RUNNING PRESS KIDS RP|KIDS

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Mewspaper Club



I STOOD IN THE middle of the newsroom, trying to ignore the fact that it was actually my neighbor Thom's barn.

"Listen, everyone! Let's hash out the first issue," I said.

Thom smiled at me. I did not smile back. I needed to look serious. At least I had sounded serious. I had practiced calling the meeting to order in front of the bathroom mirror all morning. The trick was to square up your face so your eyes felt like pried-open windows. Next, you had to make your voice a rumble, like it started down in your toes and was being forced out of the grout stopping up your mouth.

"What's wrong with your voice?" asked my other neighbor, Min Kim-Franklin. She didn't look up from where she was adding her name to the sign-in sheet by the open barn doors.

"Nothing," I said. I looked down at her name and shuddered. I didn't like a lot about Min Kim-Franklin, but what I liked the least of all was her tendency to sign her name with a heart instead of a dot over the *i*'s.

"Something is wrong with your voice, I'm sure of it," she said. Min's only a year younger than me, but the word *baby* flashed across my mind every time I saw her. Maybe it was the ruffles. The headband holding back her smooth dark hair had little cream-colored ruffles. They matched the cream-colored blouse, also with ruffles, and her orange shorts, which had—you guessed it—ruffles running across the trim. "Are you getting a cold?" she asked.

"No," I barked.

"There, that's it again." Min pointed at me. "Your voice is all gruff and mean sounding. Maybe you should clear your throat."

"Maybe *you* should take journalism more seriously," I snapped.

"That's better." She skipped—for real—toward the back of the barn Thom and I had put up the flyers in the library, at Wells Diner, and in the ice cream shop announcing the formation of a newspaper club in Thom's barn. A part of me hadn't wanted Min to find out, but of course she had. Min always found out.

No time to think of that now. I had a newspaper to run. I looked across the rest of the sign-in sheet. It'd be a bare-bones staff to start, but that was true for most modern newsrooms.

All these thoughts rumbled through my mind in the same grout-mouth voice, which was a lot like my dad's when he was on super deadline. Or when I was in trouble, like that time back when we lived in the city and the family in the apartment next to ours lost their pet snake. I had sifted a very thin coat of flour across the entire kitchen floor to see if we'd have any tracks.

First on the sign-up list should've been Thom Hunter, since we were meeting in his barn. Thom lived across the street from me, and both of his parents worked from home, so they had super wi-fi connectivity that stretched right out to the barn. My new house, on the other hand, only got wi-fi in the attic bedroom, where my mom was all of the time, writing a novel or turning into a bat, whichever happened first.

Yet Thom hadn't signed in. I sighed as I watched him wander around the barn. His long floppy blond hair fell nearly across his eyes as he bent over, picked up a greenish strand of hay, and sniffed it. Then he stuffed the hay into a plastic baggie. Also in the baggie were what looked like half of a red crayon, a purple ribbon, a sprig of catnip, and a long, black feather.

I cleared my throat. "Are you ready for me to call the meeting to order?"

"Yeah, Nellie," he said. Thom's voice was the opposite of gruff. Instead, it was soft as the cotton ball I also spotted inside the bag. "I'm just adding to my bag of smells."

Thom shook the plastic baggie. I opened my mouth. Closed it. Opened it again. Closed it again. I had a meeting to run. No time to ask why he carried around a bag of smells. Thom could be a little odd, I guess. Not dot-your-*i*-with-a-heart odd, but odd in different ways. I once saw him follow a butterfly around his yard for a whole hour.

I know that sounds a little like I had been spying on Thom for an hour, which is not at all what happened. I was simply looking out my window, from which I could see only Thom's farm, and I had seized the opportunity to work on my observation skills.

I shook my head, trying to focus my thoughts on the newspaper, and stepped backward, almost onto a pile of something the goat left behind and that probably would've been a yuck addition to Thom's bag of smells. I sidestepped and cleared my throat again.

Thom settled onto a hay bale next to Min at the back of the barn. I had really hoped someone aside from Thom and Min would show up. Just then I heard rustling near the front of the barn.

"Um, hey," called out Gloria Wells, the twelve-year-old daughter of the diner owner in downtown Bear Creek. She was a year older and way cooler than me, and I was so happy to see her I could've hugged her if I was the kind of person to give people hugs (which I am *not*).

Gloria looked a lot shorter when she wasn't behind the counter of the diner, where she usually perched by the cash register. She stood on her tiptoes and peered toward the back of the barn. "Hello? I'm not sure I'm at the right place. I wanted to, um, write . . ."

"Yes," I answered. Gloria smiled when she saw me, a smile that vanished when she spotted the goat droppings. "This is the right place."

Min shot me another eyebrow-popped-up look at my grout voice. Gloria's eyes widened, too. Maybe I was overdoing it a little. "Come on in," I added a little softer. Gloria strode past me. As she walked, some of her usual confidence snapped back into place. Leaning against the barn wall, she lifted her chin and smiled at Thom. Her forehead wrinkled when she saw his bag of smells. Thom's cheeks turned a little pink as he smiled back at her. Gloria's really pretty, with brown skin and darker eyes and soft curly hair that's even deeper brown. I grinned when I saw the notebook poking out of Gloria's shoulder bag.

I felt a little silly when I realized I was bouncing on the balls of my feet, but then I remembered Dad doing the same thing every time I saw him address his newspaper staff about a cool new project or some breaking news. And what could be more exciting than kicking off a brand-new newspaper—one that we would create entirely on our own?

We had nearly everything we needed to do just that, especially now that Gloria was here. Thom had already told me he wanted to be a writer, too. And Min, despite the hearts fascination, was a pretty incredible artist. I bet she would take on the design of the paper. The only thing missing was a photographer.

"Sorry, I'm late." I whipped around and this time didn't hold back on the toe bouncing. Because there in front of me was Gordon Burke, twelve years old like Gloria, son of the Bear Creek School District superintendent—which meant he had handy neighborhood connections—and, best of all, a photographer. A real camera swung from a strap around his neck. "I'm not too sure I really want to do the whole newspaper thing," he said, scratching the back of his neck where the harness probably rubbed against his skin. "But I thought . . ."

"Come in! Come in!" I clapped my hands. "Okay, everybody. Let's get planning."

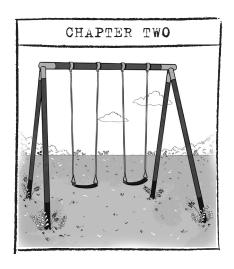
"Wait," Gordon said. He leaned backward, peeking around the side of the barn. "Are you coming?"

Stepping forward, head hanging low with a curtain of red hair falling around her face, was a girl I had spotted when I stopped to hang up a flyer at Wells Diner. "I'm, um, Charlotte," she whispered.

Copy editor. I immediately pegged her.

And that's how the Newspaper Club came together, right in Thom Hunter's old barn. But maybe I'm burying the **lede** a little. That's what Dad calls it when a reporter puts the most interesting part about an article down in the middle or toward the end.

Maybe I should start at the beginning.



STARTING A STORY DOESN'T take a lot of creativity.

That's what Dad tells me all the time. He says it's easy to spot **cub reporters** (*cub* means "new" in newspaper speak) because their articles are trying too hard.

Good stories have to answer just five questions: *Who? What? When? Where?* and *Why?*

"People pick up a paper because they want the news, and your job as a reporter is to give it to them as quickly and clearly as possible," Dad says. "Don't make it complicated for the reader. Just lay the story out there."

Most of the time, reporters have to answer all five of those questions in one paragraph. Before I even dreamed of the Newspaper Club, I thought this would be how an article about my life in Bear Creek would begin:

Nellie Murrow, ll years old, is spending her first month of summer break before becoming a fifth grader at Bear Creek Park hiding from her nemesis, Min Kim-Franklin.

Min is the reason I was festering away in little Bear Creek, Maine, instead of enjoying the city, where there are proper parks, with way more slides and swings and climbing walls, and especially way more kids and fewer squawky birds and huge trees.

Min. She's responsible for all of my heartache. The reason I'm in a town with only one diner, one gas station, and, worst of all, only *one* newspaper. Everyone knows the best towns are two-newspaper towns—where every reporter has to fight to be first to share breaking news. ("Nothing motivates a journalist like a **scoop**," Dad said. I mean, *says*. I haven't actually spoken with him in a few days.)

While we're being technical, I guess it wasn't *really* Min's fault that such a fate has befallen me. Really, it was her mom's fault. Min's mom, Mrs. Kim-Franklin, is my mom's best friend from college. They were sorority sisters and always did the super-secret sorority handshake when they saw each other, even though now we're neighbors and we (unfortunately) see the Kim-Franklins every stinking day. When the newspaper where my parents worked—Mom on the crime **beat** and Dad as the news director—folded six months after Dad left for a new marketing job in Asia, Mom called Mrs. Kim-Franklin crying.

Mrs. Kim-Franklin went ahead and ruined our lives by talking about the old farmhouse for sale next door to her house and how amazing it was to raise Min in Bear Creek. Then she threw in that Min could be my very best friend in the whole world, just like she and Mom were best friends. The next thing you know, Mom was having huddled phone conversations in the pantry behind the closed door. And *then?* We bought an ugly farmhouse without even seeing it, and Mom announced that she was going to take a year "sabbatical," which meant holing up in her attic office and writing a novel.

I couldn't even complain to Dad about it, not when he was at a job with a firm in Asia. I was betting he'd come back later this summer. He had to spend a few months immersed in the culture at the firm, but I was sure he'd start telecommuting next year.

All I could say was, this was *not* the family that raised me. Working for corporations? Writing a novel? Puke and double puke.

Everyone else changed, but I stayed the same.

And I wasn't about to be assigned a new best friend. It was bad enough being the kid who always ate lunch alone or spent it talking to a teacher. I *knew* other people made friends easily. But having to endure my summer knowing Min was required to spend time with me was too much to bear. I knew that's what was behind her trailing me all the time. If it weren't for her mom and my mom forcing it, I was sure Min would be like everyone else and leave me alone.

Not that I cared.

Mrs. Kim-Franklin watched over every single thing Min did as if at any moment she could burst into flames or break out in hives. I was accustomed to a certain amount of freedom. Mom used to say I was her free-range city kid. I even had my own subway pass!

But Min wasn't allowed to go exploring, not without her mom lagging behind us. All summer my plan was: slip out of the house first thing in the morning and get to the park alone. Then I could slouch on the swing and hear myself think without Min's chirp-chirping.

The swings at the park were the only thing I liked about Bear Creek. Maybe everything else was different, but the playground swings were just the same as the ones Dad used to push me on back in the city.

Dad and I used to go to the park right outside our garden district apartment every single day of the summer. Dad had worked at the newspaper in the evening, so we went first thing in the morning. Hardly anyone was there, or maybe they just knew the swings were for us, because we always had the two on the end ready and waiting. After giving me a few good pushes, he'd sit in the swing next to me and we'd compete to see who could go the highest. Eventually, though, we'd both stop pumping our legs and just be there next to each other. We talked a lot, me and my dad. Or, at least, we used to.

It was sometimes hard to reach him now. Kind of funny, isn't it, that the swings were the only place in Bear Creek with good enough reception for me to reach Dad? We have had the best conversations on those swings. Maybe you'd think it'd be scary to talk with someone while flying higher than probably anyone ever has in Bear Creek. But it wasn't scary for me.

I liked to pump my legs until I was soaring so high, I was just about horizontal to the ground. I didn't see anything down there, not one bit of Bear Creek. That's how I liked it. Plus, there was always one second when my body lifted straight up off the rubber seat and the only thing keeping me on Earth was the metal loops of the chain in each hand. And I wasn't even scared.

Maybe that's because I'm named after **Nellie Bly**. She was the bravest person. Nellie Bly once traveled around the whole world in seventy-two days just to get a story. Another time, she heard that people sent to institutions were being mistreated there. She wanted the scoop, so she pretended to be a patient in order to be sent to an institution, even though it meant being abused. She did whatever it took to get the story and share the truth.

Journalists have to be brave. I know this because I've lived my whole life in a newsroom, thanks to my parents. My mom is super brave. Before her sabbatical, she'd step right up to the yellow caution tape at crime scenes so she could interview police or **sources** (that's newspaper speak for someone who can provide information **on the record**. "On the record" means the source says it's okay to print what they say).

Once, Mom was filling in for a features reporter, covering a story about a new skydiving place. The company offered to give her the real experience so she could write her story with authenticity. Mom and the photojournalist she was working with each strapped on parachute vests. And then she jumped right out of an airplane, her arms spread wide like she was leaping into a ball pit. The photojournalist snapped a shot of that moment and sent it to my dad, who, for Christmas that year, gave Mom a framed portrait of the photo. We hung it in the dining room. But that was in our city apartment. I'm not sure where the picture is now, probably in one of the dozens of boxes stacked on top of the table.

Loads of times I've helped Mom write her stories or helped Dad edit other stories. I was a journalist, too, even though my stories hadn't been published yet. I guess, technically, I was still a cub.

But now Mom wouldn't even let me read the novel she was working on. She said it was inappropriate. And who knew if Dad was even able to write at his new job? Bleh.

Maybe if I could reach him, I'd ask him if he'd written anything. That's what was most important about the park being a Min-free zone. I could sit on the swings alone and really talk to Dad without feeling like I was being babysat by someone younger than me who still wore ruffles. And, technically, Dad and I were both starting our day talking with each other, since ten in the morning in Bear Creek was midnight in Tokyo. Dad didn't mind my calling him at midnight because he was a night owl.

But this particular morning's conversation with Dad hadn't gone as well as I wanted. He kept whispering ridiculous things, such as "give Bear Creek a chance" and "take it easy on your mother; she's been through a lot," and even "I'm sure Min's not that bad. Even if she *has* to spend time with you, that doesn't mean you should be mean to her."

Every day he spent away from us, Dad became less of the hard-nosed, facts-only journalist I knew and more of a stranger. Sometimes I even had a hard time remembering his crinkly-eyed smile when I'd walk into the newsroom after school. I tried not to think about that while I worked on swinging higher than I had yesterday. When I got really, really high, the swing set would hop and I'd get a little bounce off the seat.

I bet Nellie Bly wouldn't blink when that happened either.

The only problem with soaring into the sky on a swing is sometimes you need to get back to the ground fast without breaking your legs. That was the predicament I found myself in when the screaming started. When I first heard the screeching, I thought it was one of the black birds swooping through the bright blue patch of sky over me. But then the shriek ended in a definitely human word I'm not allowed to say out loud.

As the swing fell back toward land, I dragged my feet, the heels of my sneakers sending up a cloud of dry dirt around me. It took a couple more back-and-forths before the swing slowed enough that I could jump and not crumple into a broken-bones pile. I still fell forward onto my knees. One of them even bled a little bit when I squeezed the skin together. It took some time to limp over to where the screeching had started.

Bear Creek was such a boring ole stick-in-the-mud town that Police Chief Rodgers beat me to the scene.

If Chief Rodgers were a mannequin at the mall (not that Bear Creek *had* a mall), he'd topple over. His legs, even in his uniform's dark brown pants, were stick skinny, but his belly was as wide as our washing machine. Sort of shaped the same way, too. His head was normal sized but a bushy brown mustache stretched out to the sides.

I could see the ends of that mustache twitching up and down, up and down as he talked with the source of all the screeching. Peeking around Chief Rodgers, I pulled my notebook out. Even cub reporters like me know to always have a notebook and two pens in their back pocket. I scribbled down notes. At the top I wrote, *WHO?* Under it: *Middle-aged man. Fluffy white hair. Angry face.*

"I'm telling you, Chief," the man said. "I was attacked!"

"Attacked?" Twitch, twitch went the chief's mustache. "By who, exactly?"

Whom, I corrected, but only in my head. (Mom says, though it's great to understand grammar—an important tool in every writer's toolbox—it's better to keep edits to yourself, especially when talking with grown-ups.)

"I don't know!" the man bellowed. His hat, a baseball cap, was scrunched up in his fist. He swung it up and then hit his thigh with it. "If I knew that, I wouldn't be calling you, would I?"

Twitch, twitch went Chief Rodgers's mustache. "All right, Hank. Settle down." *Hank*, I wrote in my notebook. "Take me through it one more time."

Hank's watery brown eyes shifted around the park. I glanced around, too. A couple walking their dog seemed to slow as they passed by, clearly listening in. I couldn't blame them; nothing new happened in Bear Creek.

Hank drew in a big breath, making his shoulders peak. "I told you. I was walking to my truck. I just had a cup of coffee from Wells Diner and needed to use the facilities." The hand not holding his hat jerked toward the brick building for men's and women's bathrooms behind him. "Then I'm walking back, you see. And *bam!* Someone attacked me!"

"What exactly did they do, Hank?" I asked.

Both Hank and Chief Rodgers paused. Their mouths popped open a little as they turned toward me. Chief Rodgers's jaw clenched. Hank closed his mouth. They looked at each other. Figures. So many people ignore the power of the press.

As if I hadn't spoken, Chief Rodgers said, "Hank, what exactly happened?"

Hank swallowed. "Someone swiped my hat right off my head!"

"The hat in your hand?" I asked.

Again, the men looked at me. Chief Rodgers cleared his throat. "Why don't you go play and let me handle this, kid?" I didn't move. The **First Amendment** offers freedom to the press. Chief Rodgers turned back to Hank. "The hat in your hand?" he asked.

"Yeah. They swiped it right off my head. I fell forward, smack on my knees." I lifted my own sort-of bloody knee in empathy, but Hank ignored me. "I spilled my coffee!" Hank yanked out his T-shirt, which had a dark splotch all down the front. "Yelled something right in my ear, too!"

"What did they yell?" Chief Rodgers and I asked at the same time. I smiled at him and gave a little nod so he'd know he was doing a good job with the questioning. He rolled his eyes.

"I don't know, man!" Hank said. "I was too busy falling over!"

Chief Rodgers crossed his arms. "Did you see anyone in the bathroom when you were there?"

Hank shook his head.

"What about anyone at the park as you walked in?"

"Just this girl on the swings."

Chief Rodgers glanced at me. One of his eyebrows popped up like a tent. "Did you see anyone, kid?"

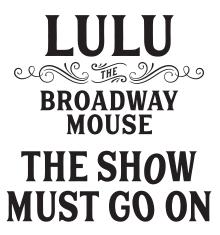
I shook my head. "I was looking mostly at the sky. That's how high I was making the swing go."

Chief Rodgers didn't look impressed. He must not have seen me. "Well, there aren't any footprints in the dirt. No witnesses. Is it possible you tripped?" Chief Rodgers asked. "Tripped?" Hank gasped. "'Course I didn't *trip*. C'mon, now. I'm telling you—I was *attacked*."

A gasp behind me made Chief Rodgers whip around so fast he had to grip his neck afterward. In front of me, Hank nodded vigorously. I didn't bother to turn. I just sighed. I knew that gasp.

Mrs. Kim-Franklin. And that meant Min had found me. Great.

And just when Bear Creek was starting to get interesting.





HERE'S 運 NEWS

HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU, DEAR READER. FAIR warning: I might (definitely) cry.

Our show is closing.

I just . . .

I guess I should do as Fraulein Maria advises and "start at the very beginning" so you can understand how we got here. (Once you understand how we got here, if you wouldn't mind explaining it to me, that'd be fab.)

It makes sense that the beginning of this story would pick up where the last one left off, right? (If you just answered, "Of course right!" bravo to you, tiny Yente.) So, although it is currently spring and my fellow cast members have been donning sockless shoes and jean jackets to match the warm breeze blowing through Shubert Alley, let's rewind to the depths of winter, puffy coats, snow boots, and blustery winds, aka a few days after my Broadway debut. Back to when my heart was bursting with joy, pride, exaltation . . . I could continue to list other applicable emotions, but we'd be here all day.

Okay. Here goes everything.

THE ROLE OF TEDDY THE BEAR WILL BE PLAYED BY LULU THE MOUSE

CHAPTER **ONE**

lers. At least I think that's what he's hollering. His speech is mumbled because he and my other three hooligan brothers each have their mouths wrapped around a corner of this weekend's massive Arts section of the *Times*, and they're slowly maneuvering it into our house, like they're crew guys moving a cumbersome set piece. Speaking of crew guys, it was Dan and Artie who arrived at work this morning with easily fifty copies of the paper—enough for everyone in the building. They tried to get a copy downstairs to me, but the Hooligans intercepted it. Apparently, Benji said, "We'll take it from here,

you clever gentlemen." (In other news, Benji has stopped talking like a cowboy and started talking like a fictional English butler.) Sure, it would have been easier to have a human carry the hefty newspaper downstairs, but my brothers wouldn't hear of it. If I could make it to Broadway, they could certainly handle weekend *Times* transportation.

"Put it down over here, boys, where we can all see it," my mother instructs.

The Hooligans plop the paper down, and my mom smooths it out with her tail. (Five bucks says later she'll ask Bet to iron it before asking one of the carpenters to frame it.)

"May I do the honors?" Timmy asks.

"You are our resident newspaper aficionado," I say.

Timmy clears his throat, then reads, "Shubert Theatre Makes History with Lulu the Broadway Mouse." Right below the headline is a huge photograph of me in Jayne's palm during Act Two, both of us with our left legs in a high kick. After the show, we found out that our sound guy,

Randall, who dabbles in photography, went to the back of the house during Act Two to make sure our debuts were documented. The *Times* bought a bunch of photos from him and now Randall can take that trip to Hawaii he's been dreaming about.

"Wow," Walt says. "That's some headline, Lu."

"The front page of the Arts section," my dad says.

"My little girl."

"Everyone told you it wasn't possible," my mother says. "Even me. I'm so glad you didn't listen, Lucy Louise."

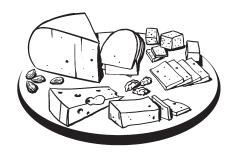
"Me too, Mom," I say.

Cut to Benji the Brit "not crying!" beside me.

"Keep reading, bro," Matty says.

The seven of us curl up around the newspaper, and each other, as Timmy continues to read.

On Tuesday evening, toward the end of the first act, a tiny mouse named Lulu made a surprise appearance onstage at the Shubert. By the curtain call, that tiny mouse had become a big star . . .



CHAPTER **TWO**

Howard proclaims. "And believe me, I've tried."
She pulls her sand-colored wig cap over her pin-curled noggin, then turns to me and H.H., suddenly serious as all get-out. "I'm kidding, of course. I would never buy a headline."

"Of course you wouldn't," I say.

"This is the kind of article an actor dreams of, Tiny," Heather Huffman says. "Are you happy with it?"

"Of course," I say. "I mean, it's great for me, but it's great for everyone else, too, right?"

"ABSOLUTELY!" Jodie shouts. "Free publicity is

the best publicity!" She dots concealer under her eyes and begins blending with her purple makeup sponge. "We're sold out for both shows today! You've made us a hit again, darling."

"If you had any use for money, I'd say it were time for a raise," H.H. says in that matter-of-fact way she does. "Perhaps there's something else we can negotiate for you? A weekly cheese platter delivery? A cushy new bed? A larger assortment of ribbon scarves?"

"Is it ridiculous to say being allowed to perform is payment enough?" I ask.

The looks on H.H.'s and Jodie's faces confirm that, yes, it is ridiculous, and I realize that me declaring out loud that I don't feel the need to be compensated for my hard work is basically pooh-poohing the strides made by generations of human women. If I'm going to blaze a trail for future generations of thespian mice, I'd better make it clear I know my worth.

"I'll ask for the cheese platter," I say.

"Good," H.H. says, retrieving a brand-new eyeliner—Cup O' Cappuccino—from a reusable Duane Reade tote. "Whatever the ask, if I know one thing for sure, it's that producers never get rid of their cash cow. Or their cash mouse, in this case." She lets out a fluttery laugh. "I think it's safe to say your job is secure, Tiny. Now. Are you sure you're still up for our preshow routine? I'd understand if you need to get up to the third floor and prepare for your own show."

"I will never give up our preshow routine," I say. "You're stuck with me."

"All right then," H.H. says. "My eyelash, please."

I scoot across their dressing room counter; my speed is slowed a bit by H.H.'s scratchy new bamboo place mat—aka her "much-needed touch of Zen." I knock the cover off the lash container, pick up her left lash, and stride it over to her. Just like I've done for three hundred fifty-two performances, just like I'll do for many, many more.

"Not to gossip," Jodie Howard whispers loudly, "but . . .

I am surprised that with Amanda back from her sickbed she hasn't made a fuss about you being her new costar."

"I wasn't going to say anything, but now that you've said something, yes. It is incredibly surprising," H.H. replies.

"Life's surprising," I say.

"Indeed, it is," H.H. says, eyeing me suspiciously before closing her left lid to apply its lash.

Just between us, dear reader, my third-floor dressing room mates and I decided it was best not to broadcast our unanimous decision to turn over a new leaf and get along. We didn't want anyone else's opinions to influence things, you know? Believe me, it's tough for me not to divulge every detail to H.H. But Amanda's confession about why she acted the way she did, and my realization about how we all could have treated her better? We think it's best we keep those experiences between the four of us: me, Milly, Amanda, and Jayne. The hope is the rest of the company will sense our fresh start, without us

having to explicitly state "We're going to get along now!" and that jolt of positivity will brighten up our backstage like a fresh coat of paint.

"In other news, I will be missing two performances next week to shoot a television pilot. Guest star. Possible *recurring*. I'm thrilled."

Bless Jodie Howard for her ability to steer the conversation back to her and away from topics that make me feel like I'm lying to my best H.H.

"Which one?" H.H. asks. "The one about the family who owns the bookstore?"

"No," Jodie says. "No, I was deemed 'too wise' for that one." She rolls her eyes and snorts some saline nasal spray. "That's show biz speak for 'too old,' Lulu."

"Got it," I say. I got it before she told me but would never have said it out loud. I mean, how could someone be "too wise" to own a bookstore? Honestly.

"The one about the Nantucket cop who solves crimes with the chef of his local seafood restaurant?" H.H. asks.

How she made it through that description without laughing, I'll never know.

"They said I 'wasn't believable' as someone who 'shucks oysters," Jodie says, decorating the statement with her signature air quotes. "No, I booked *Apartment*. Half-hour comedy. Single camera. Very *Downton Abbey* but set on the Upper West Side in a prewar co-op." (FYI, "booked" is show biz speak for getting the part.)

"Sounds fun," H.H. says. And, yes, I do sense a hint of envy that she's doing her best to repress. The gal's only human, ya know?

"Fifteen Minutes, this is your Fifteen-Minute call. Fifteen Minutes, please," Pete's voice pipes through the monitor.

"Congrats on your guest star, possible recurring, Jodie!" I say. "H.H. and I will miss you next week."

"Yes, Lisa is lovely in your role—" H.H. starts.

"I hope not too lovely," Jodie panics.

"-but she's not you, my friend. You are one of a

kind. And speaking of one of a kind, Tiny, you'd better head upstairs and get ready. We'll see you at the overture dance."

"See you in fifteen!" I say. But before I go, I whisper into her ear, "You'll book a television role soon, H.H. I just know it."

She pats me on the head and says, "From your lips to Casting's ears, Tiny."

And then, faster than you can say "There's no business like show business," I'm off. Down the leg of their dressing room table, out the door to the second-floor hallway, and up the stairs to the third floor and *my* dressing room. *Our* dressing room. Amanda's, Jayne's, Milly's, and mine.

What's that you say? Do you have your own name plaque on the door yet, Lulu? Well, right now all I have is a piece of printer paper Milly fashioned into a name plaque. Pete did put a place for me to sign in on the call board, though! Rosa rubs a marker on my foot and then holds me up so I can use my foot as a stamp.

Once it's decided that this part is mine for good, I'm sure Pete will turn the printer paper hanging on our dressing room door into an official name plaque faster than you can say "Please come back to Broadway, Tony winner Kristin Chenoweth."

Oh yes, I forgot to mention. *Technically*, I'm still an understudy. Despite what H.H. said about the producers never getting rid of their cash cow-mouse, despite making the cover of the Arts section of the *Times*, despite five stellar performances, this role isn't technically mine until the producers say it is.

This might be a show, but it's also a business.





CAMP CLIQUE

EILEEN MOSKOWITZ-PALMA







→ CHAPTER ONE ···

MAISY

"COME ON! IT'S A STOP SIGN, NOT A RED LIGHT!" DAD POUNDED the dashboard and muttered under his breath, "We can't miss this bus."

We have to miss the bus. We have to miss the bus. Please, God, let us miss this bus.

Dad turned into the parking lot and my palms started sweating when I saw the ancient yellow school bus with Camp Amelia painted in dark green letters on the side.

Dad whooped. "We made it!"

"They were too cheap to send a coach bus, which means the camp is definitely a dump. Are you okay sending me to a third-rate camp?" I asked.

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"It beats having you sit around watching Netflix all summer," Dad said, as he turned the ignition off.

I slid further into my seat while Dad grabbed my stuff from the back of the Jeep and brought it to the bus. He had bought me a monogrammed sleeping bag and duffle set from Pottery Barn Teen in steel gray, my favorite color. Like that would make up for shipping me off to wilderness boot camp.

When Dad got back to the car, I didn't budge. The second I got out of the seat, my summer would be over.

Dad opened my door. "Come on, Maisy. You don't want the bus leaving without you."

I narrowed my eyes and folded my arms. "Would that really be so bad?"

Dad opened my car door wider. "You can't stay home alone all summer while your sister's away at gymnastics camp."

I tried to keep my voice calm because Dad can't deal when I get too emotional on him. "As if I would sit home all summer? I'd be at the pool with the M & Ms."

The M & Ms are my friend group. We all have names that start with M-Mia, Madison, Meghan, Madeline, and of course me. I joined the group later than the other girls, so it's a good thing my parents named me Maisy.

"You know I'm at work twelve hours a day." Dad looked sorryish. "Even longer on surgery days."





All of Dad's patients think he's a genius, but when it comes to parenting stuff, he doesn't know how to think outside the box—which is something my English teacher says about me, so I must get it from him.

"I'll hang out at Mia's house and you can pick me up when you get off work. Mia's mom won't care. She's never home anyway," I said.

Dad shook his head and his hair flopped over his eyes. He was in desperate need of a haircut, not to mention a shave. He'd stopped caring what he looked like when Mom left. "I don't want you running around with that crew at Mia's house all summer. I don't like the guys her brother hangs out with."

"If you're gonna get rid of me for the summer, can you at least send me to rock band camp?"

"You know this. All the music and drama camps book up a year in advance. When I bumped into Bea's mother at Stop and Shop and she told me about Camp Amelia, it sounded—"

"Bea Thompson and I haven't been friends since fifth grade!"

Dad spoke in that tone he used when he didn't want to sound judgy but totally did. "Which I still don't get. You guys were like two peas in a pod and then suddenly you weren't friends."

Sometimes the only way to respond is with an eye roll.

"Come on, Maise." Dad opened my door wider. "You're going to have a great summer."





My legs felt like rubber as I climbed out of the car. It didn't help that Dad's Jeep is super high off the ground, and I'm literally the shortest almost-seventh grader in existence.

"You're ruining my life," I said as soon as my feet touched the pavement.

Dad pulled me in for a hug, but I stood completely still because hugging him would make him think I was okay with this. "I love you, Mini. Even when you think you don't love me back."

As if he wasn't being annoying enough calling me by my baby nickname, Dad grabbed my arms and wrapped them around him like he used to when I was a little kid. Then he gave me a hard squeeze, even though I kept my arms limp like wet spaghetti. "I know things have been really hard. But when you get back from camp, Mom will be home and everything will be back to normal."

Things hadn't been normal in our house in a really long time. The days when Mom was PTA president, team mom for my sister Addy's gymnastics club, and my Brownie troop leader felt like they had never happened.

Dad let go and gave me a gentle push toward the bus. "You better run before they leave without you."

I shuffled my feet toward the bus as slow as humanly possible, hoping the driver would pull away before I got there.

Dad called after me, "Don't forget to write Mom. I put the address in the front pocket of your bag."





As *if* I would write to the person who was responsible for ruining my entire summer.

A college girl wearing a gray Camp Amelia T-shirt and ripped jean shorts with a grubby flannel tied around her waist, scuffed blue Converse, and a big silver whistle on a chain around her neck waited on the bus steps. She had shoulder-length brown hair with homemade bangs that were higher over her right eyebrow than her left, so it looked like she was winking at me.

"The bus is full, but you can sit with me in the counselor section," she said, and smiled so wide I could see a chipped molar.

Sitting with the counselors seemed like a pretty newb-like thing to do, but it had to be better than sitting with Bea, so I followed the girl up the stairs into a bus full of the strangers I would be stuck spending my whole summer with.

The girl kept talking as if my summer wasn't officially over.

"My name is Bailey. I'm from upstate New York."

"I'm Maisy."

Bailey pointed to a seat filled with snacks and magazines. "Hold on, I just have to move my stuff."

I heard Bea's voice before I saw her, which is weird because she's so quiet at school. Half the time I don't even notice her. But she was acting like queen of the bus the way she was hugging people and OMGing about how much she missed them.

I lifted my hand in a half-wave, but Bea didn't turn my way.





Seriously? We were literally the *only* two people getting picked up in Mapleton.

I pulled out my phone, and Bailey reached out and took it from my hand. "No phones allowed."

"Wait!" I reached my hand out. "My friends will think I'm ghosting them if I don't tell them."

"Try writing letters," Bailey said, as if we were living in the eighties. Then she dropped my phone in a straw basket on top of a bunch of other phones and smiled at me like she hadn't just taken away my lifeline to civilization. "You can have it back on the last day."

Dad hadn't mentioned this no-phone rule, 'cause there's no way I'd have gotten on that bus if I'd known. It was bad enough I was gonna lose all of my Snapchat streaks, but on top of that, I couldn't go all summer without talking to the M & Ms. I couldn't risk it.

Everyone thinks we're best friends. But it's complicated. Madison's my best friend in the group, but she's family friends with Meghan. Madison idolizes Meghan, but Meghan tells anyone who will listen that she only hangs out with Madison because their moms are besties. So, Madison acts like my best friend when Meghan is ignoring her or being mean to her, and as soon as Meghan decides she likes her again, Madison kind of ditches me. Being away from my phone all summer would mean I wouldn't be able to remind Madison how much she needs me.





Bailey opened a bag of Doritos and the Cool Ranch seasoning mixed with the hot plastic smell of the bus seats started making me queasy. She pushed the bag toward me, but I shook my head, trying not to breathe through my nose. This was going to be a long bus ride.

"Camp newbie?" Bailey asked through a mouthful of Doritos.

I nodded.

Bailey washed down the Doritos with red Gatorade that made her teeth pink. "The bunk tournament is the best. There are four competitions: swimming, kayaking, rope climbing, and trail running. All the bunks live for the competition."

Turns out Dad didn't just leave out the no-phone rule. "Can I just be scorekeeper or something?" I asked.

Bailey laughed and wet Dorito crumbs landed on my arm. "You are so funny. You'll make friends fast."

"Seriously, I'm not such a great swimmer and . . ." I started.

"Hey, Bailey. You got the bunk assignments?" asked a tall counselor with crunchy blond curls.

Bailey turned to me. "One of my camp jobs is to organize the bunks. Sorry, this is privileged info."

I was relieved when Bailey squeezed into the seat across the aisle because I didn't want to hear any more about this tournament thing. Not to mention, it wasn't like I cared what bunk I was in, as long as I wasn't with Bea and her annoying friends, who were now singing





7



a camp song that was giving me a headache. They weren't the only irritating girls on the bus. The girl behind me stuck her bare feet through the space between my seat and the window. She was in serious need of a pedicure and a shower. Some girls in the back of the bus thought it was hilarious to toss around a beach ball to see if they could keep it in the air during the entire bus ride. I ducked every time that ball came near my head. This was going to be the longest summer of my life.

I had been up all night stressing about camp and the Mom situation and suddenly felt like I could sleep for days. I rested my head against the bus window and gave in to the rocking motion of the wheels.

I must have fallen asleep because next thing I knew, we were at a rest stop. The counselors all headed off to grab Burger King, but I decided to go to Quickmart for candy.

It was really weird not to have anyone to talk to. Groups of girls ran past me shrieking and laughing, but it was like they didn't see me, like I didn't exist. I didn't have my phone to hide behind, so I kept my eyes on the ground as I walked.

I went into the Quickmart and grabbed a big bag of Sour Patch Kids Extreme and headed toward the line. Bea was already standing at the register with the exact same thing. I wasn't surprised since she's the one who introduced me to the goodness of Sour Patch Kids.



Bea kept her head down with her hair covering her face. Like I wouldn't recognize her red curly hair and pale freekly arms?

I hate awkward silences, so I had to say something. "Remember the time we ate so many Sour Patch Kids we couldn't taste anything for two days?"

Bea laughed so hard she looked like she was going to pee in her pants, which she may or may not have a history of doing on sleepovers. "My mom made me go to the doctor even though your dad said I would be fine."

Standing there laughing with Bea actually felt good. Kind of like old times—when I had one best friend and didn't have the constant pressure to hold my spot in the popular group. When Mom was still Mom, and I still felt like I could be a kid.

Suddenly, a thick Staten Island accent attached to a tiny girl with shiny black hair interrupted our moment. "You don't talk to Bea at school and now you're nice to her 'cause you got no friends at camp?"

Bea opened her mouth and then closed it quickly. She opened it back up again and shut it. She looked like my sister Addy's goldfish.

I stood up taller, even though I didn't really have to since this little jerk was even shorter than me. "I don't need your permission to talk to Bea. I've known her since preschool."

"Isa!" A tall blond girl who looked like an Abercrombie model ran over to us. "You don't have to be so mean," she whispered.





The girl who was apparently named Isa jabbed her pointer finger at me. "This girl was best friends with Bea their whole lives, then ditches her for the popular girls. And I'm the mean one?"

I felt shame creep up my neck and spread out over the tips of my ears. I wished I could explain to Bea what had really happened. Why I had to cut her out of my life. But it was too late.

Isa said, "It's a big camp. You stick with your bunk. We'll stick with ours."

BEA

Dear Mom,

I'm writing my annual "still on the bus but missing you already" letter. I know you were only trying to be polite to Dr. Winters when you bumped into him and that he isn't to blame for Maisy's Mean Girl ways. But did you really have to give Camp Amelia the hard sell? I go to camp to get out of the Mapleton bubble. Now I'm stuck here for six weeks with my ex-best friend, who is a daily reminder that I am about to start middle school with no friends. I wish we lived in a big town where there are multiple elementary schools feeding into a big middle school. Not this backward village, where middle school doesn't even start till seventh grade. It's impossible to start over with the same kids I've known my whole life, the same kids who already know what a loser I am.





Maisy started jockeying for a spot in the social hierarchy before the bus even pulled out of the parking lot. She actually sat with the counselors, as if that would give her a leg up with the other campers. She clearly doesn't understand camp politics. I've decided to handle her the same way she deals with me at school-by pretending she doesn't exist. Keep your fingers crossed that she ends up in a bunk on the other side of the lake from me.

I miss you and Mr. Pebbles already. Don't forget to give him canned tuna on Tuesdays and Thursdays for a special treat. He only likes the organic kind packed in olive oil from Trader Joe's, so don't get him StarKist—even if it's on sale.

Love always,

Your #1/only daughter Bea

P.S. Here are some care package ideas for the summer:

- -Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell
- -The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
- -Everything, Everything by Nicola Yoon
- The Best American Short Stories Collection (either the 1986 edition edited by Raymond Carver, or the 2014 edited by Jennifer Egan)
- -A new writer's notebook (wide rule)
- -Gel pens (metallic)
- -Sour Patch Kids Extreme
- -Sour Patch Watermelon Slices

P.P.S. Thank you for literally and figuratively being the best mom and friend ever. I would have no hope of surviving the wilderness of middle school without you. I love you and miss you already.







I couldn't help feeling like it was my fault when Isa told Maisy off. Isa had been sticking up for me, but when I saw the look on Maisy's face, I felt guilty, as though *I* should be sticking up for *her*. I had to remind myself during the rest of the bus ride that Maisy wasn't my friend. She hadn't been for an eternity.

Maisy and I had been best friends since the threes class at Mapleton Day Preschool. We did everything together and people called us MaisyandBea, as if it were one big word. But, when I got back from camp the summer before sixth grade, Maisy dropped me for no reason. I had grown accustomed to Maisy writing me at camp every other day with stories about annoying things her sister Addy did, or a top ten list of reasons why she was infatuated with some boy, or best friend quizzes cut out from *American Girl Doll Magazine* with all of her answers filled out and spaces for me to fill in mine.

But Maisy didn't write once last summer, and when I got home in August, she wasn't waiting for me on my doorstep. When I texted her about going back-to-school shopping with Mom and me, she didn't reply. Mom told me not to worry, Maisy was probably in the middle of a guitar lesson or something and that we needed to go shopping anyway because I had outgrown everything. It felt like a punch in the stomach when I walked past Abercrombie and saw Maisy in there with the M & Ms. They were all trying on hats and taking a group selfie. I pulled Mom into Sephora so Maisy wouldn't see me cry.





I don't know if there were always groups and I didn't notice them because I had Maisy, or if they formed that last year of elementary school. But it suddenly felt like everyone was part of a group while I ceased to exist. Before I knew it, I was officially invisible.

Two hours later, when we were finally at camp, I couldn't help sympathizing with Maisy because we had a lot of good years before she joined the evil queen beehive otherwise known as the M & Ms. Although she may have swiftly put me on the wrong side of popular at school, I didn't know if I had it in me to exact revenge by doing the same thing to her at camp.

"What's the matter?" asked Poppy. She's the "pretty girl" of our group with her stick-straight blond hair, blue eyes, and super long legs. On top of being pretty, Poppy is wealthy, the kind of wealthy where her house has a name—Ferwick Manor. You might think that perfect life would make her act entitled, but Poppy is obsessed with social justice. She isn't one of those people who just posts artsy pictures of herself holding up witty posters at a women's march once a year either. This school year she spoke in front of the school board on behalf of a transgender student who wanted to use the bathroom of his transitioning gender. Mom always says that a kid who is brave enough to do those things is going to be unstoppable when she is an adult.







I tilted my head toward "the square," where Maisy stood alone. All the campers were huddled around the big grassy area waiting to get their bunk assignments, but no one talked to her or even looked at her. Word had gotten around about Isa telling Maisy off, so the other campers were steering clear of Maisy to avoid Isa's wrath.

"I know I shouldn't feel bad for Maisy, but I can't help it," I said.

"She had it coming to her," said Isa. Her Staten Island accent makes her sound tough, but she's the most loyal person I know, which is why she hates Maisy. That's the kind of friend Isa is: You hate someone, she hates them, too.

I watched as Maisy pulled her honey-brown hair up into a high ponytail, shook it loose, then pulled it back up again. Maisy fixates on her hair when she's upset.

"I can't fathom why her parents would send her here," I said.

"Maisy thinks trying out a new nail salon is adventurous. And she's
the least athletic person I know."

"Sucks for the bunk who gets stuck with her," said Hannah, who's definitely the coolest one among us.

Hannah's a trendsetter. One year she wore jelly sandals to camp. By the end of the summer, everyone had a pair. She had recently discovered a love of thrift shops, so she was obsessed with vintage eighties-style rompers, which are kind of like the rompers people wear today, but they come in bold primary colors and feature either rainbows across the chest or athletic stripes running down the sides.





She wore what she called statement sneakers, which were generic Keds in bold prints—the crazier the better. Her first-day-of-camp outfit was a turquoise, terry cloth strapless romper that had a rain-bow on the front paired with zebra-striped sneakers. The ends of her chin-length brown hair were dip-dyed blue, and I was taking bets with Isa and Poppy on how many campers were going to beg their moms for blue Kool-Aid mix in their care packages.

"Her bunk won't have a shot at winning the tournament with Maisy dragging them down," I whispered.

Is a bumped fists with Hannah. "That increases our chances of winning the Cup!" We won the bunk tournament every year. If we won again our last year as junior campers, we would be awarded the Amelia Cup, which had only been earned by one other bunk in the past fifty years. It was Poppy's Nana Mary who won the Cup, and she really turned up the pressure on Poppy before she left for camp to bring home the win.

"Better give up now. You don't want to waste your whole summer training for nothing," an annoyingly familiar voice said.

Isa and I whipped around to see the Dandelion Bunk twins, Ali and Alexa, lurking behind us. I wasn't sure which one was talking because they are identical. After years of going to camp with them, we still couldn't tell them apart. Not that we needed to. Their personalities were cloned, along with their appearance. They both had thick New Jersey accents, bobbed curly blond hair, pimply skin, and





were solid muscle from the mixed martial arts training they do. Picture any female professional MMA fighter at eleven, give her a twin and an attitude, and that's what these girls were like. We just call them the A twins to keep things simple.

Is a crossed her arms. "You guys lose. Every. Single. Year. To us. Why should this summer be any different?"

Ali and Alexa gave each other knowing looks.

"This is going to be our year. You'll see," said one of the twins.

"You do realize you guys aren't eligible for the Cup, right?" I slowed my speech down so these hunkering bullies could understand me. "We're the *only* bunk who's won the tournament every summer. So, we're the *only* bunk who's eligible for the Cup."

The A twins smiled at us, revealing matching sets of fluorescentgreen rubber-banded braces. The one on the left said, "Yeah, but if we win the tournament, you guys can't win the Cup."

The one on the right cut in, "Keeping you from winning the Cup is basically what it's all about for us."

Isa laughed a little too loudly. "Good luck with that."

The A twins tossed their hair at the same time and one of them said, "Don't think we'll be needing luck this summer."

Bailey blew her whistle. Then she stood on top of a milk crate in the middle of the square, holding her clipboard, which meant one thing—bunk assignments. There was a lot of shushing and one more whistle blow from Bailey before everyone finally quieted down.





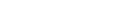
"I know you guys are all excited about another summer at Camp Amelia." Bailey pumped both of her hands in the air and everyone cheered with her, except Maisy who was busy french braiding her enviously straight hair. Putting her hair in a ponytail meant she was a little nervous. A french braid meant she was one step away from a total breakdown.

Bailey continued, "Campers, listen up for your bunk assignments."

There were never any surprises for Poppy, Hannah, Isa, and me because we always end up together in the Sunflower Bunk with our counselor, Ainsley, just like the awful A twins are always in the Dandelion Bunk with Bailey. But it was cool to watch the girls step forward as their names were called, especially girls I see every summer. Some were much taller, some had new haircuts, some suddenly had boobs, and some looked exactly the same as last summer.

Our counselor, Ainsley, stepped forward. She has a laissez-faire counselor style because she's more interested in sneaking out to the boys' camp to hang out with the guy counselors at night than she is in bossing us around.

"I'm Ainsley, the Sunflower Bunk counselor," she said, flipping her waist-length blond hair over her back. Ainsley's really a brunette, but she went blond a few summers back, around the same time she went boy crazy. She also has a sporadic British accent because she lived in England until she was five. She wore a faded University of Miami cross-country team T-shirt. She went there on a full cross-country





and track-and-field scholarship and worked summers at Camp Amelia to earn spending money for the school year. She woke up every morning before everyone else and ran for miles through the woods to stay in shape, which was impressive considering the late hours she kept sneaking into the boys' camp across the lake.

The four of us didn't wait for our names to be called. We ran over to Ainsley with our game faces on to let the other campers, especially the underhanded Dandelion Bunk girls, know the Amelia Cup was ours.

Ainsley read her bunk assignment off of a small sheet of paper even though we had already flanked her like a small army. "Isa, Hannah, Poppy, Bea."

As I stood up there with the girls, I felt what I had been waiting nine months for—that feeling that I belonged. No more worrying about who to sit with, what to wear, and what to say. I was finally in the one place where I knew where to be and what to do. I had my people.

"And Maisy," Ainsley said.

Did I just say I was happy? I take that back. Suddenly, I felt like I was trapped in a nightmare, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't wake myself up. Everything was moving in slow motion and all the voices sounded like they were underwater. But I wasn't dreaming. My ex-best friend, the absolute last person I'd want with me at camp, was going to be my bunkmate for the next six weeks.





What was the point of camp if the worst part of school came here with me?

I caught the A twins radiating "I told you so" from every pore. They were standing with their bunkmates: Kaya, who had gotten long black clip-in hair extensions and discovered lip-plumping gloss, and Tinka, who sported her blond hair half up and half down so you could see her hidden rainbow streaks, her new cartilage piercing high up on her left ear, and the multiple silver hoops that lined both her ears. With her gazelle-like legs and track star gait, Tinka was a force to be reckoned with when she was running, which was why she was our fiercest competition on the foot race part of the Cup competition. All four girls wore smirks that said "checkmate."

"This has to be a mistake." Isa grabbed the bunk assignment right out of Ainsley's hands.

Even Poppy was outraged, in her sweet Poppy way. "Not to be rude, Ainsley, but this is our year to win the Amelia Cup. We're going to be the first bunk since my Nana Mary's to win."

Ainsley snatched the paper back from Isa and held it up for us all to see. "It says right here. Maisy Winters is in the Sunflower Bunk."

Hannah stared at me, willing me to fix this, as if it were somehow my fault Maisy was here, as if I could magically send her back to Mapleton.

Poppy wrinkled her brow. "I don't understand. I thought the bunks were capped at four campers."







Ainsley looked at all of us. "There was an uneven number of campers this year. Since Maisy and Bea are from the same town, it made sense for her to get added as a fifth to our bunk."

Isa pressed on. "There's no way we're winning with her dragging us down. She's new *and* Bea told us she sucks at everything."

Ainsley shoved the paper in the back pocket of her jean shorts. "I don't know why you guys care so much about the bunk tournament. It's just one small part of camp."

Maisy stood off to the side, her fingers whipping her hair into a fishtail braid. Sort of with us, sort of not. I knew that pose. I was the master of pulling it off when I knew no one really wanted me around.

I felt sorry for Maisy for a nanosecond. Then I thought about the first day of sixth grade. After that day at the mall, Maisy ignored all my Snapchats and texts. Her Instagram feed was filled with pictures of her at the country club pool, Mia's house, or the mall with the M & Ms. From the day I left until the day I got back, she had spent every second with those girls. Mom said not to worry, that as soon as Maisy saw me at school, things would go back to normal. But on the first day of school, Maisy was hanging out at the flagpole taking selfies with the M & Ms. I walked close enough for Maisy to see me, but she didn't say hi or even look in my direction. You would think the day at the mall would've made me realize Maisy wasn't my friend anymore, but it took seeing her at school to truly grasp Maisy was part of the M & Ms, and I wasn't.





"We need to fix this," I said to Ainsley. "We're not going to win with Maisy in our bunk. Bailey can just switch her somewhere else." I didn't care that Maisy could hear me. It's not like she cared all of those times she walked past me at school without even looking at me.

Ainsley rolled her eyes. "I already talked to Bailey about it because I didn't want to deal with you guys and the tournament drama. I had to sit through a lecture about togetherness and the Amelia way. I am not doing that again."

Poppy's eyes welled up. "Nana Mary's expecting me to bring the Cup to the nursing home so she can show it off to everyone."

Ainsley hoisted her duffle bag on her shoulders and headed toward our bunk. "Why are you counting yourselves out already? You girls are the best athletes at camp. If anyone can help Maisy rise to the occasion, you can. Maybe having someone in the bunk who isn't so obsessed with the tournament will be good for you. It will force you to focus on all the other fun parts of camp."





THE CAMPAIGN



with LIBERTY and STUDY HALL FOR ALL

Laurie Friedman



A COZY DINNER FOR THREE



My spine straightens instantly. Years of practice is my secret. Slouching at the Adams's family dinner table is *not* permitted. But reading the newspaper is. Same goes for eating takeout straight from the container. Mom spears a chunk of kung pao chicken with her chopsticks, then passes the front section of today's *Washington Post* to Dad. There's an article in it she wants him to see. I don't have to look to know it's about politics. In my house, it's *always* about politics.

Mom is a congresswoman from Virginia. The Honorable Carol Adams. She, Dad, and I live in Arlington, which is right across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, where she works on Capitol Hill, doing her part to run our nation's government. My father, Harry, helps run *her*. That's their little inside joke about what he does. They think it's funny. I think it makes Mom sound like a puppy out for a morning walk.

But that's another story. About puppies. Okay. I won't make you wait for it.

Here's an important fact to know about me. My family is small. Just Mom, Dad, and me. No brothers. No sisters. Not even a dog or cat. I've tried everything I could think of to get a pet, even telling Mom her approval ratings would skyrocket if she was photographed holding a cute little furry puppy. I thought it was a genius plan. Too bad for me it didn't work. One thing I've learned over the years: some campaigns are more successful than others. But I haven't given up. One of my goals is to finish seventh grade with a puppy by my side.

My mantra: *I will get a puppy*.

Anyway, back to Dad. He has spent his entire professional life managing one political campaign after another to get my mom to where she is today. Now he runs her office. It's his job to make sure she's where she needs to be, saying what needs to be said, and looking good while she says it. That last part is important, at least to Mom. She's one of those never-a-hair-out-of-place types, especially if she's on camera or speaking in front of an audience. Which is most days. Dad's job also includes making sure all of the phone calls Mom receives (anywhere from a

few to thousands in a single day) get answered and that her staff gives the right answers.

Even though my parents live together and work together, they never argue. *Almost never*. The only thing they ever argue about is who has the most important job. Dad says it's Mom. Mom swears it's Dad. Truth is, my parents are a dynamic duo that never quits. *Like now*.

They're both eating shrimp lo mein with chopsticks while reading the Washington Post. For an only child, that sounds like dinner might be a lonely time. Au contraire. (It's a term I learned in French class that means: nope, you got it wrong.) The great thing about parents who read during dinner is that they don't stop my under-the-table scrolling through Instagram or texting with my best friend, Meghan Hart.

Amanda: Something BIG to tell you tomorrow!

Meghan: What is it?! Tell me now.

Amanda: 😐

Meghan: KK. Something BIG to tell you too!

I pause and wonder what Meghan's big thing is. Could be she's getting her braces off, which I didn't think she needed in the first place. Meghan has naturally straight teeth and the biggest smile (even with braces on) of anyone at our school. Seriously, it's a thing. If there was a superlatives category in the yearbook for "Biggest Smile," Meghan would win.

And tomorrow, her smile will be bigger than ever when she hears what I have to say.

That's because it's life-changing stuff. Not just for me. For her, too. I really want to tell her now. But what I have to say is the sort of thing that's meant to be said in person.

Meghan knows I'm running for president of our seventh-grade class at Liberty Middle School. It's pretty much the only thing I've talked about for days now. But what Meghan doesn't know is that I'm planning to ask her to run as my vice president. Seriously, who else would I ask? I close my eyes and imagine her reaction. I see squealing. Screaming. Hop-around hugging. My fingers move like race cars nearing the finish line as I text her.

Amanda: Meet me outside Mrs. Lee's class.

Meghan: Before homeroom?

Amanda: YES! NEWS is BIG!

Meghan: KK. CU then.

"Amanda, how was your day at school?" Mom asks.

My eyes shoot up from my phone. Apparently the *Washing-ton Post* isn't as interesting as I thought it was. "Um...good... I mean...well, you see..." I fumble, suddenly unsure how to tell my parents the news I've been waiting all day (actually since last week) to share with them. It's not that I don't want to tell them; I just know they'll have a LOT to say on this topic.

They both narrow their eyes at me. I'm not a fumbler, and they know it.

Dad puts down his paper. "Amanda, what's going on?" he asks.

I chew on my lower lip and study Dad. The day I had to have emergency surgery to remove my appendix, he was a nine on the parental concern scale. When I wanted to go to the mall for the first time without him or Mom, and just Meghan, he was a six. As the child of a politician and a politician's chief strategist, I've learned to gauge people's reactions. Right now, the interest level in his voice is officially a four. But that can go up fast. There's no more delaying. I clear my throat. "I have an announcement to make . . ." My voice trails off. Dad's interest level in my life is about to go from four to TEN. Which isn't good.

"Amanda, spit it out!" Mom leans across the table toward me, like she can't wait another second. Patience was never her thing.

I tuck a long red curl behind my left ear. "I'm running for office," I tell my parents. "I want to be the next president of the seventh grade at Liberty Middle School."

The sound of chopsticks clattering to the table fills our dining room. Mom, and Dad's brows shoot up higher than the Washington Monument (which is 555 feet 5½ inches tall, to be exact).

"Amanda, that's wonderful news!" Mom flashes me her TV

smile. It's the one she gives to say she supports an idea. Like more affordable health care. She's big on that.

I look to Dad. When it comes to campaigns, he can't help himself. Dad is a planner, a strategist, an endless source of good advice. His wheels are spinning. I can see it.

"Amanda, first rule of a campaign: choose your words carefully," Dad says.

"Huh?" I ask, confused.

"Don't say you *want* to be the next president of the seventh grade. Say you're *going* to be the next president of the seventh grade," Dad says. "And you will be. Politics is in your DNA. Elections have been part of your life since you were a baby."

That much is true. The first word out of my mouth was mama. The second, dada. And the third, fourth, and fifth—have you voted? In preschool, my parents didn't read me books before bed. They told me stories of important political figures and how they made a difference. I went to kindergarten with buttons to give out, my mom's smiling face plastered all over them. I don't remember a time when she wasn't running for office and Dad wasn't planning a campaign to get her elected. So now it makes sense that I'm running for office, too.

"Amanda, you're going to make a wonderful president," Mom says.

"If you're going to run for president, you're going to need two things," adds Dad. My brain reels with possibilities. *A new wardrobe*. *A smarter phone*.

But Dad says nothing about either. "The first thing you'll need is a running mate."

I roll my eyes. Dad knows there's only one person I would ever ask to be my vice president. "I'm going to ask Meghan."

Dad nods his approval, then moves on. "Next thing you'll need for a successful campaign is a notebook." He rises from his seat at the table and walks in the direction of the office he and Mom share. When he returns, he hands me a shiny red notebook. "The best politicians are informed ones. If you want to be president, you'll need to read and make notes about past presidents and what they've done to make a difference. Let them be your inspiration."

I bite my lip to keep from laughing out loud. Dad might know a thing or two about national politics. But middle school? Not so much.

"Um, Dad, I'm pretty sure no past presidents of the seventh grade at Liberty Middle School will provide the kind of inspiration you're talking about." I try to give him back the notebook. It's the last thing I need to get elected.

"Amanda, think big!" booms Mom. "Your father doesn't mean past presidents of the seventh grade at Liberty Middle School. He's talking about past presidents of the United States."

Now I can't help but laugh. On the dumb ideas scale, this one is a ten.

"There's a lot you'll be surprised to learn about some of our past leaders," adds Mom, ignoring my laughter.

Um. Yeah. I'm sure there's a lot to learn about our nation's former presidents. But how it's going to help me get elected president of my class is a mystery.

I use my chopsticks to push aside chunks of red pepper and something that looks like celery in search of any remaining chicken in my take-out carton. There isn't any, so I pop a peanut into my mouth and take my time chewing it. I'm entering dangerous territory with my parents and need to choose my words carefully.

"Knowing a few trivia facts isn't going to help me win the election to be president of my class. You might think it will, but it won't."

"Amanda." My parents say my name together in their "we're the parents" voice, which is my least favorite of all their voices. It's just not fair, the whole two-on-one thing.

"Seriously, do I have to keep a notebook about past presidents?" I ask.

"Yes!" Two voices ring out as one.

"Amanda, you don't know what little tidbit you might uncover that could help," says Mom. She gives me an encouraging smile like I'm about to go on a journey that will be fun.

But I'm not so sure about that. Keeping a notebook about our presidents while trying to get elected myself isn't exactly a priority. Plus I have a big question. "There are like fortysomething United States presidents," I remind my parents.

Dad makes a *tssk* sound. "Forty-five," he states, like I should know the exact number.

"Right." I shrug as though he's helped make my point. "So where would I even start?"

"That's simple," says Dad. "Always start at the beginning."



MY CAMPAIGN INSPIRATION NOTEBOOK

I, Amanda Adams, am being forced to keep this silly notebook by my campaign-crazed parents who refuse to accept the fact that no one has ever been elected president of anything with the help of an inspiration notebook. But since I have no choice, here goes.

★ George Washington ★

BORN: February 22, 1732, Westmoreland County, Virginia

DIED: December 14, 1799, Mount Vernon, Virginia

SIGN: Pisces (Positive traits: imaginative, compassionate,

intuitive. Negative traits: pessimistic, lazy, oversensitive.)

PARTY: Federalist (Huh? No one has ever even heard of that party.)

STATUS: Married to Martha Dandridge Washington

KIDS: None of his own; stepfather to Martha's two kids

(John and Martha)

YEARS OF PRESIDENCY: 1789 to 1797

NUMBER OF TERMS: 2

NUMBER OF LETTERS WRITTEN: Over 20,000

NICKNAME: Father of His Country

FAVORITE FOOD: Hoe cakes (Like pancakes but made on

the back of a hoe or a shovel. Look it up if you really want to

know more.)

DOG OR CAT LOVER: DOGS!

To be honest, if I could do it my way, I'd stop right here. But on the chance my parents snoop (and it's a high chance) to see what I've written, I know Mom and Dad will be looking for me to make some "deeper connections" about George's personality, background, and character that made him a good president. So without further ado . . . here are a few notebook-worthy facts about our nation's first president.

One: George Washington wasn't afraid of a little hard work.

His father died when he was eleven. He had some older stepbrothers, but they were off at school, so young George had to help his mother run the family plantation. He went to a local school where math was his favorite subject. At fifteen his formal education stopped, and at seventeen he was already working full time as a surveyor. (Something about land and maps. I'll save you the trouble of looking it up.) But in addition to being a farmer, then a soldier, then president, George spent his whole life continuing to read and learn.

Bottom line: If you want to be president, you have to be willing to work hard (ugh... I can't believe I'm about to write these next words) and be a lifelong learner.

Two: George Washington had good manners.

I know . . . who cares how he held his fork? But it was more than that. At age fourteen, young George wrote out a copy of 110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation. These were some very old rules written in France in 1595. But honestly, some of the stuff they had to say (even though they said it in a really old-fashioned, stuffy sort of way) still makes sense today.

Like do not laugh too loud or too much at a public spectacle. And be not apt to relate news if you know not the truth thereof. In other words, don't laugh at people when they do something dumb and don't gossip. Apparently, George lived his whole life according to these rules and was known for ALWAYS being a gentleman.

Bottom line: Not a bad idea to be well-behaved if you want to be president.

Three: George Washington was all about the future.

He was a commander in the army that fought hard (and for a long time) in the war against the British. Why? Because he saw a brighter future for America. He also presided over the Constitutional Convention. No doubt, that was a lot of work, but George did it because it was important to him to come up with a way of governing our country that would make sense for generations to come. He was president TWICE! That's right. He did such a fine job the first go-round that he was reelected, and the second time, he spent a lot of his time in office making sure our nation (which back then was just the states on the East Coast) grew and expanded west.

Why? Because he believed the future of our nation was all about growing it from small and powerless to BIG AND POWERFUL!

Bottom line: Being a leader means doing things that make your country (or in my case, my grade) better than it was before you took office.

 $Four: George\ Washington\ wore\ a\ lot\ of\ hats$

I know. In all those old pictures, he always has on that dark funny-looking one.

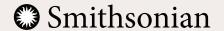
But what I mean is that he played a lot of roles. In addition to being our nation's first president, he was a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a grandfather, an army commander, a surveyor, a land owner, a planter, a hoe-cake eater, a letter writer, and . . . wait for it (because this is the big finale) . . . George Washington

was a dog lover. He had more than thirty of them! In fact, some things I read said that he had as many as fifty dogs in his lifetime. That's a lot of dogs!

time to waste!!!

Bottom line: If you want to get elected president, GET A DOG! Or fifty of them.
Dear Mom and Dad,
If you read this (which I have a feeling you will), I need a dog. Our nation's first president had a whole bunch, and he got elected to office twice. All I need is one! Do your part to help me get elected. Please get me a dog!
Love, Amanda
P.S. The election is right around the corner, so there's no





LATINAS/LATINOS WHO HAVE SHAPED THE UNITED STATES

BY SABRINA VOURVOULIAS ILLUSTRATED BY GLORIA FELIX

Introduction by Eduardo Díaz, Director, Smithsonian Latino Center

Reading Guide by Emily Key, Director of Education, Smithsonian Latino Center



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Dear Reader,

Latinas and Latinos—native born and immigrant—have played and continue to play foundational roles in nation-building and the shaping of our national culture as patriots, educators, entrepreneurs, laborers, artists, healers, innovators, entertainers, scientists, community activists, and leaders. Since its inception in 1997, the Smithsonian Latino Center has supported ongoing research, exhibitions, collecting, public and educational programs, digital content, and publications that interpret and illustrate the diverse Latino experience in the United States.

Nuestra América is inspired by the Smithsonian Latino Center's effort to center Latino stories as part of the greater American narrative through the building of the Molina Family Latino Gallery at the National Museum of American History. This gallery fulfills a promise and vision set years earlier—before the creation of what would become the Latino Center. The Molina Gallery's exhibitions will present stories on many, if not most, of the remarkable Americans featured throughout this book. History is largely made by people, and it is through their life stories that we will be able to paint a more accurate portrait of our country's past, present, and future. Latino history is American history.

This publication marks a groundbreaking moment in the Latino Center's history. I can think of no better way to enter the world of youth literature than by collaborating on a publication that showcases thirty illustrious Latinas and Latinos and their impactful contributions. Through these pages, you will learn about the trials, tribulations, and

ultimate successes of these individuals in the fields of entertainment, social and environmental justice, sports, education, fashion design, journalism, aviation, literature, politics, space exploration, LGBTQ advocacy, health care, entrepreneurship, music, science, and military service, just to name a few. Limiting our choices to thirty individuals among a bounty of notable figures was incredibly difficult. Our hope is that you will see these profiles as an initial exploration and will go on to learn about many others in the Latino community who have made and continue to make meaningful contributions to strengthening the fabric of this country.

We are immensely grateful to our colleagues at Hachette Group/Running Press Kids and Smithsonian Enterprises for believing in our work and extending this wonderful opportunity to the Latino Center. Special thanks to Jill Corcoran at Smithsonian Enterprises and Emily Key at the Smithsonian Latino Center for their vision and leadership on this project. A thank you to Adrián Aldaba at the Latino Center for ensuring the Spanish effort of this book met our community's needs.

The great labor leader César Chávez once said, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity of our community. . . . Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sake and for our own." I hope that you are inspired by the sense of community that guided the ambitions and propelled the achievements of these distinguished Latina and Latino Americans. In closing, I hope you are moved to set your personal goals high and to always be one with your communities and their needs and aspirations. Keep your eyes on the prize!

Atentamente, Eduardo Díaz, Director Smithsonian Latino Center www.latino.si.edu



NUESTRA AMERICA



SYLVIA ACEVEDO

(circa 1957-)

ENGINEER

She was in the Girl Scouts, and they were camping out, eating s'mores, and relaxing after a day of outdoor activities. The troop leader noticed Sylvia looking up at the sky, so she pointed out the planets and the constellations. It was the first time Sylvia understood what those twinkling lights really were. Soon enough, Sylvia tried to earn her Girl Scout science badge by launching a rocket. Both rockets and Girl Scouts would end up being a part of Sylvia's future. But first she'd have to learn to believe in herself.

Sylvia was born in South Dakota but grew up in the desert landscape of Las Cruces, New Mexico. Her mother was a Mexican immigrant, and her father was Mexican American and from El Paso, Texas. They spoke Spanish at home and didn't have a lot of money. Sylvia's mother noticed that the kids from their neighborhood (which had dirt streets) seemed to get sick more than the kids from other neighborhoods, so when Sylvia's sister got sick with meningitis, they moved. Sylvia didn't

SYLVIA ACEVEDO

like leaving her friends behind, but she soon found her place when she joined the Girl Scouts.

Besides teaching her about the night sky, Sylvia's troop leader taught her never to walk away from a cookie sale until she'd heard no three times. Sylvia used this technique when she was a senior in high school. "Girls like you don't go to college," the high school counselor told her. Sylvia walked into the counselor's office anyway. The exasperated counselor asked her what she wanted to study. When Sylvia said, "Engineering," the counselor burst into laughter. But Sylvia went on to get her industrial engineering degree from New Mexico State University in 1979. She became a rocket scientist at NASA's jet propulsion lab where

"I LOVE NUMBERS. NUMBERS ARE SORT OF MY SUPERPOWER."

she worked on the *Voyager* mission that flew by Jupiter and its moons.

Then she went back to school and got her master's degree at Stanford University. She had wanted to go there ever since her fourthgrade teacher showed her a photo of the university. There, she became one of the first Latinas to earn a graduate-level engineering degree.

As a systems engineer, she decided to get into tech. There weren't as many women as men in that industry in the 1980s, and at one of her jobs, there wasn't even a bathroom for her to use. Sylvia thought maybe they hoped she'd quit her job because of the inconvenience. Instead, Sylvia brought a bike to work and rode it to the nearest bathroom.

SYLVIA ACEVEDO

When the company finally realized she was the type of person who would solve a problem instead of walking away from it, they installed a Porta Potty for her. Sylvia worked for some of the biggest names in tech—IBM, Dell, and Apple—and became a tech entrepreneur. But she never forgot the impact the Girl Scouts had on her life.

She joined the Girl Scouts' board of directors and eventually became the CEO. Since she has headed the organization, the Girl Scouts have added robotics, coding, engineering, and cybersecurity to the badges girls can earn—while continuing to teach them the persistence and resilience Sylvia has found so valuable in her own life.

Way back when she was working on her science badge trying to launch her rocket, Sylvia needed to figure out how to break gravity's grip to successfully get her rocket off the ground. Now Sylvia is working to help others break the grip on whatever is holding them down. She's written a book, *Path to the Stars: My Journey from Girl Scout to Rocket Scientist*, to inspire middle school girls to believe in themselves and their ambitions.

After all, a Girl Scout is taught to always leave the campground—and the world—better than how she found it.

LUIS WALTER ALVÁREZ

(1911-1988)

PHYSICIST

riends and coworkers of Luis Alvárez would sometimes open the door to his office at the University of California, Berkeley, and catch him doing a handstand on top of his desk. Not exactly what you'd expect from a Nobel prize—winning physicist, but then, Luis seemed to enjoy standing things on their heads.

Born in San Francisco in 1911, Luis—known as Luie (*loo-ee*) to his friends—was the son of a physician. He was named after his Spanish grandfather, who was also a physician, but Luie had no interest in medicine. He liked to tinker—he built a radio when he was eleven years old—and during high school he spent two summers apprenticing in the instrument shop of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. This affection for tinkering stayed with Luie, and over the course of his life, he was granted twenty-two patents—for everything from optical devices to a golf training machine developed for President Eisenhower.

After high school, Luie enrolled in the University of Chicago in 1928 to study chemistry. He was a B student, and in his junior year, he switched



LUIS WALTER ALVÁREZ

to physics instead. He took twelve physics courses in eighteen months to make up for his late start in the subject and reportedly read every nuclear physics article that had ever been published. Later, friends would remember that when he quoted an article he had read, he could recollect every detail about it, including whether it appeared on the left-hand or right-hand page of the journal.

"ACTUALLY, PHYSICS IS THE SIMPLEST OF ALL SCIENCES."

He loved physics, insisting that it was a simple science complicated only by the language physicists used to discuss it—the language of mathematics. Luie also loved airplanes (he had a pilot's license and flew until he was seventy-three), which led him to invent a radar-based system that allowed aircraft to land safely in fog and at night. The military thought this and some of Luie's other inventions could help the United States during World War I. He was one of a number of scientists who were part of the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bombs dropped on Japan during World War II.

But his peacetime projects also gained recognition. In 1968, Luie was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for the use of liquid hydrogen in a bubble chamber with which he discovered many short-lived subatomic particles.

Late in life, after he had officially retired from doing research, Luie had the time to use physics to solve mysteries that captured the public's

LUIS WALTER ALVÁREZ

imagination. For example, he used cosmic rays to help archaeologists figure out if the chambers underneath one of the Egyptian pyramids were empty or full without having to dig the chambers out (they were empty, alas). Working with his geologist son, Walt, he was the first to say that the impact of a massive asteroid had been the cause of the mass extinction of dinosaurs. Many paleontologists initially rejected his asteroid theory. It wasn't until after Luie's death in 1988 that an impact crater large enough to uphold such a theory was discovered, making it accepted as the most likely cause of the extinction event.

Throughout his life, Luie happily followed his father's guidance: "He advised me to sit every few months in my reading chair for an entire evening, close my eyes, and try to think of new problems to solve."



PURA, BELPRÉ

(1899 - 1982)

LIBRARIAN AND STORYTELLER

Since 1996, her face has appeared on a round, golden seal marking the books of Latino writers and illustrators who are honored for their work on an outstanding work of literature for children and youth. The Pura Belpré Award, cosponsored by three national library organizations, would have delighted Pura, who was, in 1921, the first Puerto Rican hired by the New York Public Library system. (Some say she was very likely the first Puerto Rican librarian in the mainland United States.)

"I SAID TO MYSELF I AM GOING TO DO SOMETHING WITH THESE STORIES."

PURA BELPRÉ

An Afro-Latina, Pura was hired to work at the 135th Street branch in Harlem, where there was a growing population of Puerto Ricans, many of them black. "One of my duties in the children's room was to 'read' the fairy tale shelves," Pura wrote later in life. "Thus the folklore of the world opened for me. As I shelved books, I searched for some of the folktales I had heard at home. There was not even one. A sudden feeling of loss rose within me."

So she decided to write her own retellings of traditional Puerto Rican folktales. Her tale of a mouse and cockroach that fall in love, *Pérez y Martina*, was published in 1932 and was the first Spanish-language book for children published by a mainstream U.S. publisher. She would go on to write other children's books and a collection of Puerto Rican folktales.

Pura didn't start out thinking she'd become a librarian, folklorist, and storyteller. Born in Cidra, Puerto Rico, to a middle-class family that moved a lot because of her father's work as a building contractor, Pura graduated from high school in Santurce intending to go to college to become a teacher. Instead, after one year at the University of Puerto Rico, she went to New York City to help her sister plan her wedding—and decided to stay.

At first, like many other Puerto Rican women who migrated from the island at that time, she toiled as a garment worker. Pura was offered the library assistant job—thanks to her education and the library's need for her Spanish-language skills—after her newlywed sister turned it down. Some historians have noted that Pura had more liberty than most young Puerto Rican women of her time to pursue this opportunity because she wasn't living under the supervision of parents, nor was she married with children.

In addition to doing the typical work of an assistant librarian, Pura presented puppet shows in English and Spanish. Pura considered the

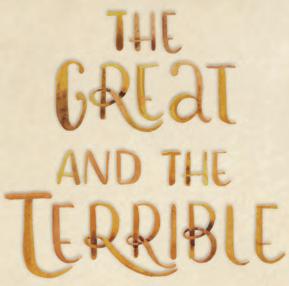
library the jewel of the community. Her time there, she would later say, was especially rewarding. "It acquainted me with Black culture and I experienced the Black Renaissance of art and literature, and the upsurge of poets, novelists, dramatists, and musicians. I saw the beginning of the now Schomburg collection come into being."

In fact, Arturo Schomburg—the Black Puerto Rican historian whose collection of literature, art, and narratives form the basis of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture's holdings—used to come to the library and chat with Pura.

At forty, Pura married Clarence Cameron White, an African American violinist and composer (whose papers are now part of the Schomburg collection), and they resided in Harlem throughout their marriage.

She left the 135th Street branch after several years to work at the 115th Street branch, which would become an important cultural center for Latino residents of the city. There, she arranged for famed Mexican muralist Diego Rivera to lecture, celebrated Latino feast days, and honed her storytelling and puppetry skills. She later worked at the 110th Street branch before "retiring" to concentrate on writing her books.

After her husband's death in 1960, she came out of retirement to work again at the New York Public Library, this time in the South Bronx. She died in 1982, but her legendary status as a storyteller lives on in the award named after her. To this day, Teatro SEA (a Latinx children's theater in New York) sends its actresses out to perform puppet shows at schools dressed up as Pura.



THE WORLD'S MOST GLORIOUS AND NOTORIOUS RULERS AND HOW THEY GOT THEIR NAMES

JOANNE O'SULLIVAN







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If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be? What sums up the very most important thing people should know about you? How would you like to be remembered? Choose thoughtfully. It may be a word that ends up being joined to your name forever.

In this book, you'll meet some of the most memorable people in history. Good, great, magnificent, and beloved people. Terrible, cruel, and bloodthirsty people. They were all leaders who made an impression that has lasted (some for thousands of years!).

First, consider the greats in the following pages. Each leader here is great in his or her own way. Some have fascinating legends attached to their births or to their lives. (Can the stars really predict when a great person will be born? You'll have to read to find out.) These leaders come from different places around the world at different periods in history. But there are some things they all have in common: They respected others; often they were big-picture thinkers; they were willing to listen to those they served; they learned from their mistakes; they thought about their actions in the long term, not just about what was beneficial at the moment. Sometimes the change they wanted wouldn't be achieved in their lifetimes, but they laid the groundwork so that things would be better for those who came after them. When times were tough, these great people rose to the challenges before them.

When you look at the so-called terribles in this book, you'll find that they also have some things in common. They usually put themselves first. They didn't have respect for anyone. Instead of learning and changing with the times or the circumstances, they were closed off to new ideas. Some of them would do *anything* to get what they wanted.

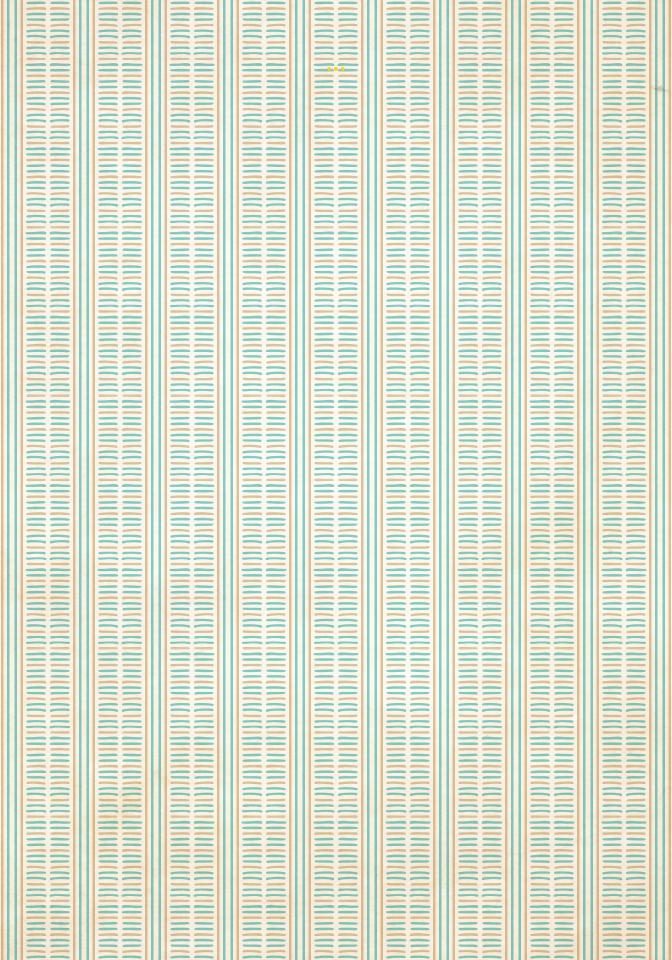
Remember, though, that humans are complicated. Some of the greats you'll find here did terrible things, too. Some of the terribles weren't all that bad. Sometimes a person is considered great by one group but terrible by another. There's a very well-known expression that you'll want to consider when you read about each of these greats and terribles: "History is written by the victor." That means that the story we remember about a person or an event may not be the whole story, just one side of it.

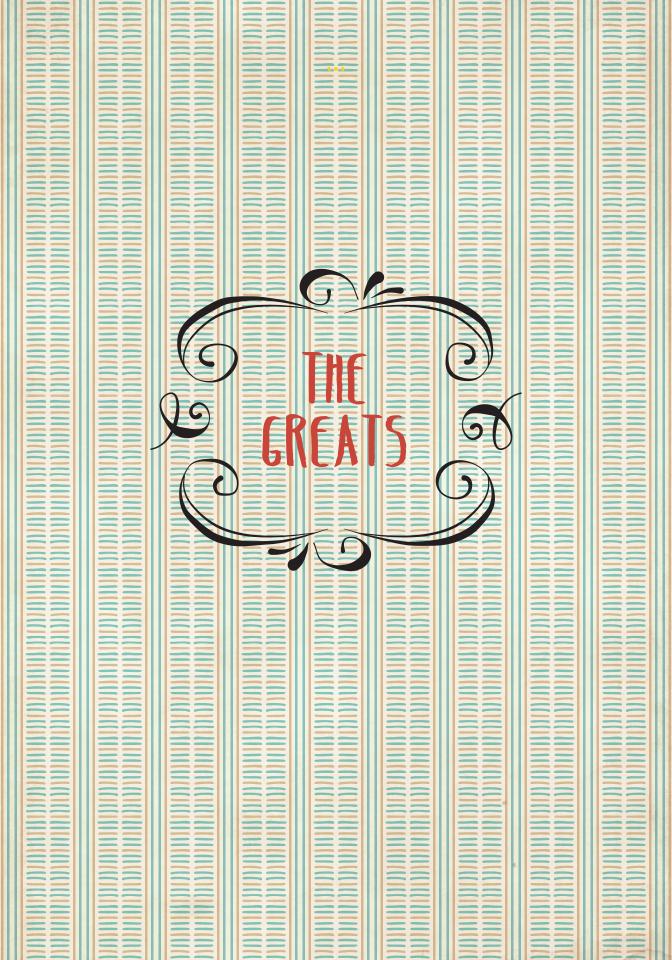
As you read this book, be sure to ask yourself: What qualities do you think make a leader great? Who are the greatest heroes in history (or even today), in your opinion? Would you rather have a leader who is powerful or one who is wise? Is it better to break with tradition, to follow it, or to adapt it to suit your circumstances?

And finally, ask yourself: How do you want people to remember you?

Signed,

Joanne the Curious











THE GREAT ROYAL WIFE, EGYPT'S FEMALE PHARAON



REIGN: 1479-1458 BCE

FATHER: Pharaoh Thutmose I / MOTHER: Queen Ahmose

SUCCESSOR: Thutmose III

OTHER NAMES: God's Wife, Lady of the Land to Its Limits, the Great One, the Foremost of Noble Ladies

WHAT WAS SO GREAT ABOUT HATSHEPSUT?

Hatshepsut (pronounced hat-SHEP-soot) wasn't the *only* female leader that Egypt ever had—several women before and after her served as regent for boys who were too young to rule. She also wasn't the only one with the title "Great Royal Wife." This was given to the chief wife of each pharaoh (pharaohs typically had many wives). But historians think Hatshepsut was the first Egyptian woman to declare herself pharaoh, the title used for those considered the supreme ruler of Egypt and descendant of the gods. That took some great courage! But it's also why she was nearly forgotten for thousands of years: archeologists who found carvings of her thought she was actually a man!

GREAT BEGINNINGS

Hatshepsut was the daughter of Pharaoh Thutmose I, and it's said that she was his favorite child. She married her half-brother Thutmose II to keep the royal bloodline going. When he died, though, the throne should have passed to Thutmose III, his son

The Great and The Terrible

by a lesser wife. But since the boy was too young, Hatshepsut—his stepmother—became regent. It seems that Hatshepsut enjoyed ruling so much that, seven years later, she decided to promote herself to pharaoh.

THE BEARDED LADY

ost queens wear gowns and fancy jewelry to special court events. But not Hatshepsut. She wore a fake beard. Made from braided goat hair, the beard was positioned on the center of her chin and held in place by a cord that wrapped around her ears. It wasn't her personal fashion statement by any means. All the pharaohs wore them to symbolize their connection to the bearded Osiris, one of the most important Egyptian gods. In wearing the beard, Hatshepsut was saying, "Forget that I'm a woman. I'm just like every other pharaoh."

When she was regent, statues and carvings depicted Hatshepsut as a woman. But after she became pharaoh, she was usually depicted in men's clothing. She even had statues made of her daughter Nefurure wearing male clothing, probably because she hoped that she, too, would one day be pharaoh.

Hatshepsut wasn't the only woman leader in history who dressed as a man to earn her people's respect. Women throughout the centuries have led armies into battle while dressed as men. Joan of Arc is the most famous example, but there are many others. Hangaku, the twelfth-century daughter of a Japanese samurai, dressed as a man to help defend Takadachi Castle from attackers. Some women rulers dressed as men for other reasons. Cristina of Sweden—who was often called the "Girl King" or "The King of Sweden"—said men's clothes were just more comfortable to wear!

Hatshepsut

PARDON HER DUST

In Hatshepsut's time, nothing said "I'm powerful" like a bunch of building projects. You couldn't walk a block without finding something under construction during her reign: temples, shrines, or monuments. But pyramids were already so last millennium. Hatshepsut wanted something unique—the biggest, most amazing mortuary temple the world had ever seen. Hatshepsut's Deir el-Bahri—the first temple in what was later to become the Valley of the Kings—is still considered to be one of the finest ancient buildings in existence. It was built into the side of a giant cliff, commanding attention for miles around. The design features three stories of colonnades and terraces accessed by two long ramps. (In Hatshepsut's day, there were also elaborate gardens on each terrace. On the bottom floor, there were papyrus pools and frankincense trees from foreign lands.) Outside of the temple, she built matching obelisks, the tallest in the world at the time. In fact, the one that remains standing is still the tallest ancient obelisk in the world.



HERE'S LOOKING AT ME

Hatshepsut wasn't exactly a humble ruler. For example, she told everyone that her father was actually the god Amun and that he wanted her to be pharaoh. "To look upon her was more beautiful than anything; her splendor and her form were divine," reads an inscription inside Deir el-Bahri. Historians think Hatshepsut dictated it herself. Also inside the temple are wall carvings telling of her amazing birth, as

THE MYSTERY OF THE MUMMY'S TOOTH

here was nothing very special about KV60, an out-of-the-way, dusty tomb in Hatshepsut's temple. When he opened it in 2006, Dr. Zahi Hawass—one of the world's foremost Egyptologists—found two female mummies inside: one in a coffin, one lying on the floor. There was no fancy sarcophagus like King Tut's, no worldly goods left to take into the underworld. Hawass had been looking everywhere for Hatshepsut's mummy, but it couldn't be one of these two. Surely the Great Royal Wife had received a better burial than this!

But Hawass also guessed that Hatshepsut's mummy might have been hidden to protect it from grave robbers, so he checked out the two abandoned mummies anyway. In the mouth of the one on the floor, he found a space for a missing tooth. This reminded him of something: a box with Hatshepsut's name on it, found in another tomb. The box contained a tooth that fit perfectly in the space in the mummy's mouth. Using DNA testing that took more than a year to complete, Hawass finally confirmed that the mummy was indeed Hatshepsut. She can now be seen at the Royal Mummy Rooms at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, looking not as divine as she claimed while she was living, but looking pretty great for someone who's several thousand years old!

well as countless statues of her—Hatshepsut as a sphinx; Hatshepsut as a pharaoh; Hatshepsut as the child of a goddess. So many statues were made in her time that there's hardly a major museum in the world today that doesn't have a Hatshepsut statue in its collection. There's even a whole Hatshepsut Room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Hatshepsut

But after Hatshepsut died, someone (possibly her stepson) decided to try to wipe out any trace of her reign as pharaoh. Inscriptions about her and pictures of her were chiseled out of walls. Obelisks and statues from her time were smashed. So much was destroyed that Egyptologists didn't really know much about her until the nineteenth century. And even though the giant temple of Deir el-Bahri was dedicated to her, archeologists didn't find her mummy until 2007 (see page 6).

Hatshepsut's Legacy



Hatshepsut's greatest legacy is not her incredible temple, which still stands in Egypt today, but rather her belief that a woman could be just as good a leader as a man.

WHEN HATSHEPSUT WAS PHARAOH ...

the chariot was the vehicle of choice in the civilized world

the legendary King Solomon was on the throne in nearby Judea

people in Shang dynasty China were making vessels (such as bowls) out of bronze

a volcano erupted on the Greek island of Santorini. Some say it caused the mythical city of Atlantis to disappear







MOST POWERFUL RULER

REIGN: circa 559-529 BCE

FATHER: Cambyses I / MOTHER: Mandane of Media SUCCESSOR: Cambyses II

WHAT WAS SO GREAT ABOUT CYRUS?

Cyrus introduced a new idea to the world: that people didn't have to give up their own culture or beliefs in order to be part of a bigger empire. They could, instead, live harmoniously together under a single ruler. This was the first time in history that had ever happened.

BECOMING GREAT

There's a legend that Cyrus's grandfather believed he would be dethroned by his grandson, so he wanted to have him killed when he was a baby (see page 12). But Cyrus grew up to be a great military leader, raising armies and conquering kingdoms. If you look at today's map, his kingdom would take up all of the Middle East and parts of what's now Afghanistan. It was the custom that the conquering army took the spoils of those they defeated, such as jewelry, horses, statues, and, of course, land. The leaders of the losing kingdom were usually executed and the people were forced to adopt the religion of the conqueror.

But Cyrus did things differently. After he conquered a kingdom, he let the leader he'd defeated live and then gave him a job, such as governor or advisor. Cyrus directed his armies to give back the spoils that they'd taken. He let the



YOU'VE GOT MAIL

hink about the huge distances from one end of Cyrus's empire and the other. Even today, it would take the better part of a day to cross it in a jet plane. In Cyrus's day, it would take months. If there was an important message or news that had to get out to all of the empire, there wasn't a good way to make it happen. So Cyrus started connecting different roads in the empire into one called the Great Royal Road. It was about 1,500 miles long and wasn't completed until after Cyrus's death—in the time of a later Persian emperor, Darius the Great. During his rule, though, Cyrus developed what's considered to be the world's first postal system. Government messages would be sent out by horse riders and wagons. At post houses positioned along the route, riders waited with fresh horses. They would take the message to the next post house. There were around eighty post houses along the road. The horsemen were said to be very fast, and, like today's postal service, they delivered the mail no matter the weather.

conquered people continue to worship their own gods at their own temples. Cyrus even embraced parts of the cultures he ruled over. It's said he started wearing clothes like the people in some of his new kingdoms (in earlier days, they would have had to start dressing like him).

Cyrus's biggest conquest was Babylon, which had until then been the world's most powerful kingdom. The Babylonians had conquered the Jews and were holding

THE GYRUS GYLINDER

n 1879, while British archeologists were uncovering the ruins of Babylon, they found a small baked clay object that was less than a foot long. It had tiny cuneiform writing all over it.

When they began to translate the message, they found that it was a declaration from Cyrus, who had conquered the city. It became known as the Cyrus Cylinder.

In the message, Cyrus declared that he was now king, but having conquered this kingdom, he wanted peace. He said that the people of the kingdom were free to choose their own religion and didn't have to worship his gods. His government wouldn't look down on the Babylonians or insult them for their beliefs. He also said that he had let captive people go back to their own homelands and restore their temples there. He returned the spoils of war that were taken from the people by his army. He promised his government wouldn't take land without compensating the owner. He wouldn't allow any oppression to take place on his watch. If his administrators did oppress people, they would lose their jobs. Finally, he stated there would be no unpaid labor in his kingdom.

Some have called the Cyrus Cylinder the first declaration of human rights. It symbolizes tolerance, diversity, and freedom of religion. Today, the cylinder is on display at the British Museum in London, but there's also a replica of it at the United Nations in New York City.

Not everyone agrees about the significance of the Cyrus Cylinder. Some say its historical significance has been exaggerated. Others think the cylinder was just propaganda used during Cyrus's reign. They claim that Cyrus actually was just as bad as other conquerors. Long after he was gone, though, we know from written accounts in several cultures that even his enemies remembered Cyrus as a fair and merciful leader.

RAISED BY WOLVES?

powerful leader inspires awe. Can this person really be human? Or is he or she superhuman? Part god? In many ancient legends, great leaders have amazing origin stories, just as you'd find in a modern-day comic book or movie. Cyrus has a story like that, too.

The story goes that Cyrus's grandfather, who was a king, had a series of disturbing dreams. When he asked the magi (the wise men at his court) what the dreams could mean, they said that his daughter would have a son who would one day overthrow him.

After Cyrus was born, his grandfather called for a nobleman and ordered him to kill the baby. But, of course, the man couldn't do it. Some stories say that baby Cyrus was raised by someone else. One version says he was raised by a pack of dogs (think Mowgli in *The Jungle Book* or Romulus and Remus, the twins who were cofounders of Rome). There's even a version of the story in which Cyrus is raised by an eagle that found him in the forest.

These stories come from the famed historian Herodotus, who was known to mix mythology into his historical accounts. The idea that a very special person's life must have had an unusual start is popular in cultures around the world.

them captive. Once Cyrus took charge of Babylon, though, he let the Jews go free so they could return to their homeland. This story was so important to the Jewish people that it even appears in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Historians say Cyrus understood that he could never impose one culture, language, or belief system on an empire as large as his. His multicultural empire endured for around two hundred years until Alexander the Great (see page 15) eventually invaded and broke it up.

Cyrus the Great



Cyrus's Legacy



Today, Cyrus is admired for showing that a king doesn't have to be brutal and intolerant to be great.

WHEN CYRUS WAS KING ...

Buddhism developed in India

the first major river dam was built in China

Chinese philosopher Confucius, by then an old man, died

the Spartans continued to dominate the Olympic Games in Greece



REALLY STUPID STORIES **** FOR **** REALLY SMART KIDS

by ALAN KATZ
Illustrated by GARY BOLLER









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THE STUPID MESSAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK

It's a good thing you're reading this book.

Because if you don't read this book all the way through to the end, your head might fall off.

Which is exactly what happened to Vincent Newman.

Vincent said, "No way. I'm not gonna read that book," and then . . .

PLOP!

His head fell off and rolled into a field, where some dogs played soccer with it.

**** VII ****





REALLY STUPID STORIES FOR REALLY SMART KIDS *

The final score was Bulldogs 7, Mutts 5. Close game.

Too bad Vincent didn't really get to see it.

When Jessica Phillips ignored this book, her ears turned into antlers.

It was all pretty shocking, especially when her family started hanging their coats on Jessica.

Miss Joy, one of the best librarians anywhere, recommended this book to Danny Valenti.

But he turned it down.

Within minutes, his rear end grew to the size of an elephant's—which made it very hard for him to lie on his bed without his trunk hitting the ceiling.

(Oh yes, he had also grown a trunk.)

Rachel Brown thought about reading this book, but she decided she didn't like its cover.

Now that Rachel's arms are 17 feet long, she

**** VIII ***





realizes that it's true—you can't tell a book by its cover.

Jordan Williams, who refuses to read any book, anywhere, anytime, passed up the chance to read this one and he now has a blooming shrub where he used to have hair.

It's pretty, and the birds like it, but it's kinda itchy.

A whole second grade class in Connecticut told their teacher they didn't want to read this book, and now each kid is fruit-shaped.

Billy, the banana in the second row, wishes he could be a pineapple.

No one knows exactly why turning down this book has such a powerful effect on people.

But it never fails.

Avoid this book and you'll face certain trouble.

Ask Josh . . .

**** IX ****







REALLY STUPID STORIES FOR REALLY SMART KIDS *

Or Laura . . .

Or Alice . . .

They all wish they'd read this book.

The good, good, good news is nothing that happened to any of them will happen to you.

Your head won't fall off. And you won't grow strange or unusual body parts.

You are 1,000,000,000% safe.

Because you have been smart enough to read this book.

Just be sure you read the whole book.

To the very last word . . . on the very last page.

Because nothing bad can happen to you if you read all the way through the whole book Seriously.

THE END ... FOR NOW

**** X ****





ANDREW ANSWERS

The whole thing started in Mrs. Wilson's class . . .

"Andrew, can you tell the class a word that starts with N?"

"No."

"Andrew, I want you to tell us a word that starts with N."

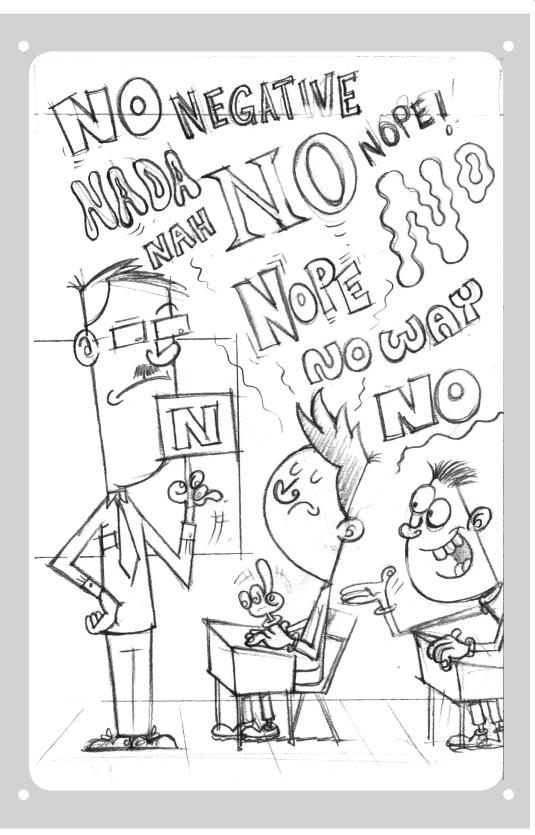
"Never."

"Andrew, I am asking you for a word that starts with N."

**** 1 ****











"Nope."

"Andrew, think. There are so many words that start with N, and you only have to name one."

"Nonsense."

"Andrew, you know the letter N. So, if I ask you, 'Can you name a word that starts with N?' what is your answer?"

"Nothing."

"Andrew, if you don't name a word that starts with N, I am going to have to send you to the principal's office. What do you say about that?"

"Nasty."

So, Mrs. Wilson sent Andrew to see Miss Fox, the principal. Miss Fox was kind, and she tried to give Andrew another chance.

"Andrew, maybe you don't like the letter N. So, let's try a different one," she smiled. "Can you tell me a word that begins with W?"

"Why?"

**** 3 ****







REALLY STUPIDASTORESS AGIRVREDALLY*SMART KIDS *

"Andrew, take a deep breath and tell me a word that begins with W."

"When?"

"Right now, young man. A word that begins with W."

"What?"

Now, as you already know, Miss Fox was kind. And she hardly ever got mad—except for that one time when Shelby Jordan painted all the erasers black instead of cleaning them. But anyway, Miss Fox tried again.

"Okay, Andrew, let's try another letter. Can you tell me a word that starts with L?"

"Later."

"Andrew, try again."

"Lunchtime."

"Andrew, tell me a word or I will call your parents. I want an L-word NOW!"

"Loser."

**** 4 ****





That did it. Before long, Andrew's mom and dad were in the principal's office.

It didn't go much better there.

"I . . . "

"Impossible."

"T . . . "

"Tomorrow."

"R"

"Ridiculous."

"C . . . "

"Can't."

"S . . . "

"Sorry."

"Y . . . "

"Yuck."

Before long, Andrew was sent to the school board.

"May we have a word that starts with A?"

"Absurd."

**** 5 ****





REALLY STUPIDASTORES ACIRWREAS LY*SMART KIDS *

Andrew was sent to the mayor.

"Andrew, I'd like you to tell me a word that starts with G."

"Goodbye."

Andrew was sent to the governor.

"Andrew, let's end this foolishness. You can go right back to your classroom as soon as you tell me a word that starts with F."

"Foolishness."

So, Andrew was sent to the president.

"Andrew, I'm a busy person. But your teacher, principal, parents, school board, mayor, and governor all thought it would be a good idea for us to chat. I know they've all asked you to say words that start with particular letters of the alphabet. But here in the Oval Office, you can speak for yourself. Tell me what's on your mind, young man."

And Andrew said,

**** 6 ****





"Anybody

Big

Can

 \mathbf{D} o

Everything

For

Generally

Honest,

Intelligent,

Joking

Kids.

Listen,

Mighty

Nice

Office!

President

Questioning

Respectful

Student







* REALLY STUPIDASTORESS AGIRWREASLLY*SMART KIDS *

Takes

Unbelievable

Vision.

Wahoo!

X-ray

Your

Zipper!"

The president thought for a moment, took a deep breath . . .

and awarded Andrew a full scholarship to the college of his choice. Starting that very day!

When asked why, the president said, "What else could I do? The kid's a genius!"

THE END

**** 8 ****





LEFT TO HIS OWN DEVICES

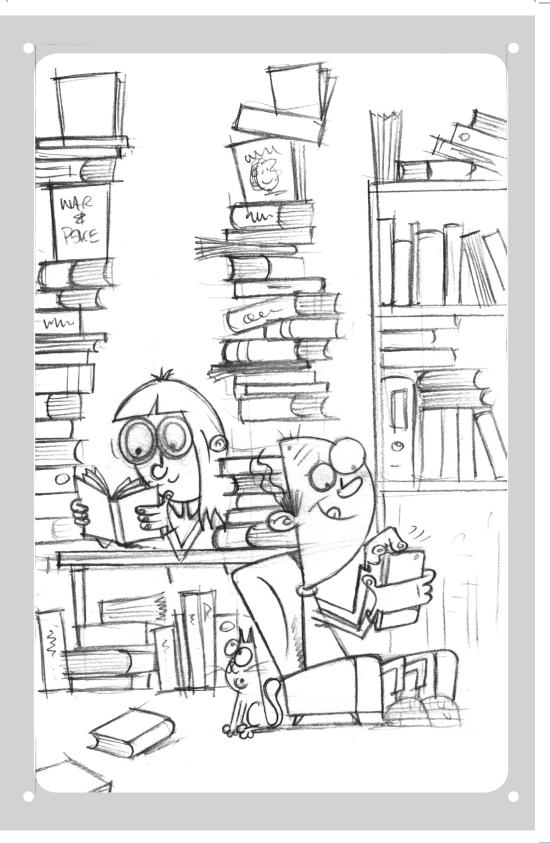
"Daddy," eight-year-old Ellen said. "Would you please drive me to Tracy's house?"

"One minute," her father said, barely looking up from his handheld device. "I just have to send this text."

Ellen sat down to read a book. She didn't mean to read the *whole* book while sitting there, but she had the time—because her dad didn't send *one* text, he sent, and received, dozens.

**** 9 ****











Ellen put the book down. She again asked: "Daddy, would you please drive me to Tracy's house?"

"One minute," her father said, barely looking up from his tablet. "I just have to download these files."

Ellen sat down to read another book. She didn't mean to read the *whole* book while sitting there, but she had the time—because her dad didn't download *one* file, he downloaded, and sent, dozens.

Ellen put the book down. She again asked: "Daddy, would you please drive me to Tracy's house?"

"One minute," her father said, barely looking up from his laptop. "I just have to send this email."

Ellen sat down to read another book. She didn't mean to read the *whole* book while

**** 11 ****







sitting there, but she had the time—because her dad didn't send *one* email, he sent dozens.

Ellen put the book down. She again asked: "Daddy, would you please drive me to Tracy's house?"

"One minute," her father said, barely looking up from his phone. "I just have to make a quick call."

Ellen sat down to read another book. She didn't mean to read the *whole* book while sitting there, but she had the time—because her dad didn't make *one* call, he made, and received, dozens.

And they weren't quick.

Ellen put the book down. She again asked: "Daddy, would you please drive me to Tracy's house?"

"One minute," her father said, barely looking up from his desktop. "I just have to order an item online."

**** 12 ****



Ellen sat down to read another book. She didn't mean to read the *whole* book while sitting there, but she had the time—because her dad didn't order *one* item, he ordered dozens.

While her dad was online, Ellen went outside (she had run out of books).

Sometime after, Ellen walked back into the house. Her dad smiled and said, "Okay, I'm finally all done. I'm ready to drive you to Tracy's house."

"Never mind," Ellen said. "I'm now twentythree and I can drive myself."

THE END

**** 13 ****













BECKY SCHMECKY

Becky was a lovely little girl.

But lately, her parents had noticed her acting, well, weird.

See, she had started rhyming. A lot. For no reason.

And her rhymes were kind of odd.

Like when she told her dad that she loved it when he played the "flute schmute."

And when she asked her mother for a new "hat schmat."

**** 15 ****



REALLY STUPID BEORYESCHONEREXLLY SMART KIDS *

"Perhaps we should take her to the doctor," her dad said to her mom.

"Doctor, schmoctor!" replied Becky.

"Becky, dear . . . would you like to go to the mall?" her mom asked.

"Mall, schmall!" replied Becky.

"Let's go to the bank," dad said.

"Bank, schmank!" replied Becky.

"Let's go to the store," mom said.

"Store, schmore!" replied Becky.

"How about a trip to the library," dad offered.

"Library, schmibrary!" replied Becky.

"Let's go to the movies," mom said.

"Movies, schmovies!" replied Becky.

"Let's go to the park," dad said.

"Park, schmark!" replied Becky.

Dad didn't know what to do.

Mom didn't know what to do either.

**** 16 ****





"Do you want to go to the restaurant schmesterant?" she asked.

"Okay," replied Becky.

So, they did.

And Becky had a double helping of her favorite meal.

Chicken schmicken!

THE END (SCHMEND)





**** 17 ****