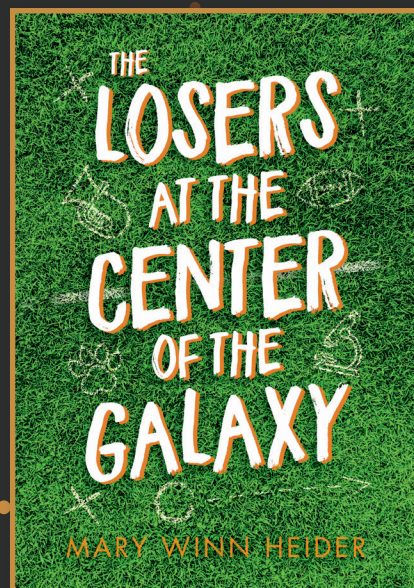
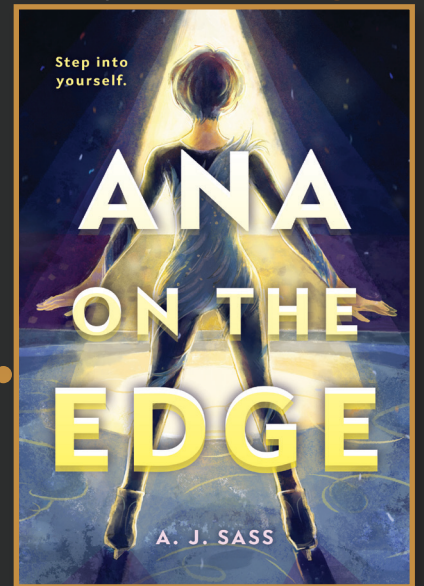
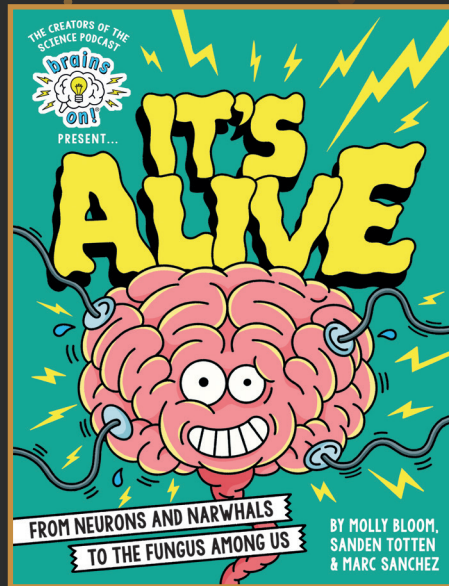
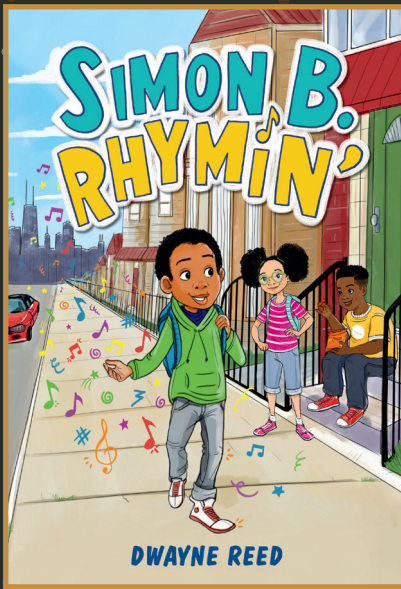


LBYR

MIDDLE GRADE CHAPTER SAMPLER



SIMON B. RHYMIN'



DWAYNE REED

LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

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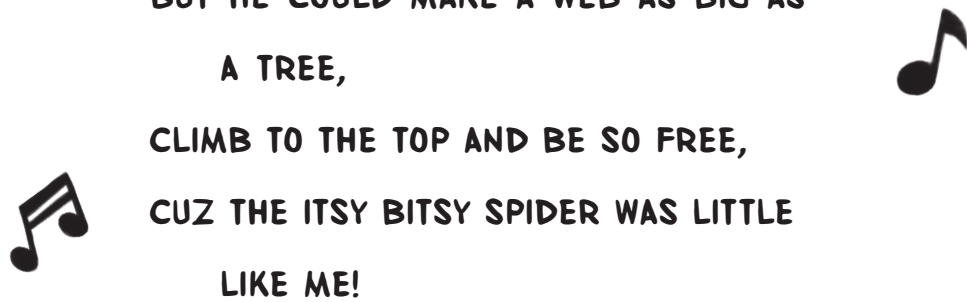
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LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

CHAPTER 1

IT'S SIMON BARNES HERE. BUT EVERY--body calls me the Notorious D.O.G., because I might be little but I've got a loud bark. Okay, not true. No one calls me the Notorious D.O.G. *yet*. But they might one day when I'm a famous Chicago rapper like Kanye West or Chance the Rapper. Everybody from the Chi knows about them. For now, I'm stuck with the nickname Rhymin' Simon, which my brother DeShawn gave me when I was five because I learned to rhyme and went kind of crazy with it. Not too long after, I did my first remix to the itsy bitsy spider song and my rhymes were extra basic.

THE ITSY BITSY SPIDER WAS LITTLE LIKE ME,
BUT HE COULD MAKE A WEB AS BIG AS
A TREE,
CLIMB TO THE TOP AND BE SO FREE,
CUZ THE ITSY BITSY SPIDER WAS LITTLE
LIKE ME!

A musical note is positioned to the right of the line 'A TREE,' and another musical note is positioned to the left of the line 'CUZ THE ITSY BITSY SPIDER WAS LITTLE'.

Those rhymes were cool back then, but, uh, I'm ready for something a little more tough, especially now that I'm eleven. The Notorious D.O.G. is something I'm trying out. It feels more like the *older* me.

I spent the whole weekend getting ready for fifth grade at Booker T. Washington Elementary School, where, this year, my class will be the oldest in the whole school. The first day is tomorrow, and I don't really feel ready for all this. On TV commercials, they show kids cheesin' real hard, happy to buy school supplies and new pairs of jeans. But don't they know that school means sitting still for hours and hours while the teacher is just talking at you about boring stuff, saying goodbye to playing Fortnite, and having to give up watching weird

videos on YouTube? Goodbye to heating up pizza rolls whenever I feel like it and getting blue snow cones with DeShawn from the neighborhood ice cream truck, when he feels like splitting his time between me and his high school homies.

My mom is trying to give me a pep talk while we shop for some new clothes at Target. I usually wear hand-me-downs from my three older brothers, but my dad says *Every rising middle schooler deserves some fresh threads for school*. So, while I'm in a tiny red changing room putting on pairs of cargo pants among my big ol' pile of graphic tees and joggers, Mom tries to boost me up with her mom-knows-best motivational speech.

"C'mon, Simon. This year is gonna be *everything*. All your brothers had a ball in fifth grade. For real. Remember when Markus won that Invention Convention? He was so excited! Plus, you're gonna be the oldest kids in the school. Everybody will be looking up to you now!" Mom's voice sails over the tall fitting room door while other parents help their kids pull together outfits they won't have to fight about.

“Yeah, but I’ll still be the shortest, Ma,” I grumble, noticing that the pants she picked out for me have about four extra inches of fabric bunched up at the bottom.

“Short is a mind-set, Simon. To me, you’re a million feet tall.”

TALL?



NAH.

ME, I’M JUST SMALL.



COULD SHORT LITTLE SIMON

EVER SHINE LIKE A DIAMOND?

MY MOM THINKS SO,

BUT ME, I THINK NO.

HOPEFULLY, I CAN GROW,

HOPEFULLY, I CAN GROW.



“Stop letting those fools test you,” she says, doing her best to put extra bass in her voice. I can’t help but laugh to myself.



I look in the mirror and think my favorite vintage Chicago Bulls T-shirt doesn't look half bad with the rolled-up cargos and new Nike Air Maxes we bought yesterday. Not all the way Notorious, but hey, it's a start. I know they'll see me in this.

I LOOK INTO THE MIRROR, AND ALL I SEE
IS FEAR,
CUZ THE FIRST DAY OF FIFTH GRADE IS HERE.
I FEEL ALL FLY BUT I'M STILL A SMALL FRY.
I MIGHT BE THE SHORTEST KID IN THE WHOLE CHI.



NERVOUS, BUT EXCITED, TO SEE OLD FRIENDS,
TO LAUGH, AND PLAY, AND LEARN AGAIN.
GOT MY SUPPLIES AND I'M READY TO GO,
CUZ TOMORROW, IT'S ON, AND THAT'S FA SHO'.



MAYBE I'LL GROW, OR JUST STAY THE SAME,
DOESN'T MATTER, THIS YEAR, THEY GON' SAY
MY NAME.

PEOPLE GONNA KNOW ABOUT WEE OLD ME,
NOT SIMON, BUT NOTORIOUS D.O.G.!
WOOF! WOOF!



On our way home from Target, we run into my best friend Maria Rivera and her grandma, Ms. Estelle, in the parking lot. I don't think Estelle is her last name, but that's what everybody be callin' her. Maria yells my name too loud, surprising me, just as Mom and I finish throwing all my bags into the trunk. I jump, but only a little, cuz *Notorious D.O.G.* ain't never scared! I've been friends with Maria since the first grade. Sometimes we call her Ri-Ri because Rihanna is her favorite celebrity. My brothers call her Big Ol' Mouth because we always know what she's thinking about and nobody ever has more questions than her. But I like that she always knows what's going on, even when I don't.

MARIA, MARIA,
THAT'S MY AMIGA,
EVERY SINGLE TIME,
SHE'LL SAY WHAT'S ON HER MIND,
CONFIDENT AND KIND,
A GREAT FRIEND OF MINE,
MARIA, MARIA!

Four black musical notes are scattered around the text. One is a quarter note on the right side, another is a quarter note on the left side, and two are eighth notes on the right side.

“Oh em GEEEE, SIMON! You ready for tomorrow? I heard our new teacher is really hard. Not strict like Mrs. Wright, but hard, like gives *real* work and actually makes us do it! Camille said she had a big project to do in the very first week of school last year,” Maria says, pushing up her pink-rimmed glasses, squirming and waving her hands around in the air. I know it’s a new pair cuz I’ve never seen these ones before, but they’re too big just like all her other ones. None of her glasses ever fit enough to stay on her face. She’s talking about school the same way she talks about everything else she’s too hype about—as if she was telling me about some new sneakers or something. I wish that’s what she really was telling me about. Camille is Maria’s older sister, who’s in middle school now and the source of a lot of Maria’s info. I’m still not convinced that means we should believe her.

“Maria, ay Dios mío! Don’t bother Simon with your silly gossip, now,” Ms. Estelle says, dragging Maria toward the Target entrance. Maria has lived down the street from us since before I knew her, so we’re always running into each other when she’s

out with her grandma shopping. “Just look at him. He looks like he’s seen a fantasma from new school years past,” she jokes, laughing at my blank face.

“Simon don’t look like he’s seen a ghost, ‘Buela! That’s just his face sometimes. He’s probably just constipated,” Maria says, flashing me an annoying smile while jabbing me in the shoulder. Instead of being quiet like most people, Maria makes up embarrassing stories about people to make herself laugh. She knows it’s okay to do it to me but she’d never let somebody else embarrass me like that. “I’m not bothering him. We been talking about it *all* summer. Right, Simon? It’s called the Freedom of Information Act, ‘Buela. I make sure he knows what’s up.” Maria rolls her eyes at her grandma and waves a quick goodbye to me and Mom. I watch Ms. Estelle go off on her in Spanish while she skips toward the door like she’s never seen a cloud in the sky.

As Mom and I get out of the car to walk toward our apartment building after unloading all my new school clothes, I can feel the butterflies floatin’ around all crazy in my stomach. I’m not ready for

us to be doin nothin' too major in the first week of school. What if we have to get up in front of everybody?! Even though I can rap all I want at home, I just know I can't do anything like that in front of a whole classroom full of other kids. They all gon' be lookin' at me weird. Last time I tried to talk to a whole bunch of people, the room got spinny, my hands got sweaty, and I felt like I was gon' blow chunks all over the place! I guess even the Notorious D.O.G. can get the back-to-school, Sunday night blues.

THE CREATORS OF THE
SCIENCE PODCAST



PRESENT...

IT'S ALIVE



FROM NEURONS AND NARWHALS

TO THE FUNGUS AMONG US

BY MOLLY BLOOM,
SANDEN TOTTEN
& MARC SANCHEZ

For the listeners of our show, who have kept us
inspired every day with their incredible curiosity



About This Book

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LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

THE SECRET LIVES OF DOGS AND CATS

DO DOGS KNOW THEY'RE DOGS?

Dogs are always by our side, kind of like a shadow...if shadows pooped and hated squirrels. And we love them so much they are practically family. They comfort us when we're sad, slobber us with kisses when we come home, and take their job as head of security VERY seriously. Just ask the mail carrier.

At the same time, dogs love eating trash, burying bones, and sniffing other dogs' butts. Stuff we'd never do. Which brings up an important question: Do dogs think they're human, or do they know they're dogs?

Oh, Say, Can You See?

Dogs don't talk. So we can't ask them, "Hey, do you know you're a dog?" But there is an experiment that scientists use to see if animals are self-aware. In other words, do they know they are unique from all other beings? This experiment is called the mirror test.

NOTES FROM THE LAB: The Mirror Test

Question: Are dogs self-aware?

Procedure:

- 1: Draw a red mark on a dog's face while it is asleep.
- 2: When the dog wakes up, put it in a room with a mirror.

3: Wait to see if the dog looks in the mirror, notices the dot, and tries to wipe it off or inspect it somehow.

Results: Dogs that were part of the test did not try to remove the dot. In fact, they might have thought the animal in the mirror was a different dog altogether!

Conclusion: Dogs are not self-aware—at least not when they look in a mirror.

So dogs fail the mirror test. But that doesn't mean they aren't self-aware. Maybe all they need is a different test. You see, humans tend to rely on their eyes to sense the world around them. But dogs use their sensitive snouts to *smell* the world. In fact, their eyesight is not very good. But their sense of smell is so much better than we can even imagine. This might be why dogs don't recognize themselves in the mirror—the mirror dog has no smell.

ANIMALS THAT PASS THE MIRROR TEST

- Dolphins
- Chimpanzees
- Elephants
- Humans (but not babies)

SUPER COOL SCIENTIST

DR. ALEXANDRA HOROWITZ



Dr. Alexandra Horowitz runs the Dog Cognition Lab at Barnard College, Columbia University, and wants to know what it's like to be a dog. She studies how dogs think, see, and smell, and she developed a scent test to see if dogs are self-aware. Alexandra hopes her work is helping people better understand dogs. While we love dogs, there's a lot we don't know about them, and we wind up thinking they are misbehaving when they're really just trying to fit into a human world.

NOTES FROM THE LAB: The Scent Test

Question: Are dogs aware of their own smell?

Procedure:

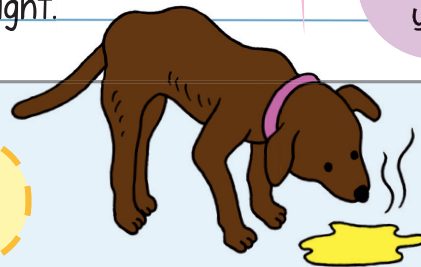
- 1: Take a little bit of a dog's urine and mix it with the urine of another dog. For a dog, this would be like seeing a picture of yourself mixed with a picture of someone else. Freaky!
- 2: Leave samples of the dog's urine and the mixed version where it will find them both.
- 3: See if the dog recognizes its own urine and expresses interest in the mixed version by sniffing it longer.

Results: The dogs were way more curious about the mixed version of their scent than the original. Just as humans use their eyes to see if their face has a dot on it, dogs use their nose to realize their scent has changed. Alexandra Horowitz, who developed this experiment, calls it an olfactory mirror test.

Conclusion: Dogs do seem to recognize themselves, but it's rooted in their sense of smell, not their sense of sight.

This pee smells weird, right? Take a whiff.

No, thanks. I trust you.



Olfactory: of or relating to the sense of smell

The Way to a Dog's Mind Is Through Its Nose!

Smells might even be a way for dogs to tell time. Dr. Alexandra Horowitz thinks dogs might know how long you've been away from home just by your lingering scent. When you leave for school in the morning, you leave your scent behind. As the day goes on, your scent gets weaker and begins to disappear. Dogs, with their super-smelling machines, might know that when your scent is at half its normal strength, you usually come home from school. So when that happens, it's time to wait by the door and wag that tail!

Dogs can remember you after you've been gone for a day, a week, a month, or even a year, because they remember your scent. That's why the golden retriever you see once a year at Thanksgiving knows you're the one who will slip it a piece of turkey under the table.

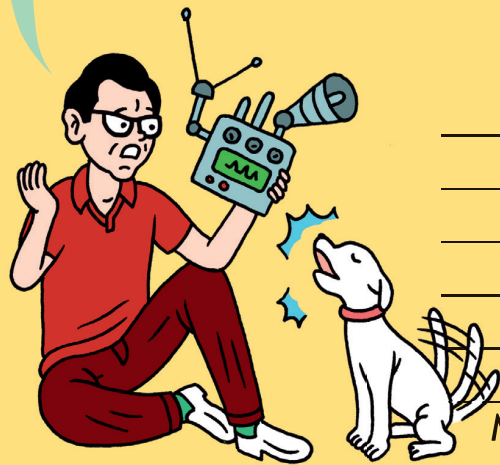
It's impossible to know if dogs remember specific events in their lives—at least until we invent a bark translator. If a dog had a scary



My clock says it's time for belly rubs.



Again?



This bark translator prototype needs some work. Every bark reads as just "peanut butter!"

THE INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE OF BARKS

Dogs speak the same way no matter where they're from, but did you know that humans hear barks differently depending on the language they speak?

WHEN OUR DOGS HEAR US PUT THE KEY IN THE DOOR, THEY GO BONKERS AND SAY...

English	Woof, woof
Spanish	Guau, guau
Somali	Wuh, wuh
Hmong	Bow, vow, vow
Russian	Guff, guff
Polish	How, how
Mandarin Chinese	Wang, wang

experience at a shelter as a puppy or at the vet's office, it might not remember *exactly* what happened. But it might remember enough about the smells to be scared if you take it back.

SWEET DOGGY DREAMS

Have you ever seen a dog run in place while it sleeps? Or growl at something during naptime? Chances are you've caught your dog dreaming. Dogs spend about half of their day sleeping, but they dream for only a small amount of that time. That's probably because they take lots of short naps instead of one long slumber like us.

Dogs have both rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and non-rapid eye movement sleep just like humans. Dogs enter REM about twenty minutes into a snooze. And REM sleep is where a dog's fantasies finally take flight!

Sure, dogs twitch and growl, but luckily they don't get up and chase dream squirrels while snoozing. That's thanks to a part of the brain called the pons. It keeps dogs, humans, and other animals from acting out their dreams. In puppies, the pons isn't yet fully developed, and in older dogs, it can be less efficient. In those cases, a dozing dog might get



Without a pons, a sleeping pointer might point its nose at dream birds, or a terrier might dig for dream rabbits. My dog would probably eat dream trash.

up and sleepwalk. Watch out, dream squirrels...and any tables or lamps in the way!

(For more about human dreams, see page 101.)

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Can dogs time-travel? Well, kind of. Dogs know what happened in the past by scent tracks, which means you can't keep any secrets from your dog. Imagine if you took a detour on your way home from school. You went on a quick mountain bike ride with your friend. Then, because you were *starving* from all that exercise, you grabbed a slice of pizza. When you stroll through the front door,

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A DOG ENTERS DREAMLAND?

- Legs start to twitch
- Breathing gets shallower
- Eyes move rapidly behind their eyelids

your dog might take a few sniffs and think: “Hey, you hit the trails without me! And you went to the pizza place. You could have at least brought me home a slice.” All this is based on your scent.

Dogs can also read the future...sort of. Their noses know what’s blowing in the wind, so they can smell what’s coming long before we can. If you’re on a walk, your dog might sniff the breeze and know that there’s a cat up ahead or that your neighbor just grilled a burger. They might even start wagging their tail because they know your best friend is right around the corner, even though you can’t see them yet. Don’t freak out. Your pup isn’t psychic, just a really good sniffer.

WHAT’S THE SECRET OF DOGS’ AMAZING SENSES?

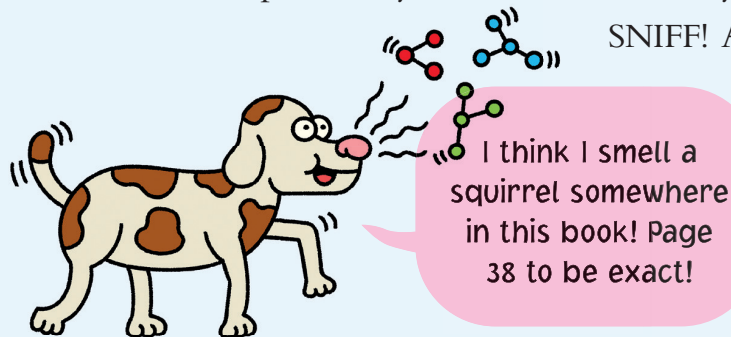
Dogs can’t read or write or play Mozart on the piano (though we’d totally pay to see that), but they *can* sense things we never could. Dogs have the same five senses as humans, but their sense of smell is about 10,000 times better (and their ears can hear far beyond our range; see page 11). Their pooch powers would make any superhero jealous.

Next-Level Noses

Dogs’ noses aren’t just the cutest, they’re also amazing sniffing machines. The moist, spongy outside helps them capture scents. Plus, they have a lot more olfactory receptors than humans do. And the part of a dog’s brain that is devoted to analyzing smells is about forty times bigger than ours.

Those olfactory receptors are great at detecting smells. It happens like this: Smells come in the form of tiny molecules floating in the air—bits of flowers in your yard, the chocolate chip cookie you ate after lunch, or your neighbor’s overflowing garbage can.

For comparison, forty times bigger is like the difference between a golf ball and a honeydew melon.



SNIFF! A dog’s scent receptors grab on to those molecules and check them out. Then they send a message to the dog’s brain letting it know that it’s smelling a salami sandwich or another dog’s butt.



Did you know humans have only 5 million scent receptors, while bloodhounds have 300 million and wiener dogs have 125 million? Wienerwurst, on the other hand, has zero scent receptors because it is a sausage.

But what does it mean when we say that dogs' sense of smell is so much better than humans'? If someone brought you a cup of water with a teaspoon of sugar in it, you *might* be able to smell that, but you'd have to taste it to be sure. A dog's nose, on the other hand, could detect a tiny teaspoon of sugar even if it was poured into a giant swimming pool.

Dogs can also smell with each nostril independently. If those sugar molecules enter the right side of the dog's nose and not the left, the dog will know that the sugar was poured into the right side of the pool.

Where humans would just smell chlorine at the pool, the dog would smell chlorine, that teeny bit of sugar, sunscreen, bathing suits, snorkels, goggles, and maybe even a little pee.



WHY ARE DOGS' NOSES WET?

When our noses are wet, that usually means we're sick. But dogs' noses are supposed to be that way! Dogs have sweat glands in their noses that help them keep their bodies at the right temperature. Their noses also secrete a thin layer of mucus that helps them capture scent molecules. And finally, dogs lick their noses a lot, both to clean them and to carry some of those scent particles to the Jacobson's organ for closer examination.

I Smell What You're Feeling

What does happy smell like? Or scared? These might sound like silly questions to us, but to dogs they make perfect sense. Dogs have a powerful smelling tool called Jacobson's organ. If you want to get really fancy, you can call it the vomeronasal organ. This bit of nose technology lets dogs smell moods by picking up chemicals called pheromones on another animal's body.



PRONOUNCER

Vomeronasal =
vuh-MARE-oh-
NAY-zull

If noses were vehicles, dogs would have a race car. Humans would have a tricycle...with a broken wheel.



Pheromones are chemicals that animals produce to send signals to one another. Like, if we humans sniffed a dog, we'd say, "Yep, that's definitely a dog." But if your dog Cuddles McMuffinsteen sniffed your neighbor's dog Penelope A. Poodle, her pheromones might tell Cuddles that Penelope was alarmed, angry, or looking for love.

To dogs,
pheromones
are like
smellable
mood rings!

I am
trying to
sniff how
you're
feeling,
Sanden.

Good thing
I'm wearing
deodorant
today...



ANIMALS WITH JACOBSON'S ORGAN

Humans don't have a working Jacobson's organ, but many other animals do, including:

- Hamsters • Mice • Cats • Giraffes
- Snakes • Rats • Goats • Horses
- Lizards • Elephants • Pigs • Bears



MYSTERY PHOTO

Focus your eyes on this mystery photo. Can you guess what it is? Turn to the next page for the answer.



ANSWER!

It's a dog's nose! Did you know that a dog has two sets of nostrils? Front nostrils for breathing in and side nostrils for breathing out. That way, when dogs exhale, they're not blowing away the smells they're trying to inhale. That gives their olfactory receptors more time to check out those smells.



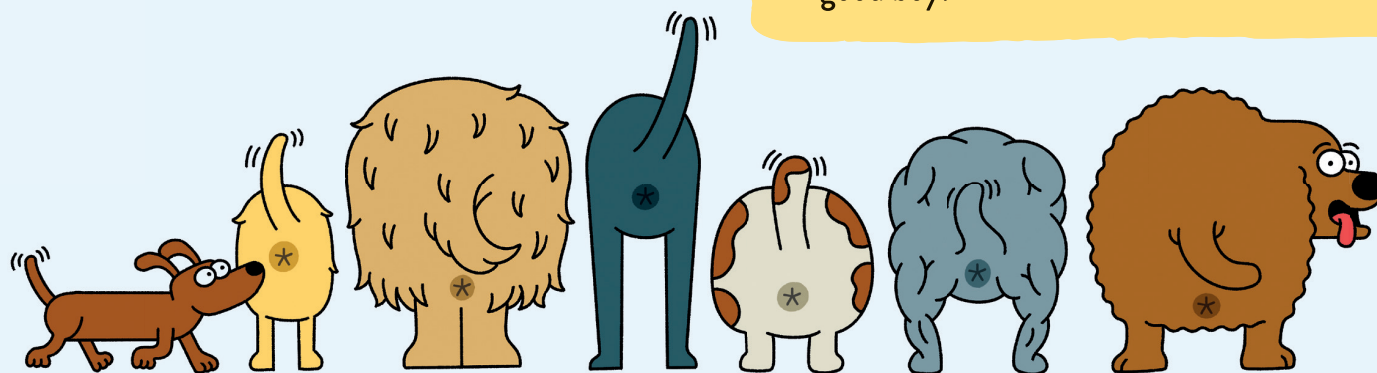
Gee, Your Butt Smells Friendly

You've probably seen dogs sniffing each other's rear ends. It's not because dogs are gross. Well, it *is* because they're a little gross, but it's also because there are glands back there that produce those important chemical signals—pheromones. So when a dog sniffs a butt, it's almost like looking at someone's social media. They can tell whether that dog is male or female, roughly how old it is, whether it's sick or healthy, and what kind of mood it might be in. Dogs can then use that information to start a new friendship or go in search of a friendlier butt.

DOGS TO THE RESCUE!

Dogs use their noses to do more than find out about the other hounds in town; they also use their scent receptors to help humans. They search for missing people in the wilderness, sniff out bombs in airports, and can even smell some types of cancer.

Some very special dogs are trained to help guide people who are visually impaired. Others can help people who are deaf or hard of hearing by alerting them when a doorbell rings or a smoke alarm goes off. Mobility assistance dogs help people who have trouble moving around. These pups can pick up dropped items, help open doors, or bring their owners the phone when it starts ringing! Now *that's* a good boy!



Ear-mazing!

Smell isn't the only super sense in dogs. They've got impressive ears too. Some dog breeds have better hearing than others, but they can all hear sounds that the human ear would never notice.

Dogs can hear higher-pitched sounds as well as those that are too quiet for human ears. That super hearing was once a matter of survival. Dogs evolved



from wolves, which hunt for small rodents like mice. So they need to hear those tiny, high-pitched squeaks to catch dinner and stay alive.

Dogs can also rotate, tilt, raise, and lower their ears to detect exactly where a sound is coming from. That's why your dog somehow always knows when you open a bag of chips!



Outta Sight!

Vision is one area where humans have dogs beat. A dog's vision is much blurrier than ours, and they also see fewer colors. Humans and dogs both have cells in their eyes that detect visible light—these are called cone cells. We have three kinds: cones that detect blue light, cones that detect green, and cones that detect red. These combine to let us see a wide range of colors. But dogs have only two kinds of cone cells: yellow and blue. They'd like to have a third cone: an ice cream cone! But that's not gonna happen.



WHY DO CATS' EYES GLOW IN THE DARK?

While it's fairly easy to guess a dog's emotions, cats are a bit more mysterious. The way they look at you, the way they sound, and even the way they raise their tails can have different meanings. If you want to understand the mind of a cat, you can invent a machine to switch minds and then live life as a feline. Or you can just read this next section. Honestly, that is much easier, with less chance of hair balls.

How Do Cats See in the Dark?

You know how your cat will choose the middle of the night to start its exercise routine? Dashing around the living room, jumping off couches, darting under tables—but somehow never running into the wall even though it's pitch-black? That's because cats need only a tiny sliver of light to navigate at night.

Rods and Cones

Rods and cones are the cells in our eyes that help us see. Rods are used to see in low light, and cones are used to detect color. These cells absorb light and send signals to the brain to say, "You're looking at a tree," or "Hey, there's something moving in the grass over there!" A typical human eye has about 120 million rods. Cats have *seven times* more than that, meaning their eyes are seven times more sensitive to light than ours. But rods don't pick up on color or fine details, so even good night vision is still pretty blurry.

Glowing Eyes

Cats, and many other animals, have a special reflective layer behind their retinas called the tapetum lucidum. It's sort of like a mirror in the back of the eye. It reflects incoming light so those light-detecting cells get a second chance to absorb it. If you've ever taken a picture of a cat at night and used the flash, you'll recognize those

MORE ANIMALS WITH EYES THAT GLOW IN THE DARK

- Deer
- Dogs
- Cows
- Horses
- Ferrets

eerie, glowing eyes. That's the tapetum lucidum reflecting the camera's flash back like a mirror. But it's also fun to pretend that it's because your pet has laser eyes. *Pew pew!*



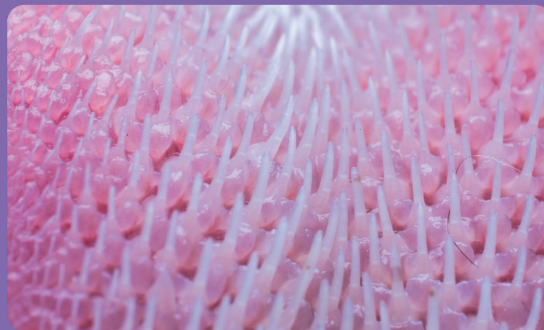
Pupils

Check out your eyes in the mirror. Your pupils, the dark circles right in the middle of your eyes, are round. Cats' pupils, on the other hand, are the shape of a football standing on its end. These are called vertical pupils because they go from top to bottom. This shape lets cats adjust their pupils fast so they can open them very wide at night and let in lots of light. Human eyes are capable of greatness, but cats' eyes beat us hands down when it comes to night vision.



MYSTERY PHOTO

Focus your eyes on this mystery photo. Can you guess what it is? Turn to page 15 for the answer.



WHAT IS MY CAT TRYING TO TELL ME?

Sadly, Baron Fluffy von Whiskerface can't tell you what he wants with words, but if you read the clues, you might be able to decipher your cat's secret messages.

Eyes—Read Me If You Can

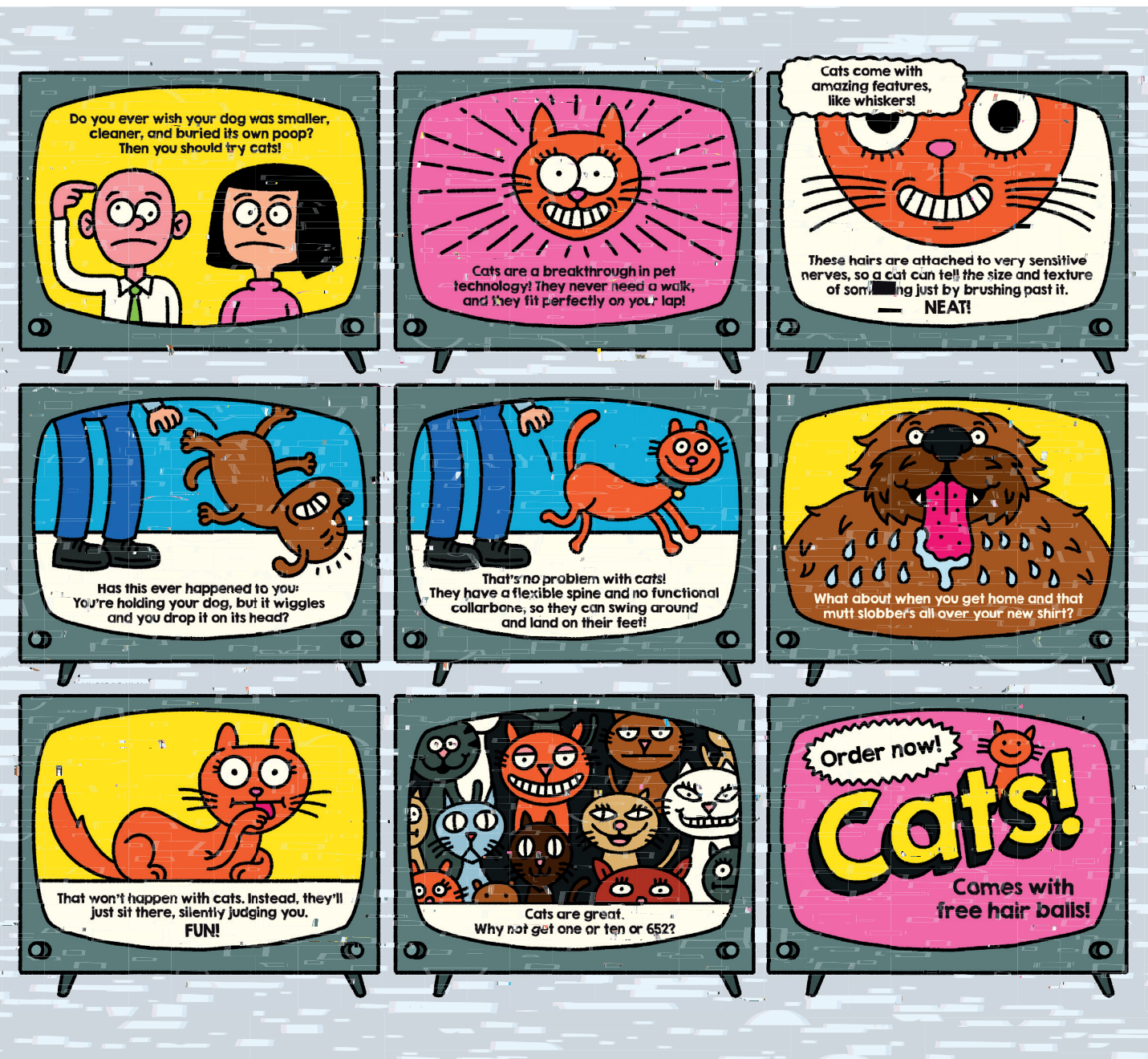
Cats use their eyes to communicate. When a cat's eyes are open very wide and its pupils are dilated, it's trying to take in more information from the world around it. It might be feeling playful or thinking about hunting. But here's the tricky part: A cat that is afraid will also have dilated pupils. So you need to look for more clues to find out how your cat is *really* feeling.

Puffy Tails—Back Off, Buddy

Ever wondered why your cat's tail puffs up when it sees another animal? Some cats even puff up all over. This is called piloerection. It's your cat's way of trying to look bigger and scarier than it really is. In other words, a big, puffed-up cat means run away stat!

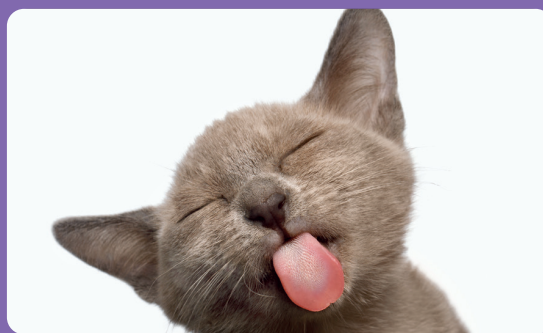
**MOMENT OF
EWW**
**CAT AND DOG MOMS EAT
THEIR BABIES' POOP!**

Be glad you aren't a cat or dog mom. For them, eating baby poop is the most natural thing in the world. Not only are the moms keeping their dens clean, but they're also protecting their newborn kittens or puppies from predators that are attracted to the smell. They do this from the time their kittens or puppies are born until they're big enough to leave the den to poop. Those moms should get the biggest, best Mother's Day card ever for doing that gross job.



ANSWER!

It's a cat's tongue! See those spikes covering the tongue? Those are called papillae, and they're made out of the same stuff as our fingernails. Cats use their tongues for grooming themselves, and these tiny claws are ideal for brushing through any tangles. This licking habit also helps them stay at a comfortable temperature. It distributes both protective oils, which can act as an insulator, and saliva, which cools them when it evaporates.



KITTY COMMUNICATION DECODED

Can you tell when your cat is hungry or wants a cuddle? Many scientists have studied how cats communicate with us, and they've discovered that cats have three main types of communication.

MEOWING: "HEY, PAY ATTENTION TO ME!"

- Kittens meow when they want attention from their mothers.
- Kittens and cats meow to humans when they want food or attention.
- Cats learn what humans respond to and tailor their meows to those particular humans. In fact, adult cats meow only around humans. They don't meow at other cats!

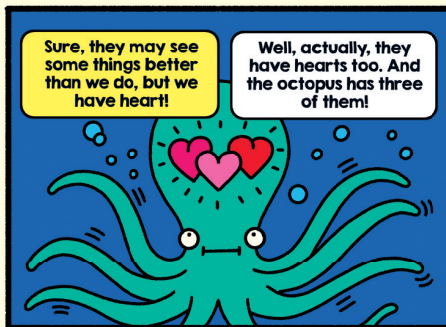
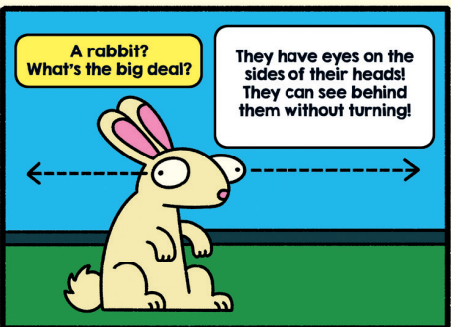
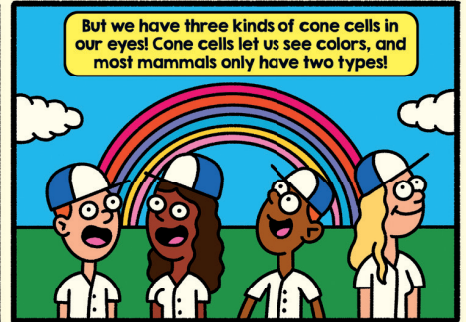
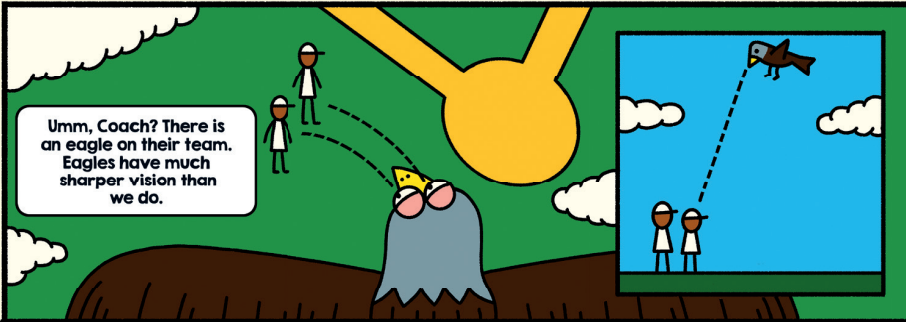
HISSING AND SCREECHING: "YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?"

- Cats have a number of defensive, "don't mess with me" sounds, from hisses to growls.
- Loud sounds make them appear bigger and stronger and may help them avoid a fight.
- Cats sometimes scream at night when they're looking for a mate.

PURRING: "PAY EVEN MORE ATTENTION TO ME!"

- Some purrs come from happiness and contentment.
- Another purr is the "solicitation purr." This includes a higher-pitched tone than regular purrs, which makes it harder for humans to ignore. You hear this sound when your cat is hungry.
- Then there's the "I'm in pain" purr. Some scientists think that purring can help heal an injured cat.

The Hibbing Humans VS. The Akron Animals



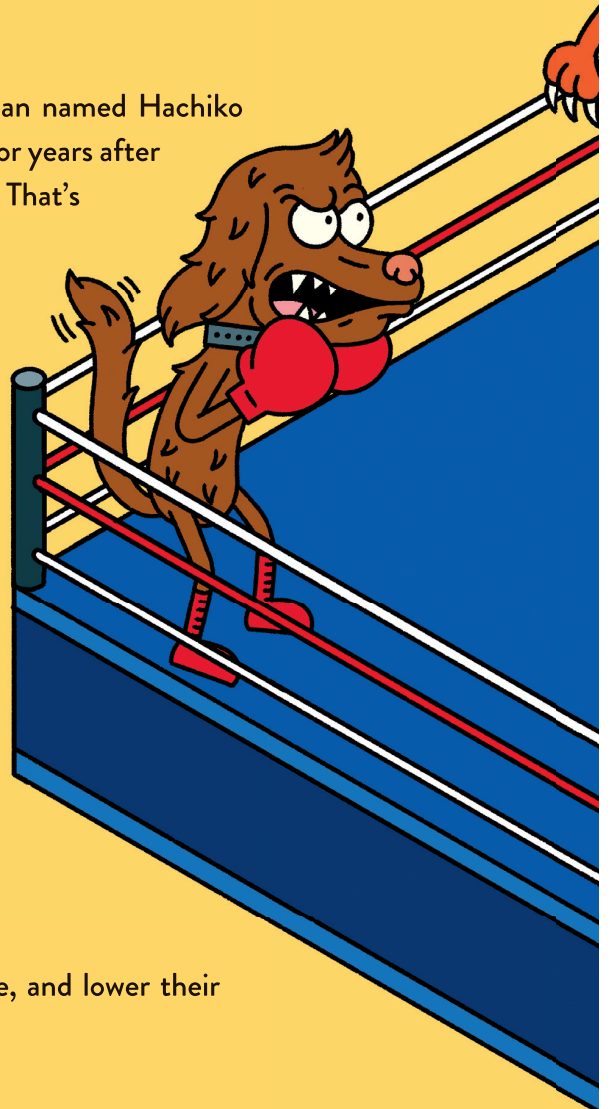
MEGA MATCHUP

DOGS VS. CATS

Now it's time for a fierce and furry fight between our favorite domesticated beasts. In one corner, dogs! Those lickers of faces and chewers of toys! And in the other corner, cats! Those graceful mouse hunters with cute faces to boot. Which cuddly contender will come out on top?

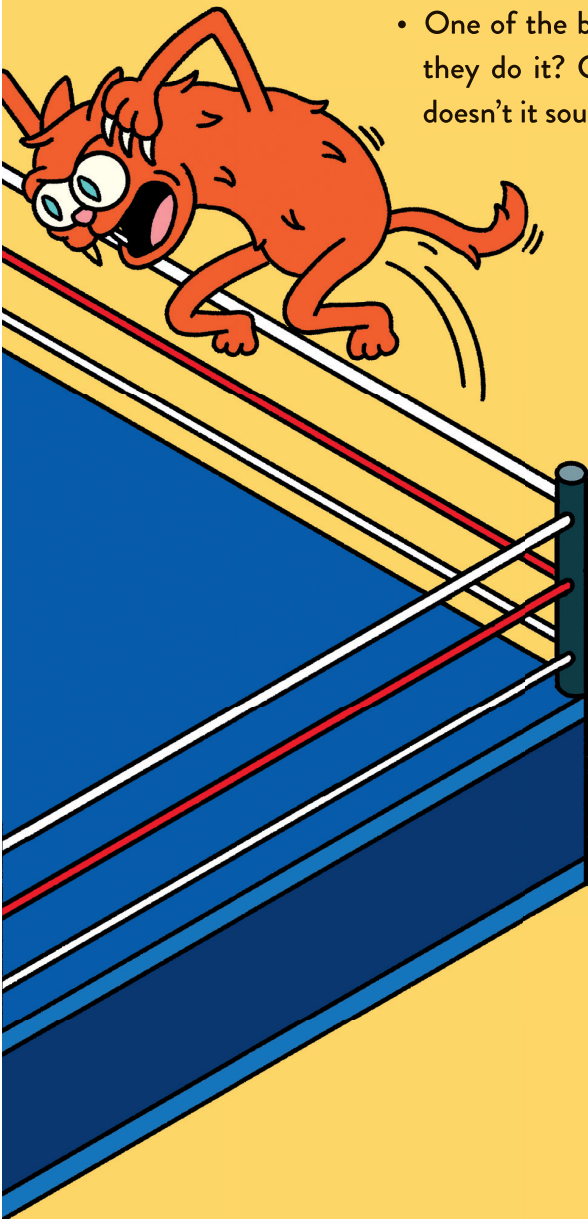
TEAM DOG

- Dogs love you unconditionally forever. One dog in Japan named Hachiko waited for his owner every day at the train station, even for years after his owner passed away. Now a statue is there in his honor. That's maximum loyalty.
- Dogs save lives! They sniff out drugs and bombs, rescue people from dangerous places, and, in the case of Seeing Eye dogs, help people navigate the world safely.
- Kids who grow up with dogs in the house are less likely to get certain diseases. The theory is that dogs expose us to so many germs that our bodies become better at fighting off sickness. Dogs to the rescue—again!
- Dogs' noses are among the most amazing smelling machines on the planet. They have two sets of nostrils and more than 100 million scent receptors.
- Dogs have super hearing, and they can rotate, tilt, raise, and lower their ears to detect *exactly* where a sound is coming from.



TEAM CAT

- Cats are natural entertainers. That's why funny cat videos are all over the Internet.
- Cats are fiercely independent and can survive on their own. They don't really need us, but they probably enjoy the free food and shelter. Some might say they've trained us more than we've trained them.
- One of the biggest mysteries left in the world is the cat's purr. Why do they do it? Could it be a secret cat code? We might never know. But doesn't it sound soothing?



- Every part of a cat's eye is designed to give it super-powered night vision. From their millions of light-receptor cells and reflective layer to their vertical pupils, cats are the ultimate night hunters.
- Cats have sensitive whiskers that help them get around in the dark. When those whiskers brush up against things, they send signals letting the cat know what's around it. Whiskers: stylish *and* useful.

Which furry
friend is cooler:
Dogs or Cats?

YOUR VERDICT



Step into
yourself.

ANA ON THE EDGE

A. J. SASS

LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

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LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

Breathe In



I stand alone at center ice. Around me, the audience is quiet. Seven judges sit in front of me, fourteen eyes ready to follow my every move.

Breathe in, breathe out. Shoulders down.

Black, glossy fabric encases my white skates, part of my one-piece costume. I look down at the National Championships logo underneath layers of ice. Knots unfurl in my stomach and flutter upward, even though I just chewed a ginger tab to settle my nerves.

The opening notes of my music drum rhythmic and low. I aim a smile at the judges before gliding forward, extending one leg behind me in a quick arabesque. I push thoughts of the large crowd in the stands, of my mom sitting among them, of how this is my first-ever Nationals, out of my head. It's time to focus.

My step sequence begins. I carve deep edges and quick, controlled turns in a winding, S-shaped pattern.

I catch sight of my coach, Alex, by the boards. His

eyes bore into me as I turn into my first jump, a simple double flip. It's not the highest-scoring element I'm capable of, but it's a great way to get my feet under me at the start of my program.

It also comes right before the tricky triple toe loop.

I take a steadying breath, then tap my toe pick into the ice for my double flip. One, two rotations, and I land strong, back arched.

I lift my arms as the music builds. There's no time to get excited yet.

Everything comes down to this next jump: the triple toe loop.

Turn, bend, tap. I recite the toe loop's takeoff technique in my head, then turn backward, preparing to spring off the ice. Once I'm airborne, muscle memory will have to get me through the rest.

My left leg reaches behind me, blade tapping. I launch into the air and snap my ankles together, arms crossed tight over my chest.

The audience cheers. Relief floods through me, and a smile tugs at the corners of my mouth. It vanishes a second later as I twist into my next combination spin.

To the untrained eye, I'm just an effortless blur of

glossy black fabric, gold-and-red chiffon fluttering from my costume. But I know each crisp position comes from years of repetition in private lessons with Alex, lessons that Mom worked long hours to pay for.

Shoulders relaxing, I exit my spin to more clapping. My smile is less rehearsed, more genuine. The ice feels more like home now, instead of slippery and foreign.

I lean on a deep edge and tap my toe pick into the ice for my three-jump combo. Launch and land, launch and land. Repeat again. It's over in a matter of seconds, my movements smooth and fast.

Out here, all my problems vanish. The judges seem to disappear, and I can no longer hear the crowd roar. The world falls away once I get into character. My steps perfectly match the music.

I land two more jumps, right on the beat of my music, then finish with a crowd-pleasing spin. My short hair whips against my cheeks as I grab my skate blade, lifting my foot high behind me in a vertical split. I end with a flourish as the audience rises in a standing ovation.

I bow to the judges, then exit the ice. Warmth forms in my stomach and spreads outward as Alex uncrosses

his arms and reaches out for a quick hug. He looked stiff during my performance, shoulders tense under the gray business suit he wore especially for this event. Not anymore.

We head to the Kiss and Cry seating area, where skaters receive their scores. The cameras catch all the drama here, every tiny reaction recorded. I'm still breathing hard by the time we sit down, but I wave at a nearby camera livestreaming the event.

In just a few seconds, I'll know how I placed.

Alex nudges me and offers a water bottle. I take a sip as a volunteer hands me flowers and stuffed animals that members of the audience threw onto the ice. I've seen this happen for famous skaters, but it's the first time anyone besides Mom has thrown things for me.

"Now the score for Miss Ana-Marie Jin's free-skate program." I sit up straighter, trying to ignore a prickle of discomfort. "Ana-Marie has earned a total of sixty-eight point five eight."

The steady thrum in my chest skips a beat. I was the last skater who performed today, and that's higher than any of the scores I overheard while I warmed up. I turn to Alex, who squeezes my arm. His gaze stays on the

results screen. It'll refresh soon. Until then, nothing's official.

I look up to the stands and spot Mom. Unlike others around her, she isn't clapping. Her eyes are fixed on the huge digital scoreboard looming over the ice. I hold my breath and keep watching her. I want this win for her as much as I want it for myself.

A roar of approval fills the rink and Mom's eyes widen. She stands with the rest of the crowd, hands flying to her mouth. My gaze flickers to the final results.

ANA-MARIE JIN: 68.58—1ST

I jump out of my seat as Alex rises and pulls me into another hug. I hug him back, bouncing in his arms. All those months of intense training, of sore muscles and hard falls, were worth it to get to this moment. My heart's racing again, but this time it has wings. I'm soaring.

I look back to the stands and find Mom. I blink fast, and she smiles at me like she knows I'm trying to hold back tears, her eyes crinkling at the corners.

The announcer speaks again, and Alex catches me

by the elbow. “Medal ceremony.” He nods toward the ice where a group of workers is setting up a podium.

We make it to the ice by the time the bronze medalist is announced. Silver comes next, her program music playing softly in the background as she takes the ice and curtsies to the crowd.

“Soak this all up. Enjoy every second.” Alex pats my shoulder. “Tomorrow we’ll fly home and get you back on your regular training schedule. Think you can top this next season?”

My program music plays, low at first, then strong and brassy. The other medalists already stand on the podium in sparkling dresses. The top spot is empty, waiting for me.

The announcer calls my name. I step onto the ice, then turn back to Alex. I give him a quick thumbs-up before gliding off to accept my gold medal.

“Definitely.”

“ABSURD, FUNNY, AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING.”
—LOUIS SACHAR, author of *Holes* and the *Wayside School* series

pity party



KATHLEEN
LANE

LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

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LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

The Voice

P a r t I

For as long as Katya could remember, The Voice had been with her. Her earliest memory: Three years old, returning from an afternoon at the pond with her older sister, she had ridden her tricycle directly into the street. Over the growl of an approaching truck, The Voice came to her, loud and clear. PEDAL PEDAL PEDAL, it said. FASTER, it said, *FASTER*, until Katya's tiny legs had spun her safely

to the other side. No more than a second later, the truck sped by. Had it not been for The Voice, she most certainly would have been flattened under the truck's enormous wheels.

Recalling the event later, Katya would often imagine a flattened version of herself next to a flattened version of her tricycle. It was not a horrible image. There was no blood involved, no broken bones, not even so much as a scratch. She was simply flat. Like the peel-and-stick books she had always loved but rarely received (except for the worn-out, fuzz-covered hand-me-downs from her older cousins). Sometimes Katya would imagine peeling herself off the page of her own life and placing herself in an altogether different life. A fancier life filled with fancier things.

She imagined flattened versions of her sister and parents too, and her dog Mudjo, and in their peel-and-stick world, she and her family and Mudjo would travel to exotic places, where they rode flattened elephants and ate flattened cakes under

flattened chandeliers. Her mother wore brightly colored flattened sun hats. Her father: flattened safari shorts, a chatty flattened parakeet riding on his shoulder—at least, she imagined him chatty, revealing the locations of buried treasures, demanding crackers in return. Mudjo always had a flattened bone between his paws. He made friends with a flattened monkey. Gone were her parents' worries about money, their fights in the kitchen over who worked harder, who spent more of their earnings on unnecessary things.

In this peel-and-stick world, Katya had little need for The Voice, and when it came time to leave this imagined life behind, she was older and more capable of looking out for herself. She knew better than to ride her bike into traffic. She had long ago mastered the dangers of the house, learned to stand upwind of campfires, learned (the hard way) not to poke blueberries up her nose. Only very occasionally did The Voice return, to warn her of an unfriendly dog, or sometimes person, but

as the months passed, she heard fewer and fewer of its warnings. Which is why she was so startled when, as she sat on the living room floor before her record-setting haul of Halloween candy, unwrapping a 3 Musketeers, The Voice suddenly called out: STOP! DO NOT EAT THAT 3 MUSKETEERS!

Only then did Katya remember. That day at school she had overheard Jonah Michaels talking about people who put poison in Halloween candy.

DO YOU KNOW EVERY SINGLE PERSON WHO GAVE YOU THAT CANDY? The Voice asked.

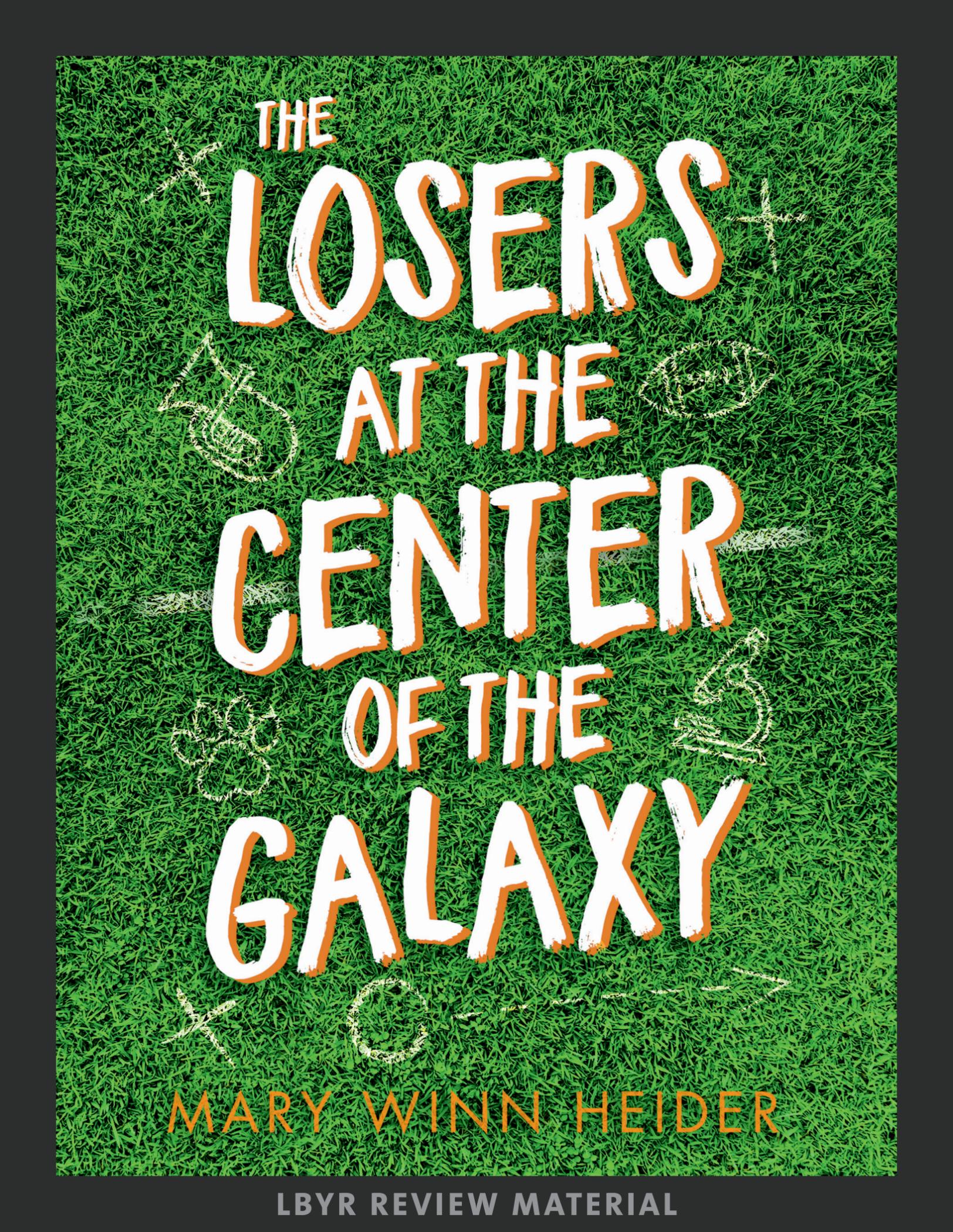
The Voice was right! There could be poison in any one of these candies!

Once again The Voice had saved her life.

That night, The Voice slept in Katya's room. It was like a slumber party, except the kind of slumber party that isn't very fun. Like when you sleep over at your much younger cousin's house and have to pretend you're squirrel sisters. Or like the kind of slumber party where you're awakened every half

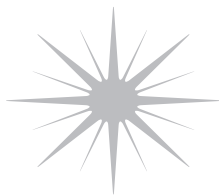
hour by the family's grandfather clock, and just when you're about to finally fall asleep, a cat walks across your face. That's the kind of slumber party it was. The kind that felt to Katya like it would never, ever end.

(To be continued.)



THE
LOSERS
AT THE
CENTER
OF THE
GALAXY

MARY WINN HEIDER



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LBYR REVIEW MATERIAL

CHAPTER

1

WINSTON AND LOUISE stood together at the fifty-yard line.

The center of the entire galaxy.

It was a weird place to put the center of the galaxy, to be honest. The ground was squishy, the air smelled like armpit, and the crowd roared.

Also, the cheerleaders were on fire.

Winston saw the flames shooting up from the squad, and his only thought was that he needed to protect his little sister, so without giving it another thought, he up and tackled Louise. It was the first thing that had occurred to him, and if he'd waited just long enough for a *second* thing to occur to him,

he probably would have realized it was a bad idea. Pretty much immediately, he knew it was not going over well.

“Winston!” Louise yelled as she hit the ground. A herd of halftime crew stampeded past, and she pushed her brother over onto the spongy turf and stood, shoving her bangs out of her eyes. “*Come on, Win.*”

Winston glanced back toward the cheerleaders, prepared to try to protect Louise again, but he noticed that they were still cheering. That was unexpected, coming from a bunch of people who were supposedly on fire, but then they spun around and he saw that they were *not* on fire. Not at all. They were wearing upside-down jet packs or something. It was a stunt.

He stood quickly, taking his place next to Louise. “I thought they were on fire,” he said, trying to explain. “I didn’t want you to see—”

“You have to stop doing that,” Louise said, brushing off her funeral clothes.

Just a few hours ago, she’d yelled at their mom from behind her bedroom door, hollered, *It’s not a funeral*, before eventually giving up and slouching out in black pants and a gray sweater. Winston

decided now was not the time to point out that at least funeral clothes didn't show grass stains.

"I'm only trying to help," he mumbled.

"I know," Louise said, rolling her eyes. "But you are *not* helping. You're ruining all my pants."

"But—"

"*Stop. Helping.*"

Winston nodded reluctantly. They both needed tonight to go well.

Here at the center of the galaxy.

Their dad had called it that.

And not just because of the hot dogs, he used to say, winking.

If it had been up to Winston, the center of the galaxy would be more like Stonehenge but bigger, a whole planet full of mysterious and ancient cold rocks that nobody understood. Or else somewhere that burned nonstop, like a sun.

Not here, on Earth, where the stadium lights blazed in his eyes, people kept bumping into him, and the Chicago Horribles were losing by fifty-nine points already even though it was only halftime.

But his dad had called this the center of the galaxy, and so here they were.

The booming chaos of the stadium swirled around them, and Winston hoped no one noticed his freak out. People were everywhere, shouting into walkie-talkies and moving things and waving to *other* people across the field.

A few feet over, Winston and Louise's mom was deep in conversation with the police detective, while a man with a headset adjusted a podium in front of them. Since they'd first arrived, escorted through the tunnels and then out under the enormous CHICAGO URSUS ARCTOS HORRIBLES archway, no one paid much attention to them, the two kids of the missing quarterback. *Former* quarterback. It was obvious that nobody knew what to say to them, that they made people uncomfortable. So they kept to themselves and watched it all happening around them: golf carts zooming, the now-extinguished cheerleaders pouncing and tossing each other in the air, and at one end zone, the stage going up for a band that would play when they were done.

A mic check boomed from somewhere, and the siblings inched closer to each other. Winston was a year older and only barely taller—from the stands they probably looked like the same person, copied and pasted side by side. They both had dark curly

hair that they kept short and square chins that they kept set. They had pale skin and freckles that kept them out of the sun. They had their dad's broad, made-for-football shoulders.

Winston and Louise looked like they were built to stop things.

Except, of course, they hadn't been able to stop anything. That was what had brought them to the stadium tonight. The complete and total inability to stop their dad from disappearing.

It had been three weeks.

Twenty-one days since he'd just walked away.

And in a minute, they were going to ask for help from everybody watching—the fans in the stadium and the fans on their sofas at home. The incomplete Volpe family would send up a flare, and their dad would find his way back home, either on his own, or because some nice stranger would see him and recognize him and know he should be returned to his family, even if he didn't remember that himself. It was going to work. It had to work.

So. There Winston stood, at the galactic bull's-eye of hopefulness. That alone was bound to make a person jumpy, especially around flaming cheerleaders.

He closed his eyes, shutting out the stadium full of people.

When his dad had been quarterback of the Chicago Horribles, he'd stood right here. Right here on this exact same squishy ground. He had felt the pressure of a whole stadium of people looking down on him. He'd told Winston once that when the pressure was too distracting and he needed to be calm inside, he would close his eyes out there and imagine someone gently pouring water on his head. At the time, Winston hadn't understood how that would work exactly, but he tried it now, and he had the very distinct sensation that *he'd* been on fire and just didn't realize it until right this second. Gradually, he felt his insides calm down.

His dad had been right about the water trick.

"Did it help you win games?" Winston had asked him.

And his dad had laughed, a great round laugh. He'd pulled Winston into a hug, the safe, forever kind. "Oh, sweetheart." His dad chuckled. "I never won. But I had a lot more fun losing."

Winston wished he could remember seeing his dad play.

A loud groan made him open his eyes. He and

Louise turned around at the same time. There was a bear on the ground behind them.

Then Winston's brain kicked in, and it wasn't a bear, of course, it was a football player—one of the current Chicago Horribles. They'd gotten new uniforms, with fake bear heads that pulled up and over the helmets.

“Get a cart,” the guy moaned, clutching his shin.

Winston glanced around, realizing that the golf carts weren't just zipping around the field for fun, they were collecting players too banged up to limp into the tunnels by themselves.

He waved his arms, and it took a few minutes, but eventually one of the carts headed his way. As he turned back, Winston saw that Louise was kneeling beside the guy, with a hand on his forehead.

She was saying something to him.

Winston wanted to join them, but whatever was happening seemed private, so he stayed where he was, awkwardly pointing as if the people driving the cart didn't know where they were going. When they pulled up, Louise got back to her feet, a strange look on her face. She didn't tell Winston what she'd talked about with the man, and he didn't ask.

Just then, a hush fell over the crowd and the

JumboTrons lit up with the Volpes' faces. It was a shock to see the giant, looming version of himself a hundred feet in the air.

"You two ready?" their mom asked.

A wave of nerves crashed over Winston, but he nodded. It was time. He noticed that Louise was still fixed on the cart with that injured player, watching as it disappeared into the shadows of the tunnel.

He nudged her, and she nudged him back, just as a few more people stepped up on the other side of the detective. Behind their little group, a semicircle formed—all the former players they could bring together at such short notice, guys when Lenny Volpe was quarterback.

Winston tried to see traces of his father in the men, but then, too quickly, he had to turn around and face the cameras.

It was on.

The press conference started with the detective. It was a good choice, whoever decided that, and the crowd fell silent as she painted the picture of a hero lost in time and space, done in by his own broken mind. Her voice boomed into the stands as she asked for information related to the disappearance of Lenny Volpe.

Next up was their mom, telling the story of the day he left. That he kissed them all goodbye and walked out. It was a made-up story, but only Winston and Louise knew that, and it was the sort of story people wanted to hear. Plus, it had already been on TV, in the paper. What made today different was the next speaker. He was the key. He was the one the public would listen to. He was the one Winston's dad might listen to, if that was possible anymore. He had the specific kind of power that comes with owning an entire football team, even if it is the worst football team in the whole country.

He stepped up to the podium.

The owner of the Chicago Horribles leaned into the microphone.

And then he opened his mouth and made a joke. A joke about how Lenny Volpe must've dropped a few marbles to have forgotten how great he had it, and he waved toward Winston and Louise and their mom, but Winston didn't want to be part of that joke, and all the hope he'd had poured out of him as Louise leapt, like a coiled-up long jumper, straight toward the man, and more specifically, toward his nose, which she headbutted with impressive force.

The man's nose started bleeding immediately.

The crowd roared their approval.

Winston was so surprised his mouth dropped open, and he watched as the man swore and tried to stop his bloody nose with somebody else's tie. Around him, the old players muttered under their breath about Louise and that leap, that real stunner of a jump considering how she was a kid.

"Holy smokes..."

"Lenny Volpe's kid, all right..."

"Five bucks says she could sky you..."

"Not taking any chances, thanks..."

The man's nose spurted even more vigorously, and he yelled about it being broken. The crowd cheered impossibly louder, and Winston felt the sound surge against him like a wave. He might be crushed by all those eyes on him, all that noise. His chest felt tight. It was hard to breathe. This was wrong. This wasn't the way it was supposed to happen. He was aware of everything all at once, how every person on the field closed in on them by a few feet, of his own embarrassing face, high up and giant on the JumboTron. Next to him, their mom was leaning over Louise, half scolding her, half making sure she was okay.

Louise caught Winston's eye and gave him a crooked smile.

She'd been right. She didn't need him to save her. She could do just fine on her own, and he didn't understand why, but it made him even sadder.

The press conference ended pretty quickly after that.

Incredibly, the Chicago Horribles dominated in the second half. They won by a single point.

A couple of weeks later, Winston was assigned the tuba in band and learned to play Darth Vader's theme song.

Louise turned her attention to science.

And Lenny Volpe stayed missing.



**HAPPY
READING!**