

# SCHOOL SWAP

## Chapter 3

Mr Jones unlocked the door with a key he found in his pocket. “Hey, Mum,” he called, hoping that’s what Jay would usually say.

There was no reply. He looked around the cluttered hallway, edging round heaps of junk mail and old newspapers to push open the door to what he hoped might be the living room.

“Mum?” he called again. “I’m home.”

Still no reply. The room was in semi-darkness, the curtains closed. Squinting through the gloom, he carefully made his way over to open them. Light flooded into a room full of mess. There were piles of washing heaped onto chairs, magazines on the floor and a small flat-screen TV that had a layer of dust so thick that Mr Jones could have written not only his name in it but probably a whole book!

He looked at the coffee table, hoping there would be space to put his marking pile down. Of course there wasn’t: it was filled with half-empty mugs and unwashed dinner plates with what looked like the remains of last night’s pizza. Mr Jones screwed his face up and plonked the books down on a saggy sofa while he leaned over to collect the dishes up. It was then he spotted a note, placed carefully under one of the mugs, in small, neat handwriting.

*Hey Jay, sweetheart,*

*The agency called with an extra shift for me. I won’t be back till late. There’s a pizza in the freezer. If you get time, can you wash the dishes, put the washing on and vacuum the living room?*

*Make sure you get to bed on time. It’s a school night. I’m on an early shift tomorrow too, so fix your own breakfast.*

*Love you,*

*Mum xxx*

So Jay had been telling the truth. He really had been too busy to do his homework last night. Mr Jones sighed and looked at the marking. He ought to get that done, but if Jay usually helped his mum tidy up, Mr Jones had better do it too or she might think something strange was going on when she finally did get home. He collected up the plates, headed to the kitchen and let out a groan. There were even more dirty dishes: a pile the size of Mount Everest towering above the sink, just waiting to be washed.



An hour later, he was stuffing clothes into the washing machine. He'd been right round the little house gathering up any crumpled heaps. He couldn't help but notice that there were at least three different types of uniform. They were all the kind that someone like a nurse might wear, but none of them was quite the same as another. Mr Jones was beginning to wonder just how many jobs Jay's mum actually had when his pocket started to buzz. He put his hand in and pulled out Jay's phone. Adil was calling.

Should he answer it? If he didn't, Adil might get suspicious. He swiped right.

"Hey," Adil's voice said. "You coming to the park to practise some skills?"

"Erm..." replied Mr Jones, "I can't tonight. Got too many chores."

"Your Mum working again?" asked Adil. "Leave them; she won't mind. Meet me in the park."

Mr Jones knew that was a really bad idea. Jay was the best football player in Year 5. Mr Jones hadn't played for forty years and even then he had been at best rubbish and at worst diabolical.

"Sorry, Adil," he said. "There's loads more than usual and I still haven't made my tea."

"But Jay," pleaded Adil, "the trials!"

"It'll be fine," replied Mr Jones, quickly hanging up.



He was confident that Jay could make the team so long as he was back in his own body. Mr Jones just needed a plan to get him there. As soon as he'd finished the chores, cooked the pizza and done his marking, he'd give it some thought.

The phone began to buzz again. He looked down, expecting to see Adil's name, but was surprised to see his home number flashing up on the screen.

"Hello?" he said. "Jay?"

"Yeah, um. Hi, Mr Jones," a wobbly voice replied. "It's nothing to worry about, but I was just wondering... where do you keep your fire extinguisher?"