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‘What’s all this nonsense about, Sal—I mean, Britt?’ Mrs Melville’s voice had lost its sugar.

‘Yeah, Britt. I’m hungry,’ Dimi protested.

Britt thought quickly. ‘It’s just that er ... ah ... my pop always says that you should never take food or *drink* from strangers. I don’t want to sound ungrateful or anything. But you know how it is these days. You can never be too careful ... that’s what Pop says anyway.’ Britt looked up at Mrs Melville with big innocent eyes. Dimi and Dexter set their glasses on the table and exchanged worried glances. ‘But I *am* hungry. I have some food in my backpack.’ She needed to get that backpack before Mrs Melville had a chance to look inside.

Mrs Melville’s smile returned. ‘Very sensible, Britt. I’ll go and get your backpack for you.’

Britt bounded behind her. ‘I’ll help,’ she said.

Mrs Melville frowned but didn’t object. She clomped ahead, her heels echoing in the cavernous warehouse.

The trip to Mrs Melville’s office and back was short but it gave Britt another chance to gather information. She counted four doors along the row of offices. Three had windows. The end one, and the largest room, didn’t. And as well as a deadlock it seemed to have a chain and padlock around the handle. A storeroom perhaps? thought Britt. But what would they be storing that would require extra security? Britt’s heart skipped a beat. Could that be where they hid the birds? Could Hairy Legs be behind that very door?

Mrs Melville handed Britt her backpack without any trouble. Once back inside the lunchroom, Britt was relieved to see that the inside of her bag looked untouched. She got out her water bottle and took a thirsty swig. ‘Want some?’ she asked Dimi and Dexter.

Dimi eyed the fizzy drink in front of him and frowned at Britt.

Dexter defiantly picked up his glass. ‘You’re such an idiot,’ he said and took a huge gulp.

Dimi was torn. He looked from his glass to Britt's water bottle and back again. 'What the heck,' he said, picking up the glass. 'It's half-finished anyway.'

Britt shook her head. There was probably nothing wrong with the drink—but if there was, at least one of them would be ok.

'You had better get back to your posts,' Mrs Melville said to Wheelie Bin and Cheese Stick. 'I'll look after this lot.'

The guards left with Mrs Melville closing the door behind them.

'Now,' she turned to face the children, 'how about you tell me what you are doing here?'

Dexter got up from his seat. 'I have no idea why these two goo-brains are here. I work at the cemetery. You can ring 'em and ask 'em if you like. I saw 'em break in through the back fence then I ...' Dexter began to sway, his body moving in slow circles. 'I ... I ...' His eyes rolled back into his head and he flopped to the ground like a rag doll.

Britt and Dimi leapt to their feet. Britt shot a look of loathing at the sweet Mrs Melville. 'You ... you ...' Everything swirled in front of her, colours mixing with colours, like a psychedelic picture from the sixties.

A wave of nausea gripped her; she felt as if the entire contents of her stomach were about to lurch out of her mouth. 'My ... water ...'

Ker-thump.

Dimi crashed back into his seat, his head hitting the table with a thump.

'... bottle ...'

Britt felt herself slipping.

Darkness consumed her.