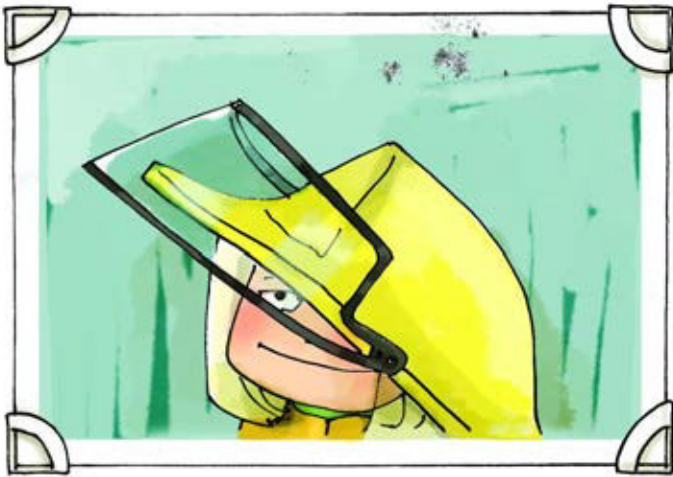


Lucy Becomes a Fire Fighter



Today Lucy woke up all excited. Last night she had watched a film about firefighters on TV. She admired those brave men and the way how they got people out of flames, risking their own lives. Sirens were loud and lights were flashing, there was smoke everywhere and flames were bursting out from the windows of the burning building.



The brave firefighter crawled up the ladder into the third floor window and brought a boy, who was the same age as Lucy, out of the burning building. The boy's eyes were closed and his face was grimy. Lucy had dreamt about all this.

“I will become a firefighter!” Lucy decided. She searched through the hall closets and finally found an old motorbike helmet. This had been collecting dust on the upper shelf since the time Dad had had a motorbike. The helmet was a bit too big for her head but there was no way this tiny detail was going to ruin the event. As Lucy had no firefighter outfit, she had to make do with tracksuit trousers and a raincoat. She hid her equipment under the bed, so that nobody would find out about her intentions. First she had to actually achieve something; then everyone would see how great a firefighter she was.

“You seem to be lost in your thoughts today,” Dad looked at her at the breakfast table. “Is something wrong?”

“There's nothing wrong with me,” Lucy said. “I was just thinking about the firefighter film that was on TV last night.”

“A guy brought a boy down with a ladder!” little Madeline added to the conversation.



“The house was on fire!”

“Yes,” Mum sighed. “To think there are such guys in the world...”

“I will be going then,” Lucy hurried away from the table after finishing her breakfast. Mum gave her a suspicious look.



“I think she’s up to something again. I can feel it in my heart. How can we leave them here all by themselves and go visit friends? Maybe we should take them with us?”

“What’s the worst that can happen?” Dad figured. “They’ve been by themselves before. Besides, Andy is a big boy and can keep an eye on the little ones.”

But Andy had plans of his own. Jack from next door had bought a new bike which needed some fixing and checking. He didn’t tell his parents that, of course.



So Lucy waited until the parents left home and everything was quiet. She got her equipment from under the bed and put it on.

“Wow!” Madeline cried. “Are we going mushrooming?” Lucy felt a little hurt.

“You can’t understand anything, can you? I’m a firefighter!” Madeline looked around the room and even climbed on the window sill.



“No, you aren’t no firefighter!” she said, disappointed, and looked at Lucy with a puzzled

face. “Why are you a firefighter?”

“Because I want to and that’s it. I want to become a hero!” She gave it some thought and then also put Madeline in a raincoat and gave her a pair of gloves.



“Now we’re both fire fighters!” They headed out training, wearing their uniforms, buckets in hand and looking all important. They stepped

down the stairs in silence.

“I’m the chief!” Lucy reminded Madeline.

“Alright,” Madeline peeped, feeling happy that she was allowed to be a firefighter in the first place.

Once they were standing out in the yard, Lucy pointed up to the fire escape ladder that went up to the roof of the three-storey building next door.

“You keep watch down here and I will climb up,” Lucy pointed the finger at the ladder.

“Okay!” Madeline agreed.

“Yeah,” Lucy added, “but first let’s move this garbage can a little bit closer, otherwise I won’t reach properly.” Luckily the garbage truck had taken the garbage away in the morning, so the can wasn’t very heavy. Lucy climbed on top of the garbage can and could reach the bottom rung of the ladder. She clambered for a while but soon reached the second rung. From then on, it got easier. Madeline was staring up, looking at Lucy climbing, and something told her that this was wrong. At the same time, Lucy had reached the second floor. She didn’t really dare look down but climbing back down felt weird as well.

She remembered what her Grandpa used to say. “Hard in training, easy in battle.”



“Lucy!” Madeline cried.

“What?” asked Lucy, without looking down.

“Don’t climb so high up!”

“But I’m a firefighter!” Lucy shouted and kept going.

“I think you should come down,” Madeline said. But Lucy couldn’t give up. She had to reach the ridge. How was she supposed to get people out of flames if she already got cold feet at the height of the third floor?”

Finally Lucy almost reached the ridge and decided to have a little rest. She put her leg over

the beam that supported the ladder and was attached to the wall, and sat on the beam.



And then Lucy looked down. She shouldn't have done it. Madeline was so far away and so tiny! Suddenly Lucy got scared. Besides, she could feel the ladder swaying. The beam that she was sitting on was loose inside the wall and all of a sudden, Lucy was sure that this day would be the day when it came off the wall.

“I'm scared!” she cried down to Madeline.

“Come down!” Madeline kept repeating.

“I can't!” Lucy complained. “The ladder is moving inside the wall!” To crown it all, a pigeon whirred onto the rain gutter. The pigeon walked back and forth, fluffing its feathers and making the

tin roof clank loud.

“Call Mum!” Lucy cried down.



“But I don’t know how!” Madeline answered after giving it some thought. But there was one number that Mum and Dad had taught her.

Madeline looked up and said:

“Hold on, I know!” She ran quickly up the stairs, inside, picked up the receiver and dialled the numbers 112.



In a couple of minutes, the yard was full of men from the rescue service. The ladder of the fire truck was set up and a big strong man brought Lucy down, holding her like a rag doll.



“Thank you, colleagues!” Lucy said once she was standing firmly on the ground again. She

shook everyone's hand one by one and bowed slightly.



“I will also be a fire fighter one day. This was my first practice today. But this ladder should be fixed. If it hadn't been shaking, I would have

climbed up and down for several times by now!”

“Wait a little more and get older,” the man who had brought her down advised. “Don’t climb so high up anymore just now. You will have plenty of time for that. Meanwhile, learn how to bondage wounds and give first aid; it’s still a little early for climbing.” She stroked Lucy’s hair with his big hand and prepared to leave.

“There are fires waiting to be fought,” he said, winking at Lucy, and got into the fire truck.

Lucy and Madeline waved at them.

Once the car had disappeared behind the corner, Lucy looked at Madeline.

“So, let’s start learning how to give first aid. We’ll start with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Lie down. You need to be half-dead!”

“Nooooooooo!” Madeline flapped her arms and ran away. Lucy looked at the roof ridge one last time, stuck out her tongue towards the pigeons and then strolled after Madeline.

