of the other boys in their class. Jayden had never much liked Luca. He thought that Dylan felt the same. So what happened next was a surprise – the first of Jayden's day – and not a very nice one.

"Go away, Jayden," said Dylan, scowling. "We're not friends any more."

Then Dylan and Luca walked off, arms round each other.

Jayden watched them go, his heart sinking.

Why wasn't Dylan his friend any more?

