

ANIMAL BOY

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Chapter 1

Josh was with his mum at the hospital. He had been knocked off his bike on the way to school and had bumped his head.

His memory was a little hazy and, try as he might, he couldn't remember what had happened to cause the accident. All Josh could recall was his neighbour helping him to his feet and the bent front wheel of his bike lying twisted on the ground.

"I think we are all done here now," said the doctor, who had given Josh a few tests and even sent him for an X-ray, just to make sure everything was fine.

"Will he be OK?" asked Josh's mum.

The doctor looked at her with a smile. "Nothing that a little rest won't cure. He just has a small cut and some bruising. He was very lucky to be wearing a helmet."



Josh was too busy studying the X-ray of his skull to care about any damage he had done to himself. It looked really cool and secretly Josh wanted a copy so that he could show his friends the inside of his head.

“See, Josh! I told you wearing a helmet was a good idea!” his mum said with a smile. “And you said it made you look silly.”

Josh had always hated wearing the bright yellow helmet that his mum had bought for him. Dave, the school bully, always teased him for wearing it, pointing and laughing at him as he entered the school gates. “Oi! Sweetcorn Head!” was an insult Josh often heard from Dave and his friends.

Josh now knew that the helmet was probably a good idea. If he had not been wearing it during the accident, a big crack running down his skull may have appeared on the cool-looking X-ray he was staring at.

“Yes, Mum. You were right,” Josh said, rolling his eyes dramatically.

The drive home was a little strange. Josh’s mum had been forced to leave work early to come and meet Josh at the hospital. Josh thought she would be angry but, strangely, she was acting pretty calmly about the whole incident. She was just glad he was OK.

As they pulled into the driveway, the headlights of the car lit up the bashed bike, which had been carefully propped up next to the front door. Their neighbour, Laura, who had made sure that the bike was safe, had even offered to pick up Josh’s little sister from school and look after her till they got back.

Josh’s mum studied the bike as she unlocked the front door. “You are one lucky boy,” she said as she helped him take off his jacket. “Now straight up to bed with you. I’ll bring up some food and a hot drink in a bit.”

Josh’s sister, Ellie, popped her head around the corner from the kitchen. “Are you dead?” she asked Josh with a blank look on her face.

“Oi, you!” shouted his mum. “As you can see, your brother is fine. He just needs a little rest after his knock.”

“Everyone at school was asking about you today, Josh,” said Ellie. “They said that after you got knocked off your bike, you’d come back as a brain-hungry zombie or something.” “Ellie! Stop that talk now!” her mum shouted. “You can see that he is fine and that he has not turned into a zombie. You can tell everyone that tomorrow.”

“Why can’t Josh tell them that himself?” Ellie said as she crossed her arms.

Her mum gave her a cold stare. “Because, madam, he has been ordered to rest and he will be taking a day off school tomorrow.”

Ellie stamped her feet. “But that’s not fair! Why does he get to have a day off school? He is so lucky!”

“Ellie, enough,” her mum said warningly.

Josh stuck out his tongue at Ellie and ran upstairs to his room.

