

Chapter 3



FROZEN ITEMS

Fruit Juice Sticks	\$0.50
Fruit Juice Stones	\$0.50
Fruit Juice Bones	\$0.50
Fruit Juice Words (will never hurt me)	\$0.00
Sunny Boys	\$0.70
Cloudy Boys	\$0.60
Cloudy Girls	\$0.60
Icy Poles	\$0.70
Icy Russians	\$0.70
Icy U	\$0.70
Uc Me	\$0.70
Billabong - chocolate, rainbow, swagman	\$1.00
Frozen Yoghurt	\$1.30
Frozen Yoyo	(prices go up and down)

Pat Flynn

Mr Simpson stands at the front of class. He's tanned, muscly and fit.

This isn't good, I think. Our normal teacher, Mrs Spencer, is nowhere to be seen. Mr Simpson teaches Physical Education and we're supposed to have it on Thursday morning. I know this for a fact, because every Wednesday night I get Mum to write a note excusing me from PE.

'This week there's been a swap,' he says. 'As you know the cross-country race is coming up so we'll use this afternoon to get in some extra training.'

One boy actually says, 'Yes!'

A girl puts up her hand. 'I don't have my running shoes.'

Me *either*, I think.

'That's okay, you can run in barefeet.'

'Cool,' she says.

Not cool.

As I walk to the oval I have two thoughts:

1. *I don't have a note.*
2. *Why did I have that second chocolate milk?*

I decide to try and talk sense into Mr Simpson. Surely he doesn't expect me to run? I jog to catch up with him - even his walk is fast. 'Excuse me, sir.'

'Yes, Matthew?'

'I'm feeling sick, sir. I don't think I can run.'

'Do you have a note?'

'No, but -'

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'If you don't have a note then you'll have to participate.' He looks at my stomach. 'Exercise is good for you, Matthew. Very good.'

This is bad, I think. Very bad.

'One lap to warm up,' Mr Simpson yells when we get to the oval.

As usual, I'm the last one back. And I'm a lot more than warm. I'm stuffed.

Kids are already stretching and Mr Simpson tells me to touch my toes.

'He can't even see his toes,' says Withers.

Lots of kids laugh and even Mr Simpson doesn't hide a smile.

'That's mean, sir,' Kayla says. 'You should tell Craig off for saying that.'

She gives me a little smile and I feel a little better, though the chocolate milk swishes around my stomach even faster.

'Everyone must run at least three laps,' orders Mr Simpson. 'Only then can you walk if you have to. Serious athletes should continue running until I blow the whistle.'

Kids line up like it's a race and Mr Simpson says 'Go'.

I run as slowly as I possibly can, but even so the two chocolate milks and cheese dog and chips all call up to me and say, 'This is a bad, bad idea.' It doesn't take long before I'm lapped, and some follow the lead of the new kid and slap me between the shoulder blades as they run past.

Pat Flynn

After the first lap I start walking, then Mr Simpson roars, 'Run, Matthew, or you'll do it tomorrow at lunchtime!'

I run. Halfway through the second lap I feel like I'm gonna barf. I try and take my mind off running and barfing and think of Kayla. Right then she jogs past and says, 'Keep going, Matt. You can do it!'

I start feeling better, and even run a bit faster. Then I hear Withers' voice from behind. 'Move over, boys. We're passing a wide load.'

Suddenly I start seeing spots, and then I see nothing at all. Nothing except blackness.

When I wake up, Mum is holding my hand. She looks stressed. This isn't unusual as Mum often looks stressed.

'Are you okay?' she asks.

'I don't know.'

'Do you have amnesia?'

'I can't remember.'

The school office lady comes in with an ice pack. She uses her happy voice. 'Feeling better are we? You just had a little faint, that's all. It's quite hot today.'

She puts the ice pack on my forehead. It's freezing.

A little faint? Like a nightmare things start coming back.

'Mr Simpson made me run,' I say to Mum.

'I'm sure it was just one of those things,' says the

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office lady. 'Though you probably should visit a doctor just to check that everything's all right.'

Mum gives the office lady a death stare. She uses her quiet, angry voice. 'I *will* do that. And if the doctor tells me that I've been called out of a VERY important business meeting because of a teacher's incompetence, you can be assured I will be back to make a formal complaint.'

Go Mum!

I hop in the Beamer and realise that all the energy from fainting has made me peckish. 'Could we drive by Maccas?' I ask. 'I feel like a burger and fries.'

Mum gives me a death stare. I wish I hadn't asked.

'Do you know what it's like getting a phone call saying your child has collapsed?' she says.

Well, I don't have a child so... no.

Mum answers her own question. Grown-ups do that a lot. 'It's scary, Matthew. Besides, I don't have time. I'm flat out at work at the moment.'

As if confirming what she said, Mum's car phone rings. It's Lincoln, her boss. His deep voice booms through the speakers. 'How's the boy?'

'He's okay,' Mum says.

'Good. Look, Lorraine, we're going to have to move quickly on the Steckworth account...'

They start talking business and I start thinking of something else. Well, someone else. Even though it has been a bad day, Kayla said heaps of nice things to me,

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although it's probably because I gave her 80 cents. Then again, maybe she likes me? Maybe she has a thing for big-boned blokes and I could be her very own teddy boy? Or maybe she doesn't care about looks, only about what I'm like on the inside. Which is sensitive, funny, smart... Well, smart at tuckshop.

We pull up outside the doctor's surgery. Mum tells Lincoln she'll be back in an hour and checks her hair in the rear-view mirror. She smooths it over, covering the small bald spot she's got from pulling her hair out - strand by strand - when she's really stressed. She doesn't think I notice this, but I do.

As I walk into the waiting room, I see a girl who looks a bit like Kayla and I smile at her, hoping for one in return. If Kayla likes me, maybe this girl will too?

She scrunches up her nose and turns away.

Who am I kidding? I think. No one likes the fat kid.