

All the fun of the fair



It was so close. Emily and her younger brother Luke felt like they could almost touch it. They had been waiting for what seemed a lifetime for this day and it was now within touching distance. The siblings had sat together and watched the travelling fairground year after year from the top bedroom window of their family home in Hallowdale. A colourful, luminous glow would emit from the mechanical monsters below and light up the surrounding skies. Screams from the children would fill the night air... but Emily and Luke could only watch.

“Once your younger brother has turned 10, I promise I will take you both,” Emily’s father used to say. “It’s just not the place for young children.” Each time she heard this, Emily was just as disappointed as the last, but her dad never did like the thought of the fairground. He always mentioned a time when he was younger where one of the rides broke down, stranding all the children for hours, cold and scared, until it could be fixed. The vibrant light shows, the colourful stalls and the smell of toffee apples and candyfloss drifting in through the window were not enough to tempt Dad. But that didn’t matter now as Luke had finally celebrated his 10th birthday last month and a promise is a promise.



The travelling fair arrived earlier that morning and although the children had both attended school that day, Emily's mind was a long way from the algebra and relative clauses that Mrs Winters (her Year 6 teacher) had spent the best part of the day trying to explain. All Emily could think of, were the colossal trucks which now littered the village, carrying the life and soul of the fairground on their backs. Her mind was filled with thoughts about when she would arrive home later that day and how the contents of those trucks will have been magically transformed into amazing rides offering tummy-churning, heart-racing thrills. The school bell rang and Emily was not surprised to see Luke hurtling through the packed corridor, coat half on, shoving his homework in his bag calling her name.

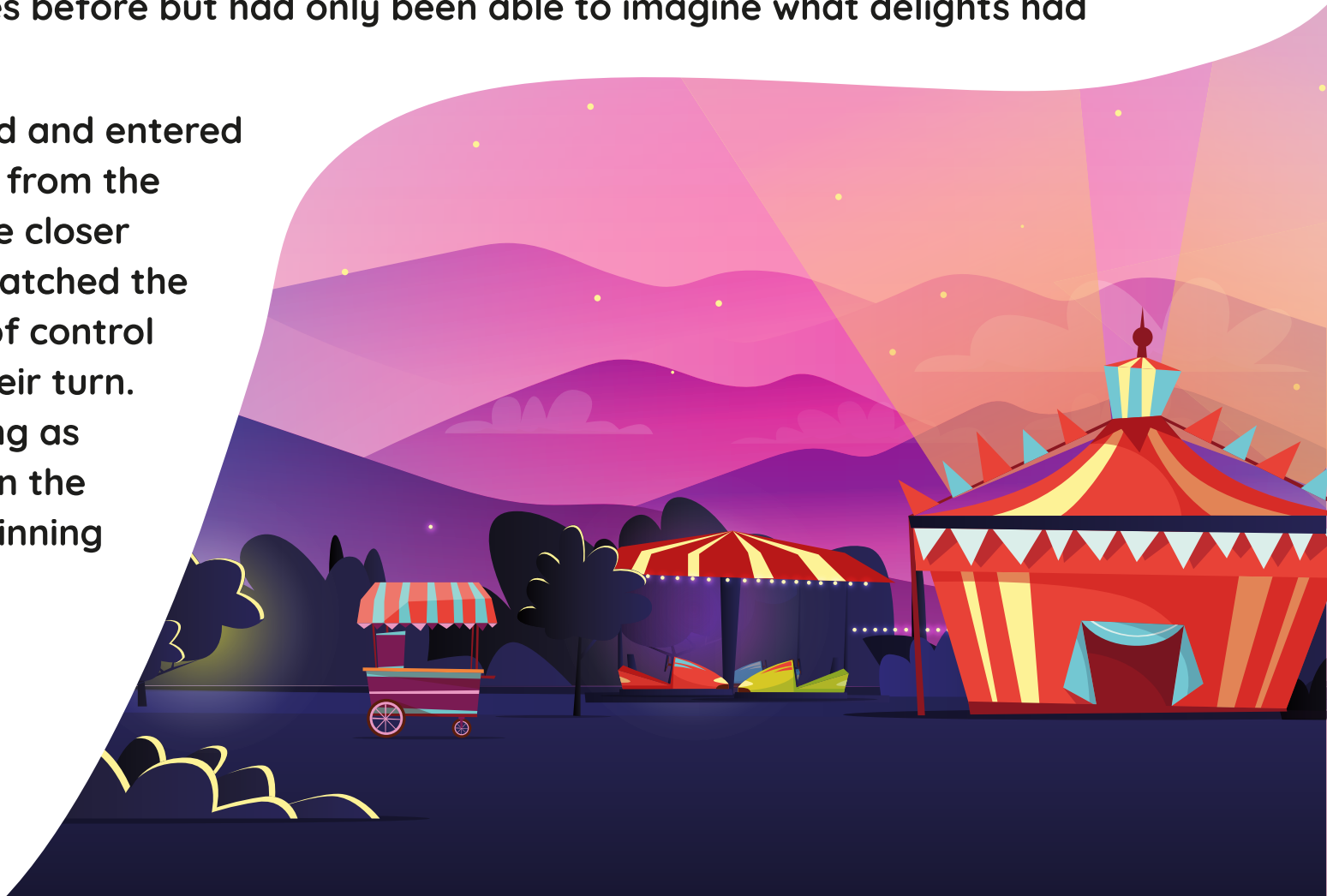


“Em! Em! Come on! It’s finally here; tonight we get to go to the fair,” he spluttered as he got closer.

The journey home in the car seemed to take forever. Dad was watching their excited faces in the rear-view mirror.

The fairground glowed eerily against the night sky and the sights of the rides, only seen before from a distance, evoked feelings of excitement deep inside Emily. She couldn’t believe she was finally here. The occasional scream or shriek of laughter reminded her where she was. She had heard those sounds many times before but had only been able to imagine what delights had caused them.

As they left the car park behind and entered the field, the music thundering from the waltzers was getting louder the closer they got. Giggling teenagers watched the cars whirling and twirling out of control as they waited patiently for their turn. Emily stood for a while watching as ride operators jumped between the brightly coloured carriages, spinning unsuspecting passengers off in a different direction. The screams of both fear and exhilaration, all mixed together, made Emily smile.



“Roll up and feast your eyes. Try your luck and win a prize!” yelled a stall holder from across the path.

“Dad, Dad! Can I have a go?” asked Luke as he ran over and joined a snake of children laughing and cheering as a small child at the front hooked a plastic duck to win a fluffy teddy bear as big as her.

After hook-a-duck and negotiating the plastic bottles, chip cartons and other redundant litter which was strewn across the floor, Emily had eyes for just one ride and there it was! Towering above all the others, standing proud, was the big wheel adorned with a kaleidoscope of twinkling lights. Emily had dreamed of this moment forever. It felt like an age to get from the back of the queue, to standing at the barrier, next to board the ride. The one car left, with room for the three of them, slowed as it came to the platform. Their footsteps clinked against the metal platform as they ran to their seats. Almost all the other seats were filled with excited children and their parents. The machine’s engine spluttered to a start. Slowly but surely, they started to move. Up, up and away they went until Emily could feel her legs become weightless under the chair. Emily watched below her as the familiar sights of the fairground began to shrink as they went higher still. Luke was so excited - he was constantly leaning forwards then twisting to see behind him causing the small car to rock uncontrollably. Emily noticed Dad’s hands were gripping the metal safety bar so tightly that his knuckles had turned as white as chalk.





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