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Leave it to Eva

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Chapter Eleven



In the morning, Jenny walked us to the bus stop around the corner from her flat.

She put money into a machine and handed Ruby and me a ticket each.

'Bus number 127 will take you to the school where the interviews are on,' she said. 'It comes every ten minutes or so. And you get off at Whitehaven Road.'

'You mean we're going on our own?' asked Ruby looking worried.

'Oh dear,' said Jenny. 'Is that a problem? I can't go with you – I've got to work this morning.'

I beamed at her. 'No problem at all. We'll be

perfectly fine, won't we, Ruby? Bye, Jenny. See you later.'

Then I grabbed Ruby's arm and pulled her onto a big red number 127 bus that had just pulled up beside us.

I felt like a real Londoner as we went upstairs and sat in the front seats. It was a lovely sunny day, and everything seemed new and fresh and exciting.

Ruby was like a child on her first ever trip outside her own house. She kept saying, 'OMG, Eva, look over there.' And then before I had time to turn my head, she'd point in the opposite direction and say, 'No, look there instead.'

I tried to be all calm and sophisticated, but in the end I couldn't resist her enthusiasm, and started to stare and point too.

Ruby was excited by the black taxis and the tall buildings and the other red buses, and when she saw two policewomen on horses I thought she was going to faint away from the

excitement of it all.

'It's like being on the telly!' she said in the end, as she sat back with a happy sigh.



Soon we got to Whitehaven Road, and we climbed down from the bus and looked around.

'I wonder where the school is,' said Ruby. 'Jenny said it's near the bus stop.'

I grabbed her arm, and pointed, unable to speak. I was staring at an absolutely huge red-bricked building with turrets and pointy windows and flags fluttering from the roof.

'OMG,' said Ruby. 'It couldn't be. Could it?'

Then I pointed at a brass sign set into the wall – ***Whitehaven School***. 'If this isn't the right place,' I said, 'then it's a very elaborate hoax.'

'But it's like Hogwarts!' she said.

'No it's not. It's way cooler than Hogwarts. You are so totally lucky, Ruby. Imagine! This could be your school for the next few years.'

She shrugged. 'I'm not going to get worked up about it. There are loads of people coming for these assessments, and there are only a few scholarship places. I'd probably have a better chance of winning *X-Factor*.'

'I hope not,' I said. 'I've heard you sing, and no offence, Ruby, but I don't think you'll be winning *X-Factor* any time soon.'

'Thanks a bunch,' she said, pretending to be hurt. 'Anyway, I'd better go inside and register. Have you decided what you're going to do for the day?'

'Sure,' I said. 'I'm going to go to the library.'

'The library? I don't understand.'

'You know, it's a big building full of books, and signs telling you to be quiet.'

Ruby punched me lightly on the arm. 'I know what a library is,' she said. 'I'm just wondering why you want to visit one on your holidays in London.'

'Libraries are very educational,' I said primly.

‘Now you’d better go or you’ll be late. See you back here at four?’

Ruby nodded, then we had a quick hug and she ran in for her interview.



‘So how did it go?’ I asked Ruby when we met outside the school later.

‘It was good – I think.’

‘You think?’

Suddenly her face broke into a huge smile. ‘Actually it went really, really well,’ she said. ‘The interviewers were tough, and they asked heaps of hard questions, but I think they were happy with my answers. I think they really “got” me.’

Ruby is usually cautious and sometimes even a bit pessimistic, so seeing her so happy and positive was amazing.

I gave her a big hug. ‘So I can come and stay with you as soon as you’ve settled in to your incredible new life?’

'Don't go booking your flights just yet,' she said, as she hugged me back. 'I've still got fitness tests and swimming trials to go.'

But I wasn't listening. I was already planning heaps of wonderful long weekends in London.

That evening, we were all invited over to Andrea's place for pasta. The food was delicious, and his three flatmates were all really nice.

After dinner, Ruby described the principal of the school.

'Her name is Mrs Armitage,' she said. 'And she is totally scary. Every time she issues an order everyone jumps – and that's just the other teachers!' When we'd stopped laughing she continued, 'She has these cold grey eyes, like sea water on a freezing day. She looked at me once, and even though I hadn't done anything wrong, I thought I was going to start crying, I was so scared. I soooo wouldn't like to get on

the wrong side of her.'

'That would never happen,' said Jenny loyally. 'As soon as she sees you swimming she'll love you forever, I'm certain of it. Now we'd better get home, you need to be wide awake for your fitness tests tomorrow.'

Andrea walked us the short distance home. He and Jenny walked ahead, and Ruby and I walked behind them.

'I'm having such an amazing time,' I said. 'Thank you so much for inviting me.'

'Thank you so much for coming,' said Ruby. 'I wouldn't have dared to come without you. I hope you're not missing anything too important or exciting in Seacove.'

I hesitated. I still hadn't told Ruby about what was happening to Kate. I knew she'd be kind and sympathetic, but something made me hold back. I felt like this was her special time, and telling her about Kate's problems wouldn't be fair. So I just smiled and said, 'No. I'm not

missing anything at all in Seacove.'



The next day Ruby's fitness tests went really well. When I met her afterwards she was flushed and excited, and I thought she was going to float away with happiness.

'When I came off the running track, Mrs Armitage actually spoke to me,' she said. 'She patted my arm and said "well done". It was totally scary, but kind of amazing too.'

'Why wouldn't she say "well done" to you?' I asked. 'I bet you're one of the best candidates there.'

I half-expected Ruby to contradict me, but she didn't. I turned and saw a slow smile spreading across her face.

'You know, Eva, I'm beginning to think I can do this,' she said.

'Of course you can do this,' I said, suddenly realising that even though I'd always believed in

her, believing in herself was a totally new feeling for Ruby. I began to name items, pretending to tick them off an imaginary list, 'Passport, tickets, phone, cool clothes, more cool clothes, some—'

'What are you on about?' asked Ruby, as I knew she would.

I grinned. 'I'm planning what to pack for the first weekend I come to visit you in London,' I said.

And Ruby just smiled, like that wasn't a crazy dream – like it was really and truly going to happen.