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STAN

Published in the Australia

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Chapter 1

Emily smiled as her grandfather handed her the large purple box with a golden bow. She had waited patiently, watching as the stacks of presents were handed out until finally, only one remained tucked away in the corner. The way it shimmered under the small fairy lights mesmerised her. It looked important, so much more than the baby-pink jersey, Barbie doll and Pepper Pig colouring book she had already received. This was *special*, like it was meant to be saved until everything else was opened.

Santa really did get it.

Emily had written a page long letter about how good she had been all year. Even after Tom broke the heads off all her dolls and tried to flush them down the toilet.

"Thanks pa," she said excitedly while pulling at both ends of the bow.

Secretly, she had been wishing for the latest tickle me Elmo. It not only shook but also rolled around laughing the faster you rubbed its tummy. Emily smiled as she imagined hearing Elmo's playful laugh when she tickled and squeezed him.

Just to be safe, she had visited Santa *twice* at the mall to tell him in case her letter didn't reach the North-pole in time, or he made the mistake of sending her the older Elmo that just shook.

Now as the ribbon fell to its side, she let out a nervous giggle before wrapping her tiny fingers around the edge of the lid.

It was a teddy bear!

It wasn't Elmo.

Emily screwed up her face as she lifted the soft toy out of the box and held it in front of her with both hands. The brown bear was old and tattered. It stared back at her with large round eyes and a smile. Dressed in black shorts and a grass green vest, three large badges were pinned to it. The first read **Master** in red and had a picture of a yellow backpack. The one below it had a picture of a bow and arrow, and the third, which was on the opposite side, was white with the words **To Serve and Protect** written across it. A small blue and white sailor's hat sat on top of its head with Johnny written across it in yellow writing.

"*HAHA! Emily got a hand me down.*" Tom sang as he transformed Optimus Prime from a truck into a robot.

"Now listen here, Emily. I know this isn't one of those fancy pants gizmos you were hoping for, but this bear is unique. That means it's different from all your other toys, its special. I found this little guy at an antique store. The woman behind the counter said his name is Stan."

Confused, Emily saw the small white hairs on his face move as he smiled. She wondered why Grandpa was giving her a present on Christmas. Isn't that Santa's job?

And where's Elmo!

Taking her presents back to her room, Emily sat Stan on her bed and looked at him. She heard a distant buzzing sound. It grew louder as it got closer, so did the galloping footsteps.

“Bzzzzzzz... *Trans-formers, ro-bots in disguise,*” landing a toy plane on her bed, Tom moved bits and pieces from it until a small robot stood in front of her.

“Starscream take out the smelly ugly bear.” Pushing a small button, Emily saw an orange missile fly from the robot’s arm and hit Stan in the left eye.

“Tom!” She yelled, “*Get out!*” She took Stan into her arms and rubbed his eye.

“Make me! Make me!” Tom replied, dancing from one foot to the other.

“*MUM!*” Emily yelled at the top of her voice. Shouting at Tom never worked, and he was too strong for her to fight, but yelling for mum always did.

“I’m going, I’m going, stay here with your *stupid* bear.” He said while making a face at it. Taking his action figurine and the small orange plastic piece with him, Emily watched as he slammed the door behind him.

“That’s just my dumb brother, Tom. He’s such a pain, but don’t you worry, I won’t let him hurt you.”

Looking past her new friend, she picked up Molly. The pink frizzy haired doll wore a bright blue dress and had a big white button for a nose with two smaller black ones for eyes. “Say hello Molly. This is Stan.” Emily put them side by side then smiled. “You two are going to be best friends forever.”

“*Bedtime,*” she heard her mother tell Tom in the room next door. Emily picked up Stan and placed him on the bedside table then hopped into bed with Molly. She pulled the pink duvet up until it covered them both then snuggled up until she was comfortable.

The door gently creaked open as her mother entered. She glanced at Stan and smiled.

“It looks like you have a new friend. What’s his name?”

“Grandpa gave him to me. His name’s Stan.”

“Hello Stan, I’m mum. It’s very nice to meet you.”

She leaned forward and gave Emily a kiss on her forehead then turned off her pink bedside lamp. “Goodnight sweetheart. Goodnight, Stan.”

“Goodnight, mummy,” she replied yawning.

Emily awoke the next morning to the sound of crying. It came from Tom. Quickly throwing her bed sheets aside, she ran from her room and saw both her parents standing over him. His bright red face was full of tears as he held onto broken pieces of plastic. He shrieked when he saw her. “*You did it! You broke him, you broke Starscream!*”

Her mother looked down at her. “It wasn’t Emily, sweetie. She just woke up. Are you sure you didn’t accidentally break it?”

Blubbing, he shouted at the top of his voice. “It was *her!* She did it! She broke him! Her and that dumb bear.”

Confused, Emily stared at the orange bits and pieces that lay in front of her. The toy was ruined, its wings broken in half, the red and blue body twisted and the small head snapped right off.

“Now that’s enough,” her father interrupted. “Emily had nothing to do with it. When you’re ready to tell us what really happened, you can. Until then, I don’t want to hear another word about it.”

Emily’s mother turned to her and gave her a warm smile, “darling can you please go outside and play, we would like to have a word with your brother.”

Nodding her head, she quickly ran back into her room and felt her heart begin to race when Stan wasn’t sitting on the night stand. Frantically searching for him, she eventually found him lying under the sheets next to Molly. She brought him close and spoke in a hushed voice. “Guess what Stan. Someone broke Tom’s toy and he thinks it was me and you, but it wasn’t. I’ll never let that happen to you Stan, I promise.”

She wrapped her arms around his fluffy body and gave him a hug. As her tiny fingers moved gently over the back of his green velvet vest she felt something underneath. Carefully slipping the vest off his arms, she turned it inside out. There was another round badge, but this one was different, it was sewn into the material. On it was a face of a purple robot bird and in small writing below were the words *Decepticons immobilise*. Surprised and confused by her new find, she slipped the thin piece of clothing back over the bear’s brown body. “We have to go outside and play. I think Tom is getting a growling for telling fibs.”

The bright morning sun hurt Emily’s eyes as she opened the back door and stepped outside. A sudden angry growl followed by a tirade of menacing barks from over the neighbour’s fence made her jump with fright, sending Stan tumbling down the concrete steps in front of her. “*Stan!*” Emily yelped chasing after him, before pulling him by the arm. “I’m sorry Stan, I hate that big, mean-old dog.”

Holding him tightly, she made her way to the small wooden box in the centre of the backyard and sat Stan down. She fixed his tiny sailors hat so it covered his eyes from the sun then smiled at him.

“This is where I play, Stan. Making sandcastles is my favourite. I start off by filling up my bucket with sand then I quickly turn it over. Like this.”

Emily was in the midst of turning over her third bucket load of sand when a dark shadow suddenly enveloped her.

She looked up and saw Tom in his favourite blue denim jacket holding his toy wrapped in cello tape. His narrow beady eyes glared at her. “I know it was you Emily. Mum and Dad say it wasn’t but *I know* it was and I’m going to get you back.”

He suddenly swung his leg down hard and kicked a clump of sand onto her then walked towards the swing set. Emily stood up, dusted the sand off her clothes then sat back down again.

“Tom’s such a meanie,” she told Stan. “I didn’t even touch his dumb toy but he keeps saying it was me. I wish he would just leave me alone for good.”

Turning her head, she watched as he sailed through the air. Emily wished she could swing that high. It was so high that he could almost see over the fence to the next door neighbour’s house. Emily had tried before but she wasn’t strong enough and Tom never helped push her. She let out

a sigh then turned her attention back to Stan. “When I’m finished with the castle, I like to get some water and put a moat around it so monsters like *Tom* can’t get in.” She started to giggle.

Emily was putting the finishing touches on her castle when she heard her mother call from the open doorway. “*Come on kids. Breakfast time!*” Looking over her shoulder, Emily saw her mother waving for her to come inside. Tom flew through the air as he leaped from his swing. Landing on his feet he was already running towards the door. Emily clapped her hands together a few times trying to get rid of all the sand that was trapped between her fingers. When it looked clean, she wiped her palms on the seat of her pants then picked up Stan. “It’s breakfast time Stan. Mums making blueberry pancakes for us today, *yum!*”

Chapter 2

The sweet scent of golden syrup and blueberries filled Emily's nose as she ran into the house. Tom was already seated drowning his pancakes with the thick golden liquid. Sitting Stan on the table next to her, Tom made a face like he smelt something bad, but didn't say anything. Her mother placed a freshly made pancake in front of her then combed a hand through the back of her hair. As Emily reached for the bottle of syrup, Tom quickly snatched it away. Grinning, he squeezed the plastic bottle until his plate was drenched. When he was done, he placed the bottle on his side of the table. "Give me the syrup, Tom."

"I'm *using* it!"

"No you're not, it's just sitting there."

Ignoring her, he cut a huge chunk of pancake and squashed it into his mouth.

"Give it." She said raising her voice.

"You want it, come and get it."

"*Mum!* Tom won't give me the syrup."

"*Tom...*" her mother's voice echoed from the kitchen.

"You're such a tell-tale-tit" he said before throwing the plastic bottle at her.

Skidding across the table, Emily managed to stop it seconds before it would have struck Stan.

"It just about *hit* him!" she complained.

Tom poked out his tongue but didn't reply.

Emily flipped open the small white cap and squeezed the rich liquid out. Her mouth watered as the soft pancake soaked the rich syrup. She cut a tiny piece then bit into it. The sweet flavours that burst into her mouth tasted like happiness.

Carrying the morning newspaper, her father came and sat down at his usual spot at the head of the table. "Yum! Pancakes," he said smiling at both their plates. He glanced up at Stan. "Is your new friend enjoying himself?"

With a mouth full of food, Emily smiled, nodding her head.

Her mother carried two plates with her, one for her father, and the other for herself. Placing both on the table, she sat down on the other side of Stan and smiled. "It's such a beautiful day today. How about after breakfast we go and spend the day at the park."

"*Yeahhh...*" Tom cheered. "Dad we can use the new soccer ball I got for Christmas."

"Sure can, buddy. Maybe we can even play a game against the girls."

Emily smiled nodding in agreement.

After breakfast, Emily took her bath. Tom's kick had left sand trapped in her hair and all over her clothes. Taking Stan with her, she carefully pulled off his blue hat, green vest and black shorts. Emily ran her fingers over the stitching, still surprised that she hadn't felt it before; it was right in the middle of the vest. Once her mother said it was warm enough, she stepped inside the large white tub and sat down in the bubbles.

“Hold your breath Stan,” she said before dunking him under the water. The furry teddy bear sucked in the soapy water then slipped from her hand fighting its way back to the surface. Bobbing up and down like an apple at the school fair, she took hold of his big tummy and picked him up. Water rushed from his body as Emily stared at his bottom. The brown bear’s backside and small tail was charcoal black, the thick fur stuck together. Bringing it up to her nose, the area smelt like the fireplace at winter time.

“What *happened*, Stan?” Gently rubbing her wet fingers over it, she turned the bear upright again. “Did someone try to hurt you?”

She brought him close and squashed him against herself, laughing as water dripped from him like a sponge, leaving behind a white soapy froth. She then lathered Stan with her bubble-gum shampoo until he was barely recognisable under the foam. When he was ready, she turned on the faucet and washed him clean. A drenched Stan stared back at her when she placed him on the edge of the tub.

“We’re going to go to the park soon, Stan. I’m going to take my new colouring book that Santa gave me.”

She looked at Stan’s smiling face. “Sorry Stan, but you have to stay home because you have to dry, but don’t worry, the next time we go you can come too, okay. I promise.”

Finished with her bath, Emily put on her favourite yellow sundress and wrapped Stan up in her damp towel. She cradled him outside, then watched as her mother clipped each ear to the clothesline with large wooden pegs. “Hang in there,” Emily said smiling up at him as he dangled gently in the breeze.

Emily took Stan’s clothes back to her room to get ready for their trip to the park.

Tom was already there. He grinned as he stepped past her without saying a word.

Emily looked around trying to see what he had been up too, but everything looked normal.

“*Let’s go kids!*” Her father’s voice echoed from the hallway.

Leaving Stan’s stuff on her bed, she quickly grabbed her Pepper Pig colouring book and pencil case, then ran out of her room.

Her mother, standing at the front door, pulled a white cap over Emily’s head and smiled as she fixed her blonde hair.

Tom came lumbering after her with his new soccer ball still in its box. “Hey, dad, I want to show you a new trick I learnt at school.”

“Sure son. Maybe you can teach it to me.”

“Don’t worry, dad. I will.” Tom said with a huge smile plastered across his face.

Chapter 3

“*MUM...MUM!*” Emily’s throat scorched as she screamed at the top of her voice. She struggled to breathe as she sobbed, running from one side of her bedroom to the other. Her usually neat room was now a mess.

After returning home from their day at the park, Emily had taken the necklace she had made for Molly into her room. It was beautiful; made out of small daisies. The yellow and white flowers tied together by the stems formed a tiny circle. Now the necklace lay broken on the floor next to her pillow as she thrashed through her bed covers.

“Emily, if you need something, you should ask politely, not scream from...”

“IT’S MOLLY! She’s *GONE!*”

“Are you sure you didn’t just leave her somewhere?” Her mother asked, picking up the pillow.

“*Yes!* I’m sure! I left her here in the morning and now she’s gone.”

Tears flooded Emily’s eyes as she checked under the bed. It was the last place she could think of where Molly might be hiding.

Moments later, her father and Tom came in. As soon as Emily saw him, she remembered ... *TOM!* “Where is she?” Tom looked confused at first but then his face hardened. “*Who?* I don’t even know what you’re talking about!”

“Yes you do... Mum! He was in my room when I went for my bath and now Molly’s *gone!*”

“I didn’t take your dumb doll.”

“*Where is she, Tom!* You said that you would get me back because you thought I broke your stupid toy.”

“Is that true, Tom?” Her father asked him.

Tom looked up with pleading eyes. “Yes, but I didn’t *do* anything!”

“Were you in Emily’s room while she was taking her bath?”

Tom didn’t reply, he looked away from his father, his face bright red.

“Tom, I asked you a question. Were you in Emily’s room?”

“Yes,” he murmured.

“What were you doing in Emily’s room?”

Tom didn’t say anything, his head stayed low as his father asked again.

“Well, you can go to your room and think about what you’ve done. If Emily’s doll isn’t back in her room by tomorrow, you’ll be grounded.”

“But, *DAD!* The games this Saturday and you promised that we could go watch.”

“It doesn’t matter what I said. Until Molly is returned, you won’t be going anywhere.”

Letting out a loud sob, Tom threw the soccer ball at Emily. “*I HATE YOU!*” He screamed at the top of his voice before running out of her room crying.

The ball struck Emily on the arm but she didn’t care, she just wanted Molly back.

“Don’t worry sweetheart, if Tom took your doll, he’ll give it back. He’s just mad about his broken toy.” Her father said.

Sniffing, Emily looked around and realised Stan was missing too. She was about to start crying again but then remembered where she had left him.

Quickly running from her room, she heard her mother's distant voice calling her name but Emily didn't stop. Racing through the kitchen, she pulled open the back door and ran into the silent night. The security light flooded the backyard with an eerie yellowish glow as it sensed her presence. The clothesline propelled as the wind pushed against it but Stan wasn't there.

Emily snapped her head from one side to the other. She would have usually been too scared to look around in the dark, but that didn't stop her this time.

"I already brought him inside, sweetheart."

Emily spun around and saw her mother smile at her, a fluffy plump Stan sat in her arms. Running to him, she wrapped her small arms around the soft brown bear and squeezed him tight. The sweet scent of bubble-gum filled her nose as she took in a deep breath.

As her mother closed the door behind her, a loud chime echoed throughout the house.

Who could that be? Her mother said as she went to the front door.

Emily followed behind her and saw Mrs Stewart from next door standing at door.

She looked very sad and her eyes were all red.

Hi, there Carol, sorry to bother you so late, but have you by any chance seen Busta? He seems to have gotten out somehow and we can't find him anywhere."

"We just got home, but why don't you come in," her mother said.

She then caressed the back of Emily's head. "It's bedtime now darling, I'll be in soon to tuck you in."

Without saying a word, Emily took Stan to her room.

Picking up his clothes from the floor, she slipped the green vest through his tiny arms, pulled up his black shorts and placed the sailor's hat back onto his head. Once he was dressed, she looked at him with pouting lips. "Tom took Molly and now he won't give her back."

Tears filled her eyes. She wiped them away with the back of her hand and took Stan by the arm, climbing into bed.

Tucking him in until only his head was visible, she snuggled up next to him. Tears streamed down her face as she thought about the last time she had seen Molly. She wondered where she was right now. Was she safe? Did Tom hurt her and would she see her again?

Emily was still thinking about Molly as she drifted off to sleep.

Emily felt something press against her stomach the next morning. Quickly sitting up, she saw Stan looking down at her. A big smile was plastered across his face.

She smiled back and gave him a hug. Then she felt sad, *Molly*.

She pulled her covers aside then gently put Stan down before tucking him in. "Maybe if I ask Tom really nicely, he will give her back."

Yawning as she made her way down the hallway, the door to Tom's room stood wide open.

Emily was shocked by what she saw inside.

The room was completely empty except for his bed and a small desk. There were no toys, no posters or books. Tom sat on the ground wearing his favourite blue denim jacket, playing with his broken toy. He looked up and stared at her with evil eyes but didn't say a word.

Emily continued toward the kitchen. When her mother saw her, she smiled then wrapped her arms around her tiny body. "Good morning sleepyhead. You must have really been tired last night, it's almost midday."

"Has Tom told you where Molly is," she asked looking up at her mother.

"Not yet honey, but sit down. You're just in time for lunch. It's burger and fries."

Emily rubbed her eyes then sat down at the dining table and watched as her mother pieced together a burger. Shuffling in a side of fries, she picked up the plate and a glass of orange juice and placed it in front of her. Emily stared at her food to sad to eat. The thought of Molly made her pout. She looked at her father when he came and sat down.

"Hi angel," he said curling his lips into a smile.

"Hi Dad," she replied in a hushed voice.

He brought his face close to hers, "how about after lunch, we go and get some ice cream then pop into the toy store.

"I don't want another toy, Dad. *I want Molly.*"

"I know honey, but until we get Molly back, having another toy won't hurt, will it?"

Emily nodded her head then stuck her fork into a French fry and shoved it into her mouth.

Chomping it down, she looked at her father again. "What happen to all of Tom's things?"

"Tom's been a very naughty boy lately," her mother interrupted carrying her father's plate. "He's grounded and he will stay grounded until Molly is returned." Her father said loudly.

"Okay," Emily replied, her voice as quiet as a mouse.

Finished with lunch Emily ran back into her room to get dressed. She got changed into her baby blue dress then went to her small desk in the corner. Taking out a plain piece of paper and a black crayon, she quickly made a sign then took some blu-tac and plastered it to her door.

Closing it behind her, she met her father by the door.

"Should we ask Tom if he wants to come?" She whispered to her father as if sharing a secret.

"No. Mum said she's going to stay home with Tom today, so it's just me and you kiddo."

Emily smiled. She liked hanging out with her Dad. Mum was fun too, but Dad always included her even when he played with Tom. He would always come up with boys versus girls' games; usually Dad and Tom would win, but sometimes she and Mum would surprise them.

As she stepped out onto the front porch, Emily heard her father shout through the open doorway. She wasn't sure who he was talking too but he said, "*Ice cream at Movenpick just isn't the same without everyone there!*"

Tom sat on the floor listening to his father's echoing voice before the door slammed shut. *They actually left me,* he thought as he flicked the taped up arm of Starscream. Last night after

Mrs Stewart left, his parents not only grounded him but also took away all his toys. *You'll get them back when you give Emily's doll back*, his father had said.

I didn't even take her stupid doll. *Why would I?*

Tom had gone looking for the bear but couldn't find it, *stupid bear*. He was leaving when Emily saw him. I didn't even touch dumb Molly.

Slowly moving the parts to transform the robot into a jet plane, he still couldn't believe he wasn't allowed to go to the game on Saturday. *Dad knew how much I was looking forward to it, and he just said no.*

It just wasn't fair, and all because of that stupid bear. *Stan ...* What kind of name is that for a bear anyway.

When Granddad gave it to her and didn't give me anything did I complain, *No!*

All of a sudden, Tom knew what he had to do. Everything was that stupid bear's fault. *If they think I'm such a bad boy, then that's what I'll be!*

Quickly standing up, he ran to his desk and opened the bottom drawer. He searched through the stacks of drawings he had done at school until he found it; the special present his Granddad had given him on his birthday.

It felt heavy in the palm of his hand. There was a white cross in the centre with the word Swiss written underneath. With his fingers, he carefully pulled at the top corner of the handle and drew down a sharp silver blade. It gleamed in the sunlight as he ran his fingers over the pointy tip.

Gripping it tightly, Tom kept it by his side as he moved towards his bedroom door. He ducked his head out but couldn't see or hear his mother. Tiptoeing from his room, he made his way to Emily's door. It stood closed with a piece of paper stuck in the middle that read *KEEP OUT TOM!*

He turned the handle and slowly opened the door then grinned when he spotted it.

Glancing over his shoulder one last time, he didn't see his mother. He raised his pocket knife high and stepped inside.

The door creaked as it slowly closed behind him...

Chapter 4

A white car was parked in the driveway when Emily and her father returned home. Blue stickers covered its body with lights on the roof. She heard an *Oh my god* from her father before he quickly threw open the door. Unbuckling her seatbelt, Emily got out and ran after him to the open front door.

Inside, her mother stood in the hallway in tears talking to a man in uniform. The last time Emily saw her mother like that was when Grandma went to heaven.

“*Greg!*” her mother said before running into arms. “It’s Tom, he’s gone, I can’t find him anywhere, and... and the police found Busta’s collar...it was under Tom’s bed...it was covered in *blood.*”

“Why are you crying, mummy?” Emily asked, starting to feel sad herself.

Wiping tears from her eyes, her mother bent down and gave her a warm hug then looked into her eyes.

“Emily did Tom say anything about going to a friend’s house, or maybe going to the park?” Confused, Emily shook her head wondering why her mother was asking her those questions.

“Are you sure sweetie?”

“I’m sure,” she replied.

Her mother took a deep breath in then nodded her head.

“Emily sweetheart, can you please go to your room. Your Mum and I have to talk to the nice policeman.” Her father said, his voice sounding shaky.

“Okay,” she replied.

Stepping past her mother, she looked up at the big man in the uniform.

He smiled as her.

Emily smiled back then quickly ran down the hallway to her room.

As she opened her door, Emily wondered what happened.

Why was mum asking me about Tom? He hates me, he wouldn’t tell me anything.

Inside her bedroom, a cool breeze from the open window made the curtains gently flutter. A small blue and white hat lay on the ground in the centre of the room, the name Johnny printed across it in yellow writing. Looking up, Emily saw something sitting on her bedside table, its back turned to her, facing the window.

Stan? No, it can’t be, she thought as she stared at the big ball of fur with frizzy hair spiralling from the top of its head. *I’m going to tell if Tom’s playing a trick on me.*

Slowly walking towards it, she stared at the back of its vest. The purple badge with a robot bird could clearly be seen through the green velvet material.

With trembling fingers, Emily clutched the furry arm and slowly pulled. It barely moved. Pulling harder, Emily managed to get it half turned before she suddenly let go.

For a split second she stared wide-eyed at a plump Stan with Molly’s bright pink hair dangling down to its shoulder and a piece of blue denim material hanging from its mouth; then out poured a high-pitch shriek.

Within seconds, her parents and the policeman burst through the door. She turned her head to speak to them but nothing would come out.

Pointing to show them what she had just seen, Emily turned to face Stan again but only deep claw marks remained on the white bedside table.

Stan was gone.

Chapter 5

Three weeks later...

“Jack! Hey Jack! Look up there.” Andrew pointed high above his head.

Jack swung his head towards the giant Kauri tree, and saw it too. “What is it?” He asked making a face.

“It looks like some kind of teddy bear, but with something coming out of its head. Who do you think it belongs to?”

Jack looked in the direction the bear was facing and saw a small blonde haired girl sitting on a bench with an older man that looked like her grandpa. She looked sad as she sat hunched over eating ice cream while the man spoke to her. “It might belong to that girl over there?” He said pointing.

Andrew looked towards her then shook his head. “Nah, this thing is too ugly for a girl to like, and anyway finders’ keepers, remember.” He then wrapped his legs around the trunk of the tree and quickly began to climb. When he reached the branch the bear was sitting on, he stretched out his arm and pulled. “Look out,” he yelled as it fell from its perch.

Jack watched as the bear bounced off the ground, flipped a couple of times then landed face down in the grass. As he picked it up, he realised the thing coming out of its head was actually its hair, *its pink, frizzy hair*.

“This thing is weird” Jack said as Andrew climbed down then joined him by his side. “Pink hair, a green vest with badges and what’s that thing hanging out of its mouth?” He tried to pull at the blue material but it was sewn into the bear.

“Let me have a look.” As Andrew took the bear, he flipped it over and out fell a small red handle with a cross on it. “Whoa, cool!” He said picking it up. “A Swiss army knife! My dad’s got one of these.” He pulled at the corner and drew a sharp metal blade. “*Awesome!* You can have the bear, I want *this!*”

Jack thought about complaining but then remembered the finders, keepers rule. Andrew had seen the bear first and also climbed up to get it, so it belonged to him. Instead, he took the bear back and searched through its tiny clothing in case there was something else hidden, but didn’t find anything. Disappointed he let out a sigh. “At least it’s got a cool Decepticons vest. Maybe it’s some kind of limited edition toy. Might be worth heaps of money.”

“Maybe,” Andrew said flicking the blade open then sliding it back. “But let’s get out of here before the owner shows up and we have to give it back.”

Nodding in agreement, Jack took hold of the bear by its leg then followed Andrew as he raced across the park, away from the sad little blonde girl and her grandpa.

It was his bear now.

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