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All through school on Friday I worried about the park and Miss Turner. Of course, she should have a few days off, but what would happen if, when she returned, the inspection had already happened and the park had been shut down?

After school, instead of going straight to the park, I made for the high street. Something Mrs Benson had said on her doorstep had come back to me.

There are people at the council who are already planning for that situation.

Who were these people and what were they planning?

Just beyond the main row of shops stood the town hall. It was a huge, brown-brick building that looked more like a castle than a council building. A flag with the town's oak tree emblem swished in the wind and the steps at the front were steep and imposing.

A very kind man at the reception desk listened carefully to what I had to say and, instead of shooing me away like an annoying kid, gave me a visitor's badge and told me to take the lift to the fifth floor, where someone would be able to help me.

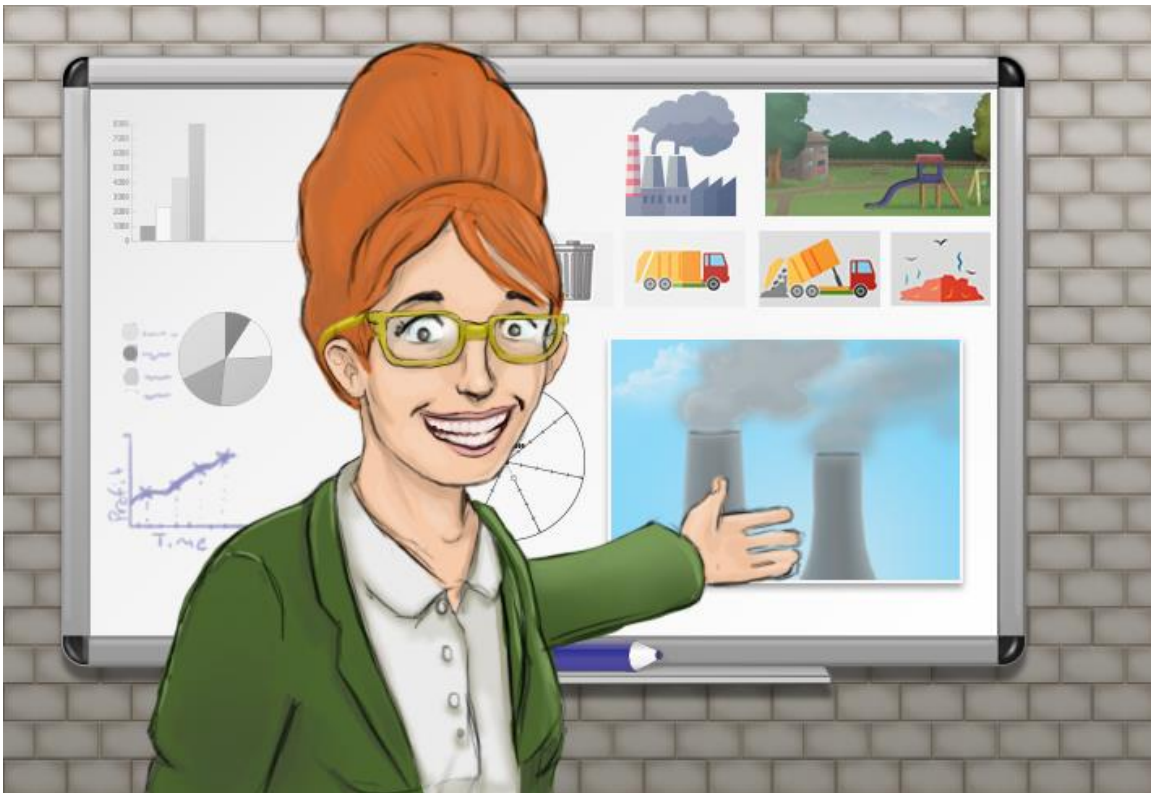
At another reception desk on the fifth floor, a woman with big, red hair led me to a room with large glass windows.

Inside, there were some enormous whiteboards. These were covered in sketches and diagrams and lots of complex-looking numbers. "Feel free to look at them as long as you wish," she said, before swishing out of sight.

I walked over to the first board and my eyes almost popped out of their sockets in astonishment. The sketches and diagrams were of the land Porchester Park stood on. They showed a huge incineration plant: a kind of factory where rubbish would be burned twenty-four hours a day. By looking at its sheer size and the list of chemicals it said the place would produce I could see that it would absolutely stink. It would also probably pollute the area for miles around. Plus it said that if the plant were built, over six hundred lorries would be making the journey to and from it every day.

So that's what this whole thing was about! It wasn't really to do with the park being overgrown; it was to do with the council selling the land to some incineration company who would stink out the local area and clog all of our streets with giant lorries!

And by the look of how detailed these drawings were, it felt like the decision had already been made, park inspection or no park inspection.



My blood boiled like a whistling kettle and I felt a shot of anxiety in my stomach.

I raced back along the corridor and hurried into the lift.

Twenty-five minutes later I was at the park. Mrs Collins and her six-year-old grandson were there waiting for me. This was today's army. I quickly told Mrs Collins about the plans I'd seen at the council.

"That sounds very worrying," said Mrs Collins. "I really hope the decision hasn't already been made. Having an incineration plant here would be appalling!"

"Can I have my ball?" said her grandson as I removed the padlock from the gates with the key Dad had collected from Miss Turner the previous night.

For the next hour, I scraped chewing gum off the slides in the play park and the Flying Fox. Mrs Collins did some weeding but spent a lot of her time playing with her grandson. As usual, I didn't feel it was anywhere near enough.

As I lay in bed that night, staring at the ceiling, an idea suddenly dropped into my head like a chocolate egg from the Easter bunny. If I couldn't get the park cleaned up in time for the inspection then maybe there was a different path I could take to get us out of this mess. It had to be worth a go!