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CALLY & JIMMY

TWINSEPARABLE



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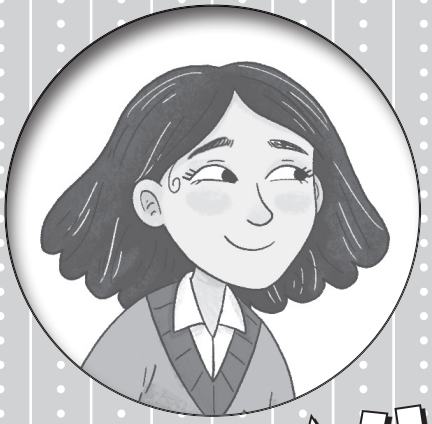
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TWIN TROUBLES





In case you don't already know, I'm Cally (short for Calista) and I have a twin called Jimmy (also known as Dimitri, also known as the most-annoying-brother-in-the-whole-wide-world). We live with our mum who is Greek but was born here in West London and our Yiayia, who is totally Greek, from Cyprus. Dad's not Greek, he's from Clapham (another bit of London but it feels like miles away because of all the traffic). And he doesn't live with us any more, but we get to stay with him every other weekend and sometimes when it's the holidays.

He and Mum split up when me and Jimmy were little, but they get on when they have to see each other at school plays and stuff.

Yiayia (we call her that because it's the Greek word for Grandma) looks after us a lot because Mum's always busy working or being tired from always being busy working. But I think Yiayia is getting a bit tired too now because she keeps getting muddled up. Sometimes she puts things away in the wrong places. I remember her looking for ages for her autograph book when a famous athlete came to our school for Sports Day. It turned out to be in the biscuit tin. Jimmy found that hilarious and Yiayia laughed it off too. But I didn't think it was funny, because I'd noticed the look on Mum's face. She wasn't angry or rolling her eyes or anything like that. She just looked sort of sad.

Something else Yiayia's been doing more and more of recently is asking questions, even if we've already answered them. Like the other day, when I was doing my homework at the kitchen table, she came up to me and said, 'Where is to be Jimmy?'

'He's at football club, Yiayia,' I said.

'Oh. Must we to be go pick him up, then?'

'No, it's OK, Candice Solomon's mum's bringing him back,' I explained.

But then, not long after that, when I was watching TV, she sat down next to me and asked me again, 'Where is to be Jimmy?'

So I said, 'He's at football club, Yiayia.'



And then she said exactly the same thing as before, ‘Oh. Must we to be go pick him up, then?’

So I gave her the same answer, ‘No, it’s OK, Candice Solomon’s mum’s bringing him back.’

Just two minutes later, when the adverts came on, she said, ‘Where is to be Jimmy?’

I repeated, ‘He’s at football club.’

And, do you know what she said? Again? ‘Must we to be go pick him up, then?’

I just took a deep breath and said – again – ‘No, it’s OK, Candice Solomon’s mum’s bringing him back.’

Jimmy, being Jimmy, isn’t so tactful with Yiayia. When he got in and she asked him for the third time if he’d scored any goals, he raised his voice and said, ‘I already told you the answer to that. I’m not telling you again.’

‘Jimmy!’ I said through gritted teeth. But my glare was lost on him.

‘Is OK,’ said Yiayia, ruffling Jimmy’s hair. ‘Yiayia knows, isn’t it, Jimmy mou?’





Typical – Jimmy was forgiven for being thoughtless, as he so often is, because he doesn’t slow down to think. It’s because he has ADHD. I do try to understand, but sometimes it feels like he gets away with it. Yiayia might forget lots of things, like what questions she’s asked us or where she’s put her stuff, but when Jimmy said that to her, Yiayia’s face fell and her eyes lost their brightness. Yiayia forgave Jimmy, sure, but that’s one thing I don’t think she will actually ever forget.

Anyway, I knew things were getting more serious when we were waiting for Yiayia to pick us up from school and she didn’t come. We’d all been released into the playground and Jimmy was doing his laps around the AstroTurf, yelling, ‘Freeedom!’ as he always does, because he has a lot of energy to get rid of after having to try hard to sit still in class all day.



Staying focused, even with his teaching assistant Miss Loretta to help him, doesn't come that easily to Jimmy.

So, there was Jimmy zooming round the pitch at a million miles per hour, and there I was standing by the fence and looking out for Yiayia. But Yiayia wasn't there. More and more people got picked up. I said goodbye to my bestie, Aisha. Mitch Moran loafed off with his big brother, Alfie. Jackson Boyle went home on his own, cos you're allowed to do that when you're nearly in Year Six if you've got permission from your parents. Nina Wilinska skipped away holding her mum's hand. One by one, everyone got picked up and went on their way. Until there was just me and Jimmy and a few other stragglers left.

I went over to the pitch to get Jimmy, because you have to go back to your teacher if no one's come to collect you. 'Come on, Jimmy,' I said. 'Yiayia's not here. We have to go to Mrs Wright.'



Jimmy reluctantly put the brakes on his trainers, making an annoying sound effect of a racing car screeching to a halt. Tugging him by the arm, I led us back to our classroom. I was being the sensible, holding-it-together one. But inside I had a sinking feeling.

Mrs Wright looked concerned when she saw us coming back without Yiayia, which didn't help much either.

'No Grandma today, Cally?'

'No. Not yet,' I replied.

Then Mrs Wright put on a cheery face, and said, 'Not to worry. Let's get you two down to the office and we'll give her a call.' But I *was* worried. And I could tell she thought something was up too, cheery face or not. Jimmy didn't notice, he was just irritated that he had to be in school longer than he needed to be and so he waved his arms round his head like a windmill and made silly noises to entertain himself along the way.

When we got to the office, Mrs Johnston already seemed to be expecting us. She put on that fake smiley face as well and said, 'Ah, Cally and Jimmy. Your grandma is on her way in. We've just had a call from Mrs Khan. She and Aisha bumped into her outside Superco. Must have got a bit waylaid with the shopping. All's well now. Aisha and her mum are walking over together with her and they said they'd help get you all back home.'



Why do grown-ups always say things like ‘not to worry’ and ‘all is well’, when it isn’t? I knew there was more to it than that because Mrs Johnston then went on to mutter to Mrs Wright something about how Yiayia was looking a bit lost and confused when Aisha and her mum had found her and that she wasn’t even heading in the direction of our school. She thought I couldn’t hear, but I wanted to know, so I *did* hear.

When Yiayia eventually turned up, she had a big frown on her face, and her eyes were sort of squinting, as if she was trying to work out a really tricky puzzle of some sort. But the moment she noticed us, she suddenly went all happy and kind of laughed and said, ‘Heh, heh. Hallo, Calista mou. Hallo, Jimmy mou.’

As the grown-ups put on their even cheerier faces and started brightly saying things like, ‘Ah, here we all are, then,’ and ‘All’s well that ends well,’ Jimmy squished up to me and whispered,

‘How come she hasn’t even got any shopping on her, if she was at Superco and that?’

My heart got a bit heavy then. He was right. All was not well at all. We went up to Yiayia, stood either side of her and took a hand each, and we headed back home, doing our best to act as if it wasn’t anything really.

But that night, when we were meant to be tucked up in our beds, I could hear Yiayia and Mum having a talk downstairs. It sounded deep. And Yiayia was stressed. So I crept out onto the landing and listened in from the top of the stairs.

‘I no good any more,’ said Yiayia. ‘I used to be able to do so many thing. Now I not can do anything.’

‘That’s not true. We just need to make a few adjustments, that’s all,’ said Mum. ‘It’ll be all right.’

‘Is not all right,’ sighed Yiayia. ‘I forget children today. I be in supermarket for nothing.’



‘Now, now. Don’t upset yourself. Come on. Perhaps it’s time the kids started walking to and from school by themselves anyway. They’re getting big enough for that now. Give you a bit of a break, hmmm? How about a nice cup of tea and some telly?’

And that was the end of that conversation. The kettle went on, and so did the TV. Nothing like a quiz show to cheer Yiayia up.

But going to school and walking home on our own! Now that *was* a result. I’ve been wanting to do that for ages. Shame I’ll have to be responsible for Jimmy as well though. But that’s OK. I can be grown up enough for the both of us. Anyway, I *am* the oldest. Only by seventeen minutes and forty-two seconds, but it still counts.