

∞ Chapter 01:00 ∞

ELLE

Something bad just happened and I want to leap back in time to make it unhappen.

But you're not supposed to solo leap till you're 3-leap, which is 12 years old for Annuals.

I won't be 3-leap until the 29th of February. Three days' time.

I just ran out of double geography and now I'm in the corridor. I'm tongue-tied and my face is burning red with humiliation and I can still hear Mr Carter's old, creaky voice in my memory: 'Elle, where are you going?'

I check my watch: 15:01, Wednesday 26 February.

I close my eyes to block out the muffled shouts from the classroom, the yellow walls of the corridor, the smell of sweat and all the bad thoughts colliding in my head about the bad thing that happened AND getting into trouble for running out of a lesson.

I'm THINKING about leaping back in time so the bad thing won't happen. I don't MEAN to leap. That would be wrong.

When I have that thought, another one comes into my mind at the same time. Will athletics club still be on tonight? It's usually 5 o'clock on a Wednesday, but someone said it might be cancelled. I imagine doing running round the track to keep myself calm and it feels like it's actually happening. My body goes fizzy, charged up like a battery. Something very strange is happening to me. My body isn't any bigger but it's much stronger. I'm no longer Elle, I'm Elle to the power of 3! My head begins to spin so fast I stop thinking about running. I try to think about nothing at all but I've never felt so happy, like I could take on the whole world.

I clasp my hands tight.

Everything goes dark.

I hear a door open.

Classroom chatter pours out, like a tidal wave.



I open my eyes. Things slowly come into focus, like my eyes are a camera. I'm sitting on the grass by the school track, next to the long-jump pit. My watch says 17:00. My mouth is a capital O. I just leapt 1 hour 59 minutes into the future!

I feel dizzy, like I've been in the spin dryer at the laundrette and my skin's still damp. When I try to move, I throw up all over the grass. But it doesn't make me sad; it makes me feel better. I look around me. No one's doing slow jog or high knees. No one's spinning in the discus circle. Athletics really is off tonight. So, nobody saw me appear out of thin air; nobody saw me leap from the corridor.

Only you and I know what just happened.

I'm tongue-tied with everyone. Except you. It's easier talking to you because I don't know what you look like or if your eyes are rolling clockwise or anticlockwise because I said something odd or rude like 'How many days have you suffered from acne?'

I'm autistic, so sometimes I'm very direct or say the wrong thing at the wrong time. But I LOVE words, the sound and shape of them and how they feel on my tongue. And I love sprinting and long jump because it's the closest you get to flying. And when I TALK about sprinting and long jump, it's like the words come to life and I'm pounding down the runway, launching myself into the air. It's the best thing ever.

I like it here beside the track. If I was a millionaire, I'd build my house right here.

How fast can you run the 100 metres? My PB's 13.12 seconds, which gives me an 89.59% age grade. That means I'm almost in the top 10% in the world for 11 year olds. I want to run in the Olympics and stand a good chance because I'm a Leapling with The Gift and the Olympics only happens in a leap year.

My favourite Olympics is Mexico City, 1968.

My favourite athlete of all time is Bob Beamon.

Bob Beamon made a world record in the long jump of 8.90 metres at the 1968 Olympics.

They had to send someone out of the stadium to buy an old-fashioned tape measure so they could measure the jump properly.

Mr Branch, my athletics coach, says it was the most political Olympics since 1936, when Jesse Owens got four gold medals

and made Hitler leave the stadium. In 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos did the Black Power salute wearing black gloves on the medal podium and got suspended from the US team. Dick Fosbury raised his fist during his medal ceremony in solidarity with Black Power. Dick Fosbury was white. He invented a new way of doing the high jump called the Fosbury Flop.

But the best part of the 1968 Olympics was Bob Beamon's jump.



It's 17:10 and Grandma will be home in 20 minutes, so I need to run home. There's still frost on the opposite pavement and cracked ice on the puddles, even though the sun came out today. I love weather like this. It doesn't happen very often in February. Usually it's grey, cloudy and damp. I wonder what the weather will be like in the future. If it gets warmer, we won't get frost any more and people will read about it in history books.

I suddenly realise how cold it is, that I leapt out of school without my coat and now school's closed. But you don't need a coat if you're running. You just run and run and run and feel warm inside and the air feels cool on your skin. I grab my bag and run across the school fields, the frost crunching under my feet, jump over the fence like in the steeplechase and start running up the tree-lined drive that leads to the Hill. You'd think after leaping I'd be tired but it's the opposite. I feel like I could run a marathon.

It's not a steep hill but it goes on for ages. It's next to the main road, and there isn't much traffic, so it really is like running a

marathon in the Olympics when they get rid of the traffic so the runners don't get run over. But I don't run on the road, I run on the path. The council haven't cut the hedge so I have to be careful not to get cut on the thorns.

There's lots of houses on both sides of the road with their windows boarded up and piles of rubbish stinking in the gardens. You know people still live there because the bins are overflowing. Grandma says they're flats where they put criminals when they come out of prison and have no money. The bins smell horrible. The council never empty them. I breathe through my nose, even though Mr Branch says it's better to breathe through your mouth to get more oxygen. It's hard running uphill with a schoolbag full of books, my geography project which I didn't hand in, my yam and my PE kit.

When I reach the top of the hill, I'm in the zone. The zone is when you get into your running rhythm and forget where you are. I like being in the zone. It feels safe, like being under the table when I want to calm down. But there's a car horn hooting, hooting, hooting. I turn my face to see a bright red car and a woman with long ginger hair. It's Mrs C Eckler, my favourite teacher. She stops, winds down the window and says something about school and athletics and giving me a lift but I'm panicking that I won't be home before Grandma, who will find out athletics wasn't on and wonder why I didn't get home earlier. Panic makes me hear her words in the wrong order and my heart starts thumping. Lots of cars are queuing behind her, hooting their horns. It's all too much. I accelerate away like Usain Bolt.

The path's level now. I run past the shops, the newsagent's, the Indian grocer's, the Polish deli that had its windows smashed

in so there's cardboard in their place. Someone sprayed graffiti onto it in a foreign language I don't understand. We buy bread there sometimes because it's nicer than the bread in the supermarket and the same price. I start to relax now that I can't hear those cars hooting like an orchestra from hell.

I'm in the centre of town now. I run through the Pound Emporium, even though the floor's slippery and the flickering overhead lights always give me a headache, and out the other side to the car park, where they sometimes have a market selling bruised fruit. I go this way because there aren't as many people. I run past the big supermarkets we never go to because Grandma's leg pains her when she walks more than 200 metres, and on past the industrial estate.

This is the best part of town. Old, grey buildings used by businesses, and no people. It's the best place to run. The windows look like eyes with no sockets and sometimes big lorries go in making a rumbling noise like they've taken over from human beings.

We live in a flat on the other side of the industrial estate in a row of houses nicknamed 'The Mush-Rooms'. I think they're called that because the walls are so damp mushrooms grow out of them. Our landlord's Italian and he doesn't charge the same rent as the English ones. Most of the people who live there are Nigerian or Polish, except Mrs Leggett, who acts like she owns the place. The houses are terraced, so I can hear what people are saying in the next flat, though Grandma says that's not possible with old houses. But I can.

I'm starting to get tired but have a second wind when The

Mush-Rooms come into view. I do a sprint finish and only stop running when I reach our front door, number 36.



When she comes through the flat door, even though she's out of breath from walking up the stairs, Grandma sings 'Elle Bíbi-Imbelé!' and looks at me with her what-big-eyes. Most people just call me Elle. My full name is Elle Bíbi-Imbelé Ifiè. I write it with accents so people say it properly but they still get it wrong. Ifiè means time in Izon, which is a Nigerian language. Bíbi-Imbelé means mouth-sweet, as in sweet-talking. I like having time as one of my names and I like sweet-talking, except when I'm tongue-tied, and I love Elle because it's a palindrome like Hannah. It reads the same backwards and forwards. Before she died, Mum called me Elle after the fashion magazine.

Grandma says Mum died before I was born. But that doesn't make sense, does it? Grandma says Mum was in a coma after the car crash, so it was like she was dead. Maybe that's what she means. After Mum died, my dad went back to Nigeria and married someone else. I don't miss my mum or dad because I don't remember them. Grandma's like a mum to me. She's very short for a grown-up.

I was the same size as Grandma two years ago. People say 'Elle, you're tall for your age' but they don't know my TRUE age. I'm not 11 going on 50 like Mr Branch says. I'm two going on three. I bet you've guessed why. I'm a bissextile, a Leaper, or Leapling. I only celebrate my birthday every four years.

called Big Ben because of his height and obsession with timing things.

Big Ben has a stopwatch that times things down to two decimal points. He times me doing the 100 metres even when I don't want him to. He can't help it. He times EVERYTHING. And throws chairs when he goes from 0 to 10 on the anger scale. Big Ben's already been excluded from two schools. At his first school, he overturned his desk and books went everywhere. He'd only just started Second Year but was very strong. He went to the same primary school as me after that. In Sixth Year, he threw a chair because the teacher told him off for talking when he wasn't. It landed on the teacher's desk and snapped like firewood. Everyone cheered except the teacher and me. I missed him when he left.

Intercalary International's his last chance. After that, it's the Pupil Referral Unit. That's a school for children who get excluded and they can't find another school to take them on. I worry Big Ben will end up there one day. He never remembers to do time-out. When I do time-out, I do running round the playground or the athletics track. He doesn't throw chairs at people now, though, just at tables or chairs with no one sitting in them. Zero occupancy.

Big Ben's favourite car is a Lamborghini Asterion, which goes from 0 to 60 in three seconds, but his ambition is to time its acceleration down to a nanosecond. That's a billionth of a second. His uncle's a second-hand-car dealer. Last year he told Big Ben he'd teach him to drive when he was tall enough. He didn't expect that Ben would grow 6 inches that year. Now Big Ben can drive better than his uncle, even though he's exactly the same age as me and it's illegal to drive a car until you're 17.

Everyone thinks he's my boyfriend but he's not. I hang out with him because he's clever and kind and times me when I'm running. He says I'm the best sprinter in athletics club because I'm faster than boys the same age. Once I was crying at school because Pete LMS kept repeating everything I said in a silly voice so the teacher gave him detention. Big Ben gave me one of his socks straight off his foot. It was dark grey, at least a size 10 and smelled of cheese. I hid it in my bag because people might make more fun of me but it made me feel much happier. Big Ben doesn't care what people think. He'd never give me perfume or flowers just because I'm a girl. He says 'Am I your boyfriend?' 100 times a day.



Grandma's plaiting my hair before bed. I love it when she plaits my hair, even when she cornrows it so tight that I can't close my eyes in bed for the first night. She says it must last a long time so the tighter the better, but it pulls my skin so I look like I've had a facelift. It takes days for my face to feel normal!

Tonight, she's doing single plaits I can comb out in the morning. I sit on the floor and she sits on the sofa behind me, combs my hair with the afro comb, then the fine-tooth comb to divide it into sections. She massages pomade into my scalp, which smells like tar but in a good way. Some of the other pomades used to make me sick so we only buy this one. When I start shuffling on my bottom, shifting from one side to the other

because I find it hard to sit still on the prickly carpet, Grandma sucks her teeth.

‘Elle Bîbi-Imbelé! You are too antsy-pantsy. Sit, not run-o!’

Grandma likes singing my name. Tonight, she’s happy. I know she’s happy because she’s singing whilst plaiting my hair AND she doesn’t have to work hard to pull it tight when she’s tired after a day of cleaning because it only has to last till the morning. I’m happy too because it won’t feel like a facelift and I’ll be able to close my eyes in bed.

But when I get into bed and close my eyes I don’t sleep, I worry.

I worry Mrs C Eckler was so offended I ran away from her she’ll stop being nice to me in school and won’t be my favourite teacher any more.

I worry someone will find out about the illegal leap and arrest me and send me to a Young Offenders Unit, which is prison for teens, though I’m not 3-leap yet.

But most of all I worry about the bad thing that happened at school.

I open my eyes wide to make the bad thoughts go away but it doesn’t make any difference. My mind plays back today like a film on a loop. Each time I see it, it’s exactly the same as the first time. Every sight, every sound, every smell. It’s bad because, even though I now know it’s going to happen, I don’t know what it means.

Today I got a text from the future!

∞ Chapter 02:00 ∞

THE PREDICTIVE

My school is called Intercalary International because it's a boarding school for Leaplings who have The Gift. It only has two classes with a four-year gap in between and goes up to Fourteenth Year. It looks like a country mansion and you have to go up a drive with lots of tall trees to get to it. There's no sign outside apart from 'Private' because it's top secret. Locals think an eccentric billionaire lives there. It's the only one in the world and some of the pupils come from places like India and Brazil.

I'm a day pupil because I live close by. Very occasionally, an Annual will attend as a day pupil if they're the right age and can't fit into another local school, like Pete LMS. His real name is Peter Wolf and he's a bully. He goes to athletics club, but Mr Branch never picks him for the team. He went to my primary school. In Second Year, he was addicted to the computer, wanted everyone to 'Like My Status' on Facebook = HIS status, not mine. I never go on Facebook because of trolls. I nicknamed him Pete LMS and the name stuck. EVERYONE calls him Pete

LMS. He's still addicted to social media. I never call him Pete LMS to his face. I wouldn't want to get close to his face anyway.

His breath smells of raw meat.

Yesterday we had double PPF before lunch. Leaplings don't do history, we do PPF, which stands for Past, Present and Future. We take PPF in Block T, away from the main school building and built in the shape of a capital 'T'. The further up the school you go, the more lessons you have in Block T. We don't mix with the Eleventh Years until after the first Leap trip. PPF's my favourite subject. I got a Level 4, which is exceptional for a Seventh Year.

Yesterday was important in the PPF curriculum. Our teacher, Mrs C Eckler, gave us final information about the Leap 2048 trip to the Time Squad Centre. The Time Squad is like the Crime Squad, but it solves crimes committed across YEARS rather than countries, like if you kill someone in 2020 and hide the body in 1960. It only has four members of staff and is also top secret.

In Seventh Year you go to the future because it doesn't matter if you get things wrong. You have to be more experienced before you leap to the past. You do that in Eleventh Year. If you accidentally change something in the past, you rupture the space-time continuum. It's a VERY BIG DEAL. But some people say you can't change the past because what happened, happened. I prefer the past: you know what's going to happen. I'd rather go back to 1968. The future is totally unpredictable.

We were given the timetable for the Leap 2048 trip last week, but Mrs C Eckler said it might change because of the weather.

In 2048 it rains so much due to global warming they've invented new words for it, like drizzle and catdogs. I was surprised they hadn't improved weather forecasts by then so people could plan things. I like plans. They help make things more predictable so I feel safe. When plans change, everything becomes unpredictable.

Then, Mrs C Eckler introduced us to the Meat Ration menu.

'Can anyone tell me why meat is rationed in the future? Yes, Elle.'

'Meat is rationed in the future because too many people want to eat it for dinner and they ran out of land to breed enough animals to be made into meat.'

After that, lots of the meat became GM, which means genetically modified. I learnt that in science. Even now, scientists can change genes to make animals grow faster or lose their horns. In the future, people became scared it would make THEM grow faster or, worse still, GROW horns, so some stopped eating meat. But millions still wanted to eat meat that wasn't GM. So it had to be rationed.

The Time Squad have a no meat policy to be eco-friendly. On the lunch menu, there were things like minute steaks made of beans. Mrs C Eckler asked me to read the menu out loud because I have a clear voice. I pronounced minute steaks miNUTE by mistake. Mrs C Eckler corrected me and said it was MInute, as in $\frac{1}{60}$ of an hour. I felt humiliated but Mrs C Eckler said she'd made the same mistake herself which made me feel so much better.

Yesterday, Mrs C Eckler gave us a quiz about 2048 to

see if we'd been listening in class. It had questions about eco-robots who collect rubbish. I liked it because it was multiple choice, which means they give you some silly answers, some not-so-silly, and the correct one, and you have to choose. I like reading the silly answers best because they're like jokes. The best ones were:

Question 2: Why must we keep the Time Squad trip a secret?

Answer B said: To stop the wristwatch becoming extinct.
The correct answer was C: Because we all swore the Oath of Secrecy to protect The Gift and everything connected with it.

Question 6: Why is the population smaller than in 2020?

Answer E said: Everyone went to live on the moon!
The correct answer was A: The global one-child-per-family policy.

There was one I had to guess.

Question 7: What was significant about the year 2000?

I put A: The Time Squad was formed.

But I thought it might have been C: There was an upsurge of eco-crimes.

I couldn't remember if the upsurge BEGAN in 2000 or just after. After that, she showed a video about the Time Squad Centre.

First '2020' came onto the screen followed by a picture of the globe with green for land and blue for water. Then '2048', and there was more blue on the globe. The camera zoomed into the green really quickly, so it was like the view from a plane. Rain seemed to be dripping down the camera lens.

The camera zoomed in again on an aerial view of a glass building surrounded by lots of fields and trees green as a tropical rainforest, a play park with everything made of wood and a group of yellow dome-shaped buildings that looked like upside-down baskets. It was still raining.

Big letters on the screen said 'FIGHT CRIME ACROSS TIME'. That's the Time Squad motto. A voice said, 'Welcome to Time Squad Centre, 2048,' and the camera zoomed in on an old white woman. Her face was like earth when it hasn't rained for months, her hair was a white electric shock and she had cat's eyes. She looked 200 years old. A caption said 'MILLENNIA, Centre Director' and she said, 'I run the Centre.' I smiled when she used the word 'run', imagining her sprinting down the track in the 100 metres, doing a dip finish.

Then the camera zoomed in on the grass and trees and showed a bald man chopping wood who looked about 40. Lots of letters were flying around like insects, which made me feel dizzy until they settled into words, a caption, which said 'LE TEMPS, Eco-landscaper' and Le Temps was a talking head. He said, 'I plan the land,' and I was surprised because I expected him to have a French accent but he just sounded posh. I know *le temps* means weather in French so maybe he was in charge of the weather as well. He wasn't doing a very good job!

Then the camera went into the building and zoomed in on a café sign, with green tendrilly writing on a white background that read ‘The Beanstalk’, then into a large white room with a brown floor with a giant beanstalk in the middle that went right up into the ceiling, and it focused on a fat woman who was older than Le Temps but younger than Millennia and looked Indian. She was kneading a big lump of white dough like it was a punchbag. Her long black hair had silver streaks and it was wound up into a knot on top of her head and she had her nose pierced with a sparkly blue stone. The caption said ‘SEASON, Cook’ and she became a talking head. She said, ‘I make the food.’

Then the camera went along a corridor and up a spiral staircase to a door that said ‘The Igloo’ and went inside. The room was round, with large white bricks and a dome ceiling. Then a teenage boy appeared out of nowhere, disappeared, appeared again in another part of the room, and I recognised him because he came to our school last year at the beginning of Seventh Year. He looked exactly the same: a skinny black boy with hair like antennae and white clothes with graffiti on them. A caption came up saying ‘MC², Energiser’. I assumed he charged us up like batteries. The camera zoomed in on his face and he blinked several times before he said, ‘I move through time and space,’ and Big Ben pumped his arm in the air. That was the end of the video.

Mrs C Eckler turned off the equipment and smiled.

‘Any questions? Yes, Ben.’

‘In 2048, are we 40 years old?’

‘No, Ben. When we leap, we’ll all stay the same age as now.’

But you've raised a very important issue.' She cleared her throat, so I knew she was going to say something important. 'Very rarely, when people leap they meet their future self. Your FUTURE self would be 40.'

I raised my hand. 'Is it dangerous?'

'No, Elle. But you mustn't approach your future self. Let them approach you. They will know exactly what to do.'

I still wasn't sure Big Ben's future self would be less likely to go from 0 to 10 than him. I had lots more questions, like how MC² was going to charge us up like batteries, but they stayed in my head, which was resting on the desk straight after the video. I'd already started replaying it back in my mind, especially Season kneading a big lump of white dough. I knew we had breadmaking in the timetable and wondered if we were going to make WHITE bread. I hoped so because I only eat white food. If the food has a colour, or worse still lots of different colours on the same plate, the smell and flavour mixed with the SIGHT of it is too much and I get sensory overload and have to have time-out. I don't want to eat with my eyes closed.

I was still thinking that when I realised Mrs C Eckler was talking to me.

'Elle, be ready for me to collect you at 5:45 a.m. this Saturday. Text me if you're feeling delicate.'

I looked up at her. 'Why will I feel delicate?'

'Sometimes we have an Oops, remember. Things happen that we don't expect. If you're feeling a BIT delicate, you can still come on the trip. But we must plan for Oops.'

Oops is the bane of my life. Oops makes my heart beat fast

and hard like I just ran the 100 metres but instead of feeling happy I feel scared. If there was a person called Oops, they'd be my mortal enemy. Worse than Pete LMS. Mortal enemy means you fight to the death.



After lunch was double geography. We've been doing projects on climate change and what we can do to stop it. We had to interview grown-ups about food, fossil fuels or plastic bags. I interviewed Grandma about food. I don't want the climate to change because I find it difficult when it goes from spring to summer and autumn to winter. The government make the clocks go forwards or backwards, it's either too dark or too light and messes with my sleep. It takes me weeks to recover. But the worst thing is when weather changes dramatically from one day to the next. I have to check the forecast a lot because the prediction can change every hour, especially when it's windy. The wind makes the weather move around like a poltergeist.

Projects mean working in pairs and I was with Big Ben. He wanted to do CO₂ emissions from cars. He plans to invent the first eco-friendly supercar. But I wanted to do the meat and dairy industry because I read online that the rainforest is being destroyed so they can grow cows to make into burgers. When the cows poo they mess up the gases in the air, so the air gets warmer and melts icebergs in the North Pole and sea levels rise.

Grandma told me when she was a girl she only ate meat once a year at Christmas, when they killed a goat and roasted it for

the whole village. The rest of the time they ate fish from the river like tilapia. I was happy when she told me that because I like fish even more than meat. But when I read about us fishing too many fish until there will be none left I was sad.

I wanted to celebrate vegetables. I brought a yam into school as an example of a vegetable. Big Ben had to go with my idea because he has difficulty reading and talking in class unless it's maths or PPF. Anyway, he wasn't at school yesterday because of Anger Management so I had to present on my own.

I got to geography last because I always try to avoid the rush between lessons. As soon as I walked through the door I heard, 'Where's your Leaper boyfriend?' It was Pete LMS. He always says this when Big Ben isn't at school. Some of the class laughed, but Jake smiled at me and Maria said:

'Shut up! You're not funny.'

I like Jake and Maria, they often stick up for me. Jake's very good at PPF, even though he shouts out in class, and Maria does the high jump at athletics club. She's so good she represented Brazil.

I sat down at the back of the class and refreshed my mobile for the speech. I knew it off by heart but liked reading it over and over again. It distracted me from the talking that goes on during lessons when the teacher is speaking. The class is extra noisy for Mr Carter who speaks extra loudly in a slow, croaky voice, even though the geography class is small, only 15 children.

Suddenly, it was my turn to present. I took the yam out of my bag and I could hear someone laughing but I didn't know why. I stood up, scrolled down my mobile for the prompt list

and took a deep breath like I was going to push out of the blocks for the 100 metres.

‘Toomanycowsintheworldeatpeople.’

The whole class laughed so loud I couldn’t rearrange my thoughts properly. That wasn’t what I wanted to say but we were advised to deliver from prompts rather than read the full speech from the page. Mr Carter said we could use our mobile phones and make a list of words so we knew what to focus on for each section. My list said:

COWS

DAIRY

FISH

VEGETABLES

Looking at the word COWS had made me say cows first, when I should have said people. I’d memorised my speech word for word; I could see it in my mind, but my mouth mixed everything up and it came out like a long sentence in German that’s all one word. I love German but not when I want to speak English. Mr Carter cleared his throat like he was starting a car on a cold day. He does everything in slow motion because he’s older than Grandma. But before he could say anything at all, Pete LMS said, in my voice: ‘MAD cows.’

Everyone laughed except Maria, who shouted across the room: ‘Just cos you’re Pete LMS doesn’t mean we like you.’

Maria has hated Pete LMS since he wasn’t picked for the athletics team and said high jump was only for freaks. Pete LMS

makes fun of people who are different, especially if they're good at something. He calls Ben a Leaper after Big Ben let slip he was born on the 29th of February. Pete LMS doesn't know everyone in this school is a Leaping with The Gift. When we do PPF, he does history on his own.

I went from 0 to 10 in 0.5 seconds. I felt tears coming into my eyes and my face going red, even though I'm black and it doesn't show. But I had to do my speech. If I didn't do my speech, I'd get into trouble.

I stared down at my phone, the word COWS, and began again.

'Too many people in the world eat cows. They are addicted to burgers.'

'Ever seen a cow eat a burger?' shouted Pete LMS and banged his fist on the table. Everyone was laughing now, even Jake and Maria. But that wasn't what I meant. I meant PEOPLE are addicted to burgers.

I tried to continue my speech but every time I started a sentence Pete LMS would say the opposite and roll his eyes clockwise while Mr Carter looked out of the window because he's 103. Pete LMS gave me a hard time because his dad's a millionaire factory farmer who specialises in cattle, so if no one bought meat his whole family would starve. Actually, they wouldn't starve; they could eat the meat other people didn't buy. They'd be eating forever!

When I got to the FISH section, I looked down so I'd say the right words in the right order and noticed my screen was flashing. I had a text. In capital letters, it said:

SOS L

Sent Tue 3 Mar 2048. 23:00.

2048! It must be a mistake. I didn't recognise the number and I had lots of thoughts in my head at the same time. I closed my eyes and opened them again because the thoughts were coming too fast, one on top of the other, and maybe if I closed my eyes and opened them everything would be normal and I could carry on doing my speech. But when I opened my eyes, the thoughts kept coming like this:

SOS L

Who sent it? Why did they text ME?

SOS means someone's in trouble.

Howdidtheygetmynumber?

This isn't supposed to happen.

What does L mean? Is it a person who ends their texts with the initial L?

L means 50 in Roman numerals.

Is it someone pretending to be L to humiliate me? Like Pete LMS. Does he sign texts as L? But he's not a Leapling, how could he send a text from the future?

SOS means someone's in trouble!

It was sent in 2048 so it hasn't happened yet.

If you get a text about something that's GOING to happen, it's a Predictive.

SOS L is a Predictive!

Sent Tuesday the 3rd of March 2048, 11 o'clock at night.

2048 is the year of the school trip.

Maybe I can stop the bad thing that's going to happen.

I thought all this in ten seconds till I realised someone was

nudging my hand. Suddenly, Pete LMS had my phone! He smiled like it was his birthday and this was the present he'd wanted for ages.

'SOS L,' he said, in my voice, to the whole class. Then, in his voice, 'A message from your Leaper boyfriend.'

I had a shooting pain in my head but I rushed across the room to get it back. I lunged towards Pete LMS and he laughed in my face. He was holding the phone too tight for me to grab it. Of course Mr Carter was a minute behind. Before he could say anything, Pete LMS said: 'Is The Palindrome about to cry? Boohoo!'

'That will be quite enough, Peter,' said Mr Carter in his slow, croaky voice.

Pete LMS stood up at his desk.

'Enough? I've had enough! Expect us to believe all this rubbish about man-made climate change?' We all gasped. 'My dad says Nature does what she likes. Nothing to do with man.'

He turned and threw my phone across the room. It crashed to the floor and the back came off.

And what did Mr Carter do? Continued the lesson, in his own time, like nothing had happened. His droning voice went on and on but it sounded like it was in the distance.

'Where are you going, Elle?'

I hadn't realised I'd packed my phone and yam, stood up, put my bag on my back, walked over to the door and opened it. Run round the track, I told myself. Do ten laps of the track. But instead I stood in the yellow corridor with all the thoughts

spinning round my head. I closed my eyes, my body went fizzy
and I leapt through time.

SOS L

Someone's in trouble in 2048 and I have to save them.