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Opening extract from

Six Hours

Written by

Pete Johnson

Illustrated by

Jen Collins

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Chapter 1
The Great Escape

Dominic was getting scared.

He looked around. It was the start of the exam in the hall. And everyone seemed to be writing – except him. Dominic couldn't write anything for one simple reason – he had forgotten every single thing he'd ever learned.

His brain had frozen up.

What on earth was happening? It didn't make any sense. History was Dominic's best subject. And he'd revised for this exam every night for weeks. But now ...

'You're a bit nervous, that's all,' he told himself. He picked up his pen. Only he couldn't hold on to it. His hands shook too much. His tummy hurt too. It felt like it was about to explode.

"I feel sick!" The words were yelled across the hall. So someone else was feeling groggy. Dominic turned round to see who it was.

A hot, blonde girl from Dominic's class was swinging her hand in the air. Lara.

Mr King was the teacher in charge. He rushed over to Lara. "How dare you shout out in an exam?" he hissed.

"But I've been waving my hand for ages," Lara said. "And I'm going to throw up any second."

Mr King spluttered a bit. "All right," he whispered. "You may go and see the school nurse. I shall speak to you later."

"I can't wait," Lara muttered.

Dominic couldn't help but smile. He'd never talk to a teacher like that. No wonder Lara was in trouble so often. She always had a lot to say for herself.

But after Lara had gone Dominic felt worse. He took some deep breaths. They didn't help. And now his head was spinning.

At last he raised his hand. Mr King stormed over and glared down at him.

"Please Sir, I feel ill," Dominic said.

"You too!" Mr King said with a heavy sigh. "All right, go and see the school nurse. I'll speak to you later as well."

As Dominic stumbled out of the hall, he could hardly see where he was going. But the weird thing was, as soon as he was outside he felt better. And by the time he reached the nurse's room, he didn't feel sick at all.

The nurse was thin and miserable looking, with very small, very sharp eyes. Right now, her eyes were fixed on Dominic as he walked up and down her room. Next she made him touch his toes. And then she took his pulse.

"It's normal," she said. "There's nothing wrong with you."

Dominic had to agree with her. He felt bursting with health now. But if he returned

to the exam room he was sure his head would start to spin again and that horrible sick feeling would return too.

Then Lara staggered out from the loo at the back of the nurse's room. "I've puked up twice, Nurse," she announced. "I hope I haven't got any bits of carrot in my hair."

Dominic just stopped himself from laughing out loud.

But the nurse snapped at Lara. "Show me your tongue."

"Feels a bit rude to stick my tongue out at you." Lara grinned.

The nurse didn't grin back. Instead, she felt Lara's head and then took her pulse.

"If I could just lie still on your couch I'm sure I'll feel better in a few hours," Lara said.

"You're better now," the nurse said. "You both are."

Then one of the secretaries came in to say that the nurse was needed upstairs.

The nurse sighed. "I haven't had a moment to myself this morning."

"It's so annoying when people are ill, isn't it?" Lara said.

The nurse glared at her. "I shall return in a few moments with a teacher to take you both back into your exam," she said. Then she swept out.

Lara lay down on the couch. "That woman is a total nightmare," she said. "Anyone else would have believed me. I thought that bit about me having carrots in my hair was pretty good."

"So you're not really ill?" Dominic asked.

"Well, doh, of course not," Lara said. Then she sat up. "But you're a bit of a swot, so why are you here?"

