

Tomorrow was school sports day and Adam Stockley was putting out his PE kit neatly in his bedroom. He needed to be ready for this special day. He laid out his favourite pair of sports shorts and his best sports t shirt. Then he thought that they didn't look too good together, so he swapped the t-shirt for his second best. Yes, that colour was a much better match. He had cleaned his sport trainers earlier, so they looked as good as new. They weren't really dirty, just a little dried mud on part of the sole, but he wanted everything to be just right. This was his last sports day at this school before he went up to the comp in September. Before he became a little fish in a big pond instead of the big fish in a little pond. That's what people his mum had said anyway.

So, all was ready. Tomorrow was **tournament** day. Adam brushed his teeth, went downstairs to say goodnight to his parents and then got into bed. He was very excited about the thought of sports days. Things looked good. There had been a spell of dry weather, so the school field was looking fine, even if a little brown. Better than puddles anyway. And the weather forecast looked as if this dry spell would last a few more days yet. Adam didn't really consider himself to be a sportsman: he didn't like football much and he hated cricket in the summer. But he could run. And he loved running. He often took himself off for a run along the streets of the estate after school. And every now and again he would speed up into a sprint, timing himself on the second hand Garmin that his mum had bought him for Christmas. A year ago, at last sports day, when he had been in year 5 he had been second in the 2k race on sports day, only just being beaten by Ollie Rook, who was a year older and a good 3 inches taller. This would be his chance. Tomorrow night he would be hanging the (small) medal for the fastest runner on his bedroom door handle.

Going to sleep isn't the easiest thing to do when you are excited about something that's about to happen, so half an hour after Adam had got into bed, he was still wide awake. He got up and found his school bag and took out the book from the school library that he had been reading. He was near the end and last night he had hoped the happy ending would **materialise**. He opened the book at the 'gift from Sandfield' library book token and started reading. The book was a young person's edition of 'A Tale of Two Cities' adapted from the longer original version by Charles Dickens. Adam had chosen the book from the school library because he had heard a bit about the story. In truth it was probably more because he liked the picture on the front cover. He had read quite a lot of the book and thought he might finish it tonight. He needed to know what would happen to **convict** Charles. And so it came to pass. The story came to an end and Adam eventually fell asleep having wondered how it could be possible for anyone to make such a sacrifice or to carry out such an act of kindness.

Sports day dawned clear and bright to the relief of the children and of course the teachers who would have to come up with some other plan if sports day had to be postponed. Despite his late night Adam bounced out of bed, ready for action. His mum gave him a good luck hug, squeezing him against her tickly **angora** cardigan which always made him sneeze and promised to **cook** his favourite tea, whatever happened.

The races were mainly programmed according to ages and started with the bottom classes, so Adam had quite a long wait, as he was only running in one. As he sat in the sun half heartedly watching the other children run, his mind wandered back to the end of The Tale of Two Cities. How, he asked himself could someone allow themselves to be killed to save someone else, even if it was their friend. Adam wondered if he could ever do such a thing. In fact, he couldn't remember if he had ever really carried out a single act of kindness. Even a small one. Was that what grown-ups do?

At last, it was time for what Adam thought of as 'his' race, the longest race at his school-2k. Adam had practised running round the streets near his house, so the distance wasn't a big deal for him, and he set off to a flying start and could see that there were no runners in front of him. The race was his; till it wasn't. Suddenly Josh Gibbons **materialised** as if out of nowhere and overtook him. Oh no. Adam took a huge breath, got his legs ready for greater action and prepared to accelerate and to overtake Josh. If he did that it wasn't far to the end. Yes, he could do it. And then suddenly, Josh tripped or mis stepped or was distracted but whatever it was he did a nosedive and fell awkwardly to the ground, where he lay sobbing.

Adam would never know whether in his head he made the decision to stop or to go on or whether it just somehow happened automatically. Because he found himself rushing over to Josh and gently helping him to his feet. He put his arm round his shoulder, and they both managed to limp together to the finish. By then of course they had been overtaken by some of the other slower runners. It was never going to be Adam's race after all.

But it was the right thing to do, wasn't it? He thought about it later. He may not have saved someone's life with his own but as yet, in his eleven years of life, perhaps this was a start. Perhaps this single act of kindness was 'a far far better thing that he did than he had ever done'.