

The Big Book Festival

Hours passed and hundreds of parents and children came through, eagerly snatching up books until there were just a few boxes remaining.

Mr. Weston glanced at his watch and nodded, smiling.

"Well, it's about time to start cleaning up, folks. You did a great job today. Thank you all for your help!"

The small group of volunteers that were left clapped tiredly, though they were still smiling. Lots of people had come, and lots of children had gone home happy, clutching their "new" books tightly to their chests. Reggie figured all the hard work they'd done was worth it.

"If you're too tired, honey, you can go rest in the car," Mrs. Brown said as Reggie yawned. "I'll be out shortly. Your father and brother are catching a ride with Tee and his uncle. They're going to bring those leftover boxes of books down to the Tune In To Books office before they head home."

"Okay," Reggie said, yawning again. "I'll be out in the car."

An old truck pulled up beside the Browns' car just as Reggie reached it. The back door opened and a girl jumped out, nearly knocking Reggie to the ground as she pushed past her.

"Sorry!" she mumbled, hurrying toward the gymnasium.

She was back just a few moments later with three books in her hands. This time, Reggie could see her face, and she sat up straight in the back seat of the car.

It was Trina Baker, and not only was she the meanest girl in school, she was also leaving with one of Reggie's favorite books!

Reggie watched helplessly as the girl jumped into the back seat of the waiting truck, which backed up and sped off, leaving a cloud of dust behind. Wide awake now, she sat back, her arms folded across her chest.

"I knew something like this was going to happen," she complained aloud.

Of all the girls in the entire city of Baltimore, why did it have to be mean Trina who took that book home? She didn't deserve it! All she'd ever done was bully people around and make everyone afraid of her. What right did a mean girl like that have to take a nice book like that home with her? She'd probably rip the pages or leave it out in the rain or something. She couldn't possibly know how to treat it.

Reggie looked at her watch. It was way after five o'clock. Technically, the festival had been over for several minutes when Trina arrived. They didn't have to let her in. They could've turned her away at the door. After all, she'd come late. That was her fault, not theirs.

"I wouldn't have let her in," Reggie said out loud again.

Whoever had opened the door to her should get in trouble, she decided to herself. She wondered who that person was.

Mrs. Brown appeared in the doorway of the gymnasium, her face full of smiles as she turned and waved at someone Reggie couldn't see. Hurrying to the car, she opened the door and slid in behind the wheel.

"What a great day, huh, honey?" she said cheerfully, glancing at Reggie in the back seat. "Everything okay, Reg?"

"Mama, what if someone really mean took one of your favorite books home with her? What would you do?"

Mrs. Brown sighed. "Well, first of all, I'd remember that the book wasn't mine anymore. And then I'd forget all about it and focus instead on all the nice people who took books home. We distributed over six thousand today, Reggie, can you believe it? Six thousand. That's a lot of happy families and communities, honey. Focus on that, okay?"

Reggie nodded, buckling herself in as her mom

started the car.

Six thousand books. Lots of happy families.

It wasn't going to be easy, but she'd try to focus on that.

She'd really try.