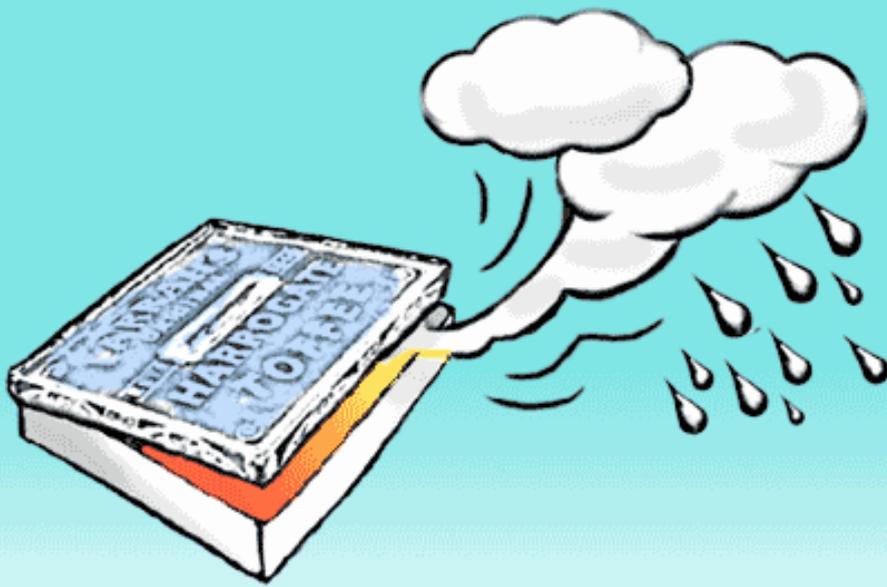


The Weather Tin



Emma Laybourn

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THE WEATHER TIN

Chapter One

Jamie shot out of bed like a rocket. It was the day of his birthday party!

He'd invited his friends to a football match on the field, and a picnic. His only worry was the weather.

"Please, no rain!" begged Jamie, as he ran to the window.

He threw open the curtains, and stared out. There was no rain. That was good. But there was no sun either.

The sky was grey. Not an interesting, stormy grey, but a flat, dull grey.

"Is it cloudy?" wondered Jamie.

But it was not only the sky that was grey. The field was grey. The street was grey. Everywhere was the same dull grey...

Everywhere except next door, in Mr Macey's garden.

A small patch of sunlight sat on Mr Macey's lawn, like a bright yellow mat. Over his tomato plants perched a little white cloud. And there was rain coming from the cloud. It was busily raining on the tomatoes and nowhere else.

"What's happened to the weather?" gasped Jamie. "It's all in Mr Macey's garden!"

He pulled on his clothes and ran outside to peer over the fence.

Old Mr Macey came shuffling out of his house next door. He was carrying a deckchair, a newspaper, and a large toffee tin. He put his deckchair down in the patch of sunlight. Leaning back in it with a smile, he began to read.

After a moment his smile changed to a frown. Mr Macey fanned himself.

“It’s too hot!” he muttered. “Let’s have a bit of breeze!”

He picked up the toffee tin, and opened it a tiny crack. At once Jamie saw the flowers waving. He felt a cool breeze wafting over the fence.

“That’s better!” said Mr Macey. “And that’s enough rain on my tomatoes now.”

The little white cloud over the tomatoes disappeared. The sun shone down on them. Mr Macey closed the toffee tin with a happy sigh, and leaned back in his chair again.

Jamie glanced around. The sun still shone nowhere except Mr Macey’s garden.

“Mr Macey!” he shouted over the fence.

Mr Macey looked up and saw him. He jumped up, quickly hiding the toffee tin under his newspaper.

“Hello, Jamie!” he said. “How are you?”

“Not happy,” said Jamie. “What’s happened to the weather? Why have you got it all?”

“Me?” said Mr Macey, looking guilty.

“Yes, you! You’ve stolen all the weather!”

“No, no,” said Mr Macey. “I haven’t *stolen* it. I’ve just borrowed it.”

“Why?”

“Well, I’m fed up with the weather doing what it likes,” said Mr Macey. “Rain, when I want sun! Sun, when I want rain! It never does what you want. Don’t you agree?”

“Sometimes, I suppose...”

“So I’m keeping it all in my tin,” said Mr Macey, “and just letting the bits out that I need.”

“But you can’t do that! You’ve taken everybody’s weather,” cried Jamie. “Today’s my birthday! I’m having a football party on the field, and I need sunshine!”

“A football party?” said Mr Macey. “I like football.”

“And a picnic!”

“A picnic?” said Mr Macey. “I enjoy picnics.”

“And a cake!”

“A cake?” said Mr Macey. “I *love* cake! I’ll tell you what. If you invite me to your party, I’ll bring along my toffee tin and make sure you have plenty of sunshine.”

“It’s a deal!” said Jamie.

Chapter Two

Everybody was in the field, ready to play football.

“Can I go in goal?” asked Mr Macey eagerly.

Jamie looked at his friends.

“Okay,” they agreed. So Mr Macey went and stood between the goalposts.

Jamie’s Mum was relieved, because it meant she didn’t have to be the goalie. She could get the picnic ready instead.

She gazed up at the sky. “Oh, dear! What a miserable, grey day!” she said. “I can’t think what’s happened to the weather.”

Jamie looked hard at Mr Macey.

“Ah!” said Mr Macey. “Quite!” Nobody but Jamie was watching as he took the toffee tin out of his pocket. He opened it just a crack.

At once a bright yellow square of sunshine appeared, exactly the right size to cover the football pitch. Mr Macey closed the tin again.

“That’s better!” said Mum in surprise.

“Kick-off!” shouted Jamie happily, and the game began.

Mr Macey rested the toffee tin against the goalpost while they played. Jamie was so good in defence that Mr Macey had an easy time. He didn’t need to save any goals.

After a while Jamie got too hot in the sunshine.

“A little bit of shade would be good,” he said, looking at Mr Macey.

“Okay,” said Mr Macey. He opened the tin a crack, and a small white cloud appeared in the sky over the field. Once Jamie was in its shade, Mr Macey carefully shut the tin.

“Nice,” said Jamie.

But as the game went on, he got even hotter.

“Phew! It’s warm,” he said, mopping his brow. “We could do with a breeze!” He turned round and stared at Mr Macey again.

“A breeze? No problem,” said Mr Macey.

He bent down for the toffee tin. Just then one of Jamie’s friends kicked for goal. Jamie was looking the wrong way and saw the ball too late.

The ball shot past him and smacked into Mr Macey, who was holding the toffee tin. The tin flew through the air.

“Somebody catch it!” cried Mr Macey.

But as the tin soared through the air, the lid came open.

And suddenly there was a breeze.

A second later, the breeze became a gale.

Two seconds later, the gale became a whirlwind...

Chapter Three

The whirlwind rushed around the football pitch. It picked up the ball, spun it, and tossed it high in the air. It tried to pick up the footballers too, and although it was not quite strong enough, it whirled them around the field as if they were spinning tops.

“Get the tin!” cried Jamie. The whirlwind blew his words away. In any case, nobody could reach the tin. The wind had thrown it up into the sky, almost too high to see.

A moment later the wind died down.

“Thank goodness,” said Jamie – and then his mouth dropped open.

The wind had blown itself away. But snowflakes as big as saucers began to fall around him.

The field was turning white. Within seconds, Mr Macey looked like a snowman.

Then the tin fell out of the sky, surrounded by huge snowflakes. As soon as it hit the ground it was buried beneath the snow.

When Jamie tried to run towards it, he sank knee-deep in a snowdrift. He couldn't see the tin at all.

As for the football, it had disappeared – but the football team didn't care.

“Wow!” they shouted. “Snow!”

They started jumping in the snowdrifts. Some of them began to build a snowman. The others were soon throwing snowballs.

Before long, there was a whole crowd of huge snowmen in the field, and a joyful snow-fight was going on. The children shrieked with laughter as they played in the snow.

Jamie joined in with the snow-fight. It was a lot of fun – until someone picked up a big ball of snow and threw it at him.

The snowball broke apart in mid-air. And out of it tumbled the toffee tin.

All at once, the snow stopped falling. A dark cloud oozed out of the tin and draped itself over the goal like a heavy grey quilt.

When Jamie ran to pick up the tin, a flash of lightning from the cloud made him jump away.

More flashes of lightning stabbed down at the children below. Jamie was horrified.

Then he realised that the flashes were tiny – not big enough to hurt. They only tickled the children, making them scream and giggle.

Trying to ignore the lightning, Jamie reached for the toffee tin again. Before he could grab it, it began to rain.

But this was no ordinary rain. It was so heavy that he could hardly see through it. He was soaking wet in an instant. Raindrops as big as marbles plunged into the snow, drilling deep holes in the drifts.

Soon all the snow was melting in the rain. There was so much water that the goal-mouth began to flood.

Within minutes, the whole field was turning into a lake. The water swirled and swished around his feet. The picnic hamper began to float away.

And so did the toffee tin...

Chapter Four

“I’ll get it!” yelled Mr Macey. He splashed through the water towards the toffee tin.

As he spoke, thick white fog billowed out of the open tin. It covered him completely.

Jamie stared. All he could see was a white mountain of fog like half a ton of candy floss, sitting on the flooded field. Mr Macey was somewhere inside there. Jamie heard shouts and splashes – and then a *crash*.

Slowly, slowly, the fog faded. The golden sun shone down, warming him through.

Jamie looked up at the sky suspiciously, wondering what would happen next.

The sky wasn’t dull and grey any more. It was blue and dotted with little clouds – but this time, the sunshine and clouds were everywhere, and not just over the field.

He looked down and saw Mr Macey sitting on the picnic hamper.

Mr Macey’s face glum. He held the toffee tin in his hand. The lid had broken right off.

“I’ve lost all my weather,” sighed Mr Macey. The flood-water swirled past him and ran into the ditch, leaving the field green again, if rather wet.

“I’m so sorry, Jamie,” Mr Macey groaned. “I ruined your birthday party.”

“Oh, it wasn’t your fault,” Jamie’s Mum told him. “It was that dreadful weather.”

But Jamie’s friends cried out, “Dreadful? It was brilliant! It was wonderful! We’ve never played in a tornado and a blizzard and a thunderstorm and a flood before. That was the best party ever!”

“It was. Thank you, Mr Macey,” said Jamie. “And now stand up, please. I need to get into the picnic hamper.”

Mr Macey stood up and Jamie opened the hamper.

“Let’s see what’s inside *this* tin,” he said, grinning.

He lifted out a cake tin. Inside it, his birthday cake had stayed perfectly dry.

So Jamie cut a slice for everyone – and an extra large slice for Mr Macey.

The End

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