

Monkey Business In The Air - 00 Lilly Teddy Bear

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Second 00 Lilly Adventure, Lilly goes to the zoo



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Monkey Business In The Air - 00 Lilly Teddy Bear :

Chapter 1

A Day Out At The Zoo

With Lilly safely tucked up in bed and a kiss planted on her head, Vicky bounced down the stairs dumping her school bag at its foot. Then headed into the kitchen to collect the packed lunch her mother had prepared ready for the trip to the zoo. Lilly had no intention of staying in bed until Vicky got back from school. Lilly, who was not even the slightest bit tired, slipped out from under the covers. If there is one thing a secret agent bear knows, it is that they must get a good night's sleep when a mission is coming up, so she had and had more than enough sleep already. Besides today was the day, the day Lilly HAD to go to the zoo with Vicky. Peered around the bedroom door and down the stair, Lilly check the coast was clear. The family were all in the kitchen chattering away. Vicky's mother discussing the coming weekend's events with Vicky's father, whilst Vicky and her brother were having a 'lively' conversation about who should have the rosier apple for their lunch box. A most important issue when you are eight! Not quite as important as Lilly's mission though. The mission that had her swiftly slide down the banister and straight into Vicky's school bag just in the nick of time. And to burrow down to the bottom before Vicky came back out in to the hallway, place her lunch in her bag and zip it up.

Lilly would have to stay concealed at the bottom of Vicky's bag until they got to the zoo. If Vicky or Miss Sharp found Lilly before they got there, the mission would be off. Miss Sharp had said "No toys!" and if Miss Sharp said, then she SIAD and you had better listen! At best if Vicky found Lilly before they got on the coach to the zoo, she would give Lilly to her daddy to take back home. At worst Miss Sharp would find Lilly. Vicky would be in a whole lot of trouble and Lilly would find herself locked in Miss Sharp's drawer until home time and more importantly, after the trip to the zoo!

Chapter 2: All Board

All aboard

No. Lilly must not be found, the monkeys were stealing crocodile tears, it was her job to stop them and find out how any why they were infecting the visiting children. For the past month it had been reported by teddies all over the district that their owners had returned from the zoo with a serious case of croctearalitis: That's 'croc-tear-a-lit-is' which is name the doctors' use for the infection that has the patient crying false tears to enable them to get their way. This had resulted in several teddy bears being confiscated from their children unfairly, because a child's parents did not know their daughter or son had been infected. And really could not help the crying. But instead believed their crying was deliberate, because sometimes children and some adults too, do cry crocodile tears without coming into contact with real crocodile tears at all, just because they want to get their own way. This, as you know is a naughty thing to do! No, the outbreak of crocodile tears most certainly originated at the zoo and Lilly needed to get to the bottom of it. Teddy and children's happiness depended on it!

As each child climbed aboard the bus Miss Sharp asked "if they had their lunch pack, their drawing book and pencils" and if they had any toys, to "hand them over immediately!". Miss Sharp seemed to be in a particularly bad mood today. The teacher checking each bag as the children all boarded, depositing found toys into a large black bin bag that would go into her drawer until after the trip to the zoo. And for the errant child's name to be jotted down for a detention the following lunchtime. When Vicky was asked, she smiled sweetly at Miss Sharp and opened her bag widely to be checked. Knowing she had her drawing stuff and her lunch box, and most definitely did not have any toys. Not even Lilly, as much as Vicky wanted to bring her to the zoo. "Yes Miss" she replied to the questions regarding lunch and the drawing stuff and a resounding "No Miss" to the question about any toys. It was Vicky's forthright replies and innocent look that had 'Old Sharky Sharp' only take quick look in Vicky's bag. After all she could smell when a child was lying and she could smell that Vicky was not. However she did think that Vicky had an awful lot of pencils with her, her pencil case look ready to burst at the seams. And not surprisingly, it was quite a squeeze for Lilly to climb inside and pull the zip up behind her. It was a good job that Old Sharky couldn't smell teddy bear sweat, or the mission would have been over before it was begun! It had been a close call, but Lilly was on the bus and heading toward the zoo.

Chapter 3: Bear Talk

Bear Talk

Lilly was very pleased to be sat comfortably on top of Vicky's lunch box and no longer squeezed amongst the pencils. She was even more pleased to have arrived at the zoo and be walked around in Vicky's school bag, carefully peeking out so as not to be seen. However the four hours that Vicky and her class mates would be there was not very long, she needed to slip out of the bag as soon as she could and make her way to the bear compound. She needed to start gathering facts and the bears seemed to be sensible place to start the investigation. After all she was a bear and so it stood to reason that the bears in the zoo should be willing to tell her what they knew. It is against the rules for an animal to talk to a human or get involved in their world, but talking to a human's bear was perfectly fine. The two things that puzzled Lilly the most were; how do you make a crocodile cry? And of course, how would you collect its tears? After all, to do both, you would need to get pretty near, and we all know how 'snappy' a crocodile can be.

It was a short hop, skip and somersault across the path and over the wall of the bear's compound. And something that Lilly performed with her usual dexterity and deftness. Once over, she skirted the wall until she came to a pile of boulders, which she used as cover to get near to the big old Grizzly, laid out sunbathing on a large flat rock a little way from the humans peering over the wall. It was no guarantee that the bear would be friendly towards Lilly or that he would even be bothered to talk to her. Bears are not known for being particularly friendly, unless you're a teddy bear that is, so still at a safe distance Lilly moved into the view of the bear, which was stretched out relaxing in the sun and cleared her voice.

"Uhhh, excuse me sir", Lilly begun, showing as much respect as she could. "Might I have a word?" Roderick opened one eye and viewed Lilly almost absentmindedly, snorted a little, and shifted himself up on his forearms just a little. "A teddy bear, and what would a teddy bear be doing coming to see me?" "Still" he continued a little unconvincingly "beats being gawped at by that lot over there," Rolling his eyes across to the other side of the wall comically at the faces peering over. Lilly responded as politely as she could. "I was hoping you could help me sir. You see, the monkeys are stealing crocodile tears, and I was hoping you would be able to tell me how they are doing it" Roderick, for that was the bears' name, rolled over onto his back and groaned. "Oh that, why should I care?" Stretching his paws high in the air and looked at Lilly upside down. Lilly frowned at the big old Grizzly who seemed more interested in playing to the humans than what Lilly had to say. "Sir. This is important!" Lilly said still politely but more forcefully. Roderick rolled back over and stood up and grinned. Arching his back and making himself look very big indeed. "Watch this doll!" He then stood up on his hind legs and waved his paws about furiously letting out an almighty growl and pulling his lips back to expose his teeth. His manly display made the crowd of humans step back away from the wall fearfully, before he dropped back down onto it front legs. "They love me!" he said smugly. Obviously Roderick didn't mind being gawped at all really.

With Roderick's display Lilly knew exactly how she would get him to tell her what he knew about the goings on at the zoo. She knew now that Roderick loved to pose and loved the attention of the people visiting. "Uhhh" Lilly began again. "Sir". Roderick slumped back down onto his tummy and rested his chin on the floor. "Roderick, I'm Roderick". Lilly tried hard not to grin; she might expect a Grizzly Bear to be called, Rocky, or Atlas or even Boris, but Roderick. His name didn't exactly fill you with fear. Lilly repeated his name keeping a straight face. "Pleased to meet you Roderick, I am Lilly". Roderick chuckled deeply, but said no more, perhaps he though Lilly was a funny name too, one that doesn't exactly match a secret agent. "What would you do if the zoo was closed down?" Roderick sat up once again on his haunches looking at Lilly a little more intently this time. "What do you mean, closed?" Lilly put on a most serious face. "Closed because of crocotearalitis, and it's only a matter of time until they work out where its coming from and when they do, no more visitors, and no visitors means no zoo!" Lilly had laid it on a bit thick but it was doing the trick and

Roderick began to talk.

Chapter 4: How To Make A Crocodile Cry

How To Make A Crocodile Cry

"No more zoo?" Roderick looked close to tears. "But I like it here! Where would I go? I've been here since I was a cub!" And with each worried statement the big old Grizzly got more animated and grizzly about what it would mean if the zoo closed. It appeared that the tough old bear was actually a bit of a baby or more correctly a cub. So much so that Lilly had to coax him out of view of the crowd, firstly to save his dignity, but also to comfort and calm him down. If there is one job a teddy can do well, it is comfort a crying child or bear. Though she didn't much appreciate the bear hug Roderick gave her, it was worth the squeeze to get him out of his self-centred sulk and talking about what the monkeys were doing. "There, there," said Lilly as she broke free from the hug and stroked Roderick's nose reassuringly. "How are the monkeys getting the crocodile tears?" Roderick sniffed and began to explain.

"It's at night just after the keepers go home. The monkeys have a way out. I see them slipping under the fence and out through the hole they keep hidden in the netting. Gigging! They are always gigging! Those monkeys never stop gigging and messing about!" Roderick let out a big huff. He was clearly unimpressed by the monkey's behaviour. Lilly stroked a little more and encouraged Roderick to keep talking. "Go on, and then what happens next?" "They head down to the ostriches, whispering and fooling around like a bunch of kids on a hike, where they sneak up on one of the dozing birds and pluck its plumage. They're after the longest feathers they can find, and once plucked, run off towards the crocodile pit leaving the ostrich to run around startled from her sleep, squawking mad and spitting feathers! Poor old Beth barely has any tail feathers left at all." Lilly gave Roderick a kind smile; it was obvious that the big Grizzly was a big old softy really. It was also becoming obvious how the monkeys could make a crocodile cry. Roderick returned a worried smile and continued. "One of these days Rex is going to be too quick for those monkeys. Then they will be sorry!" "Rex is a crocodile right, Rex because he's a reptile I guess?" Lilly enquired. Roderick nodded. "Stupid monkeys don't know how dangerous he is. One of them stands by the pool and rudely wiggles its bottom at Rex to entice him out of the water, and as soon as he's out, the others attack with the long feathers and start to tickle. Man that Rex likes to be tickled. At first! Silly old croco' even rolls on his back. Well, that's when the real tickling begins. All those monkeys tickling him under his chin, armpits and belly. You know what it's like when you're tickled that much, more than you can take, when you can barely breathe for laughing. That's when you begin to cry, tears of uncontrollable laughter, it's then that those pesky monkeys steal his tears."

Lilly thought a little about what Roderick had told her, but there were still a couple of unanswered questions. What did the monkeys do with the tears and how were the children becoming infected? Neither question could Roderick answer. Lilly would have to go elsewhere for those answers. She figured that the best animals to ask these questions of would be the ones doing the stealing. With Roderick having told all he knew Lilly knew it was time to move on. She gave Roderick one last big teddy bear hug, reassuring him that she would stop the monkey's tomfoolery and make sure the zoo did not close. She then turned away to climb back down the pile of rocks; shimmy up a small tree and down back over the wall. The next stop the Monkey House!

Chapter 5: Falling Tears

Falling Tears

A prams' storage basket proved a very useful way to travel; out of sight, quick and comfortable. Though the small child crying above her made Lilly's heart melt. Her natural reaction was to climb into its arms and sooth the child's tears, but she could not be side tracked from her mission. It had taken nearly an hour to find out from Roderick what he knew. The clock was ticking: the countdown was on. One hour had gone and three hours were left until Vicky and the other children would re-board the bus and head back home. As Lilly's transport wheeled its way along the path Lilly could see Miss Sharp talking to a boy, it was Billy Smith. He was crying and Miss Sharp had a face like thunder. Miss Sharp having a face like thunder was not that unusual, but Billy Smith crying was. He was one of those children that just did not cry! The lady pushing the pram was heading straight to the Monkey House, hoping that the monkeys would be enough of a distraction for her daughter and quell the tears that appeared to be falling for absolutely no reason at all. Lilly suspected that they were heading directly towards the place that was causing all the tears. Even the child's mother was beginning to sniff, and adults are fairly immune to crocodile tears. Though the mother was fairly young, so perhaps her immunity to crocotearalitis was not that strong, never the less it was a worrying development.

Lilly had hoped to have gotten to the monkeys before any more children were affected by crocotearalitis. This made thing even more complicated. Back at TOTS (The Office of Teddy Security), the boffins had been analysing crocodile tears and had found an antidote, something that would counteract the crocodile tears. Not only would Lilly have to stop the monkeys, but she would have to collect the antidote: A perilous task, even for the world's best secret agent. How on earth was she ever going to collect the tears of a Boa Constrictor? If you think crocodile tears are hard to come by. Constrictor tears are incredibly rarer and very, very powerful. Unfortunately for Lilly they were also the perfect antidote to crocotearalitis. What made it even more difficult was that a Boa can only shed one tear at a time and only once in twenty four hours. Lilly had to make sure that the monkeys would no longer be able to infect the children before she distributed the antidote, although she had no idea how she would do that either. She did know that the antidote wouldn't last very long. Once she had dosed everyone affected with the cure, all that would happen, if she hadn't stopped the crocodile tears being used forever, is that the antidote could wear off and the children would become infected again. However she was going to collect the tears of a Boa Constrictor, she had to get to the monkeys first and before they had all the children in the zoo balling their eyes out.

Chapter 6: Monkey House

Chapter 6 - Monkey House,

At a convenient place Lilly slipped from under the pram and out of sight to find the hole the monkeys use to escape from their enclosure. It wasn't long before she came across a tunnel in the bushes that lead to the loose area of netting the monkeys use to aid in their creeping out of their home when nobody was looking. Lilly lifted it and crawled under it and quietly made her way to the huts at the back of the large tree filled cage. Unknown to Lilly a pair of eyes watched her from a heavily leafed tree just outside of the monkey's cage. A pair of eyes that didn't like what Lilly was trying to do. Eyes that had seen her arrive and talk to Roderick. Eyes that were plotting to do her harm!

There was no wonder that Lilly was not aware of her watcher, the monkeys were making such a commotion, swinging and leaping, chattering and laughing, teasing, pranking, joking and giggling. Roderick was right: Man, did those monkeys giggle incessantly! Lilly clambered through the doorway of the largest hut that the monkeys used for sleeping in or shelter when the weather was unkind. Inside it was no quieter. A group of monkeys sat preening each other, telling jokes and falling about whooping at the punch lines. Lilly tried to butt in, "Excuse me, might I have a word or two?" To which one of them replied, "Sure, try this. Go away!" The rest to fall about laughing and began telling teddy bear jokes: "Did you hear about the teddy bear who though she was a goat?" "No. How long has she thought that?" "Since she was a kid!" "How do you confuse a teddy bear?" "I don't know. How do you confuse a teddy bear?" "Give her four spades and tell her to take her pick!" As the noise of raucous laughter increased more of the monkeys came inside to join in with the hilarity. Lilly was getting nowhere and the hut was becoming packed with monkeys. Monkeys pushing and shoving trying to get 'their' joke in and laughing noisily when, because of the crush one of them would be propelled back out of the door or fall off his perch after a well-aimed slap on the back. Every monkey but one was in the hut, and it was bedlam! Lilly was trying her mightiest to be heard but it was hopeless. It was clear that she needed a different tack. She needed someone who knew exactly how to make others listen; to be quiet; to behave! Miss Sharp immediately sprang into Lilly's mind. And at this time of day she knew exactly where Miss Sharp would be. She would be where everyone was: at the pool watching the Sea Lion's show. Lilly was going to have to leave and fetch Old Sharky before she could get anywhere with the monkeys. Though leaving wasn't going to be that simple. Not now the monkeys had decided that playing catch with Lilly was a very funny way to decide who would tell the next joke!

Meanwhile outside, the one monkey who hadn't joined in with the others was talking to someone in the shadows on the other side of the fence: Someone who had peanuts as payment for his services. The monkey had slipped out under the netting and was taking instructions from a hard faced raccoon, before scurrying away to carry out the instructions with a promise of more peanuts on his return. A raccoon that was hell bent on creating havoc with his dastardly plan to put the children in danger so as to lure Lilly into a deadly trap!

It must have been about the tenth time that Lilly had flown through the air only land in the arms of another monkey, to listen to another teddy bear joke that she realized just how to get out of her 'hilarious' predicament. It was during this acrobatic flight, just before landing next to a small monkey near to the door, she yelled, "I know one!" How could the monkeys refuse to let her talk? "Two monkeys and a bath of hot water, one climbs in and says oo oo ha ha oo oo! The other replies put some cold water in then you idiot!" If there is one thing that gets a monkey's sides splitting with laughter it is a monkey joke. And with the joke told, the hut fell about laughing just long enough for Lilly to toss the giggling little monkey into the air to be caught and a round of monkey jokes to begin again while Lilly jumped out of the door, under the netting and towards the pool where all the humans had gathered for the show.

Chapter 7: Getting Teachers' Help

Chapter 7 - Getting Teachers' Help.

As Lilly headed off towards the wooden benches that rose in tiers from a corrugated roofed metal frame that lined one long edge of the Sea Lions pool, the monkey headed the other way and the raccoon slipped back into the shadows. The show had just begun so the benches were full of children, parents and teachers, all their eyes on the pool where one of the stars of the show was demonstrating how to keep a ball balanced on your nose while swimming backstroke. Lilly scanned the rows of backs for Miss Sharp, whom she located with ease by her silver haired bun which sat atop of her head: a hair style it appeared the strictest teachers always favoured. And if there was one thing Lilly required right now was a strict teacher!

Miss Sharp was sat conveniently on the highest row at the back of the stand and right at the end, where she could see all the children who sat in the tiers below her, all the way down to the pool, where Lilly's Vicky sat, a tissue in her hand. As too did many of the other children who occasionally sniffed and dabbed their eyes, feeling tearful for no real reason. All they knew was that they felt that they weren't getting their way: though they didn't really know what their way was either. Miss Sharp had her detention note book out and was writing names, which was a sure way of telling she was not particularly happy herself. She was scowling; her face, set like a prune sucking a lemon, showed her displeasure. If there was one thing that really annoyed Miss Sharp it was children who cried crocodile tears.

Lilly's fears about the infection spreading were turning out to be true: she had an epidemic on her hands. She had to talk some sense into the monkeys, find out if they had any more tears stored and how they were infecting so many children. And for that she needed Miss Sharp's help! Lilly was going to have to do something that was frowned upon in the world of teddies. Step over the mark, break a rule. Set aside the teddy bear code of conduct. She was going to have to interact with a human, an incredibly difficult thing to do, since letting a human know she was alive would mean being dismissed from TOTS and risked being sent teddy bear jail! There was only one avenue open to her, and if she got it wrong then not only would the whole mission be in jeopardy, but she would change the relationship between teddies and humans forever. She was going to have to hypnotise Miss Sharp!

It was a simple task climbing up the metal framework of the stand and onto a ledge that braced the uprights to support the roof. There tucked out of sight, Lilly felt in her special secret agent pouch for her pocket watch set on a long chain. Before she could lower and swing it in front of the teacher's eyes, which everyone knows is the best way to hypnotise someone, she would have to begin by talking her into a relaxed state. Lilly was going to have to take it very carefully. Miss Sharp was as sharp as her name suggests and didn't miss very much. If she smelled a ratâ for a teddy, the game would be up! Something perhaps you did not know, but Lilly did, is that teachers are particularly strange humans, in that their hearing is different from others: something that would help a great deal in hypnotising Miss Sharp. Have you ever wondered how your teacher heard something you whispered? Well it's because their hearing is very finely tuned. Teachers are one of a very rare breed of humans, in that they can hear teddy bear's talk.

So in very calm and hushed tones Lilly began to whisper, she whispered about warm sunny days on far away beaches, where waves rippled up onto their shores. She whispered of summer breezes in buttercup meadows and rivers that wound themselves sleepily through the fields. She talked about cool woodland walks, up in the hills where small birds flitted like dreams from twig to twig and nightingales sang lullabies. And she lowered the watch by its chain and started a pendulum swing in front of the teacher's eyes, and spoke about warm cosy nights on plump comfy cushions in front of crackling fires, whose flames danced hypnotically amongst the logs. And ticking grandfather clocks and how it make you sleepy..veery sleeepy. Miss Sharp's eyes at first had followed the watch as it swung left to right and back again, but as Lilly talked she slowly brought the

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watch to a stop and as she did the teacher's eyes lids became heavy and eventually close. Miss Sharp was fast asleep; all but that she could still hear Lilly in the background.

Now there is a little you need to know about being hypnotised so you can understand what happens next. It is like being wide awake, though you are asleep whilst the hypnotiser can give you instructions and make you believe pretty much anything they like. However they also have to be able to wake you up and end your hypnotic sleep. And once woken, you will not remember anything that has happened while you were asleep. This is most often done by a click of the fingers, but of course Lilly does not have fingers that can be clicked so she decided that blowing a raspberry would be the easiest way to begin and end the hypnotism.

Lilly pulled up the pocket watch and checked the time before putting it back in her pouch. Another hour had gone: only two hours were left to solve the crime and complete her mission. Lilly began to give the now hypnotised teacher instructions quickly. Whilst Miss Sharp sat there snoozing all she could hear was Lilly's voice in her head. "In a moment I will wake you up with the sound of a raspberry, and when you hear it you will love teddy bears. And you will immediately then go to the Monkey House. You will believe that the monkeys are naughty children and their enclosure is a classroom. The second time you hear me blow a raspberry, you will become awake fully and forget everything that has happened." And with that Lilly dropped into Sharky's lap, stuck out her tongue, pursed her lips and blew. "THPPPP!" :~

Chapter 8: School House

Chapter 8 - School House

Miss Sharp rose quickly and strode down the tiered benches, teddy in arms, much to the amazement of many of the children, and made her way towards the monkey house. Lilly managed to duck out of sight as the teacher passed Vicky, but only just in time and only with a quick instruction for the teacher to loosen her grip. Lilly was sure it must have been many years, if ever, since Sharkey has held a teddy or did anything other than put one in a sack that she had confiscated from a child who had foolishly brought into class. This time Lilly was not headed for the sack, she was headed for the 'School House' where there were 'naughty children' that needed Miss Sharp's expert attention. Miss Sharp sure did love her teddy and carried Lilly proudly high in her arms, snuggling her closely. Completely unfazed, in her hypnotic state that her teddy would wriggle lose at times from the tightly affectionate hug and pointing her in the direction of the Monkey House.

Nor was Miss Sharp concerned when Lilly reached into her pouch and pulled out a lock pick and proceeded to unlock the gate that lead into the treed area of the enclosure. What Miss Sharp could not believe was the scene in front of her eyes! Children misbehaving, swinging in trees, rolling about in the dirt, fighting, eating bananas and dropping the skins on the floor, chattering, shouting, and GIGGLING! In her classroom! At first she stood and surveyed the room with an iron stare, before carefully placing Lilly down on a tree stump next to her and clapping her hands loudly. "CHILDREN!" she shouted in her strictest no nonsense voice. All the monkeys stopped what they were doing and looked incredulously at the human now stood in their enclosure. She stared back at them with stern determination and waited for total silence. "You will come and sit down here immediately," she said, pointing at two logs in front of her, one set behind the other like seats in a class room. Lilly drew her breath in and held the silence too: she had seen some strict teachers in her time but Miss Sharp was by far the strictest. But was she strict enough to make monkeys behave, and more importantly, listen to the questions Lilly needed to ask?

Miss Sharp was not about to give them time to think about it, "I said immediately! Girls at the back, boys at the front." Slowly one by one the monkeys dropped out of the trees and got up out of the dust and sat themselves quietly down in front on the teacher. "In all my years of teaching, I have never in my life, seen and heard such diabolical behaviour!" She continued, reaching into her pocket to pull out her pen and detention book. "Name," she said as she pointed at the first 'child' with the pen. "Oo-oo" was the reply. Miss Sharp diligently wrote Oo-oo in her book before moving to the next. Aa, then Ee, followed by Uu and Ii along with other strange names that only a monkey have, all entered into the teachers book. With all the names written down Miss Sharp held the class in her iron gaze once more. "I have somebody with me that needs to ask you some questions. You had better answer them honestly and quickly unless you want double maths detention." Of course the monkeys had no idea what maths or detention were, but they did know this human was the most scary thing they had ever seen and double anything with her didn't sound like a good idea.

Miss Sharpe looked across at Lilly who was stood on the tree stump, "Over to you Miss Lilly." Lilly did not want to sound confrontational with her first question, it could have the effect of making the monkeys argumentative, and she didn't want Miss Sharp get even tougher with the monkeys. She knew how the monkeys collected the crocodile tears. What she needed to know was what they did with them, and she needed to stop them doing it again. To do that the monkeys needed to understand the consequences of their action. Lilly thanked Miss Sharp and began. "Do you like living here at the zoo?" The monkeys all looked at each other, then back at Lilly and nodded in agreement at each other, the noise level rising as they confirmed their liking of life at the zoo. "And would you be sad if the zoo were to close?" The suggestion of which brought the noise level above acceptable levels for the teacher's ear and was quelled with a sharp shush! from Miss Sharpe as the monkeys made it clear they would not want the zoo to close. Leaving the monkeys to think on the questions asked, Lilly changed the thrust of her interrogations. "What do you think crocodile tears do?" At

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first this question was answered with silence; it had not occurred to the monkeys that Lilly would know about the collecting of tears and were very worried that Miss Sharp might know too. Monkeys might be a little out of control, but they do know what is just messing about and what is being naughty. And they knew what they did to the ostriches and Rex was very naughty. Then out of the worried silence Uu squeaked from the back, "They're medicine for raccoons, Miss," and the others began talking all at once, wanting to add their little bit, drowning out anything UU continued to say. Miss Sharp chastised the monkeys for all speaking at once, whilst in the gloomy shadows at the back off the perimeter fence, a raccoon listened, furious that the monkeys were about to tell Lilly who they gave the crocodile tears to. Still, he thought, "Rex would take care of Lilly so it would be of no consequence if she knew or not." All he would have to do was ensure Lilly and Rex would meet face to face.

At first UU's answer had taken Lilly by surprise, she had assumed that it was the monkeys who were infecting the children with crocotearalitis, but it appeared perhaps not. With Miss Sharp having brought the class back under control, insisting that if, "a member of the class wanted to answer a question then they should put their hand up: not shout out," Lilly continued to probe a little deeper. "Raccoon medicine. Are there any raccoons at the zoo?" Lilly had seen the list of animals at the entrance, and had noted that raccoon had been crossed out and replaced with guinea pigs. Ee's arm was raised high and eagerly in the air, his hand waving in an 'I know the answer' sort of away. Miss Sharp looked over the top of her glasses and glared at him, in the way a teacher does when she wants you to know you are in the spotlight, and as such, expected to behave impeccably. Pointing her pen at Ee she nodded at him to speak. "Yes young man, you may answer Lilly's question." Ee went on to explain. "Yes, there is one raccoon at the zoo and we get the medicine for him, cuz it's for his knees, they get all stiff, see Miss, and he says when his knees get stiff he can't climb in the food store and get us extra peanuts, and we like peanuts. Lots!" "Hmm," thought Lilly, "the monkeys were being paid peanuts for crocodile tears." Ee's explanation, though enlightening, didn't answer the other part of the question fully. Clearly there was a raccoon at the zoo, but it didn't seem that the humans knew about it. Lilly thanked Ee and was about to ask where she might find this raccoon, when another monkey appeared through the hole in the netting. A monkey who was immediately caught in the steely eyed teacher gaze. "You're late, come here now and sit down where I can see you. Name!" The monkey sat quickly, shaking a little, not only because Miss Sharp was very scary, but because she knew she had just done something very naughty indeed. She had just let Rex out. Not only that, but the raccoon who had promised her half a bag of nuts, was nowhere to be seen. Why did she have to be so nut crazy! The other monkeys cringed in silence as they waited on their 'classmate' to give her name. Which she did quickly, after a nudge from Aa who was sat next to her. "Gulp Miss," Gulp almost whispered, as the teacher's attention drifted away from the monkeys and beyond the perimeter of the enclosure to gaze at something moving along the path towards the pool.

"Who let that crocodile out?" Miss Sharp almost shrieked. Gulp gulped, and Lilly, seeing Rex just moments after Miss Sharp had spied him, sped out of the monkey house and towards the pool to head the crocodile off before he reached the children. The raccoon followed secretively. He couldn't wait to see the meddling teddy bear be torn limb from limb by Rex. Miss Sharp, of course, stayed behind. The monkeys had become agitated at Rex roaming free and Miss Sharp was not about to let the 'children' start running about in panic. "Children" she said firmly, "You will stay put until Miss Lilly has returned the crocodile to his enclosure." Though she had no idea how a 10 inch teddy bear would manage such a feat, she somehow knew Lilly could!

Chapter 9: Walkies

Chapter 9 walkies

As the last of the sea lions jumped through the last of the hoops, and the troop gathered to take their final bow, Lilly was racing towards the open gate at the back of the stand. The gate that pretty soon, the children would come pouring out of, and Rex was moving rapidly towards. The raccoon had already slunk into an almost empty rubbish bin; a safe distance from the gate to watch what he hoped would be the end of Lilly. Lilly had to run flat out to reach the gate before Rex. She had no other plan in her head other than to shut the gate and draw Rex away, and to save Vicky and the other children from coming face to face with the large ferocious snapping crocodile, and avoid them coming across a real live moving teddy bear secret agent while doing it. Rex was within feet of entering the gate when Lilly sprung in the air over Rex's snout and onto the gate, causing it to swing closed, and for her to pull down on the latch, safely locking the humans in the pool area, buying Lilly valuable time to return Rex back to his enclosure, find the raccoon and obtain the antidote: valuable time that was near to running out. Within an hour the buses would be pulling up and the children would be climbing aboard. And for the first time in her life, Lilly would have failed her mission.

With the gate secured and Rex's attention now solely on Lilly, she leapt down and headed around the corner, to draw the crocodile away from the children, a corner that the raccoon had hoped Lilly would take since she had avoided Rex at the gate. Lilly had barely travelled ten feet when she realized her mistake, and Rex lumbered around the corner after her. The pathway led to a rubbish store, with high concrete walls and no way out. Lilly had led Rex into a dead end and now she was cornered. Trapped by an advancing snapping crocodile!

Lilly backed up onto the bins, keeping her eyes fixed firmly on the large beast, which was moving ominously towards her at rapid pace. Her situation seemed hopeless with the crocodile being so close. There was no way she would be able to summersault over his head, and would surely be caught in the jagged rows of teeth he was displaying. Back up further and she would fall backwards over the rubbish bags stacked behind her and Rex would pounce. It seemed to Lilly to be the end. However, if she was going to go, she would stand her ground and face the end bravely! Lilly wanted to whimper desperately "please, no Rex" as he lunged at her, but Lilly, being the bravest of bears, found herself shouting firmly, "NO REX" Whilst keeping full eye contact with the large reptile. The change in Rex's manner was instant. He slid to a halt as he came nose to nose with Lilly and clamped his mouth shut. In his eyes Lilly read a flicker of obedience. "Bad crocodile!" Lilly barked into Rex's face causing him to back up a little with a whimper. Lilly had found out by accident, but it appeared that Rex was actually very well trained. Lilly was not to have known, nor the raccoon, who was lurking around the corner and wondering why stuffing was not flying everywhere to the terrible sounds of a teddy bear being dismembered, but Rex had been rescued from a circus. He had spent several years with the animal trainer, who had bought him as an egg and raised him with a litter of puppies.

Lilly fished in her pouch where she always kept a packet of jelly babies, her favourite sweets, selecting a yellow one, she always saved the red ones for herself. Rex eyed the little jelly sweet hungrily and immediately sat down wagging his tail. Lilly responded by holding up the jelly baby for Rex to take, which he did gently and was rewarded with a pat on his nose and an enthusiastic, "good boy Rex!"

Chapter 10: Raccoon's Retreat

Chapter 10 - Raccoon's Retreat

The raccoon had decided to venture a close look, and was tentatively peering around the corner when his heart jumped in his mouth, Rex was virtually upon him causing him turn on his heels and scamper in panic the other way. He had not expected to come face to face with a snapping and hissing Rex, and he most certainly did not expect to see Lilly sat on a harnessed Rex's shoulders shouting "YEE HA" at the top of her voice! The discarded rope Lilly had found in the rubbish sacks proved to be very useful indeed as a harness, enabling her to guide Rex in the direction she wanted him to go. The remainder of the rope she had made a lasso out of which she was whipping around in circle above her head. In between the, "yee ha's," Lilly was commanding Rex to, "fetch," and the raccoon was under no illusion as to what or WHO Rex was being told to retrieve. The Raccoon tore around the corner and out onto the main path, hotly pursued by a fifteen foot crocodile and foot tall teddy bear. Terrified, the raccoon rushed past the gate that the humans were now queued up behind, most of the children tearfully wondering if someone would be along soon to let them out and what on earth was the commotion on the other side of the high wooden barrier. Each time the raccoon tried to change direction, leap up a wall or climb a tree, Rex was there, jaws snapping shut alarmingly near to the mammal's rear end. Lilly knew exactly where she wanted the raccoon. She needed to detain him long enough for the humans to find him and where he couldn't create anymore mischief. She also needed to get Rex back in his compound before the humans got out of the sea lion's pool area. If that happened the zoo would most definitely be closed. Rex was much quicker than the raccoon, who, judging by the raccoon's portly waddling, had clearly eaten a few too many peanuts destined for the monkey, and was hampering his ability to escape. Lilly guided the raccoon past the Monkey House and Miss Sharp, who was now telling the monkeys how much she loved teddy bears. It was a simple task to marshal the raccoon past the ostriches and into Rex's compound, where with a flick of her wrist, Lilly lassooed the errant creature and commanded Rex to, "Leave," which Rex did obediently, then to be rewarded by Lilly with a green jelly baby this time.

Lilly dismounted Rex and marched the raccoon to a tree in the middle of the compound and bound him to it, while keeping Rex nearby to ensure the raccoon had no ideas about trying to escape. Once secured, Lilly began interrogating her prisoner, who was very co-operative due to the way Rex looked at him hungrily. It unfolded that the raccoon, who's name incidentally was Mary, on account of his hairy state at birth and that they had thought he was a girl, had escaped several months ago, and had evaded the keepers long enough for them to give up looking. He had been housed in a pen right next to the aquarium and thus had very few visitors. The brightly lit tanks and colourful fish meant most everyone hurried passed and barely noticed him. And those who did stop would point at the name sign, where children who would point at him and snigger when reading his name sign, a sign that read 'Harry Mary', the name that he had been teased about for years. And to add insult to injury when they put new animals in his pen, they were guinea pigs, who talked in cute little squeaks that had everyone stopping before entering the aquarium. The raccoon really had had his nose put out of joint, and harboured a grudge toward the children who ignored him and those who poked fun. Whilst on the run from the keepers, he had heard of the effects of crocodile tears and thought it would be payback for the hurt he had endured. If he was going to be miserable then everyone else should be too! At least that was his thinking.

Lilly felt sorry for Mary, at least for the way he had been treated, and thanked him for his answers. She did not call him Mary, but Harry instead: Hairy Harry sounded much more suitable and seemed to please the raccoon. Harry had told her that he had put the crocodile tears in the air conditioning unit in the aquarium; it seemed to him to be a 'fair' place to put it, as it was due to that place that he had been so ignored. And Harry had put the last big dose he had in the air conditioning unit first thing this morning. Lilly knew that was the first place the school had visited when they had arrived, so knew that all the children must have been infected. She needed to go get the antidote immediately. She was happy now that there were no more crocodile tears

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about, and so long as Harry was contained then she would have no more trouble from him. Lilly apologised to him for having to leave him with Rex and promised that if he stopped his vendetta against the children, then she would do what she could to make his life at the zoo a happier one. And with that said, Lilly turned to Rex and commanded him to, "guard," which Rex began doing with diligence, allowing Lilly to make her way quickly to the Reptile House and an appointment with a large Amazonian boa constrictor.

Chapter 11: TV Dinner

Chapter 11 - TV Dinner

By Lilly's reckoning, she had no more than 30 minutes to collect the antidote and use it to stop the epidemic of crocotearalitis that was spreading through the children waiting to be released from behind the gate. Lilly wasted no time and made her way to the Reptile House, and once there checked the largest glass tanks that held the exotic animals until she came across a magnificent snake, adorned in light golden brown medallions, set against a creamy white background of skin. Lilly looked around the interior of the tanks, which was really a small room with two large glass viewing windows. In the middle of an undulating stone effect concrete floor was a pond and behind it the floor rose to create a higher platform. There in a loose coil lay Shakira: a 17 foot albino boa. Above Lilly's head an out of sight something was flickering and appeared to be mesmerizing Shakira. Lilly banged on the glass and momentarily the snake glanced over and looked uninterestingly towards Lilly before returning her gaze back towards the flickering.

Off to one side of the pond, amongst the scattered sand and loose foliage a large log lay, its remaining branches reaching up towards the roof where Lilly spied a trap door just large enough for a small teddy bear to fit through. There was another door at the back, a door that the keepers would enter through, but Lilly would not be able to open such a large door in a hurry. And she was most definitely in a hurry. No, Lilly would have to enter through the small trap door. A door that was used to feed the snake: anything that came through that door, Shakira would see as food. Lilly knew that, but had no choice. She needed Shakira's attention quickly and being her lunch would certainly do that.

At the start of the row of the larger tanks, there stood a Lime tree in a large clay pot, its branches reaching high enough for Lilly to scale and climb into the first of the tanks roofs. Once up, Lilly dashed across each roof and leapt across the metre wide pathway that ran between them. Shakira's tank being the largest had a wider pathway separating it than the ones Lilly had just leapt across. Lilly walked to the edge and looked over. The jump was nearer twice as far as the pervious jumps she had made. Not only that, Shakira's tank stood a good bit higher too. This was going to be no ordinary jump. It was going to have to be an extraordinary jump, a jump that would be difficult, even for a secret agent extraordinaire. Lilly walked back to the very edge of the roof she was stood on and concentrated on the gangway in front of her, the wide gap she needed to clear, and the wall of Shakira's home. Rising on her toes, like a gymnast Lilly composed herself, and then shot down the gangway gathering speed. When almost at the end she carried out a forward flip, her toes landing perfectly on the other edge of the roof, before summersaulting into the air, propelling herself forward, chin up, chest out, arms wide like a professional ski diver, which of course she was. Even with the outstanding leap, Lilly only just reached Shakira's wall and clung on by the very tips of her paws, before scrambling up the wall, onto the roof, to make her way to the trap door.

Lilly loosened the latch and lifted the trap door clear and carefully stuck her head in to make sure Shakira hadn't moved from her platform. She had not, though the removal of the trap door had drawn her attention away from what Lilly could now see was a small TV screen above the viewing window she had knocked on. "Hello," Lilly said to a puzzled Shakira, who was not used to her food talking to her as it was usually dead and lowered through the trap door on a pole. Shakira was further puzzled that it was not her feeding time yet, but still the strange looking animal, that had now climbed fully through the hole and onto the highest branch of the log, could be a tasty morsel and for a change, alive. Lilly stood upright on the branch and gave Shakira a friendly smile. "Hi, I'm Lilly," she said warmly. Shakira slid forward towards the branch and tasted the air with her tongue, confused by what her tongue was telling her. Lilly didn't smell like food, yet she had come through the trap door so she must be? Lilly kept her eyes firmly on Shakira's trying to anticipate the snake's next move whilst continuing trying to strike up a conversation. Shakira on her part was weighing up whether to strike (as snakes do!). After all Lilly did look a little like a rat, though she had a squishier nose, didn't really

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have a proper tail and her ears didn't look quite right. Not small enough.

One moment Lilly was standing on the branch, the next moment she wasn't! Lilly had made the mistake of looking up at the open trap door, just for a moment in case she needed to make a quick exit. That was when she Shakira struck! And Lilly found herself within the tight coils of the boa. Lilly was used to being squeezed. Vicky had quite a squeeze on her, and so did Miss Sharp, but this squeezing was altogether something else. It just got tighter and tighter. So tight that Lilly was in fear that her stitches would burst apart. So tight that she could barely draw enough breathe to speak. It could certainly be said that Lilly was in a real bind. It was as Lilly's last breathe was being forced out and Shakira was about to devour her bulging eyed meal that Lilly recognized what was being shown on the TV screen. It was one of her favourite films, and more like a thought being squeezed out of her body than an intension to talk, Lilly found herself saying, "Romeo and Juliet, my favourite." That's when the grip loosened just a little and Shakira pulled her head away and looked almost sympathetically at her dinner. Then she spoke in a thick Columbian accent. "It's mine too, so sad, don't you think?" Lilly nodded, trying to catch her breath and ease herself a little way out of the coils, though Shakira wasn't ready to release her quite yet.

Chapter 12: Antidote Actress

Chapter 12 - Antidote Actress

Lilly caught her breath and relief washed over her. Now that Shakira had decided not to squeeze her till her eyes popped out and not only that but had decided to talk to her too, Lilly, being very smart, as secret agents have to be, had time to consider the importance of the TV. Although a TV in an animal's enclosure in a zoo was unusual, Lilly was grateful that Shakira had one; it would give Lilly a way to talk to the snake about something the snake obviously felt passionate about. The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet had really captured Shakira's attention and gave Lilly the chance to persuade the boa that she was not just chatty food. Shakira had looked back at the screen as Romeo discovers Juliet, apparently dead, and for Romeo, unable to live without her, to drink poison. Shakira watched, her brow furrowed and a lump in her throat. "So sad," she whispered hoarsely. The closing scene of this most famous of tragedies had Shakira on the edge of tears. Lilly eased herself a little more out of the slowly loosening coils, pleased that she was as yet, not the lump in the boa's throat. And hoped that when Juliet woke from her potion induced sleep to find her lover dead, to dramatically take a dagger and plunge it into her chest, it would push Shakira over the edge, and if it did Lilly must be ready to catch the tear! Shakira looked emotional enough to cry as she spoke Juliet's final lines along with her. "Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger, this is thy sheath, there rust and let me die". It certainly put a tear in Lilly's eye watching Shakira so engrossed in the play, showing all the signs of sadness Romeo and Juliet induces, all except that one golden tear. As Juliet slumped lifeless against her lover, Shakira looks back down at Lilly, who had managed to free herself from the boa's grip and was holding a small glass vial that she had put in her pouch just for the purpose of catching a precious tear. Lilly smiled back sadly, wiped a tear away and complimented Shakira on her words, "You said that beautifully".

Lilly's compliment only seemed to make Shakira sadder as she sniffed tearlessly and croaked, "I'm a famous actress, you know". "You are?" Lilly responded and racked her brains to think of a film she might have seen Shakira in. Conversation was good, conversation meant she was less likely to be eaten, and if she could keep Shakira in her sad state then she might even avoid being squeezed again. The only squeezing she wanted was for Shakira to squeeze out a medicinal tear and soon! Lilly really couldn't think of anything that Shakira had been in, but perhaps that was a good thing; If Lilly didn't recognize the snake as a famous actress, then perhaps Shakira would feel hurt? And that might bring forth a tear. "I'm sorry but I don't think I have seen any of your films", Lilly continued. Shakira gave Lilly a miserable smile. "That's okay my little munchie morsel, I don't suppose you would have. I have to do horror films. You know, Snakes on Planes, Boa Constrictor, Firewalker. Always the baddie! I did get a part in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone; my first chance at not being a baddie. They had given me the part being as it is a boa in the book that Harry releases, and then for some unknown reason they change it in the film and gave MY part to a python." Shakira said in a disgusted hiss.

It seemed that Shakira would talk for ever if Lilly let her and with little chance of a tear. She needed to take control, guide the conversation and she had an idea, but first she had to stop Shakira thinking of her as food! It was Lilly's turn to put on a hurt face. "I will thank you for not referring to me as 'little munchie morsel'. I am NOT your dinner, I am a teddy bear and most unappetising. I am Lilly, fluff and stuffing and most certainly NOT edible." Lilly looked determinedly at the snake and tried to gauge her reaction. Shakira for her part, studied Lilly a little more, and then poked Lilly with her tail. "Hmm" she said and tasted the air with her tongue once more, "So if you're not a munchie morsel why did you come through my food hatch, and why are you here?" Lilly told Shakira as quickly as she could about Rex and Mary, who was now to be called Harry, the monkeys and crocodile tears. Shakira looked alarmed when Lilly explained about the zoo being closed and how she had to get a tear from Shakira to save the day. The snake sighed and looked very glum indeed. "Oh to be able to cry!" she wailed dryly. I could be Juliet if I could just cry, who wants a leading lady that cannot weep tears? Believe me little munchie morsel, believe me Lilly, if I could cry I would be world famous and you

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could have all the tears you need." Shakira bowed her head in despair. "I haven't shed a tear for years!"

Lilly watched the boa crumple into a sad pile, that looked more like an over cooked strand of spaghetti than a majestic snake. Lilly's heart ached for Shakira, who so wanted to cry, but she had no time to dwell on Shakira's inability to end her sadness by shedding a tear. Lilly climbed out from the down hearted snakes limp coils, and seated herself back on the branch she had been whisked off of previously, when Shakira has imagined her as a snack. Lilly cleared her voice and clapped her hands. "Excuse me Sinorita". Shakira eyed Lilly from within her own crumpled heap suspiciously. Lilly continued enthusiastically, trying to lift the boa's mood. "How about giving me a demonstration of your acting ability? I'd love to see you act, I really would: something really moving." Shakira regained her composure a little once again becoming more snake and less spaghetti. "You would, really? You want so see me act, even though I cannot cry and you won't be able to save the children from the crocodile tears?" Lilly nodded eagerly, and Shakira rose higher still, as if lifting herself out of her doldrums, the ledge she had been sprawled out on becoming her stage. "What shall I do? Shall I be Juliet?" Lilly shook her head. "You would need a Romeo." How about Esmeralda?" Lilly once again, shook her head. "No hunchbacks round here. No it needs to be something really difficult, something that will show your acting at its best." Lilly already knew what she wanted Shakira to do; she had right from the beginning, when she had realized that Shakira was approaching the tear thing from completely the wrong direction. Lilly struck her forehead with her paw, as if she had been hit by a sudden idea. "Got it!" She said triumphantly. "Imagine we are at the Oscars, and you have just won, after all if you're as good as you say you are it will be good practise. Give me your acceptance speech." Lilly had thrown down a challenge and a challenge that she knew Shakira could not resist. After all, it is what every aspiring actress dreams of: winning and Oscar and making THE speech.

Shakira gave Lilly a nonchalant grin; she was really beginning to like this funny bag of fluff. Do her acceptance speech for an Oscar, of course she could, goodness she had watched enough of them. Shakira smiled a wide crooked smile at Lilly. "Okay you're on, I'll do that then. You'll have to cue me in with an introduction. I'll nod when I am ready." With that Shakira closed her eyes, became very still and took long slow breaths to compose herself for the part. Lilly checked her watch, ten minutes until the busses would be drawing up and the children were still stuck behind the gate and Miss Sharp was still teaching the Monkeys algebra. Slowly Shakira opened her eyes and nodded at Lilly to cue her in. Lilly did her best to sound like a compare at the Oscars, and pretended to read the back of an envelope. "And the nominees for best female are; Michelle Williams as Marilyn Monroe in My Week with Marilyn; Meryl Streep as Margaret Thatcher in The Iron Lady; Shakira as Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. And the winner is." Lilly opened the invisible envelope and after a long pause, said. "Shakira!" Leaned forward with a rounded block of wood that had been lying nearby on the 'stage' and presented it to the snake as if it were the little gold statue Shakira had always dreamed of.

As quickly as Shakira had grabbed Lilly, Shakira grasped the makeshift Oscar with her tail and pulled it close to her chest, her expressions running from surprise to shock to joy. "Meeeee, really, nooo! Oh my god! My goodness, I never! .gosh, me, I can't believe it!" Shakira spoke in a semi breathless gushes at first then slowed her speech a little as if she was bringing herself under control. "Goodness! really, I never expected this." Shakira looked at her Oscar and back at the audience, Lilly, repeatedly. "My word, what can I say. I'm quite overcome!" And she did most certainly look overcome. Lilly wasn't sure at first but it appeared the snakes eyes looked watery as Shakira began to thank a long list of people, including her mother, father, her voice coach and her therapist. As Shakira continued to reel off the unbelievably long list, from fellow actors to the janitor, her voice became croaky as if fighting back the tears. And that when it happened! Just as Shakira blubbed her thanks to imaginary audience that was made up by Lilly, a tear pooled in the corner of Shakira's eye and rolled down her cheek, soaking into the stone floor and disappeared. Lilly had leaped forward with the small glass vial to catch the tear but alas, she was not quick enough. Though Lilly really didn't need to worry, Lilly had been right. Shakira had spent all this time trying to feel sad so she could induce a tear. And had ignored the fact that tears can fall for joy too, and the single tear of joy that ran down Shakira's cheek triggered real joy as the boa realized this fact too. Whilst it was true a Boa can only cry one tear a year. It is

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truer to say that it is one sad tear a year. However there was no restriction on tears of joy, and Shakira wept! She wept so many tears of joy that Lilly easily filled her vial, which she capped off with a cork and hastily said her goodbyes to a most grateful and tearful snake.

Chapter 13: A Sprinkling of Happiness

Chapter 13 - A Sprinkling of Happiness

The buses were rumbling up the tarmac road that lead to the car park as Lilly stepped out of the Reptile House with the vial of tears firmly in her grip. She could see their roof tops coming towards her amongst the avenue of trees. In a few minutes the drivers would leave their buses and make their way through the zoo gates in search of the children they would have expected to find being organized into tidy queues by their teachers. But right now, other than Miss Sharp, everyone in the zoo was still stuck behind the gate at the sea lions pool. She couldn't allow the drivers to find a hypnotised Miss Sharp still with the monkeys, teaching them mathematics, and she couldn't let the children be released until she had administered the antidote.

Lilly speed down the main path that wound through the zoo, as she ran past the pens and enclosures the animal all started to chant. "Go Lilly Go!" Thanks to Roderick the whole zoo now knew about the crocodile tears and the antidote, and inhabitants cheered Lilly on. Lilly held the vial aloft like an Olympic runner holds an eternal flame, past Rex who was wagging his tail whilst still diligently guarding a rueful Harry. Past the ostriches, who spread out their somewhat patchy plumage and clapped their wings in delight. Past Roderick, who roared most manly and gave his scariest snarl, whilst winking at Lilly. Past the Monkey House, where she skidded to a stop. A ball of dust enveloping her, to the delight of the monkey's, which love a comic entrance. Delight shown by a large amount of whooping that Miss Sharp would have quelled, if it was not for the sound of a raspberry being emitted from the centre of the plume of dust. With Miss Sharp released from her hypnotic trance Lilly speed on to further cheers until she reached the sea lion pool.

Lilly knew what she needed to do as she skirted the fencing that surrounded the pool area until she found a gap wide enough for her to squeeze through. Though she had quite enough of squeezing for one day she wriggle through to find the water storage tank that collected rain water off the stand roof. It was at about the same time as Lilly scooted up the ladder to pour the vial of tears in to the water that Miss Sharp, somewhat shocked after being woken, found her way out of the monkey's enclosure and hurriedly made her way towards the sound of crying children, children that were not necessarily crying because they were stuck behind the gate for the best part of an hour. After all, there was a nice big grassed picnic area, a play park with an ice-cream stall within the grounds that made up the sea lion enclosure. No, they were crying, well they didn't really know why, just because, just because of crocotearalitis! Lilly jumped down from the tank and followed the pipe that led away from it and towards a large lever. Taking a firm grip on the lever she pulled with all her might to release the water that fed the sprinklers that were dotted all over the grassed area where the children were sat crying soulfully. Within moments the sprinklers sprang into life and span round in circles, arcing water high into the air to fall like rain in fine drops, which fell in a mist, dancing with the sunlight that streamed through the droplets in a myriad of rainbow colours.

At first the pirouetting of the sprinklers spread pandemonium. Adults and children leapt from their places in a panic looking to escape from the unexpected downpour. But as they ran, mixed in with the rainwater came Shakira's tears; tears that at first caused confusion. Children and adults alike stopped where they were stood and looked at one another, and down turned mouths turned up and began to beam. And then there was a giggle, I may have been Vicky; it was hard to tell as the single giggle was met by another, and then more and then more. Everyone began to laugh and point in amusement at each other being rained upon. It may have been Vicky, it was hard to tell, that was the first to start skipping in and out of the sprinklers as they whooshed happy tears. Whoever it was, the change was instant and it affected everyone. Adults and children alike began dancing and laughing in the rain. Lilly couldn't help but smile and chuckle a little herself, as she watched from the lever and wondered if perhaps she had overdosed everyone a little; though being a teddy bear she believed that you could never have too much happiness.

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Miss Sharp's confusion of finding herself with the monkeys and hearing crying that had inexplicably changed to laughter as she reached the sea lion pool, changed to annoyance; detention book annoyance! As she released the latch and stepped in, she could not believe her eyes. Children running amuck amongst the sprinklers, not only children, but adults, her fellow teachers, all shrieking in delight and running about. Miss Sharp strode into the clearing and reached for her book. "Well I never!" she began. "In all my yearsâ!" And then she felt it; a giggle rising from inside. "Children!" she said trying to stifle the giggle and frown as only Miss Sharp could. But the giggle could not be denied and all she could do was to put her hand over her mouth to try and stop it coming out. Neither could she deny the scene that unfolded in front of her was purely wonderful. And as she stood in the mist of the sprinklers she could not suppress her amusement, or the urge to join in with the fun. None of the children knew Miss Sharp could do a cartwheel, or a backflip, nor did they expect her to end up sat on a sprinkler when she came to rest; an event that only lead to further mirth and howls of laughter, the loudest laughter coming from Old Sharky herself. It was at this point that Lilly slipped away from the lever to where the children had stacked their bags, to find Vicky's and to slip back in unnoticed her mission accomplished.

Chapter 14: A Jolly Good Ending

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The grass was getting soggy and the children and adults were getting muddy when the sprinklers finally stopped. It was not clear who closed the lever and left everyone dripping and giggling in the late afternoon sun. Perhaps it was one of the bus drivers who had arrived at the gate and shivered at the thought of all that wet muddiness climbing onto his clean bus. Whoever it was, they had drawn the day to an end; a day that began with some monkey business in the air conditioning and ended in a sprinkling of happiness. And it was sometime before the tears ran out in the water tank and the gardeners who looked after the trees, shrubs, flower borders and grassed areas of the sea lions compound, were able to do their work without laughing and dancing about; though a strange thing did happen. Although they stopped their dancing and laughing when the tears finally ran out, the good mood never seemed to leave. Once touched by the tears the happiness inside stayed with them.

This happiness certainly stayed with Miss Sharp, who appeared to remember what it was to be a child. Something that she demonstrated on the bus back to school, when she stood up at the front, opened her note book and read through the names of the children she had marked down for detention the following day. Clearing her voice she read. "Robert Jones, Emily Jackson, Martin Gould, Amir Kahn, and Billy Smith," caused those children to look up a little perplexed and then to giggle as Miss Sharp continued to read her list; The next group of names making no sense to either Miss Sharp or the children at all. "Oo Oo, Aa, Ee." Miss Sharp said. Sounding something like a monkey, whilst unable to stop grinning like a Cheshire cat, such were the effects the sprinklers. And when she took hold of the pages and tore them out of the book holding them up for all to see, before scrunching them into a ball and declaring. "Detention is cancelled!" the children cheered loudly, and if she could have been heard back at the zoo the monkeys would have too. Though it was probably a good thing that they didn't; the mere thought of Miss Sharp returning to the zoo was enough to ensure they didn't get involved in anymore monkey business where crocodiles were to be involved. Though Gulp did have a new plan, a plan that involved obtaining some boa tears, as that seemed to be much more fun.

It was at this time that Vicky looked in her bag for a packet of sweets to share. To her surprise she came across Lilly. Her first thought was. "How on earth did Lilly get in her bag," she clearly remembered tucking her up in bed that morning. Her next thought was to try to push Lilly to the bottom of her bag before the strangely acting Miss Sharp noticed. Vicky's alarm was not missed by the eagle eyed teacher who walked up the aisle towards her. "Vicky" she said as she stood next Vicky's row of seats whilst dropping her smile and frowning most disapprovingly. "Is that a teddy bear?" Vicky gulped and nodded. "And how did it manage to get into your bag?" Vicky shrugged and said the only thing she could think of. "She's a secret agent miss." She had said that before, but now Vicky was beginning to believe it. Miss Sharp frowned her deepest frown. "Name" She said turning a fresh page in her note book. Vicky said "Vicky Miss Sharp," as if Miss Sharp didn't know. Miss Sharp tutted, "Not you, her!" and pointed at Lilly. "Lilly" Vicky replied quickly though a little confused. Miss Sharp scribbled in her book and then pulled out the page and handed it to Vicky, then broke out into a huge mischievous grin. On the paper she had written, 'Lilly and Vicky are cordially invited to a Teddy Bears Picnic at the School Playing Field at 1pm tomorrow afternoon.' Lilly stared at the invite in amazement as Miss Sharp moved on to the next child, greeting them with "Teddy bears name please."

As for the zoo, well, after the keepers rescued Harry from Rex's guarding, they found him a new home, with the skunks. Which, whilst it doesn't sound very nice, being somewhat smelly at times, was actually perfect. The skunks, mainly due to their smelliness were very popular with sleeve to nose boys, which gave Harry the attention he craved. Rex having remembered his years with the circus dogs found renewed delight in fetching sticks from his water hole that the children would throw for him only to return them to be thrown again. Wagging his tail so enthusiastically you might think he would wag it right off. Roderick, well he continued

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being the scariest bear you would see anywhere. Of course the whole zoo knew in fact he was just a big soft teddy bear under the stomping, snarling and growling, but the spectacle of a ferocious bear brought the crowds in to the zoo. Then there was the star of the show; Shakira the crying boa. She packed the house with her acting, and whoever saw her could not help feeling somehow strangely happy inside when she had finished her weeping.

So if you are ever at the zoo and you hear a giggle or two accompanied by a tear and a grin you can bet your bottom dollar it has something to do with a monkey named Glup and her friends who still sneak out when the zoo is closed to collect the right kind of tears to give to Harry, so he can add a few drops into the air conditioning ready for the next morning. Whilst you are there, take a deep breath and ask yourself, "Can I smell monkey business in the air?" If you can I can assure you, a giggle or two will ensue.

Then there is Lilly, who returned to being just an ordinary, common all garden, teddy bear. Well at least for now; though with a teddy bear picnic planned for tomorrow, it wouldn't be long before she would be given her next mission.

By Dibs

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