



CHAPTER 1

Brrriing!

The bell went for the end of the lesson. All week Mr Donald had been teaching Frankie's class about the Middle Ages – knights and castles and tournaments. Frankie had loved every minute.

"Well done, class!" said Mr

Donald. "Tomorrow we'll be looking at each other's projects."

"Oh no!" said Louise. "We haven't finished ours."

Frankie looked down at the model castle in front of them, with its battlements made of egg boxes and its moat from blue tissue paper. Its cardboard towers still needed to be painted, and they hadn't stuck the flags to the turrets yet.

The class had split up into groups of three to make their projects, so Frankie had joined his friends Louise and Charlie. Another team – led by Kobe – had decorated a



wooden shield with a coat-of-arms, while Tanya's group had put together a book of medieval recipes. Pablo and his friends had wanted to make a papier maché dragon, but Mr Donald had said that dragons weren't real, so they settled instead on putting together

a miniature catapult that fired table-tennis balls.

And they had *a//* finished. One by one the class filed out.

“Sir?” said Frankie. “Can we just have ten more minutes?”

Mr Donald looked at his watch. “Of course you can. Just don’t get up to any mischief!”

He picked up his satchel and left the classroom as well.

Charlie was trying to put glue on one of the flag poles, which were made from old lollipop sticks. But so far he hadn’t been very successful. His goalie gloves were making him clumsy.

“Why don’t you take them off?”
asked Louise.

“Gotta stay ready,” Charlie
replied, without looking up.

He finally managed to put a flag
pole in place.

“Right,” said Frankie. “Let’s all
get painting.”

Frankie went to the back of the
classroom to get the paint pots.
His ankle ached a bit from where
he’d twisted it in a tackle the week
before. He hoped it was going to
get better by the weekend because
his school were playing Ryles Park
under-tens.

As he fetched the paints, Frankie

heard a knock at the classroom door. His older brother Kevin peered in, grinning. *Great!* thought Frankie. *This is all we need!*

“What are you lot still doing here?” he said. “The bell went a couple of minutes ago.”

“We’re finishing our projects,” said Charlie, gesturing to the castle with his glove.

Kevin sniggered. “What a bunch of geeks.” He strode into the room and grabbed Frankie’s bag, then started rooting around inside.

“Hey!” said Frankie.

“I need your house keys, swot features,” he said. “I’ve lost mine.”

He tipped the bag upside down and all Frankie's stuff fell out. His books, his pencil case, his lunchbox. And his battered football.

Frankie fished in his pocket and took out his keys. "They're *here!*" he said. "Why didn't you just ask nicely?"

Kevin grunted and tossed the bag aside. He snatched the keys from Frankie's hand.

"Don't stay too late, teacher's pets," he said and marched back towards the door.

On the way, he saw the football. Drawing back his foot, he smashed the ball against the whiteboard.

Frankie watched in horror as it bounced off. Everything seemed to happen in slow motion. The ball looped through the air, right towards their model castle. Louise's mouth became a perfect 'O' shape. Charlie dropped the glue and reached out, but Frankie could see it was too late. The ball smacked straight down onto the delicate construction, crushing it completely.

"What have you done?" said Frankie.

His brother did look a little bit worried for a second. Then he shrugged, said "Oops!", and rushed out of the classroom.