

Alone, with only his shadow for company, Charles stared straight out of the window. He thought to himself that life was so boring.

"Coat Charles!" his mother barked, "Get it. Now. It's time for your walk. And Victoria my lovely, please come along."

The mother, with her back upright like a soldier and her coat buttoned up to her chin, marched Charles along the path to the park. Victoria led the way as Charles, who was barely visible in his mother's shadow, trailed along beside her.

When they arrived at the park, the mother let Victoria off her lead and watched, with her chest fully puffed, as the pedigree dog bounded across the field. Immediately, the mother's eyes burned and her face twisted like the crumpled wreckage of a car crash. Another dog had joined Victoria. "Get away from her you filthy mongrel!" she roared. "I demand you leave her alone!" To her obvious frustration, the two dogs continued to chase each other around the field like best friends. Charles, still drenched in his mother's shadow, looked on with his hands deep in his pockets and thought the dogs were having a great time. He wished he was.

"Sit," his mother ordered. "Here." The strapping woman wiped the bench clean with her velvet handkerchief and sat down. Charles followed her. Her gold earrings glistened in the sunlight and the multicoloured scarf was like a bed of summer flowers. However, her face was cold, her nostrils closed and her eyes narrow. Hands tightly clasped, she sat turned away from the little boy, whose feet dangled from the bench and whose hands continued to be buried deep in his pockets.

"D'you wanna come on the slide?" chirped a voice. Charles slowly turned his head and looked at the smiling girl with a blank expression. "It's lots of fun," she continued.