

The Girl with Red Hair

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OXFORD BOOKWORMS

STARTER



THE GIRL WITH RED HAIR

Mark likes his work in Mason's store. He watches people, and he asks questions. What is that man putting into his bag? Why is that woman wearing two coats? Why are those two boys looking around all the time? Mark asks questions, and then he finds the answers.

Then one day Mark sees a girl with red hair, and he can't forget her. Now he's got some different questions. Who is the girl with red hair? Is the little boy her baby? Who is the man in the black jacket – the good-looking man? There are a lot of questions, and Mark doesn't always find the right answers.

But he wants to look into those beautiful green eyes again . . .

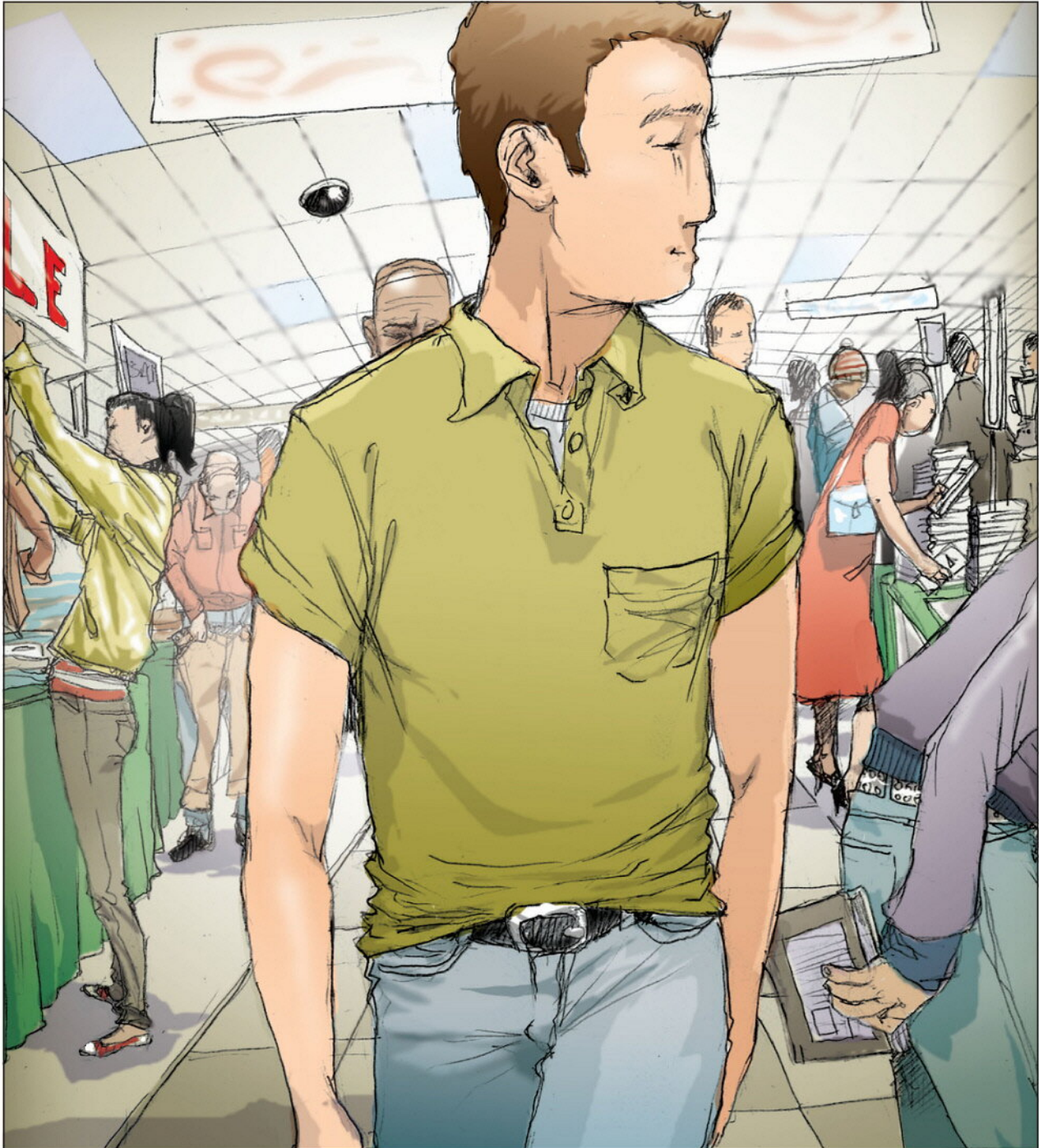


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1 Wow!



My name is Mark Sellers. I'm twenty-two years old, and I work in security in Mason's store. You can get everything here – books, TVs, hats, flowers, sandwiches, beds, bicycles . . . It's interesting work, and I like it. Sometimes I walk around in the store, and sometimes I work in the office.





Leon and Shami work in security too. I like working with them.

‘Look at this woman,’ Leon says. ‘Which hat is best for her – blue or black?’

I look at the woman on the screen.

‘Oh – the black hat,’ I say.

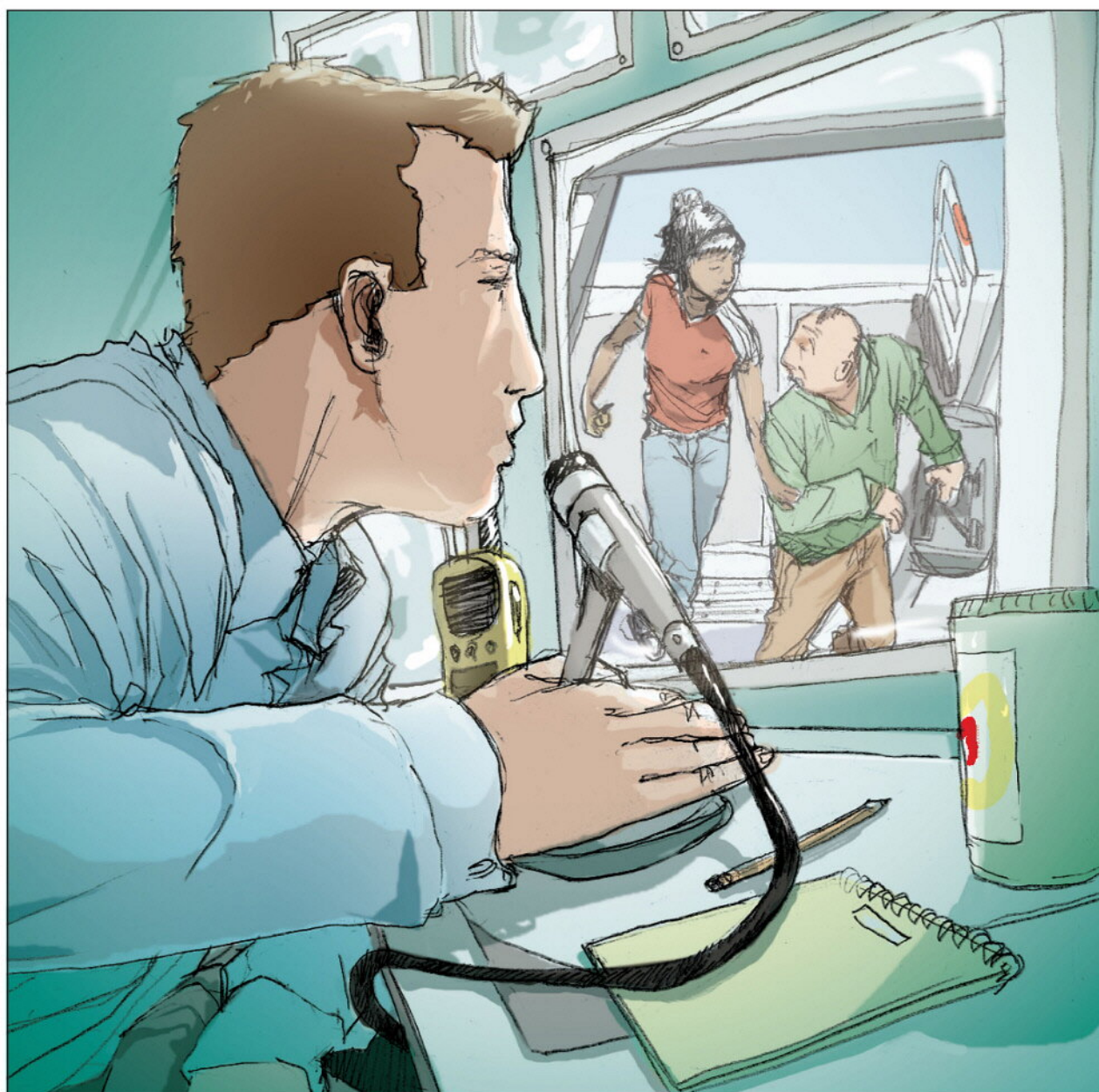
‘No!’ says Shami. ‘The blue hat is nicer.’

We watch and wait. In the end the woman takes the blue hat.

‘Hurray!’ says Shami. ‘You two know nothing about hats.’

Yes, it’s interesting work.

Today I'm watching the screens. I'm looking at a man with a big bag. He's got a clock in his hand. He looks around slowly. Now he's got a clock in his bag. The man walks to the door. I talk on my radio. Shami walks quietly behind the man. When he gets to the door, she puts her hand on his arm.



‘Please come with me,’ she says.
Good. I go back to the screens.



And then I see her.

‘Wow! Who’s that girl?’

‘What girl? I can see lots of girls,’ Leon says.

Now the picture on the screen is bigger.

‘That girl there – with red hair.’

Leon looks at the screen.

‘Hmm – yes, she’s OK. But who is she? I don’t know.
Why don’t you go and ask her, Mark?’

The Girl with Red Hair

He laughs and walks away, but I can't stop looking at the screen. Who is that beautiful girl? What is her name? I want to meet her.



The Girl with Red Hair

Every day I look for the girl with red hair, but I do not see her.

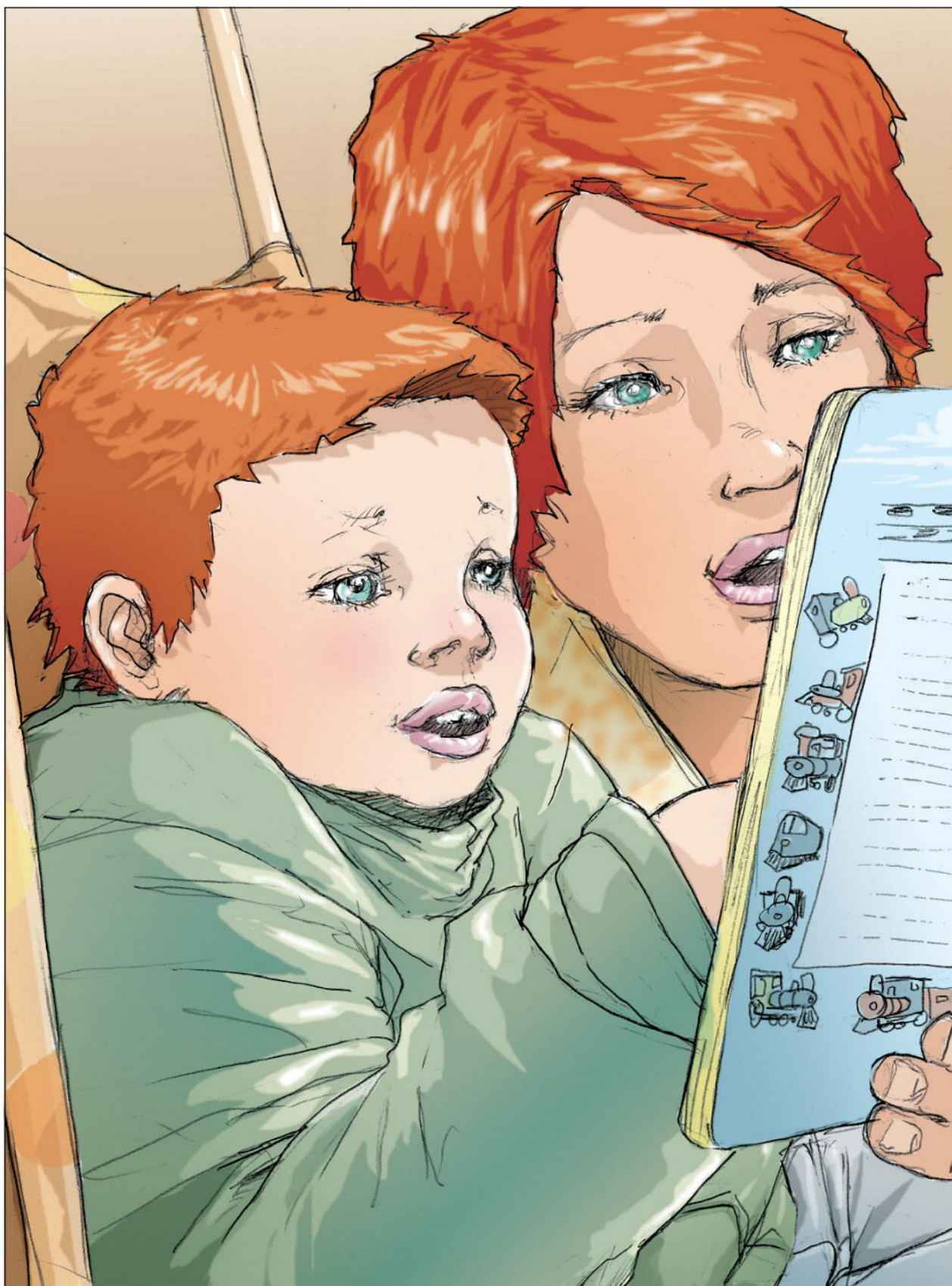
‘Where is she?’ Leon says every day. ‘Where’s the girl with red hair, Mark? What’s her name?’

‘Oh stop it, Leon,’ says Shami. ‘Mark can dream, can’t he?’

I laugh at first, but after three days, I want to hit Leon. Then, suddenly, I see her again.



I am watching a woman with a big bag. And then, there she is – the girl with red hair. She’s got green eyes too. But there is a baby with her, a little boy. They are looking at a book about trains.



‘Look, Greg,’ she says. ‘Look at the big train.’

The little boy smiles. He’s got red hair and green eyes too. *Her* baby. So – has she got a husband? A boyfriend? I look at her beautiful green eyes again, and then I go back to work. But there are lots of questions in my head.

She comes to the store on Wednesday mornings. She usually arrives at about eleven o'clock.

‘How’s your girl?’ asks Leon.

‘She’s not my girl,’ I say. ‘I don’t know her name. Her little boy’s name is Greg, but she’s – the girl with red hair.’

‘Well, let’s give her a name,’ says Leon. ‘What do you think, Shami?’

‘Hmm – Scarlet! Her name is Scarlet,’ says Shami.

‘Apples are red,’ says Leon. ‘Apple is a nice name—’

Then he looks at my face, and runs out the door.



2

Boohoo

Next Wednesday I am in the store when the girl with red hair comes in with Greg. She stops and looks at a picture. Greg takes his hat off and drops it. I pick up the hat and go over to her.

‘Excuse me,’ I say. ‘Is this your little boy’s hat?’

She smiles at me.

‘Oh, thank you,’ she says. ‘Greg, look, it’s your hat.’

Greg laughs. She puts out her hand and takes the hat from me. Is she wearing a ring? No, there is no ring on her hand.

Wednesday is the best day of the week, I think.



Ten minutes later, I am near the flowers when Leon speaks to me on my radio.

‘Mark, go to the door!’ he says. ‘You must stop her – the girl with red hair.’

‘What? What’s happening?’ I say.

‘Go quickly – now. It’s the little boy – he’s got one of the red planes.’

Those red planes! Children take them all the time, because they like the colour. Then they get to the door and the alarm rings. Children cry, and their mothers get angry. I hate those planes!





When I get to the door, the alarm is ringing. The girl with red hair is standing there, and her face is red.

‘What’s happening?’ she says.

‘Please come back into the store for a minute,’ I say.

We go back into the store, and the alarm stops.

‘This young man has got the answer, I think. Where’s the plane?’ I say to Greg.

‘Plane,’ says Greg, and he waves a little red plane at us.

‘Oh, I *am* sorry!’ she says.

‘It’s all right,’ I say. ‘It happens all the time. Can I have the plane? Good boy!’

‘Thank you very much,’ says the girl with red hair. But the alarm is ringing again. I must go.

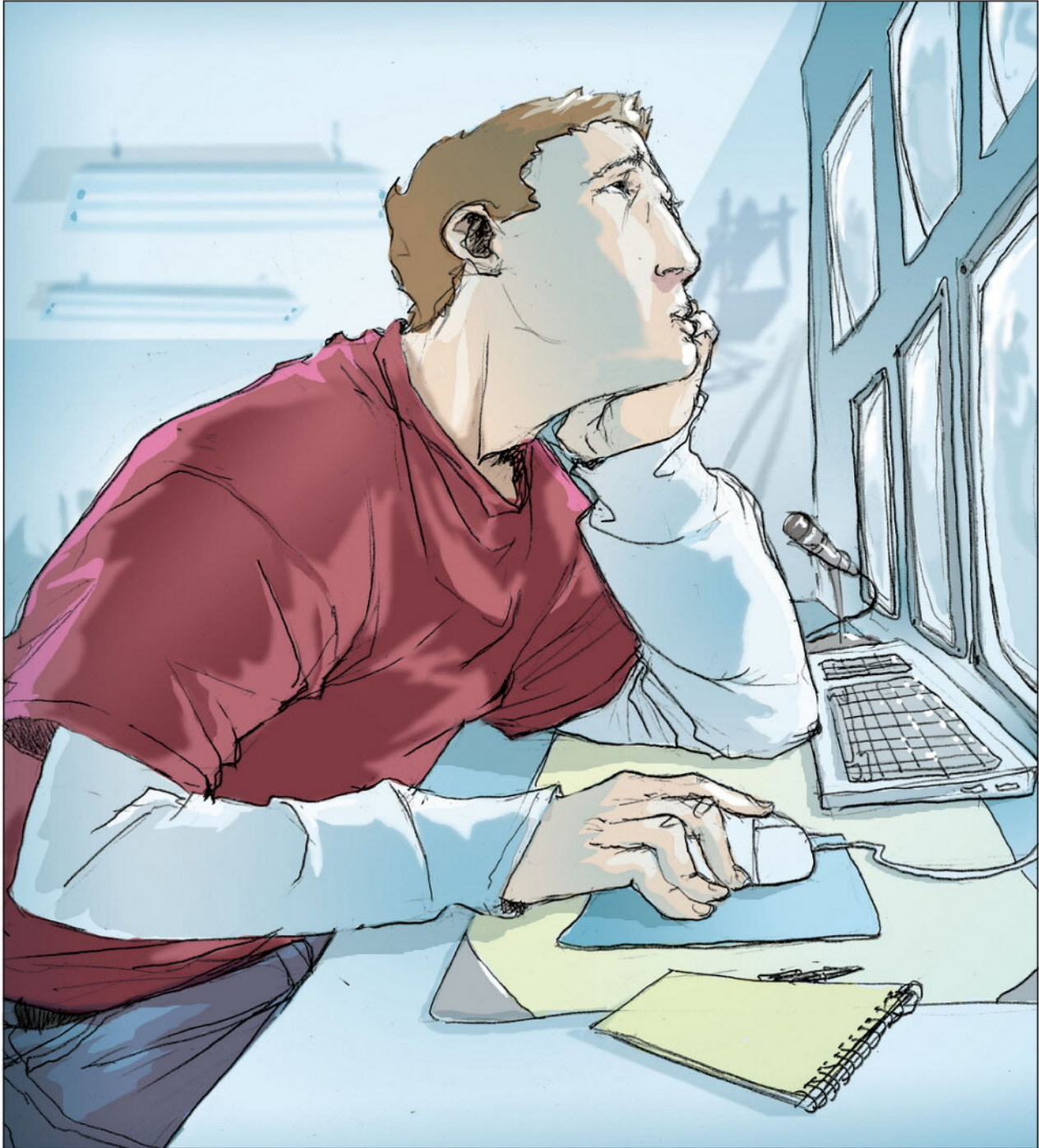
I walk into the office upstairs. Shami is watching the screens. She stops and looks at my face.

She says nothing, but she smiles. Then she goes back to work.

I look at the screens too – but I am dreaming.



I'm happy. I'm really happy. But how can I meet her again? I think about this for the next six days, but I can't find any answers. Then it's Wednesday again.



I'm sitting in the office watching the screens. Ten o'clock comes and goes, then eleven o'clock. I can't see her.

The Girl with Red Hair

I look on every screen in the store. In the end I see her near the door. She's looking at her watch, and talking to Greg. Is she waiting for somebody?

Perhaps she's meeting somebody. Perhaps she's late. Perhaps her mother is coming. Perhaps—

But now she's waving at somebody.





A good-looking man in a black jacket walks up to the girl with red hair and kisses her. Greg laughs, and the man picks him up and kisses him too. Is he the baby's father? Of course he is. Anybody can see that.

I don't want to look, but I can't take my eyes away from the screen. Then they all go down the road, away from the store.

I look around the room. Leon and Shami are in the store, and the room is very quiet. It feels cold.

Then Leon and Shami come in. ‘Now that’s not a happy face,’ Shami says. ‘What’s the matter?’

I tell them. I tell them about the girl with red hair, and Greg, and the good-looking man – and the kiss.

Leon looks at my face and thinks for a minute.



‘Look, Mark,’ he says. ‘It’s a dream, that’s all. You see a nice girl, you think about her, you talk to her – and one day her boyfriend arrives. Boohoo. You stop dreaming. But there are always more girls.’

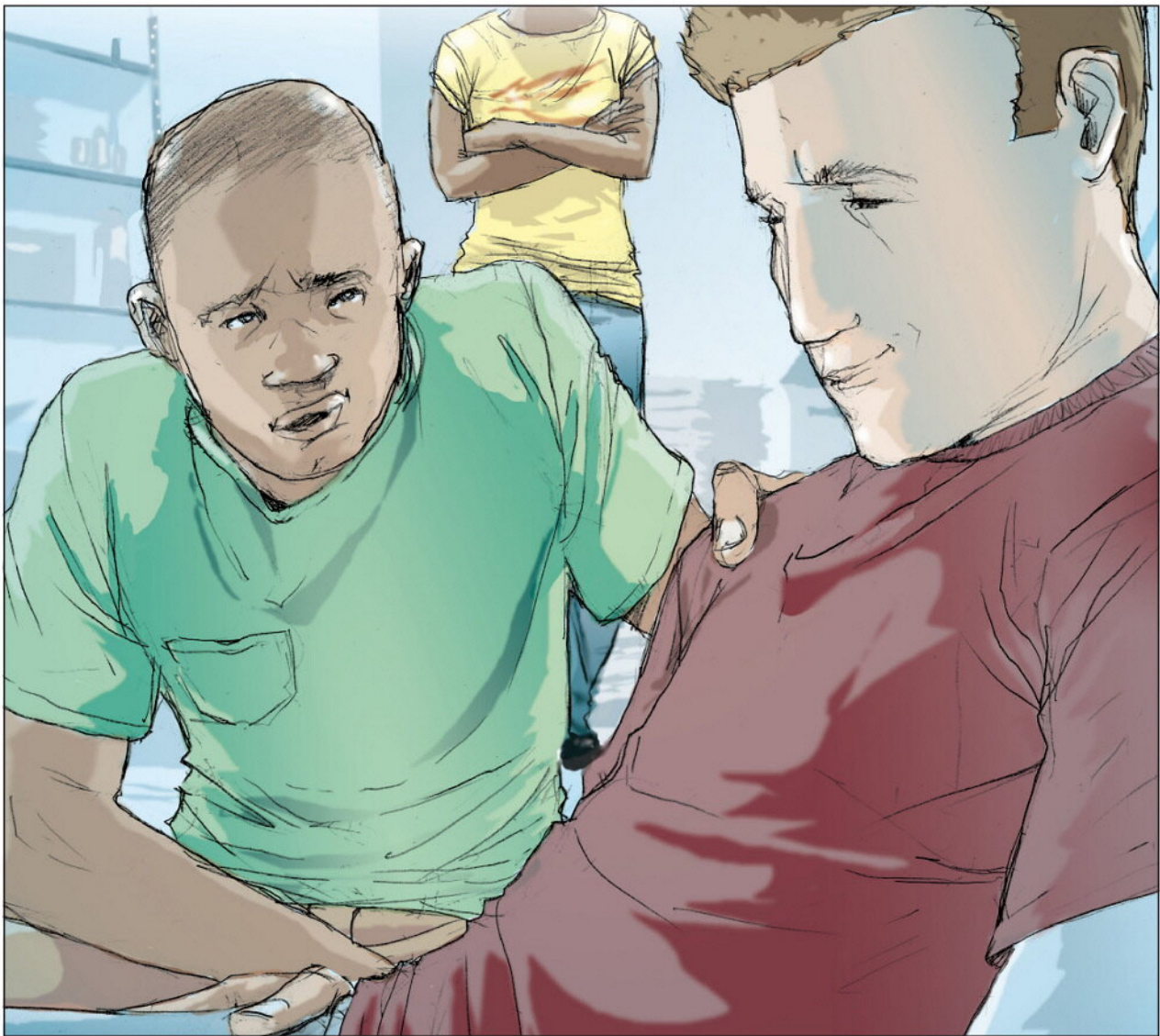
‘Yes, but—’ I say, and then I stop.

‘But they’re not the girl with red hair, right?’ says Leon. ‘But she’s got a boyfriend. You need a different girl, Mark – a girl without a boyfriend. Why don’t you come out with us tonight? We’re going to Ocean Blue. It’s a wonderful club, and there are lots of nice girls there.’

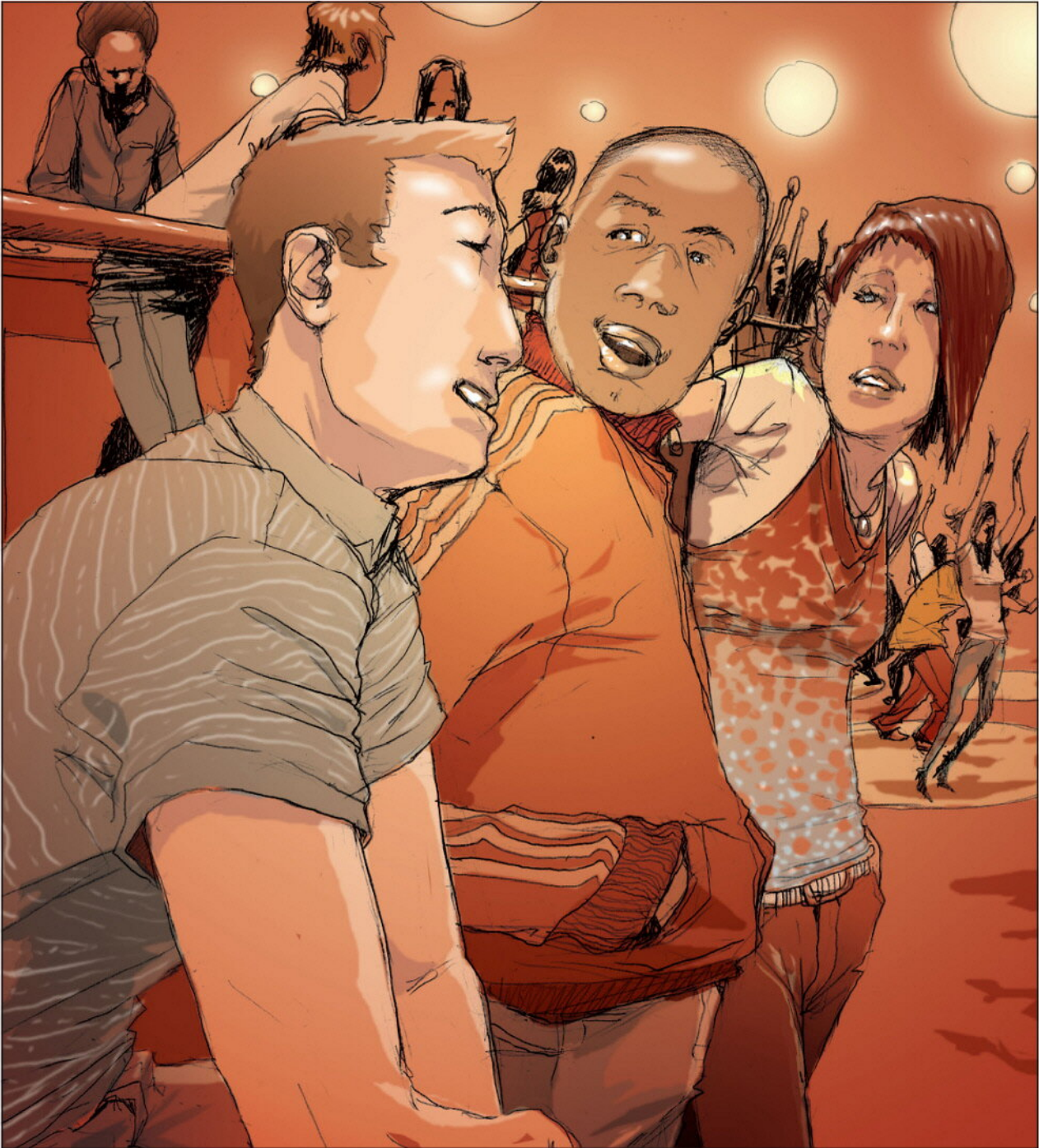
I don’t really want to go, but I don’t want to stay at home and do nothing.

‘OK, then,’ I say.

‘Good man,’ says Leon. ‘See you there at nine.’



3
Yay!!



The club is dark. There's a lot of noise, and a lot of people, but the music is good.

Leon is there with his girlfriend Ellie. I talk to them and their friends. I'm feeling good. Perhaps tonight I can forget about everything. Leon and Ellie are dancing, so I go to get a drink.

The Girl with Red Hair

Leon is right about one thing – there are a lot of nice girls at Ocean Blue. Tall girls, interesting girls, girls with black hair, blue hair – and red hair.

Red hair? I'm waiting for my drink, and I'm standing next to the girl with red hair. No, two girls with red hair. Is this really happening?



The girl with red hair looks at me and smiles. ‘Just a minute,’ she says. ‘Don’t I know you?’

She’s talking to me! Why can’t I say anything?

‘In the store,’ I say at last. ‘In Mason’s store. With your little boy. And the red plane.’

The girl with red hair laughs.

‘Oh, with Greg!’ she says. ‘I remember. But he isn’t *my* baby – he’s Claire’s. This is my sister Claire – she’s his mother.’ The second girl with red hair waves at me.

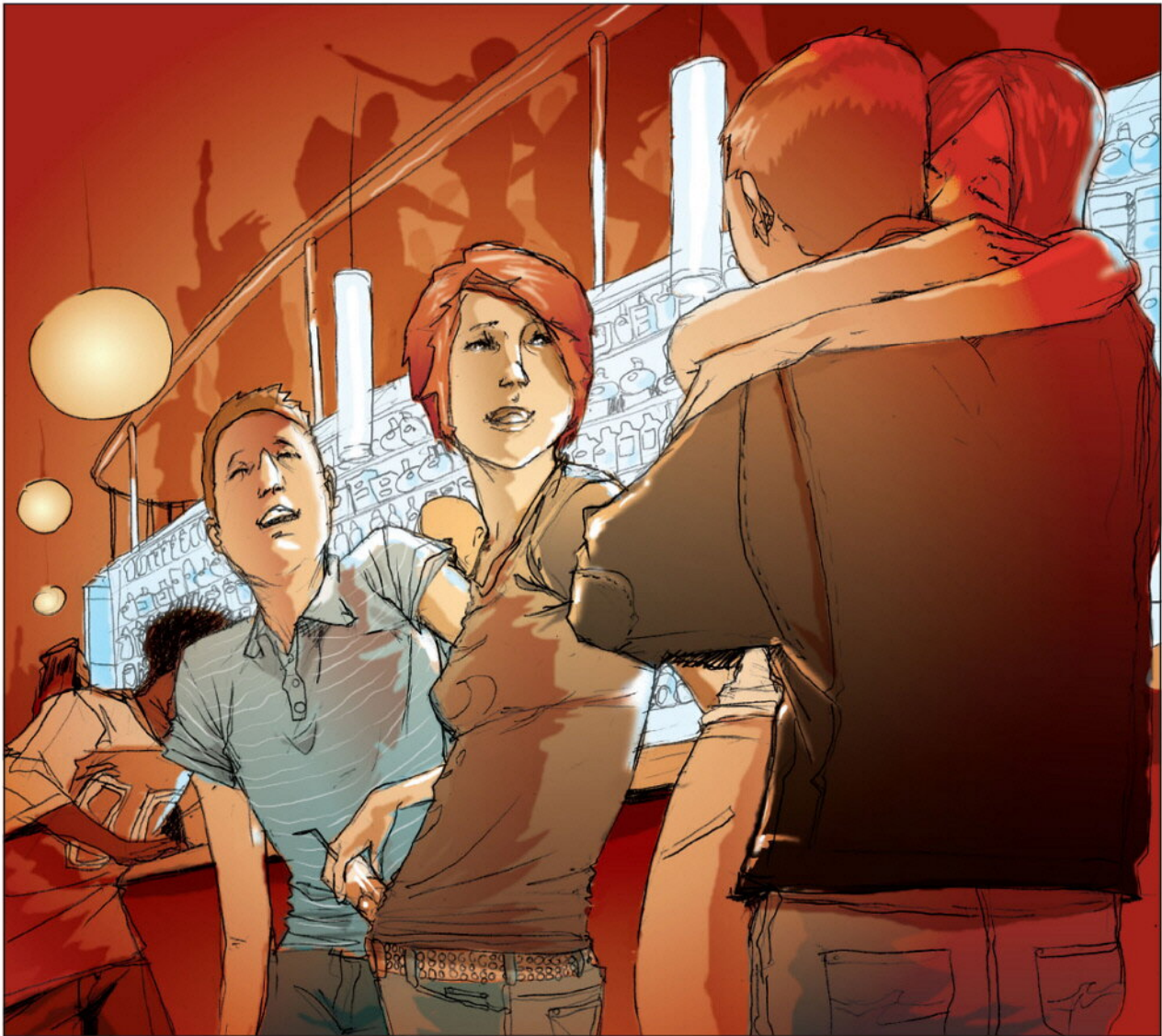


‘But I always see you with him,’ I say.

‘I look after Greg on Wednesday mornings, and we always go to Mason’s,’ she says. ‘Then I meet Claire. Well, usually, that is. But not this week.’

Just then a good-looking man in a black jacket arrives. ‘Sorry I’m late,’ he says, and kisses Claire. ‘Hi, Kate.’

Claire smiles at him, and the girl with red hair says hello. I’m starting to understand. This is Claire’s husband, and Greg’s father. And the girl with red hair is called Kate.





My face is red.

‘Hey, I’m sorry,’ I say to Kate. ‘It’s – well, Greg’s got your hair and your eyes. But I can see now. He’s got *Claire’s* hair and eyes. Of course.’

‘It’s OK,’ Kate says. ‘It happens all the time. People say, “Isn’t your little boy happy!” And sometimes I just say, “Yes, he is.” ’

Claire and her husband go off to dance, and I get Kate a drink.

‘Here you are, Kate. My name’s Mark.’



‘Thanks, Mark,’ she says. ‘So you work in Mason’s.’

‘Yes,’ I say. ‘I work in security. I look for little boys with red planes, and girls with red hair.’

‘And do you find them?’

‘I find lots of little boys with red planes.’

‘And the girls?’

‘Just one.’

Now I have the answers to my questions. The girl with red hair is Kate. She hasn’t got a husband, and she hasn’t got a baby. And those green eyes are smiling at me. Yes, Wednesday really is the best day of the week.



GLOSSARY

- alarm** something that makes a loud noise when something is wrong
- around** in different places
- baby** a very young child
- boyfriend/girlfriend** a boy/girl you like and go out with
- club** a place where you go to dance, listen to music, etc.
- dream** (*n* & *v*) to hope for something nice in the future
- drop** to let something fall
- good-looking** nice to look at
- husband** the man that a woman is married to
- jacket** a short coat
- kiss** (*v* & *n*) to touch someone lovingly with your lips
- look after** to take care of somebody
- music** what you make when you sing, play the piano, etc.
- pick up** to take something with your hand
- radio** a machine that lets you hear somebody's voice from far away
- ring** (*v*) make a sound like a bell (a telephone rings);
(*n*) a circle of metal that you wear on your finger
- screen** the flat part of a TV where you see pictures
- security** keeping people and places safe
- store** a big shop that sells a lot of different things
- wave** (*v*) to move your hand to say hello or goodbye to somebody

The Girl with Red Hair

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

1 Look at the front and back cover of the book and choose the correct ending for these sentences.

1 This story is about . . .

- a ☐ work and friends.
- b ☐ love and work.
- c ☐ friends and children.

2 Mark sees the girl . . .

- a ☐ on TV.
- b ☐ in a house.
- c ☐ in a store.

2 Guess what happens. In the story . . . Yes No

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Mark's friends talk to the girl. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Mark's friends help him. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 the girl does not speak to Mark. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Mark meets the girl at a club. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 the girl has got a boyfriend. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 the girl starts work in the store. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ACTIVITIES

While Reading

1 Read pages 1–4, then answer these questions.

- 1 Where does Mark work?
- 2 Who knows most about hats?
- 3 How does Mark talk to Shami?
- 4 Who does Mark see on the screen?

2 Read pages 5–8. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Mark wants to meet the girl with red hair.
- 2 Shami wants to hit Leon.
- 3 The girl and the baby have got blue eyes.
- 4 The girl comes to the store on Wednesdays.
- 5 Leon knows the girl's name.

3 Read pages 9–12 and answer the questions.

Who . . .

- 1 . . . drops his hat?
- 2 . . . likes Wednesdays?
- 3 . . . tells Mark about the plane?
- 4 . . . has got a red face?
- 5 . . . is watching the screens in the office?

4 Read pages 13–16. Now answer these questions.

- 1 Where is Mark on Wednesday morning?
- 2 What is the girl looking at?
- 3 Who is the man in the black jacket?
- 4 Who tells Mark, ‘It’s a dream’?

5 Read pages 17–19, then match the sentence halves to make four complete sentences.

- 1 Ocean Blue is a wonderful club . . .
 - 2 Mark doesn’t want to go out . . .
 - 3 Mark is feeling good . . .
 - 4 Mark wants to forget about everything . . .
- a but he doesn’t want to stay at home.
b but then he sees two girls with red hair.
c because he likes the music and the people at the club.
d and there are lots of nice girls there.

6 Guess what happens next in the story. Yes No

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 The two girls are sisters. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 The girl is the baby’s mother. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 The girl’s sister is the baby’s mother. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 The man in the black jacket is the girl’s husband. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 The girl hasn’t got a husband. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Mark gives the girl some flowers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

ACTIVITIES

After Reading

- 1 What do you know about Kate and Mark? Choose the right words for each person, and then write a description.

work / Mason's store

red hair / green eyes

twenty-two years old

sister Claire / little boy Greg

work / Leon and Shami

like working / security

look after Greg / Wednesdays

- 2 Put these sentences in the correct order. Number them 1–10.

- a ☐ The girl leaves with the man and Greg.
- b ☐ The good-looking man (Claire's husband) arrives.
- c ☐ Leon says, 'Come with us to Ocean Blue.'
- d ☐ Mark meets her sister Claire.
- e ☐ Mark tells his friends about the boyfriend.
- f ☐ At the club, Mark sees two girls with red hair.
- g ☐ Mark gets Kate a drink, and she smiles at him.
- h ☐ A good-looking man meets her and kisses her.
- i ☐ The girl with red hair tells Mark about her family.
- j ☐ The girl is waiting by the door of the store.

3 Who says this? Who do they say it to?

- 1 'You two know nothing about hats.'
- 2 'Look at the big train.'
- 3 'Apple is a nice name—'
- 4 'Oh, I *am* sorry!'
- 5 'Sorry I'm late.'
- 6 'Just one.'

4 Complete this summary of the story. Use these words:

*club door every feels good-looking
husband kisses plane sorry stops*

Mark sees a beautiful girl with red hair in Mason's store. She comes to the store _____ Wednesday with a little boy called Greg. One day Greg takes a little _____, and Mark _____ the girl and Greg near the door. Her face is red and she is very _____. The next Wednesday a _____ man meets her and Greg at the _____ of the store and _____ them. Mark is not happy. That night he goes to the Ocean Blue _____. There he meets the girl with red hair, Kate, and her sister Claire. Greg is Claire's baby, and the good-looking man is her _____. Kate hasn't got a boyfriend. Mark _____ very good.

The Girl with Red Hair

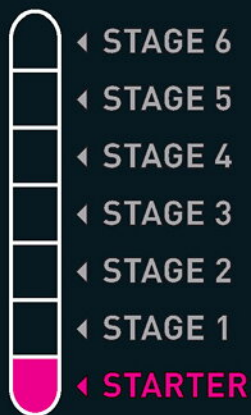


Every day people come to Mason's store – old people, young people, men and women.

From his office, and in the store, Mark watches them. And when they leave the store, he forgets them.

Then one day a girl with red hair comes to the store, and everything changes for Mark. Now he can't forget that beautiful face, those green eyes, and that red hair . . .

(Word count 1,702)



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