

# Rage

by

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# One: Time to Run

Rage has many colours. Most see red, but then there's yellow, purple and even green. The colours change too, like a sky at sunset – the artist paints it one way, then another, until the perfect atmosphere is captured. Rage is never perfect though and when one sees red, they actually see no colours at all. All the senses are nullified.

Claire had had enough. *What the Hell!* She was screaming - the voices echoing inside her head. She didn't want anyone to know. She had her dignity. *I'm not sharing these tears with anyone. They can stuff it.*

What happened next surprised Claire, her teacher and all her classmates. The computer screen landed with an almighty crash. She had lifted it above her head, with cables dangling like tentacles, paused, looked around and then brought it hurtling down. If it

had been basketball, it would have been one mighty slam-dunk.

*Time to run.* Claire hopped over the screen and made a dash for the classroom door. Expecting someone to chase her and tackle her to the ground, she felt a surge of energy. Turning her head, though, she noticed no one had moved. Everyone was still sitting there, frozen by the shock of what had just happened. *I need somewhere safe.* Her brain did a quick scan of the school: *The ground floor would be safest. Better still, get out of the building.* She ran down the nearest stairs and then, realising no one was behind her, started to walk. She saw another teacher approaching and decided to walk on, feigning normality (although she had forgotten what that looked like). It worked. The teacher seemed to pay no notice. *See, no one cares.*

Claire had had a difficult year. The more she tried to 'persevere' the harder things became. It was the day before her tenth birthday when things really kicked off. Her Dad was late picking her up from school. He was in a foul mood. She wanted to tell him

about her day - the project on the First World War and how food was rationed – but he only responded with half words like ‘uh-hum’ or ‘oh’. It was clear he wasn’t listening and so she decided to curtail it, ‘... and in the end, everyone died of starvation.’ She looked up to see his reaction, but there was none. She half expected him to say, ‘That’s nice,’ but he didn’t.

Ten minutes later they were home. Mum wasn’t there. As she climbed the stairs to her room, she could sense something was wrong. It was a couple of days later that she found out what had happened. Her mum had been diagnosed with stage two cancer and decided to move in with her sister, saying her being at home would be too much of a strain on the family. Claire suspected the reality was more to do with her not having Dad hanging around Mum’s neck. He would always fuss over her and when she had enough, she’d scream at him: ‘Give me some space, you moron!’ That would push him away for a day or two, but then he’d be back again. He’d be offering to get her dinner, iron her clothes or do some other chore. Then, whenever she started to do some

cleaning or washing, he'd jump in and try and take over.

Claire decided to hide in the art store cupboard. A year three teacher, one day, called her over and asked her to help carry some materials back to her classroom. As she was being loaded up, she quickly looked around the cupboard – which in fact was more like a room - noting where the switch was and the fact that there was no lock on the door. This would be a perfect hiding place she thought at the time. That time had now come.

She sandwiched herself on the floor between the shelves of coloured A4 paper and the rolls of display backing paper, near the far end. The room was big enough for a bed and, for a few moments, she imagined having her own room in the corner of the school, with its own sink, cooker and washing machine. That's all she'd need. She could fend for herself.

Claire was now feeling calmer. She realised her initial thoughts of running away were impractical. All she needed was space; her own space. The art

cupboard seemed to wrap its arms around her, and she sensed something profound. She couldn't explain it at the time, but she knew this was a place she'd need to come back to. Yes, when she was in a better frame of mind. This could be her refuge. Somewhere no one else knew about.

An old wooden box lay just across from her. She reached over and lifted the lid. It was empty and judging by the film of dust, with her fingerprints now freshly implanted on it, she realised that it was no longer used. This would be her box. *Tomorrow, I'll get some provisions: a torch, a packet of Haribo sweets and other banned treats, an Argos catalogue and....* Claire realised she was smiling. Whatever had caused her rage was now forgotten. She picked herself up and decided to get back to class and face the music.

It was lunchtime and she could hear the other children outside playing. She found her teacher, Miss Harper, sitting by her desk, tucking into a sandwich.

'I'm sorry Miss, I don't know what came over me,' Claire spluttered.

'That's ok,' replied the teacher. 'Come over here and take a seat.'

Miss Harper didn't seem at all angry and this confused Claire.

'You can spend your lunchtime here if you want.'

She passed Claire a book: *Times Like These* by Harold Winter. She started reading, but her mind soon drifted.

The rest of the afternoon went quickly. She was told that she should not make her own way home, as her dad would be collecting her. Apparently, the head teacher wanted to speak to him.

When Dad came out the head teacher's office, he looked at Claire with a sympathetic smile. 'Okay poppet, let's go.'

She couldn't work out why everyone was being so nice, considering what she'd done. At home, her dad tried to speak to her, but this time it was her turn to feign interest. Claire's mind just kept thinking about the Art Cupboard. *I need to give it a name. My Special Place? Too corny. Hideout? No, it sounds like something from the Famous Five series.* She then