

Chapter Three

Watch out Brenda!

Brenda's getting more and more excited as they walk along the road. She's holding Amy's hand tightly and talking about meeting Gary and Jack. Amy is not really listening because she is reaching out to touch the walls as she walks.

Brenda chats about Gary and reminds Amy that when he was at school, Gary didn't talk very much. "Don't you remember?" Brenda says. "We couldn't understand what he was saying could we? Gary used to get really angry when people didn't understand him."

When Amy doesn't answer, Brenda keeps on talking. She tells her that Gary looked different when they met him yesterday. "He had something in his ear, didn't he? Do you think it's something to help him hear things better? Gary looks different, doesn't he?"

Amy still doesn't say anything, so Brenda looks across at her. She watches as Amy reaches out her hand to touch the walls as she walks along Magnolia Street. As they walk past the shops, Brenda squeezes Amy's hand tightly. She knows Amy is nervous and that she likes it when Brenda squeezes her hand.

Brenda is excited and she can't stop talking. Amy pulls her hat down tighter over her ears, but she can still hear Brenda's voice.

Brenda is still talking to Amy as they turn left into Jamaica Avenue. When they get to the end of the Avenue, Brenda knows they are nearly at Green Gates centre and she tells Amy this. As they walk around the corner and into Green Gates Close, Amy is starting to feel tired. She squeezes Brenda's hand and tells her she wants to stop for a minute.

Suddenly, Brenda lets go of Amy's hand and says, "look, there's Gary!"

"Gary, Gary, Gary" Brenda shouts, as she runs along the street.

Gary is walking on the other side of the street and he stops walking when he hears Brenda's voice. He watches as Brenda, who has stopped running now, turns around and shouts at Amy.

"Come on Amy, hurry up." Brenda shouts.

Amy starts to walk as fast as she can, but she can't walk as fast as Brenda. She's upset that Brenda is already a long way in front of her. Just as Amy gets closer to her, Brenda starts to cross the road.

Brenda doesn't see the red car coming around the corner.

Amy screams!

Gary shouts out to Brenda. But Brenda has already stepped onto the road.

Amy stands still, puts her hands over her ears and screams again.

The driver of the car just misses Brenda. He toots his horn and shouts some rude words at Brenda before driving off.

Brenda walks slowly back to the pavement and starts to cry.

Amy stops screaming and walks over to Brenda. Gary has already crossed over the road and now has his hand on Brenda's shoulder.

Amy looks at Brenda and then at Gary. She doesn't know what to do. It always upsets Amy to see Brenda crying.

Gary holds Amy's hand and tells Brenda he will help them both to cross the road. He puts his arm around Brenda and holding Amy's hand, they walk across the road to the Green Gates centre.

When they get to the other side, Gary tells Amy to sit on the wall outside the centre with Brenda. She watches as Gary goes into the Green Gates centre and then looks across at Brenda. Amy knows when she looks at Brenda that she is not happy.

Amy is pleased that Brenda was not hurt but now she is worried that Brenda is going to start shouting at her. She sits quietly and thinks about the car and how Brenda nearly got run over.

Brenda is always telling Amy to make sure it is safe before she crosses the road. Amy doesn't think that Brenda looked carefully before she crossed the road.

Suddenly, Brenda stands up and shouts at Amy.

"Stupid car, I nearly had an accident!" Brenda shouts out.

"I was scared" Amy says quietly. "I thought you would be killed".

"Well he should have seen me" says Brenda in her angry voice. "It's all your fault, Amy" Brenda shouts at her.

"You were walking too slowly! If it weren't for you, we could have crossed the road before the car came around the corner!"

Amy looks at Brenda. She is not sure what to say.

Suddenly she hears people talking. When Amy looks round, she sees Gary with a group of people walking towards them.

"Hey Brenda, this is Tariq" she hears him say.

Brenda looks up and sees Gary. Behind him she sees a tall man with long black hair. He tells Brenda his name is Tariq and he works at Stronger Voices.

Tariq sits down on the wall next to Brenda. He asks her if she is alright.

Brenda looks at him and smiles. She has stopped crying now.

Then Brenda hears more voices. Behind Tariq she sees a nice man in a wheelchair. He says hello and asks Brenda what happened.

Brenda smiles and he tells her that his name is Jack and he is a friend of Gary's.

"Hello Jack," Brenda says, "I'm Brenda, Gary's friend".

Jack looks at Gary and then at Amy. Gary points across the road and tells everyone what happened. He tells them there was a red car coming around the corner and it was going too fast.

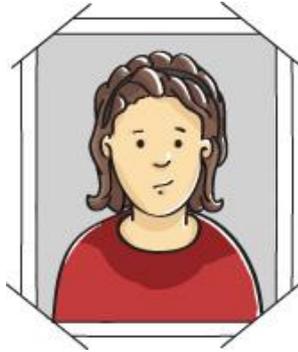
Brenda starts to cry again, and Tariq tells her it is OK because she wasn't hurt. He tells her the driver of the car was going too fast.

Amy stands up and looks at Tariq, Gary, and Jack. They are all fussing round Brenda and asking her if she is alright.

Brenda looks up at all the men standing round her and smiles. She has forgotten all about the car now.

As Brenda sits on the wall, she sees more people coming towards her. There are lots of men and they are all asking Brenda if she is alright.

Amy looks at Brenda and wishes she were at home.



Amy asks you these questions:

Why did Brenda cross the road?

What should she have done?

What did the driver of the car do to Brenda?

Why did Brenda say it was my fault?

Why do you think Brenda is not angry anymore?

Chapter Four

Stronger Voices

Gary, Jack, and Tariq are all talking to Brenda. Amy is still sitting on the wall and watches as Brenda talks to the group of men.

“If you’re alright, let’s go inside and you can meet the rest of the group,” Tariq tells Brenda.

Brenda tells Tariq she is feeling better and picks up her handbag. She looks back at Amy and smiles as she walks into the Green Gates centre with Tariq and Jack and the other men.

“Come with me Amy” Gary says slowly. “Give me your hand and I will take you to the room where we meet for the Stronger Voices group.”

Amy holds Gary’s hand as they walk slowly into the building past the reception area.

They don’t have to walk far before Amy hears people talking and laughing. Gary opens a big brown door and Amy looks into a large room where there are lots of chairs, tables and people.

Amy quickly looks round the room. When some people look at her, Amy pulls her hat down tight over her ears and looks down at the floor.

Gary walks towards the table and finds a chair for Amy to sit on. Amy's glad that Gary has found her a chair where she can touch the wall.

As Amy sits down, she hears someone laughing very loudly at the other end of the room. Amy knows who it is before she looks across the room.

Brenda is talking and laughing with Tariq and is already drinking from a big green mug. While Amy is looking at Brenda, Gary sits down next to her and asks Amy if she would like a cup of tea.

She is just about to answer him when Brenda shouts out. "Hey Gary, come and sit over here with us!"

Gary tells Brenda he is sitting with Amy. He asks Amy again if she would like a cup of tea and when she says yes, Gary walks off to the kitchen.

Sitting on her own, Amy puts her head down on the table with her hands over her ears. There are lots of people in the room talking and laughing and it feels like they are all looking at her. Amy knows some of the people here but there are a lot of people she doesn't know.

She looks up as a friend of Brenda's called Sasha, walks towards her. Sasha says, "hello Amy, what are you doing here?"

Amy tells her she is here to join the group. Sasha sits down next to her and says she's been a member of the Stronger Voices group for a long time. Then Sasha asks her what happened to Brenda. Amy tells Sasha about the red car which almost ran Brenda over and then told her how she met Gary in town last week.

As she talks to Sasha, Amy starts to feel much better.

They're still talking when they hear Gary's voice. When they look round, Gary has two green mugs in his hand. He's with Jack who must have said something really funny because some people are laughing loudly.

"Gary said you wanted a mug of tea," Jack says to Amy and looking straight at her says, "my name's Jack and I'm the best-looking person in the room!"

Jack winks at Amy as he combs his hair and wheels his chair closer to her. Gary hands the mug of tea to Amy and she looks at Jack and thinks how nice he looks.

Before Amy has a chance to say anything, she hears shouting. When she turns around, Amy sees a woman with bright red hair walking into the room. As this woman walks towards Tariq and Brenda, Amy stares at her.

They are too far away for Amy to hear what they're saying but she sees Brenda picking up her handbag. As Brenda opens her handbag, she sees her take out the forms they filled in earlier this morning. Brenda smiles at the woman and then points to Amy.

Amy has never seen anyone with bright red hair before and she can't stop looking at her. When the woman looks across at Amy and smiles, Amy looks away and picks up her mug of tea.

Gary and Jack are still talking when Amy asks them who the woman is with red hair. He looks across the room and tells Amy that her name is Jessie. Then Gary tells Amy that Jessie works with Tariq at Stronger Voices.

"She's nice" Gary says, "You'll like her, she's kind and friendly."

He is just about to say something else when Tariq comes over to Jack and whispers in his ear. Jack turns his chair

around and then shouts out “are you all ready to start the meeting?”

Amy looks at Gary and then at Brenda. She wonders what will happen next.



Jack asks you these questions:

What is the name of the woman with red hair?

Why did Gary go to the kitchen?

Who was talking to Amy?

What do you think I said to Gary that made him laugh?

Who is the best-looking man in the room?