



A CITY CALLED L8R

A City Called L8R is a wonderful glimpse into the future by Sam Debenham, our story book competition winner. He was inspired by our story – A Robot Called B4, which tells of two adventurous children who travel back in time with a robot they find in a garden shed, to a time before industrialisation when the Earth was green and the atmosphere unpolluted.

It's all part of an initiative by leading boiler brand, Worcester Bosch, to encourage our children to think about what it means to be sustainable in a fun way.

To find out more and order your copy of A Robot Called B4 visit worcester-bosch.co.uk/storybook



By **Sam Debenham**

A CITY CALLED LEAR



**Brought to you by
Worcester Bosch**

Written by Sam Debenham
and illustrated by Harry Waine



CHAPTER 1. BACK IN THE SHED

Alfie, Ava and their time-travelling robot, B4, were back in the shed.

You know the shed – THE shed. The one at the bottom of Alfie’s garden where they found all the bits of B4 and put him together and went back in time and saw dinosaurs and... well, you remember.....

After such an adventure, you might think that Alfie and Ava were ready for the next one. Maybe going further back in time to see the start of the universe. (Or just back in time far enough to tell the past versions of themselves the answers to numeracy tests.)

But no. Ava and Alfie weren’t planning their next adventure. They were, in fact, a little bit sad.

“I think I liked the world better when it just had dinosaurs in it,” said Alfie quietly.

“I know what you mean,” Ava replied. “I mean, there were no people, and you need people to have ice-cream and video games, but... everything was so clean.”

“I still can’t believe how much the world today has changed,” said Alfie. “And not in a good way.”

“Makes you wonder what it’ll be like in the future,” said Ava. “I wish we could see it.”

“CALCULATING!” blonked B4.

“Pardon?” replied Alfie.

“Did you just switch him on?” asked Ava.

“No!” said Alfie, wondering if he had actually switched on B4.

“I absolutely did not! Probably.”

“B4!” shouted Ava, using her teacher voice. **“What are you doing?”**

“ACTIVATING!” clanked the robot.

“Oh no,” muttered Alfie.



CHAPTER 2. THE RAINBOW'S END

Alfie muttered 'oh no' because he had noticed something familiar happening.

The same purple light that had shot out of B4 when he took them back in time to 150 million years BC was – you guessed it – shooting out of B4 again.

“Er... Alfie...” began Ava but then stopped because Alfie had put a box over his head.

“I’m not here,” she heard Alfie declare from inside.

Ava was just about to tell Alfie to pull himself together when the ground started to shake, and then shake a bit more. Before long, the whole shed was vibrating and pots of paint, lumps of wood and showers of nuts and bolts were falling off shelves all around them. Ava grabbed a box and put it over her head.

When the shaking stopped, they both peered out.

“Where did B4 go?” said Alfie.

Before Ava could answer, they heard B4 outside.

“TRANSPORT INBOUND!” he blarped.

“Transport?” said Ava and Alfie.

When they stepped out of the shed, they realised what B4 meant.



Hovering about 10 metres above B4's head was a rainbow. A huge, glowing rainbow, pulsing with colour and shimmering magically with light.

Alfie stared at it. Ava stared at it. Then Alfie stared at Ava and Ava stared at Alfie.

Then they noticed something. It wasn't actually a rainbow. It was a giant rainbow-shaped, rainbow-coloured floating... thing.

"Is that a balloon?" asked Ava, not quite believing her eyes.

"NEGATIVE, HUMAN AVA," squonked B4.
**"TEMPORAL PROGRESSION
TRANSPORT UNIT."**

"No... she's right, B4," said Alfie. "That is definitely a balloon."

"NEGATIVE, HUMAN ALFIE," glonked B4.
**"TEMPORAL PROGRESSION
TRANSPORT UNIT."**

"I think he might be broken," muttered Alfie.



"NEGATIVE, HUMAN ALFIE!" barked B4, sounding surprisingly annoyed.

"Temporal progression... temporal progression," mused Ava. "What does that mean?"

"Well," replied Alfie. "Temporal means time, and progression means going forward. So it means going forward..."

"In time," said Ava, eyes widening with excitement.

"Oh dear," said Alfie. "I think you're right – look!"

Alfie pointed at lettering he'd just noticed under the arc of the rainbow. It read 'L8R'.

"LATER!" shouted Ava, jumping up and down. "B4, is this a going-forward-in-time machine?"

"AFFIRMATIVE, HUMAN AVA!" splonked B4.

"Because I said I wanted to see what the world looks like in the future?" Ava fired back.

"AFFIRMATIVE, HUMAN AVA!" blonked B4.

With that, the rainbow balloon... sorry, the temporal progression transport unit... began to descend.

Now, rainbows are supposed to have a pot of gold at the end of them. This rainbow, however, did not. Instead, there was a large basket, comfortably big enough for two people and a robot.

Before Alfie could realise what was happening, Ava had leapt inside and was beckoning him to join her.

"Right," said Alfie, realising there was no point in arguing with Ava. "We're doing this, are we?"

"AFFIRMATIVE, HUMAN ALFIE!" gronked B4.

CHAPTER 3. WE HAVE LIFT-OFF

Inside the basket was a large control panel covered in LED lights which flashed and flickered.

“What do we do now?” said Alfie.

“INPUT TEMPORAL TRAVEL INTEGER.”
clanked B4.

Ava looked at Alfie.

“Integer is a whole number,” said Alfie.
“Don’t you listen in maths lessons?”

“Yes!” protested Ava. “Sometimes.”

After pressing a few of the flashing LEDs, Ava realised it was a sort-of keyboard.

“Right,” she said. “100 years in the future should do it.”

“Are you sure?...” began Alfie. But Ava had already pushed a big red LED light, guessing it was some kind of ‘enter’ key.



And it was.

The temporal progression transport unit... actually, let’s just call it a balloon... the balloon began to rise into the sky. Up, up, up, towards the clouds.

“Woohoo!” shrieked Ava.

“Oh dear,” muttered Alfie.

Rather than go into the clouds, the balloon somehow made them part, sending them rolling and bubbling across the sky.

“Cool!” said Ava.

“I hope those clouds aren’t broken,” said Alfie.



With a jolt, the balloon began moving forward. With the clouds gone, Ava and Alfie could get a perfect view of the city – their city.

To be completely honest, it didn't look good. Cars and trucks belched out fumes that created a murky fog over the whole landscape. Everywhere, concrete and tarmac seemed to cover the ground, strewn with litter and dotted only occasionally with sad-looking trees. In the distance, they could see a waste tip with giant bulldozers pushing bags of rubbish into a huge heap.

“Yuck,” said Ava.

“Double-yuck,” said Alfie.

Before long, the balloon began moving faster. Then it moved faster still. Then it started moving very, very fast indeed – and was heading for a particularly odd cloud. It was pulsating and bubbling and appeared to be transforming into something – a familiar shape that... wait a minute. It was an egg-timer!

“**YEEESSS!**” yelled Ava, hands raised in the air like she was on a rollercoaster.

After a moment of fear, Alfie thought he should probably just go along with it, so he raised his hands too and screamed “**WOOOOHOOOO!**”

And with the two friends yelling, the wind rushing past and B4 quietly jangling and rattling, the balloon sped headlong towards the strange egg-timer-shaped cloud.



CHAPTER 4. THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT

Everything was still. The balloon was still, the air was still, Alfie was still. Even Ava was too. (Of course, B4 was also still, but he's a robot, so being still is kind of his thing.)

Alfie and Ava looked down.

“Wow,” whispered Ava.

“Double-wow,” whispered Alfie.

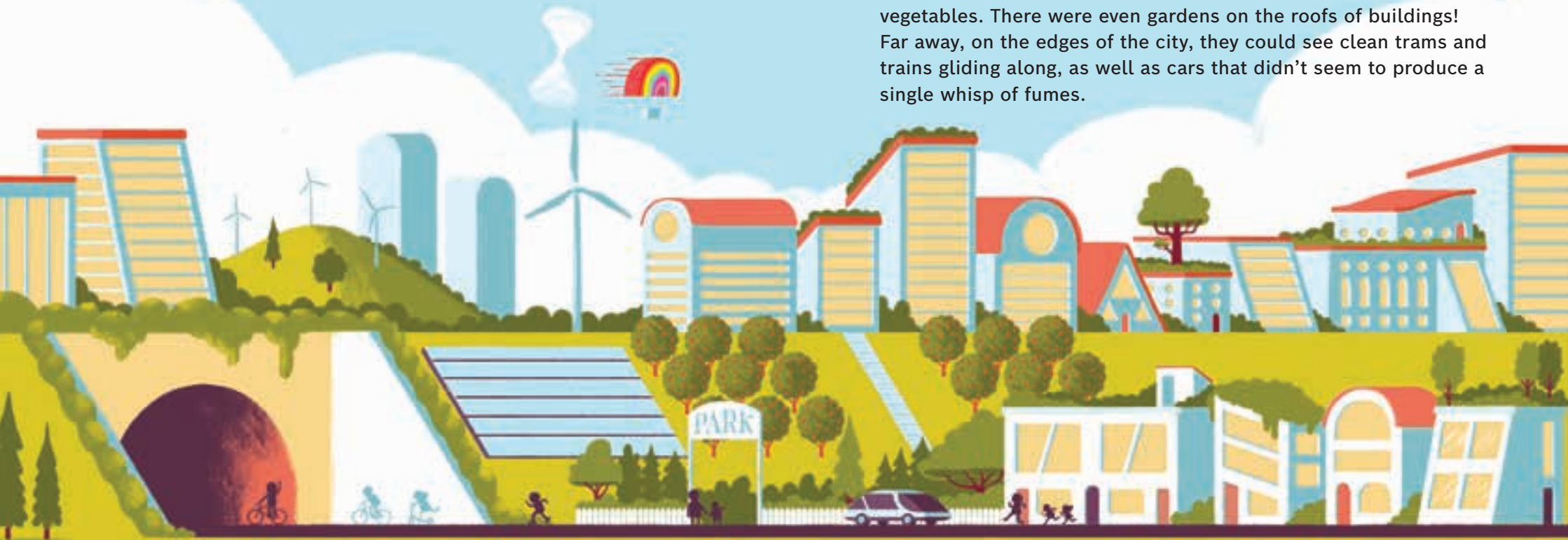
As the balloon began to drift downwards, they couldn't quite believe what they could see below them. You might think that a city so clogged with pollution and fumes and gunk could only get worse.

Apparently not.

What Ava and Alfie could see was simply incredible. They knew it was their city, but it was completely, totally, absolutely, wonderfully different.

The roads choked with cars and trucks were gone. The huge patches of concrete and tarmac were gone.

Instead, there were clean tree-lined streets, with people cycling and walking and roller-skating along them. All across the city were wide, green gardens, bursting with flowers and fruit and vegetables. There were even gardens on the roofs of buildings! Far away, on the edges of the city, they could see clean trams and trains gliding along, as well as cars that didn't seem to produce a single whisp of fumes.



The balloon touched down in a lush park. Ava, being Ava, jumped out of the basket and ran about like an excited puppy.

“LOOK AT IT ALFIE!” she yelled as she sprinted past.

Alfie, being Alfie, took his time to climb out. Then he turned to B4.

“So, this is what our city looks like in the future?” he asked.

“AFFIRMATIVE,” bleeped B4.
“AND NEGATIVE.”

“Wait... what?” said Alfie. But before he could say anything else, Ava was running back to him with another girl.

“This is Astrid!” said Ava quickly. **“She’s going to show us around!”** Then the two ran off again.

“You have to say, B4, that Ava is very, very good at making friends,” said Alfie.

“AFFIRMATIVE,” bleeped the robot.



CHAPTER 5. THE GUIDED TOUR

Once Ava and Astrid had stopped running about like crazy, taken a moment to get their breath back and properly introduced everyone to each other, they all headed off to look around.

“So, where are you from?” Astrid asked.

“Er... well...” stuttered Alfie.

“Oh, a long way away,” said Ava confidently.

“Your robot’s nice,” replied Astrid. “I like those old retro ones.”

“Retro ones?” protested Alfie before Ava gave him a secret kick on the ankle and went “**Shhh!**”

“So,” continued Astrid. “What do you want to see?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” replied Ava. “How about everything?”

So off they went to see everything.

They strolled down wide, car-free streets and said ‘hello!’ to the people roller-skating and cycling by (because everybody seemed to say ‘hello!’ to them). They walked through rooftop community gardens and listened to the bees buzz and the birds sing, uninterrupted by the roar of traffic. They joined a group of children doing junk modelling, turning things that would be thrown away into... well, just about anything they could think of.

(Alfie made a rather nice cardboard jetpack, complete with paper rocket jets, and Ava somehow managed to turn some tin cans and plastic tubes into an assault course for a hamster.)

They looked out from the rooftop and saw fields of wind turbines in the distance, elegantly turning. They noticed bird feeders and hedgehog houses dotted around the parks and gardens. They even had time to walk along the river that, back in Ava and Alfie’s time, was dark and grimy and full of litter and plastic. Here, though, the water was as clear as glass with shoals of little fish flitting through it.

“How is everything so clean?”
Ava asked Astrid.

“Everyone just does their bit and it all adds up,” she replied, as though it was the most obvious thing in the world.



After a while, Astrid got a phone call. Only she didn't have a phone. Something that looked kind of like an earring beeped and she just started speaking.

"Phones seem to have changed a bit too," said Alfie.

"That was my mum. I have to go and have tea now," said Astrid.

"It was lovely to meet you," said Ava.
"Thanks for showing us around."

"Yes, thanks," added Alfie. "The future is quite amazing."

Astrid looked at him strangely. "Er... I'm sure it will be," she said, then ran off into one of the bright white buildings topped with a huge garden.

"Nice one, Alfie," teased Ava.

"Hey, B4 – why are all the buildings white?"

"HEAT REFLECTION TO REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION," squonked B4.

"That's clever," said Ava.

"In fact, everything's clever, isn't it, Alfie?"



Alfie was staring into the distance.

"Uh-oh," said Ava.

"He's got his faraway face on. Hey! Alfie! Yoohoo!"

Alfie jumped. "What? I was thinking."

"Go on," sighed Ava.

"When we got here, I asked B4 if this was the future and he said 'affirmative'."

"Obviously," said Ava. "Because it is."

"But then he said, 'And negative'," continued Alfie.

"Oh," said Ava.

"Hey, B4," said Alfie, turning to the robot.

"Did you say 'affirmative and negative' because this is the future, but also isn't?"

"AFFIRMATIVE," zonked B4.

"I'm lost," said Ava.

"And is that because this might be our future, but also might not be?" continued Alfie.

"AFFIRMATIVE," blarped B4.

"I'm even more lost," said Ava.

"It's simple," said Alfie excitedly, like he'd solved a riddle.

"This is our future if we change the way we do things back in the past. But if we don't, this won't be."

"Oh crikey," said Ava.

"So it depends on what we do back at home?"

"AFFIRMATIVE," blapped B4.

"I don't want to see what the future's like if we don't change," said Ava quietly.

"I couldn't agree more if I tried," replied Alfie.

CHAPTER 6. TIME TO GO

Ava and Alfie sat silently for a while. The idea of a future even more polluted and grimy and smoky and stinky than the present was not a happy one. But it wasn't long before their thoughts were interrupted by a familiar sound.

It was the low humming, thrumming sound that usually happened just before a flash of purple light came shooting from B4 – which it did.

“Is it time to go?” asked Alfie.

“AFFIRMATIVE.” glonked B4.

Within a minute or so, the huge rainbow balloon was drifting down through the pure white clouds and the bright, clear sky.

A little sadly, the two friends climbed into the basket and looked down as they rose smoothly through the air.

“Do you know what?” said Ava suddenly.

“I want this future. Not some grubby, yucky, smelly future.”

“Me too,” said Alfie. “One thousand per cent.”

“Well then,” replied Ava, that familiar Ava-shaped determination returning. “Let's make it happen.”

Alfie was just about to agree when the balloon picked up pace. He turned to see the egg-timer-shaped cloud in the distance and decided that now would be a very good moment to close his eyes for a bit.



CHAPTER 7. WHAT NOW?

Alfie's mum and dad were playing one of those board games grown-ups play. There were lots of pieces and cards and a really boring-looking board. They seemed to be just sitting there, looking at it.

Ava and Alfie burst in.

“Stop that!” said Alfie. **“We need to all start making small changes to the way we do things!”**

“Yes!” said Ava.

“Less smoke, less cars, more bikes, more roller-skates!”

“Oh,” said Alfie's dad, without looking up. “Okay.”

“If we change now, there's still hope!” shouted Alfie, jumping on the spot.

“But it has to be now!” shouted Ava, also jumping.

“Absolutely,” said Alfie's mum, staring at the board.
“Totally.”

“GAAAH! Come on! Come with us – there's only one way you're going to understand,” said Alfie running ahead of his mum to the garden.

“Woah!” said Alfie's dad. “Where are we going?”

“You'll see,” said Alfie.

And that was when Alfie's mum and dad noticed what appeared to be a rainbow hovering in their garden...



