



Empowered

by E.L.Norry



Noa and Ballie ran across the playground to the crowd gathered around Charley inside her glowing blue forcefield. She was shouting but no-one could hear her.

Ballie mouthed, "It's soundproof!"

Charley scowled before clicking her fingers and the forcefield dropped. "I said... unless someone changes my dumb superpower then I'll smash it!"

Her steel boot hovered over the Academy's most prized possession, the amethyst amulet which granted the Seniors their powers. All Seniors had been gifted their superpower this week and Charley, the new kid, hadn't stopped complaining.

Charley poked her tongue out and snapped the forcefield shut again.

Ballie rushed forward, fists raised, but even his super strength wasn't powerful enough to punch through.

Ballie glanced at Noa. "Should we get Mrs Feenix?"

"Wait. Let me try something." Noa put his hand on the outside of the forcefield and felt a ripple of energy. "Charley? Can we talk?"

"NO!" she shrieked.

"I know how you feel. I was disappointed with my superpower too."

Charley moved forward, almost nose-to-nose with Noa. "Really?" She looked at him suspiciously. "Make Ballie move away - I won't be tricked!"

"Please Charley. Give me a chance?"

Charley let down the forcefield and Noa stepped inside.

"Well. I'm not giving the amulet back," she glared at him, but Noa saw something else behind her anger - sadness.

"If the amulet's damaged then no one will be given a superpower ever again."

"Don't care!" she tutted.

"But think of all the good things Sturgeon Academy has done for our community -- fly people to hospital, lift crashed cars, reduce the crime rate."

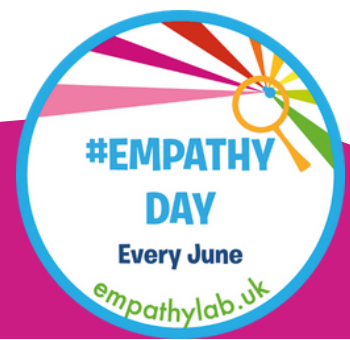
Charley grimaced. "But my superpower is stupid."

"I think it's cool."

"Yeah?" Charley folded her arms. "How?"

"You can always protect yourself."

#ReadForEmpathy





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"I'm alone enough as it is! When the forcefield is up no one can get in, or even hear me."

She sighed. "I may aswell not even exist."

Helplessness washed over Noa; he swallowed. "I'm sorry that you feel like that."

"Mum's disappointed too. She hoped I'd be able to fly."

Noa had no idea what to say. He noticed tears in Charley's eyes.

"My Dad used to fly; Mum says I remind her of him."

Suddenly something urged Noa forward. He put his hand on Charley's shoulder and looked her in the eyes. Words spilled from his lips without him even thinking about them.

"I'm sorry, Charley. Your Mum being disappointed about your superpower sounds hard. I'm sorry you feel alone too; being the new kid can be tricky."

Charley took her boot off the amulet. The amethyst glowed.

"Could you give this back to Mrs Feenix and tell her I'm sorry?" Charley whispered. "I just want to go home." She handed the amulet to Noa.

"Lets give it back together."

Noa and Charley smiled at each other. She clicked her fingers and the forcefield dissolved around them.

As they walked across the playground, Charley asked, "So what is your superpower?"

"Empathy," Noa replied. "Turns out - it's more important than I thought." He grinned.

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