

Tabby had a point. Emmy nodded thoughtfully.

“How can we stop them without drawing attention to ourselves?” she asked.

“Easy!” said Tabby. “We’ll set off all the fire alarms. Everyone will have to leave the building, and the aliens’ plan will be ruined.”

It was a really good idea. I’d always thought that Tabby was just a sports nut, but she was much smarter than I had realised.

“There’s one problem,” I said. “How are the three of us going to search for the machine without being recognised?”

Emmy thought for a moment ... and then all the light bulbs on her THINKING HAT 5000 turned on at the same time.

“Don’t worry, Ash. I’ve got a plan!”



2

DEVIOUS DISGUISES

As I made my way towards the school gates, my heart was pounding. I was sweating so much that I could barely breathe.

“Everything okay in there, Ash?” asked Emmy.

I opened the visor on my helmet, gasping for breath.

“No! Couldn’t you have made this fancy-dress costume a little less hot? I’m boiling!”

“That’s a top quality astronaut’s spacesuit you’re wearing!” said Emmy. “It’s designed to withstand temperatures of -200 degrees Celsius. I don’t hear Tabby complaining.”

Tabby gave me a wave. We were wearing spacesuit costumes for the party, complete

with a rocket pack and helmets. It meant that we could easily hide our faces, if we needed to, simply by closing the visor.

“That’s not all those suits can do,” said Emmy. “I’ve installed headsets inside the helmets so we can secretly communicate!” She held her watch up to her lips. “Testing, testing ...”

Sure enough, I heard Emmy’s voice crackle out of a speaker beside my ear.

“Cool!” came Tabby’s voice. “We can keep in touch while searching for the robot-making machine!”

“Exactly,” said Emmy. “Now, put your visors down. We’re almost at the school gates and, from now on, we have to act naturally. Don’t forget, I’m supposed to be a robot!”



She started walking towards the gate in large, robotic steps. Mrs Henderson was already waiting at the front gate with two more teachers. They were all wearing identical green jumpsuits, and all three of them were grinning that strange smile. “You are just in time,” said Mrs Henderson. “The mayor will be here soon. Leave the children here and we will take care of them.”

Tabby and I glanced at Emmy. We hadn’t planned for this. Without Emmy, it would be up to us to find the robot-making machine by ourselves. Emmy fumbled.

“Er ... can I come in anyway?” she asked.

Mrs Henderson gave her an odd look. “Why?”

“Um ... I need the loo.”

The teachers looked at each other.

“Okay,” said Mrs Henderson. “But then you must leave.”



We made our way into the school. I waited until we had turned the corner before I started shouting at Emmy.

“That was the best you could do?!” I ranted. “Robots don’t even go to the loo!”

“Shh! Keep your voice down,” said Emmy. “At least I’m inside. Now I need to find a different disguise so those teachers don’t recognise me. You two head to the sports hall, and I’ll meet you there!”

She scampered off, leaving Tabby and me by ourselves. The doors to the sports hall were just ahead. Inside, we could hear loud music and children shrieking with excitement.

“Come on!” said Tabby, patting me on the back. “Let’s go find that robot-making machine and turn Mum and Dad back.”

She made to step forward, but I stopped her.

“Tabs, I’m sorry I said you weren’t clever earlier. Your fire-alarm idea is brilliant.”