

Claire just wants to walk home with her candyfloss ... but the walk along the old train tracks becomes a nightmare.

'The ghost train is for kids!' said Claire.

'People look pretty scared when they come out,' said Peter, trying to pull her to The World's Scariest Ghost Train. 'Come on, it'll be fun!'

'They're pretending,' said Claire. 'They know it's not real, so what's there to be scared of?'

'OK,' Peter said, as he bought a ticket for himself and the rest of their group.

Maybe it was time to go home, Claire thought. But there was one thing left to do at the fair – buy a candyfloss. It was impossible to finish a candyfloss. They were just too big and too sweet, yet, at the same time, there was nothing there. It must be possible though, she thought, as she paid for her huge pink sugar cloud. She set herself a challenge. Tonight she was going to eat a whole one. For that, she needed time, and that meant walking home by the train tracks instead of through the town centre.

It wasn't very dark yet. She stepped off the dirt and onto the track. Each wooden sleeper was just the right distance apart so she could step from one to another easily. Of course, Claire knew not to walk on train tracks anywhere else – it was stupid and dangerous. Only last year some boys in the big city died playing on the tracks. But there was nothing dangerous here.

No one in Fellside had any memory of a train using the railway tracks. There wasn't even a train station. The tracks suddenly finished as if the engineers ran out of wood and iron. Claire always thought of them like those cartoons where the cat tries to catch the mouse and the mouse puts down tracks in front of his speeding carriage until he runs out.

The train tracks were a mystery, but an old one and nobody wondered about it now. They were just there, and that was that. The tracks vibrated as she walked. She could feel it and then she could hear it too. It was getting stronger and louder. She looked behind her. A round light, small but getting bigger, was coming towards her. It couldn't be ...

A train.

The wheels screamed louder against the rails as the driver slowed the train. It couldn't stop before it reached her. Luckily, Claire fell to the right, off the track. She was screaming but she couldn't hear herself above the noisy old train. Its carriages passed her, empty.

Where is it going? she thought. The tracks end in a couple of miles.

A man put his head out of the window of the engine and shouted. 'Don't you know it's dangerous on the tracks?'

'But ... there aren't any trains!' Claire said. But there was clearly a train now, whatever was true before. It's not real, she told herself.

'This isn't real,' she repeated out loud. But the heat coming from the engine felt real.

'You can't keep walking on the tracks, so you're going to have to ride the train the rest of the way.'

'No!'

'Not scared, are you?' he said. 'If it isn't real, what's there to be scared of?' He was using her own words to Peter.

She couldn't stop herself climbing the metal stairs up to the train's engine, candyfloss in hand.

'Sit,' he said, as the train slowly started moving again.

'Where are we going?' Claire asked.

'End of the line,' he said.

'Oh, OK!' That wasn't far. The tracks ended near here. The driver said nothing.

She didn't want the candyfloss. It takes forever to eat a whole one, she thought. It just wasn't possible.

'Er ... excuse me?' Claire shouted, because it was as noisy inside the train as outside. 'How long until we get there?'

'As long as it takes to eat a whole candyfloss,' the driver of the real ghost train said. The pink cloud in Claire's hand looked the same size as when she took her first bite.

'How long is that?' she asked, but she already knew the answer.

He turned to face her. Except now there was no face. There was nothing under his cap at all. 'Forever.'

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