

BOOK TASTING

for Emerging
Readers



WELCOME

to Penguin's Book Tasting!

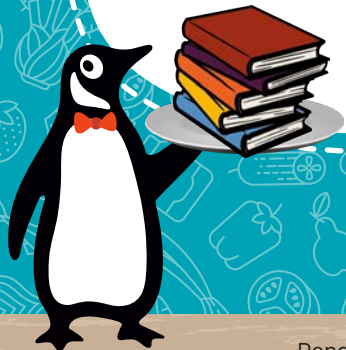
We're Penguin Young Readers and we'll be your server this evening!

Today we have a special look at six chapter book series that your emerging readers may find appetizing. Please see our menu to get a sense of what to expect and be sure to fill out the Book Tasting form when you're done tasting each book!

If the mood strikes, we'd love to hear from you. Share your thoughts on social using the **#PenguinBookTasting** hashtag.

Bon appétit!

Penguin Young Readers



• PENGUIN • BOOK TASTING

Jada Jones: Rock Star 4



By Kelly Starling Lyons;

Illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

When science-loving Jada Jones's best friend moves away, school feels like the last place she wants to be. Then her teacher assigns a class project on rocks and minerals, Jada thinks things will turn around.

J.D. and the Great Barber Battle 29



By J. Dillard; Illustrated by Akeem S. Roberts

Eight-year-old J.D. turns a tragic home haircut into a thriving barber business in this hilarious new illustrated chapter book series.

Secret Spy Society:

The Case of the Missing Cheetah 51



By Veronica Mang

The first book in a highly illustrated new chapter book series about three delightfully mischievous young girls and some of the most enigmatic women in history who worked as spies.

The Unicorn Rescue Society:

Sasquatch and the Muckleshoot 103



By Adam Gidwitz and Joseph Bruchac

Illustrated by Hatem Aly

The Unicorn Rescue Society travels to the fir trees of the Pacific Northwest to save the famously elusive creature, the Sasquatch.

Astronaut Girl: Journey to the Moon 131



By Cathy Hapka and Ellen Vandenberg

Illustrated by Gillian Reid

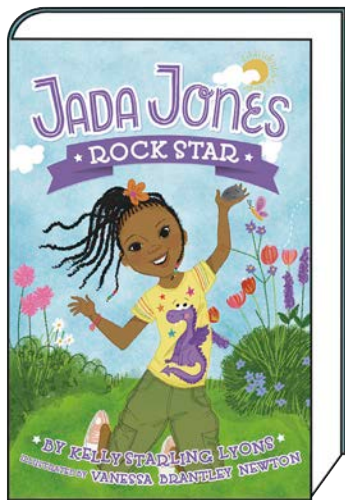
Can Astronaut Girl save the day with a little help from science? Find out as she and her space crew make their debut in this chapter book series!

Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet 155



By Zanib Mian; Illustrated by Nasaya Mafaridik

Can Omar's huge imagination help him survive a new school?



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Jada Jones: Rock Star

By Kelly Starling Lyons;
Illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

When science-loving Jada Jones's best friend moves away, school feels like the last place she wants to be. Then her teacher assigns a class project on rocks and minerals, and Jada thinks things will turn around.

Chapter One:

BEST FRIEND BLUES

For the first time ever, I overslept. Usually I beat everyone downstairs on school mornings. But when I woke to the sun peeking through my blinds, I just shut my eyes again. I would have kept right on sleeping if Mom hadn't come into my room.

"Jada," she said. "It's time to get up." I groaned and yanked the cover

over my head. Thinking about school meant thinking about Mari. At recess, we used to take off hunting for rocks—inky black slivers, orange hunks perfect for writing on pavement, gray nuggets splashed with silver that shimmered in the light. Why did she have to move?

Mom sat next to me on my daybed and gently pulled my fuzzy blanket



back. My eyes blurred as I sniffed and tried not to cry.

I turned to the wall.

“I know you miss Mari,” she said, pulling off my sleeping scarf and stroking my braids. “But you have lots of kids in your class who would love to be your friend. You’ll see.”



Mom kissed my head and left so I could get ready. I washed up and slid on my jeans with deep rock-stashing pockets and purple dragon T-shirt. I opened my jewelry box and picked up the heart-shaped pendant Mari gave me for my birthday. I clutched it in my hand. Her half said “best.” My half said “friend.” Even though Mari had just left Raleigh for Phoenix on Friday, I already felt like part of me was gone.

For breakfast, Daddy made his specialty—homemade banana pancakes with strawberry syrup.

“Can I get just a tiny smile from my favorite daughter?” he said, setting a flowered plate in front of me.

Daddy knew that would usually



make me laugh. I'm his *only* daughter.
I tried to smile, but it felt more like a
grimace. All teeth with no joy. While
my little brother, Jackson, gobbled his
pancakes, I poked at mine with my fork.
Finally, I washed down a mouthful with
a gulp of milk.

Daddy put his
hand on my
shoulder.



“Blues can feel like they’re here to stay,” he said softly. I knew what he meant. Daddy plays all kinds of music—hip-hop, jazz, reggae. But his blues songs made me think of an aching way down deep. I wondered if the hurt of losing Mari would ever go away.

“But you know what’s certain about the blues?” he asked.

I looked up at him and shook my head.

“They don’t last forever.”

I thought about what Daddy said on the way to school.

“Try to have a good day, honey,” Mom said as she dropped Jackson and me off at Brookside Elementary. I nodded before closing the car door behind

me. Maybe it wouldn't be as bad as I thought. Maybe I could have an okay day without my best friend.

I walked Jackson to kindergarten and slowly climbed the stairs to the fourth-grade hallway. Miss Taylor had said we would be starting a new science unit. I couldn't help but get a little excited about that. But when I walked into my class, the first thing I saw was Mari's empty seat. I sat across from it and quickly hid my face behind my library book about different kinds of gems.

"Sorry Mari is gone," Lena whispered to me as she slid into her chair. She and Carson sat at my table. We were the only group that now had three instead of four.



I put down my book and looked at her instead. Daddy said you could tell a lot by someone's eyes. Her kind, brown ones said *hope you're okay*.

"Thanks," I said.

Lena is cool. Her best friend is Simone. They are nuts about jump rope the way Mari and I are crazy for rocks. I thought about Mom saying I'd make new friends. Maybe I could show Lena and Simone how awesome rocks could be.

During lunch, I sat across from them and waited for my chance to talk. It seemed like it would never come. Simone kept glancing at me and frowning. She chattered to Lena about everything—what she did over the

weekend, what movies she wanted to see, what she planned to do when she got home. It was like she was afraid to stop talking. Finally, she eyed me cautiously and bit into her pizza. I jumped right in.



“What can’t walk but can skip?”

I asked her and Lena.

“Huh?” Lena said, popping a grape into her mouth.

“It’s a riddle,” I said. “What can’t walk but can skip?”

Lena shrugged. Simone looked annoyed.



“Give up?”

Lena nodded.

“A stone. It can’t walk, but it can skip across a pond.”

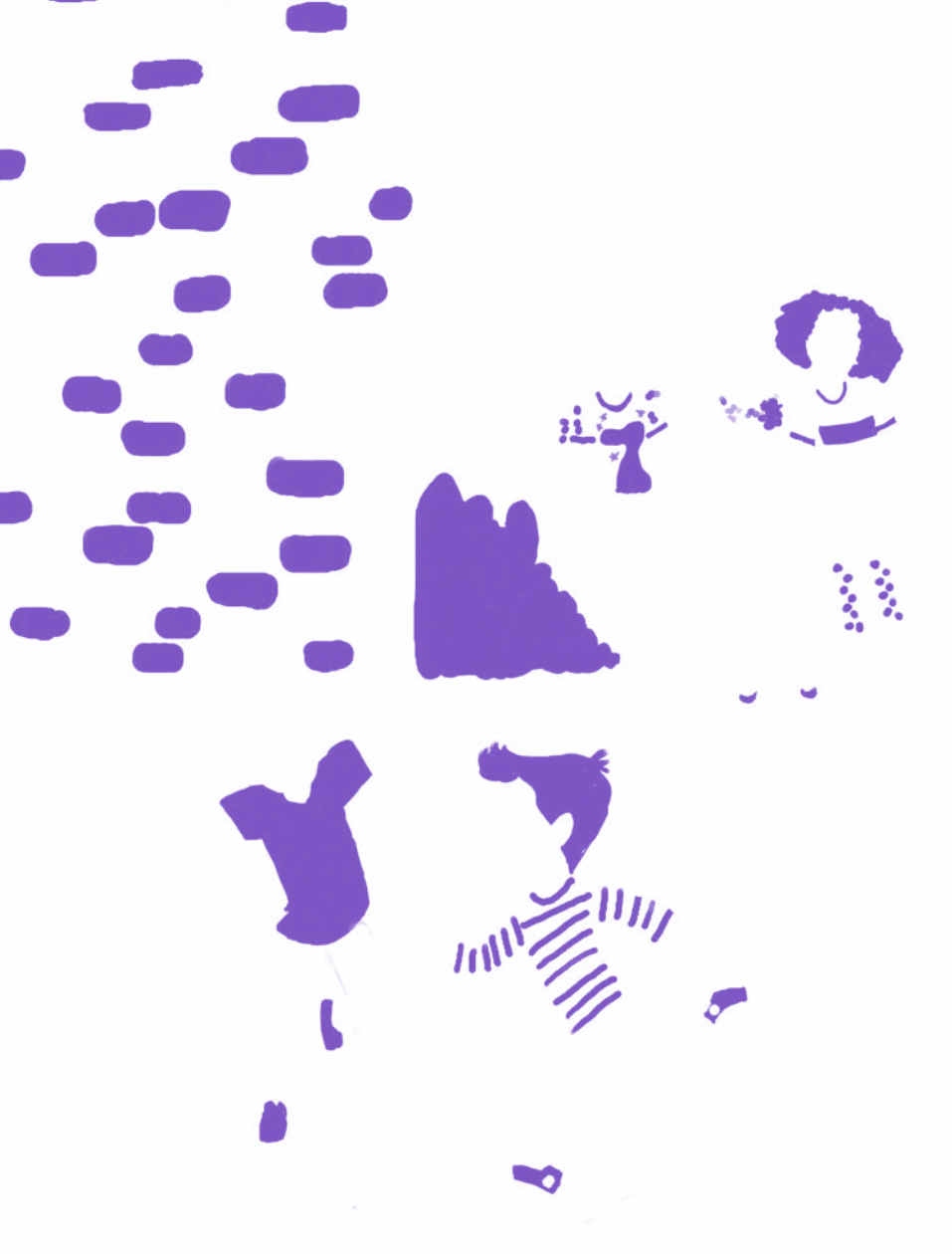
I waited for them to lose it. Lena grinned. Simone rolled her eyes.

“Lame,” she mumbled. A couple of kids giggled.

I kept my eyes glued to my turkey sandwich. Mari would have loved that joke.

After lunch, we lined up for recess. I chewed my bottom lip and wished I could stay inside. As soon as I saw the playground, my missing-Mari ache was back.

“Hey, do you want to jump rope with us?” Lena asked.



I stank at jump rope, but the invite made me feel better. Lena and Simone were part of the Bunny Club, kids who could jump more than one hundred times in a row. They could do single rope and double Dutch. I loved their tricks, like hopping on one foot, touching the ground between jumps, and jumping so fast the thumping ropes sounded like drums.

“She probably just wants to look for rocks,” Simone answered for me. “Right, Jada?”

“Yeah,” I lied. “Thanks anyway, Lena.”

I walked to the wooded edge by the swings where Mari and I discovered our best finds. One time, we snagged a piece that looked like pyrite. Covered with

orange dirt, it didn't seem like much at first. But when I shined it on my pant leg, I saw sparkling golden flecks.

We didn't care if it was fool's gold. To us, it was treasure.

I picked up a smooth gray stone and a jagged brown rock and stuffed them in my pocket. Nothing extra special. It was no fun searching alone. I sat on the bench and watched my classmates jump, make up songs, and play kickball.

"Anything good?" Miles asked as he waited for his turn to kick. He liked rocks as much as he liked sports.

"Nope. Not this time."

"Keep looking," he said before running off to join the game. "You'll find something."



When we lined up to go back inside, I reached into my pocket and felt my smooth stone again. It wasn't what I was looking for, but it was pretty neat. Almost a perfect oval. Cool to the touch



and fit right into my hand. Mari would give it a thumbs-up. I bet Miles would, too. Maybe Daddy was right. The blues weren't here to stay.

Chapter Two:

TEAM TROUBLE

Back in class, it was time to find out our new science unit.

“Before I tell you, let’s see if anyone can guess,” Miss Taylor said as her eyes gleamed.

She glanced my way and turned on the SMART Board.

A picture of limestone, slate, and quartz filled the screen. Lena grinned at me, and I smiled. We were starting

a unit on rocks and minerals!

As Miss Taylor filled us in, a spark of excitement flew from my head to my feet. I did a little dance right at my desk. We would spend one whole month studying something I loved. All of the fourth-grade classes would split into small teams. Each team would design fun projects to teach facts about rocks. Then there would be a rock fair, where students would vote for the best idea. The winner's class would get to go on a field trip to find rocks and gems.

"You can pick your partners, two or three to a group," Miss Taylor said. "But if you don't make good choices, I'll choose for you."

I looked at Lena and wondered if we

could work together. She had invited me to jump rope. This could be my chance to find out if we could be friends. Just as I opened my mouth to ask her, Simone showed up at her side.

“Me and you,” Simone said quickly to Lena, cutting her eyes at me and turning so I faced her back.

My heart sank. Simone clearly didn’t want me on their team. Who would I team up with now? I glanced over at Carson’s seat. He was paired with a friend at another table. I looked around the room for Miles.

He already had partners, too.

“And Jada,” I heard Lena say. My heart did a little flip.

“Jada?” Simone said like she couldn’t



believe Lena would suggest me as part of their group. I held my breath and pretended I didn't hear. Please ask. Please ask.

Lena tapped my shoulder.

"Jada, will you be on a team with Simone and me?"

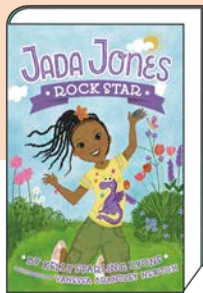
Yes! I was looking forward to working with Lena. Simone, I wasn't so sure. Instead of Team Terrific, working with her could be Team Trouble. But rocks were my thing. How hard could it be?

"Sure," I said, and pushed my worry away with a smile. Two smiles in a day.



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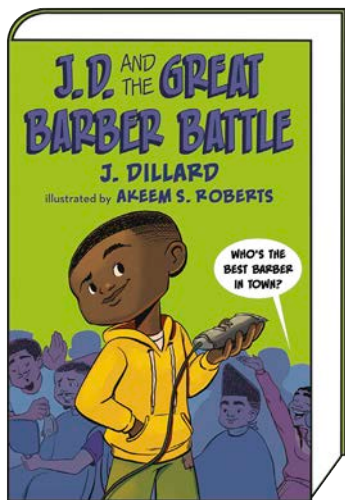


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J.D. and the Great Barber Battle

By J. Dillard;
Illustrated by Akeem S. Roberts

Eight-year-old J.D. turns a tragic home haircut into a thriving barber business in this hilarious new illustrated chapter book series.

CHAPTER 1

A Crooked Fade

“Sit still and look straight into the mirror,” my mom said as she turned on a set of clippers.

The buzzing sound made me a little nervous. I shifted on my stool in the one bathroom my entire family of six (three adults and three kids) shared. It was the Sunday night before the start of third grade, and I was in the middle of a family tradition. In the Jones family, none of us kids got our hair cut before we turned nine. Up until now, my mom always cornrowed my hair and I'd liked it that way, but I was excited for my first real haircut.

I had been checking out my friends' haircuts all summer for ideas.

My friend Xavier, who lived across the street, had his cool dad cut his hair into the most amazing hi-top fade. But Mr. Boom was an ex-marine and strict. He made it clear HIS time and HIS money were only for HIS kids. Even when he took us all for ice cream he made sure everybody's parents gave their kids enough money to pay for our own

stuff. No way I was ever asking him for anything.

“Come back with five dollars!” I imagined him saying if I asked him for a haircut.

And I’d want to yell back, “Your prices are steep!”

But not with Mr. Boom. I’d just say “Yes, sir!” to everything.

My best friend, Jordan, who lived next door, also had cool hair thanks to his older brother, Naija.

Naija had already graduated from college. He would come home after work, change into his clothes that were straight fire, and sometimes cut his and Jordan’s hair. He had skills and could cut designs like playing cards into the back of his head. I would watch him and study his technique for hours. But it seemed to be happening less and less. He was a grown man with a full-time job, a new car, and a girlfriend. Naija didn’t have time to cut hair all day.

I didn’t just want to copy one of my friends’ haircuts, though. I had so much hair that maybe I could get a small Afro with an edge up like Steph Curry. Or even something wilder like that

quarterback on the Kansas City Chiefs, Patrick Mahomes.

Jordan had an iPhone and sometimes I would look on his Instagram account at barber hashtags. I loved the guy who cut designs into people's heads and then colored in the outline with a pencil.

I was good at art. I always kept a set of colored pencils and paper in my backpack so I could draw whenever I felt like it. After I saw those Instagrams, I started drawing myself with all types of Marvel characters cut into the back of my head.

Deep down, I knew I could never get The Amazing Spider-Man or any of those other styles I really liked, especially since there was only one barbershop in town, Hart and Son. They offered three types of kids' haircuts—a baldie, a Caesar, or a fade. Sometimes I'd go with my friends on Saturdays, and getting a haircut there took longer than it did to sit through one of Pastor's Sunday sermons. Your day was shot to pieces. I figured my mom could manage something simple, and plus I knew we did not have extra money to spend.

"I want a basic fade," I told my mom.

I asked for her phone and showed her a picture of Michael B. Jordan, the villain from the movie *Black Panther*.

“Okay, baby,” she said. “I can’t believe you are going to third grade.”



I loved the weekly time my mom set aside to style my hair. My younger brother, my older sister, plus my grandparents, lived with us. It was hard to get alone time with Mom. Especially since she ALWAYS seemed to be in school, even more than me!

At first, she told us she was going back to school to become a nurse. But after spending six months working at the hospital, she quit.

"I hate the hospital," Mom said one night after a long shift. "Everybody isn't treated the same."

I didn't know exactly what happened, but I used to overhear her talking to my granddad about people being turned away for not having insurance or patients being given pills they didn't need!

So after she sat at the dinner table one night with tears in her eyes, Granddad told her if she hated the job that much, she just had to stop.

"There's plenty of other jobs in the world," he told her.

I knew it was hard for her. Mom loved medicine and her dream was to become a nurse and help sick people. It made me so proud to hear

how great she was at it and how neat and clean she kept all the patients' rooms. It made me keep my bedroom extra clean, too.

So Mom went back to school to get something called an MBA and her thick books that said ANATOMY now said things like STATISTICS 101 and MANAGEMENT. She had told us she had seen a job opening in the mayor's office, but she needed this MBA thing to apply.

Mom's super smart. She didn't always get a 100 on her tests, and she didn't expect us to, but she said the important thing was to always try as hard as you could.

A couple of years ago, all of us moved in with my grandparents after my granddad had a heart attack.

"It'll just be for two months, until Granddad feels better, then we'll move back with Dad," my mom had told us.

Well, two months turned into two years.

Dad sent money sometimes, and Mom never said anything bad about him, but I didn't really know why they split up. They met when they were track stars at Mississippi Valley State, and

even today Mom had what she called her “runner’s legs.” Sometimes she would race me and my sister around the big track at the local high school and she’d remind us why her nickname as a kid had been “Cheetah.”

So it was my mom, my older sister, Vanessa, my baby brother, Justin, and my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Slayton Evans, all in an old house built in the 1930s. Like most houses in Meridian, Mississippi, it had a closed-in porch so you could sit outside when it was hot, which was most days, and all the rooms were on one floor. Luckily, I still got my own room since Vanessa slept with Mom and Justin loved sleeping with my grandparents.

“Baby, did you hear me?” my mom asked. I checked the time on her phone. It had been about twenty minutes already, and she’d finished cutting my hair.

“Well, what do you think?” she said. “I can’t believe how grown you look.”

I stared into the mirror.

What I saw was not good.

My mom had cut my hair down, all right, but my hairline looked like a hilltop or a mountain

range. It definitely wasn't straight like I'd seen in pictures or on my friends.

"I can't go to school tomorrow looking like . . . this!" I told my mom.

"Nothing is wrong with your hair," she said. "You are not missing out on the first day of school. Now please get ready for bed."

I sighed and my shoulders fell three inches as I reached for my toothbrush and started to get ready to brush my teeth.

That night, I couldn't sleep.

Maybe I could fake being sick?

My hair looked terrible.

I didn't want anyone at school to see me like this.

How many ways could the third-grade class of Douglass Elementary make fun of a bad haircut?

Well, I was about to find out.

CHAPTER 2

The Nervous Breakfast

The next morning my entire family sat around eating grits, eggs, bacon, and buttered toast with jelly. Granddad had to watch his diet now, but he could never pass up a good piece of bacon or two.

My family was always busy, but Grandma loved to make everyone breakfast before we all left the house. "Fuel for the day," she'd say as she and my grandfather drank cup after cup of coffee without talking much.

The people in my family weren't big talkers except my sister, Vanessa. I was pretty sure she was friends with every girl in Meridian between the ages of ten and thirteen. The only person in my family who had a cell phone was my mother, and so Vanessa would spend as much time as she could talking on my grandparents' landline, dragging the cord around the house as she talked.

I sat at the table quieter than normal, wearing a Mississippi Bulldogs baseball cap.

"James, take that hat off while you're eating!" my granddad said.



Granddad, a tall, slim man with glasses, had recovered well from his heart attack. In fact, even though he had retired from running the local JCPenney, his health scare inspired him to go into the burial insurance business.

“We’re all going to die, right?” he said. Granddad treated it like any other regular fact.

Everyone in our family had a burial insurance policy. Even us kids.

Granddad didn’t play. We couldn’t even say “Huh?” or “What?” around him. Everything was “Yes ma’am,” “Yes sir,” “No ma’am,” and “No sir.”

And his punishments were terrible—like not playing outside for a week or making us read boring books aloud to him and give reports.

So the first time he asked, I took off my hat.

No one said anything. They just looked at one another nervously until finally, Vanessa spoke up.

“What happened to J.D.’s braids?” she asked.

“I cut his hair. It looks fine,” my mom said. “Now let’s finish eating. Everybody has a long day.”

The morning was moving too fast, and I’d have to leave for the bus soon. I needed to think of something quick.

“I want a ride to school today,” I said.

“Why?” my mom asked. “You always take the bus with Jordan.”

Granddad jumped in before I could continue.

“Stop this hardheaded act you got going on this morning, James!” my granddad said.

What he meant was that we already had our rides figured out. He took my mom to school, my grandmother and Justin to her ceramics studio, and he dropped off Vanessa on the way. Vanessa was already in middle school even though she was only in fifth grade. In Meridian, grades five through eight were all in a separate building. Her school was close to Mom’s college.

“Oh, Lord! James, stop all this fighting first thing in the morning,” Grandma piped in.

“Oh, Lord” was her favorite thing to say. Grandma, a deep-brown-skinned woman who kept her salt-and-pepper hair cut short, LOVED church and she was the reason we always had to go. And not just on Sunday mornings. There was weeknight Bible study, Sunday morning Bible school, and choir. Granddad played piano at church sometimes and even practiced on the Baldwin piano in

the living room. Mom and Vanessa were excellent singers. I usually lip-synched. Musical talent was something that skipped over me, but I was good at art like Grandma.

Like Granddad, Grandma didn't play, so I dropped it.

On a normal day, I loved taking the bus with Jordan. He was my best friend, but he could also give me a hard time.

Jordan would definitely have something to say about my hairline, and I would need EXTRA-tough skin to make it through the ride to school.

CHAPTER 3

The Most Horrible First Day

I snuck out of the house with my baseball cap and walked to the bus stop with my jacked-up hairline covered.

I stood quietly next to Jordan, and it wasn't long before he had something to say.

"You never wore a hat to school before, J.D.," he said as he knocked my hat to the ground, sending up a puff of red Mississippi dirt when it landed.

"Whoa!" he said as soon as he saw my head. "What happened to your hair? Your hairline looks like LeBron James's."

"My mom did it," I said. "It's okay, though. I'm going to get it fixed."

"By who? I know you don't have money to go to the barbershop. You don't even have money to pay Naija for a haircut!" Jordan said, rubbing it in.

The ride to school only got rougher when Jordan took my hat and tossed it around the bus and even more kids saw my hairline.

I pulled out my notebook and started to draw pictures of comic book characters and cartoons. I would usually draw the entire Marvel universe over and over, but today's teasing called for something more complicated, like Lego Batman.

My art was award-winning. Once I got third in a competition for a sketch of a bass fish. It was still hanging up on a wall in the Meridian mall.

"J.D.'s hair looks worse than Kevin Durant's!" Xavier said, smacking my notebook closed.



“Yeah, J.D., you looked better with your braids.”

That comment came from a girl named Jessyka. Jessyka always sat with my friends and me at lunch because she was on the peewee football team with us. She wore her hair in ponytail twists, and her nails were always painted different cool colors and designs every week. Sometimes while we ate, we'd look at YouTube videos on her phone. I always wanted to watch barber channels.

Jessyka was also Vanessa's friend from kids' track-and-field. And she wasn't just ON the team, she was the STAR. Jessyka anchored the boys' and girls' 4 x 100 relay team, so that meant she was faster than EVERYBODY. She was so good, she got to run with ten- and eleven-year-olds. Sometimes she would come over to my house and paint Vanessa's nails.

“My mom wants me to look like Flo-Jo when I run my races,” she told me. “Flo-Jo is my hero! I watch YouTube videos of her. I'm going to start uploading videos of my own races soon. And maybe videos of me doing other kids' nails.”

I wasn't exactly sure who "Flo-Jo" was, but when I asked my mom, she said Flo-Jo was an amazing track star and her hero, too.

Even Jessyka's last name, Fleet, made her sound like a born athlete.

It was so embarrassing to hear her say something bad about my hair.

But if I was being honest, I was used to being teased.

My clothes and shoes were hand-me-downs from my aunt and uncle in North Carolina. They had kids a bit older than me and mailed a box of my cousins' used clothes every time the weather changed, so I was always out of style.

Before, my hair was the only thing no one made fun of!

We finally pulled up to Douglass Elementary after the longest bus ride ever. Nothing had changed about it from the year before. Everything about Douglass was old. Our dusty schoolbooks nearly fell apart, the stairs creaked when you stepped on them. One time a kid almost fell through!

We had to change classes after every subject,

and although I tried to keep my hat on in between, every teacher told me I had to take it off when I sat down at my desk. So all morning, different groups of kids of all ages could get a crack in.

“Yo, your hair looks a mess!”

“J.D.’s MOM cut his hair . . . !”

Jordan could always get the other kids to pipe down if it went too far. But Jordan was never in class with me because I was in honors classes. He could be, too, but I think he filled in the wrong bubbles on multiple-choice tests on purpose.

I knew I could meet up with Jordan again at lunch and maybe the lunch ladies would let me keep my hat on while I ate.

No such luck.

Because Mom was still a student, I qualified for free lunch. School didn’t offer the most exciting food in the world, but since it was the first day, there was pizza and tater tots.

“J.D.! Good to see you back in school!” Ms. Carol said. She was a lunch lady with a close-cropped gray haircut. She smiled and scooped up a handful of tater tots for me. “Now take that hat off, you know it’s not allowed.”

Unbelievable!

As I made my way to the lunch table to sit next to Jordan, it seemed as if the whole world was slowing down and everyone was looking at my hair.

The first thing I noticed when I sat down between Jordan and Xavier was all the new Marvel character lunch boxes. The few times a year my mom packed my lunch, it was always in a brown bag.

“The food inside is the same, isn’t it?” my granddad responded whenever I tried to complain.

Sitting between Jordan and Xavier, I quietly put a piece of pizza into my mouth. I wasn’t in the mood to say much to anyone.

Jessyka sat across from us.

“I won my race again this weekend, J.D.,” Jessyka said. “I’m going to be the best wide receiver our team has ever seen!”

“I bet you’re right,” I replied. “I’m still getting used to switching from offense to defense.”

“Hmm. It’s probably better for you not to get hit all the time,” she said.

Wait, what was that supposed to mean?

Jessyka brought out the newest edition of *Spider-Man*. Last year she was Gwen Stacy for Halloween.

She started to read the comic and then stopped, looking up at me.

“You know, J.D., you should let Xavier’s dad cut your hair next time,” she said. “I like how his hair looks.”

Jordan and Xavier couldn’t stop laughing.

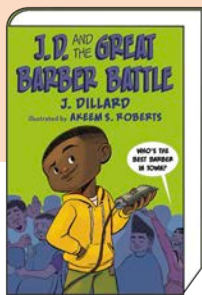
If this was going to be every day of third grade, I knew I wasn’t going to be able to take it.

I needed a plan, and maybe my mom’s box of hair supplies could help.

J.D. and the Great Barber Battle

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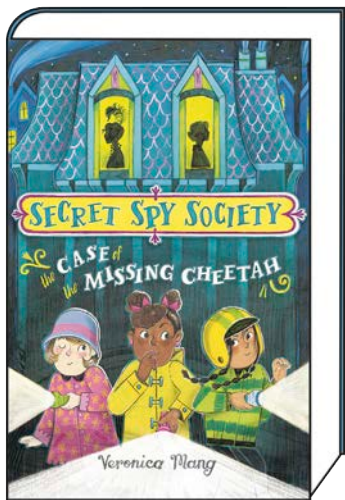


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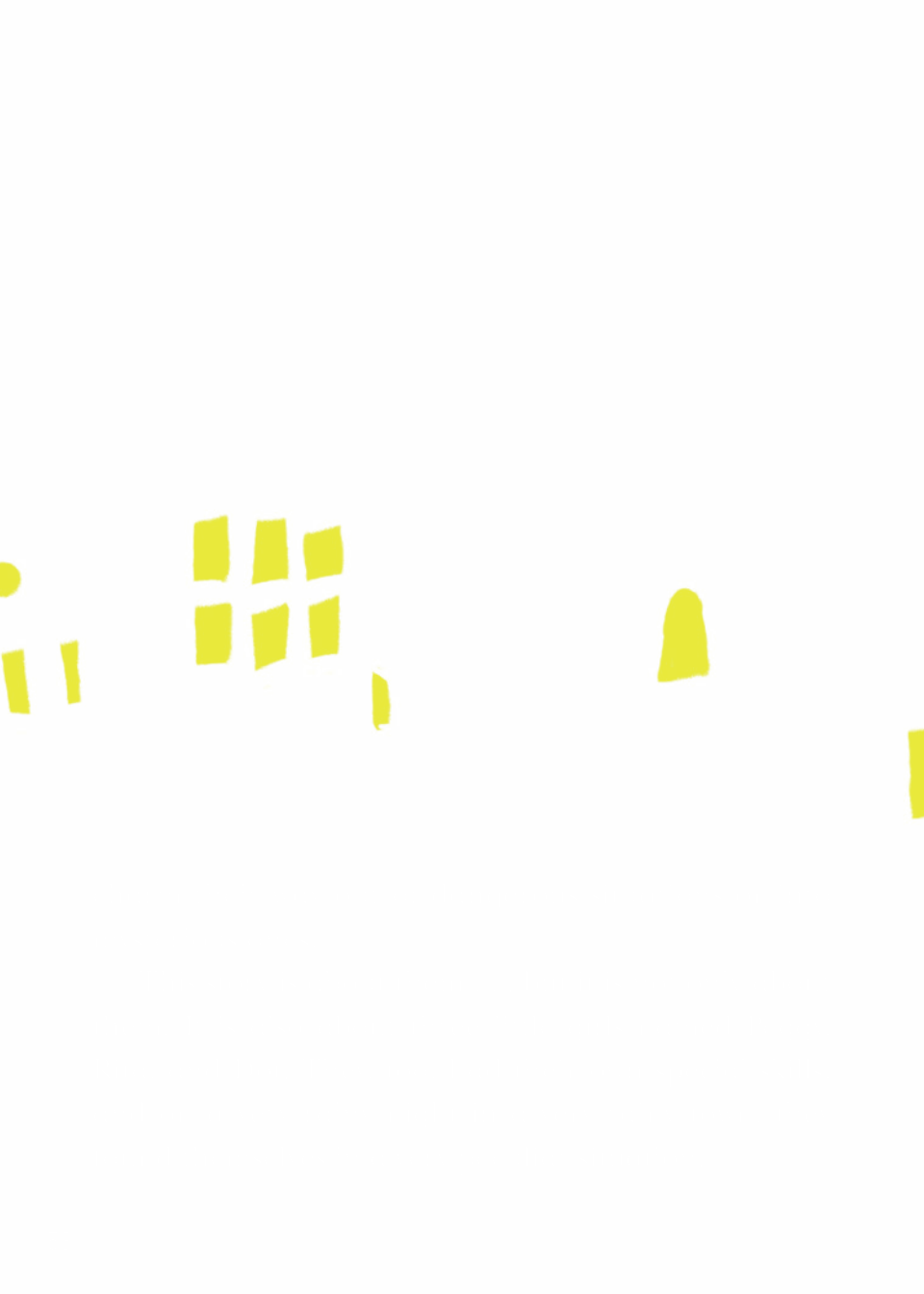
Secret Spy Society: The Case of the Missing Cheetah

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The first book in a highly illustrated new chapter book series about three delightfully mischievous young girls and some of the most enigmatic women in history who worked as spies.



Chapter
ONE



In the little girls' "clubhouse," things were a bit too quiet. The spy club met routinely in Rita's attic, but what was the point anymore? The clubhouse phone hadn't rung for weeks, and it was collecting dust.

Usually, the girls' skills were put to use solving mysteries, like stolen ballet slippers or cryptic notes left in sidewalk chalk. Tonight, however, the girls were just bored. All that was left to do was to sit around the clubhouse and play some sort of game to pass the time.

On this evening, that was Go Fish, and Rita was taking a very long time on her next move.

Rita, who was one for planning, calculating, and figuring out, was trying very hard to decide whom to request an ace from.

Peggy, who was one for charm, chatting, and spunkiness, was practicing card tricks.

Card tricks can be useful in sticky situations



or for pranks or for occupying yourself when your friend is taking too long.

Dot, who was one for acrobatics, crafts, and doing things with her hands, chose to occupy herself by building a giant card tower. It got taller and taller and taller and taller . . .

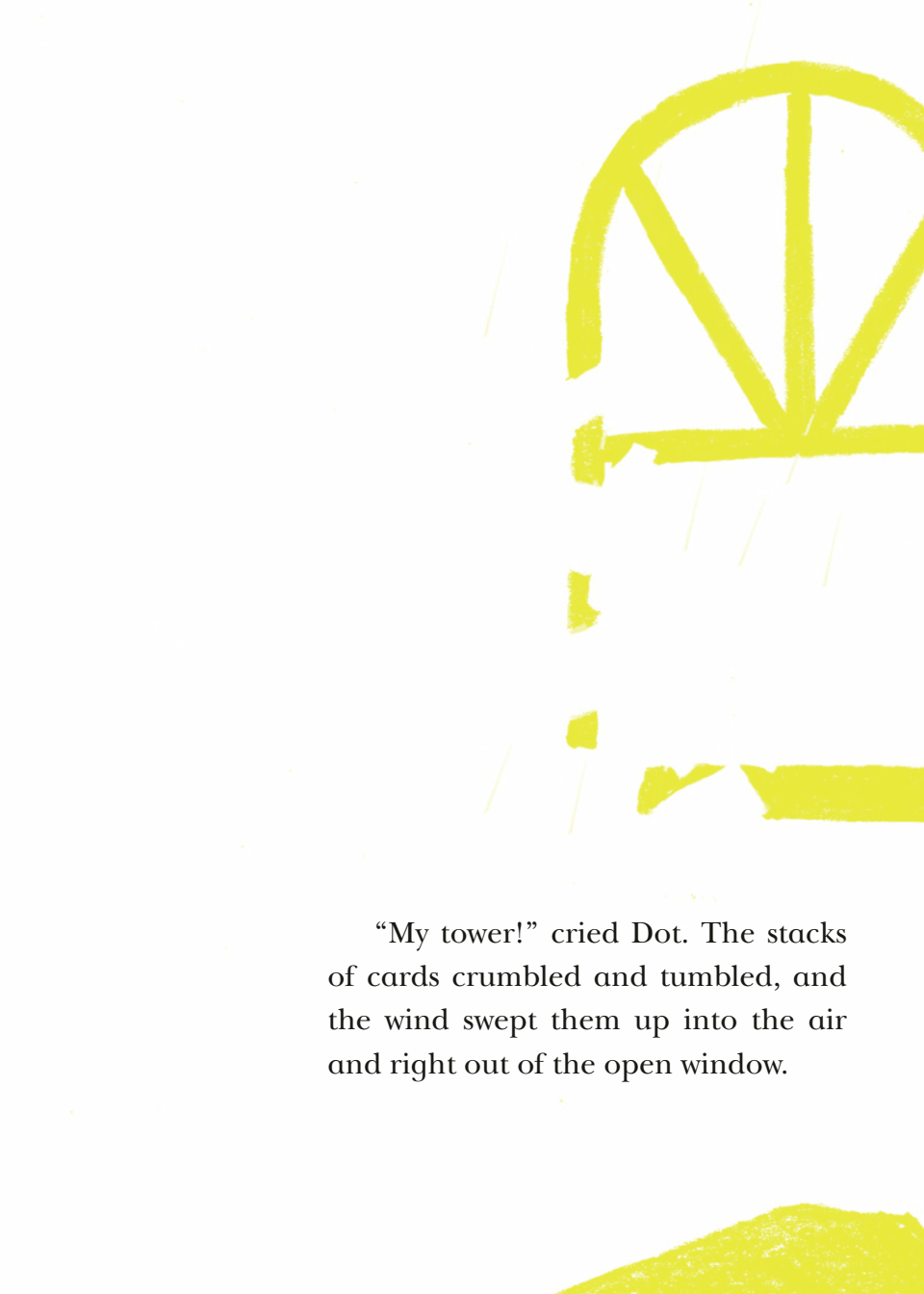


“Ah-ha!” said Rita. Finally, a decision had been made.

WHOOSH!

went the card tower.





“My tower!” cried Dot. The stacks of cards crumbled and tumbled, and the wind swept them up into the air and right out of the open window.

The girls rushed after them and watched as the cards floated away into the storm outside.

“Well,” sighed Peggy, “there goes our fun.” They were just about to turn away when something odd happened. Through the fog and the rain, they saw a woman under a yellow umbrella walking unusually fast down the street. They supposed that this was not out of the ordinary. But in the middle of the night? And in the middle of a storm?

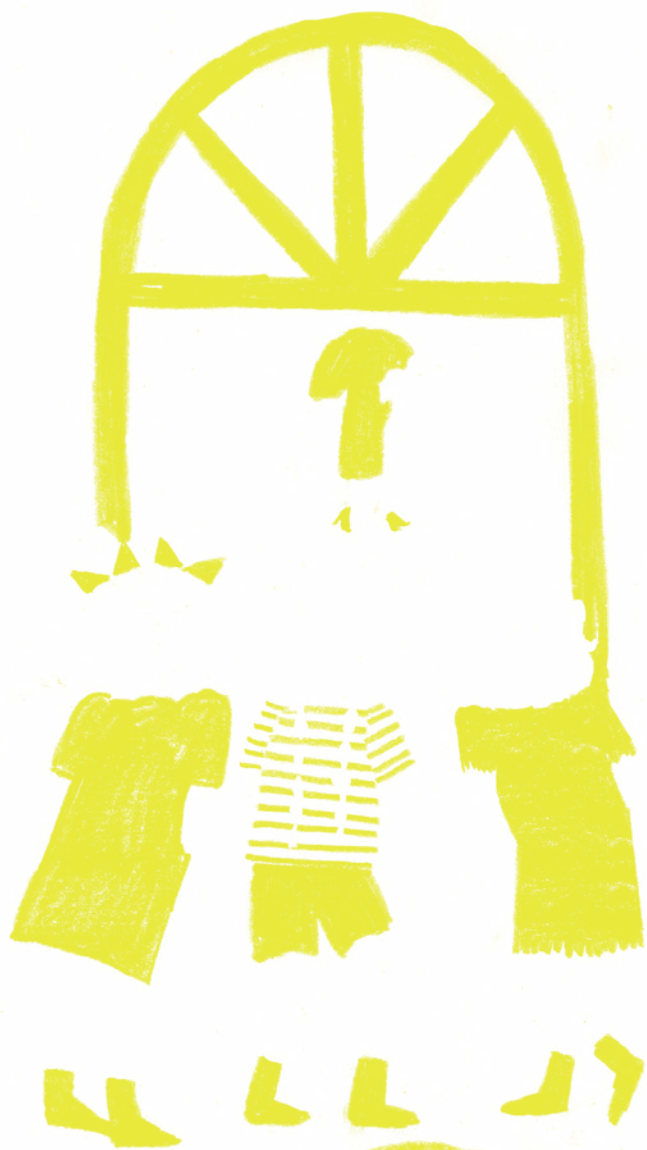
“How odd,” said Rita.

“How peculiar,” said Dot.

“And how absolutely unignorable,” said Peggy.

There was nothing to discuss—the girls swept into action. They had, after all, just lost their only entertainment, and perhaps it was time to find their own mystery.

At this point in their sleuthing pursuits, the girls had gone on so many adventures that they had an unspoken routine. For example, Dot was usually the stunt girl, because she moved very fast and swift, more so than most children her age. She sped around the room and collected all the necessary materials: a flashlight, Rita’s notebook, Peggy’s sunglasses, their rain shoes, a snack—all the essentials. Dot was usually done before the other girls and would stand impatient and fidgety until they were ready.



A magnifying glass, for up-close inspections



Rita was the problem solver. She made sure all the details were figured out. Where were they going? Did they need to bring any books? Know any codes? Plot any maps? She always had a stockpile of information handy that made her excellent at figuring out tough problems. All of these brainy and mathematical things came very easily for Rita.

A screwdriver, for sticky situations



Peggy was the performer.

A private composition book, for super-secret notes



A yo-yo, for looking inconspicuous



A harmonica, for when spies have the blues





Binoculars, for peeking secretly



Pens and pencils, for note-taking

Scissors and string, for quick inventions



A flashlight, for rainy nights like tonight



A sandwich, for snack emergencies



She could talk her way into or out of any situation, and convince even the most cranky, skeptical adults. She always made sure that they had an explanation to get out of any sticky situation and were fully equipped with disguises. Hats, hoods, hairdos—she would pack sunglasses and extra outfits to hide in plain sight. Only in case of emergency, of course, but every good spy needs to prepare. Today, their needs were few but specific: raincoats and headgear for both cover and function, since it was storming.



Outside, the rain poured down
on them with loud

PLUNK
PLUNKS

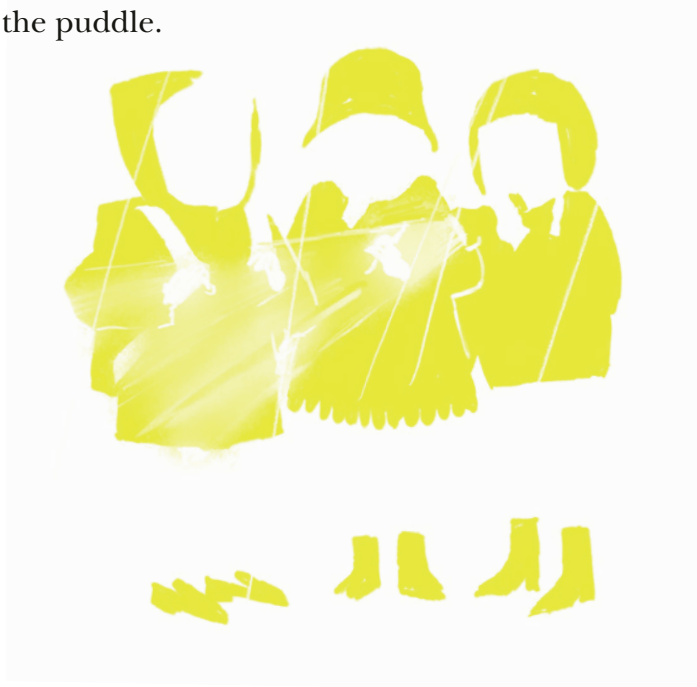
on their hoods
and hats and helmets. They trailed
behind the umbrellaed figure, follow-
ing through twisty, turny streets.

The umbrellaed lady was taking
an odd route, but they tried their best
to keep up.

Their feet splish-splash-splish-splashed in puddles as they shuffled down the street. Peggy's foot landed on the wet sidewalk, but instead of the normal splash or plop, her foot landed with a

CLINK!

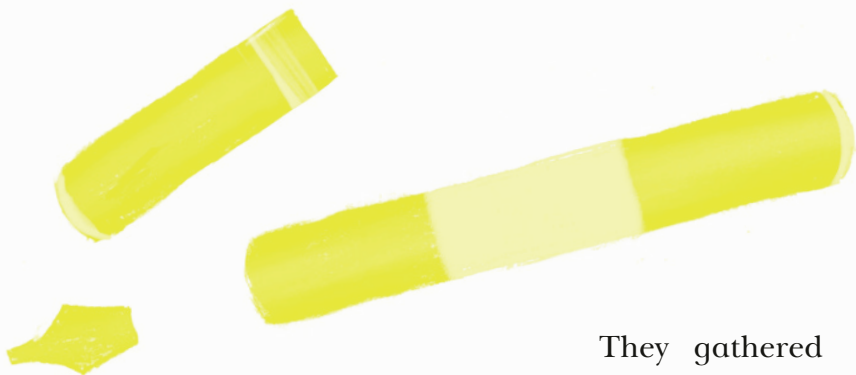
“Wait up!” she whisper-yelled to the other girls. They looped back around, and Dot pointed the flashlight down at Peggy's boots. They crowded over as she reached down and pulled a long muddy something out of the puddle.



“A stick?” asked Rita.

“A fork?” asked Dot.

“Even better,” said Peggy, wiping off the mud. “A very fancy and very important-looking clue!”



They gathered around and stared at the shiny gold thing in Peggy’s hand. A fountain pen! And etched into it, they saw two elegant letters: *N.K.*

“*N.K.?*” the girls wondered aloud.

Somehow, this felt familiar. *N.K. . . . N.K. . . .* The girls didn’t think they knew anyone with the initials *N.K.*, did they?

“Oh no!” Rita gasped. “Where did the woman go?”

“I think we might have lost her,” Dot said. They all stopped. They had a hard time seeing anything through the storm. Dot pulled out her binoculars and peered down the street, but there was no sign of the yellow umbrella.













“N-E-W. . . . I-N-T-E-L. . . . N-K.” Rita spelled out, translating with her eyes on her notes.

“N.K.? Again?” asked Dot.

“I wonder what that means,” Peggy said.

Rita was puzzled. “I’m not sure. But she looks like someone who is up to something.”



The girls snuck in closer when, suddenly, the flash-light dropped out of Dot's hand and landed with a horrible

THWACK!



“АНННН!”

“АНННН!”





Everyone stood looking at one another. The mysterious woman stared at them with wide eyes, turned away, and dove for her umbrella.

“Nope!” Dot swooped in and snatched it away.

The girls circled closer and wiped the rain out of their eyes. Peggy held up the pen.

“Miss Khan?!”

For there, standing in front of them, was none other than their very own teacher.





Chapter TWO

“What?” Peggy exclaimed.

“How?” Dot shrieked.

“. . . and why?” Rita chirped.

Miss Khan was frozen. It was very strange for the girls to spot their teacher outside of school, but judging by the look on Miss Khan’s face, it was even stranger for her to spot them. “I’m happy to see you! But you sure gave me quite a scare. What on earth are you doing way out here in the middle of the night?”

Dot and Rita glanced side-eyed at Peggy. “We . . . well . . . we, uh . . . we needed to . . . get a new deck of cards! Yes, you see, we lost ours earlier today. It was tragic! A freaky wind in Rita’s attic blew them—whoosh! Right out the window!” Peggy’s eyes were big and full

of theatrics. Rita, Dot, and even Miss Khan were completely absorbed by her story. “And you know how antsy we get when we have nothing to do, right? So, of course, we absolutely needed to get that new deck of cards right away. And you know how this town is—everything closes so early! The only place open this late is that store, you know, that one way over there on the other side of town. Sad, really. So few options around here!”

Peggy took a deep breath.

“Anyhow, we’re walking along and we find this beautiful pen in a puddle, and then we see you! Up ahead. Of course we didn’t know it was you, but we figured, ‘Oh boy, this beautiful pen might belong to that lady up there, we’d better catch her!’ So, you know, we caught up, and, uh. . . . Here’s your pen!” Peggy gave a sheepish grin and thrust the pen forward. “N.K. That’s you!”

Miss Khan blinked. “Please, my dears, do come inside.”



They went through the doors of the mysterious house. Miss Khan warmed a kettle on the stove. Rita was wandering around the room and, of course, paused at the bookshelf. There were all sorts of fascinating books: books about architecture and astronomy and Antarctica and aerospace engineering. There was even a book about books! She pulled out

a particularly fat and interesting one called *Cryptography, Ciphers, and the Art of Codes* and plopped it on the table.







Dot, meanwhile, sped around the room, picking up trinkets and putting them down and then whizzing to the next shelf. She made her way from thing to thing until she came to a door that was almost hidden in the corner. It was open a crack, and she peeked through. There was a room full of other women in fancy dresses. Twinklings of piano and trumpets drifted from inside. Some of the women were singing and a few were gathered around a table. Dot thought they looked very serious, like there was something important going on.

“Who are they?” asked Dot.

Miss Khan hurried over.

“That’s my . . . dance troupe. We get together every now and then to practice our routines.” She quickly shut the door.



In a few minutes, Miss Khan had produced three steaming cups of hot chocolate. The girls, naturally, added marshmallows.

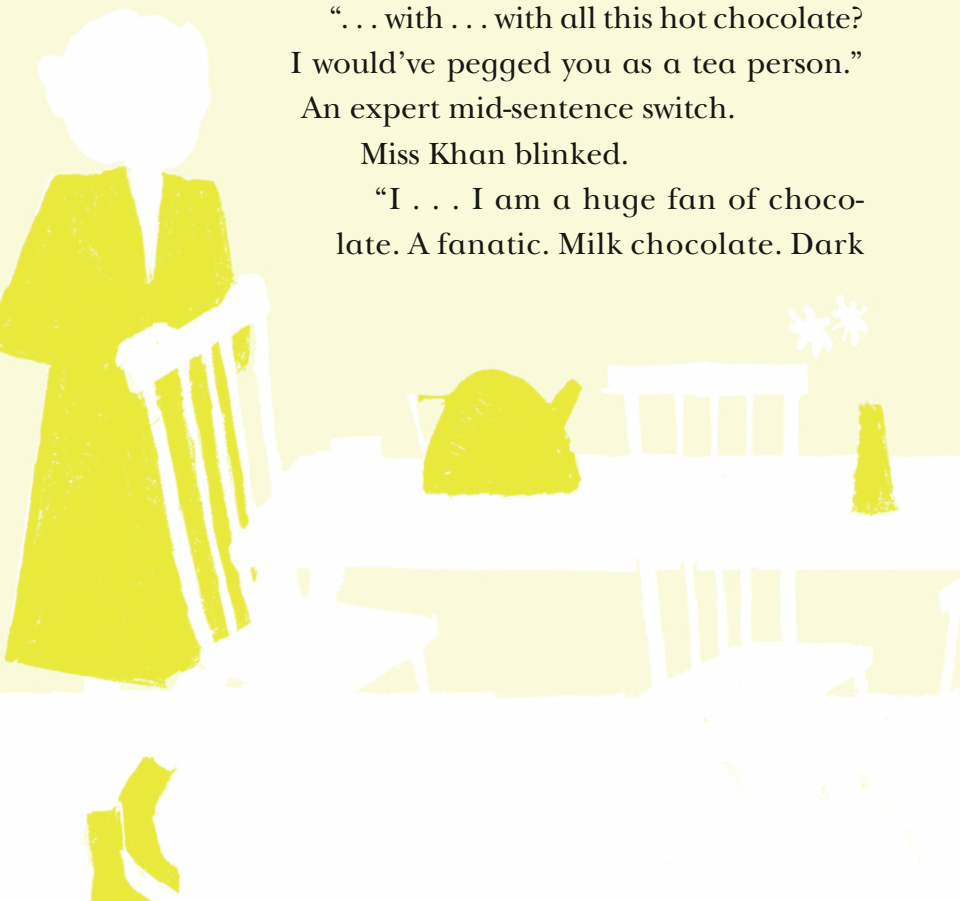
Peggy slinked into her chair. “So, Miss Khan, I never got to ask. What exactly were you doing . . .”

Rita shoved her with a pointy elbow and gave her a look that said *please stop talking or you're going to get us caught!*

“ . . . with . . . with all this hot chocolate? I would've pegged you as a tea person.”
An expert mid-sentence switch.

Miss Khan blinked.

“I . . . I am a huge fan of chocolate. A fanatic. Milk chocolate. Dark



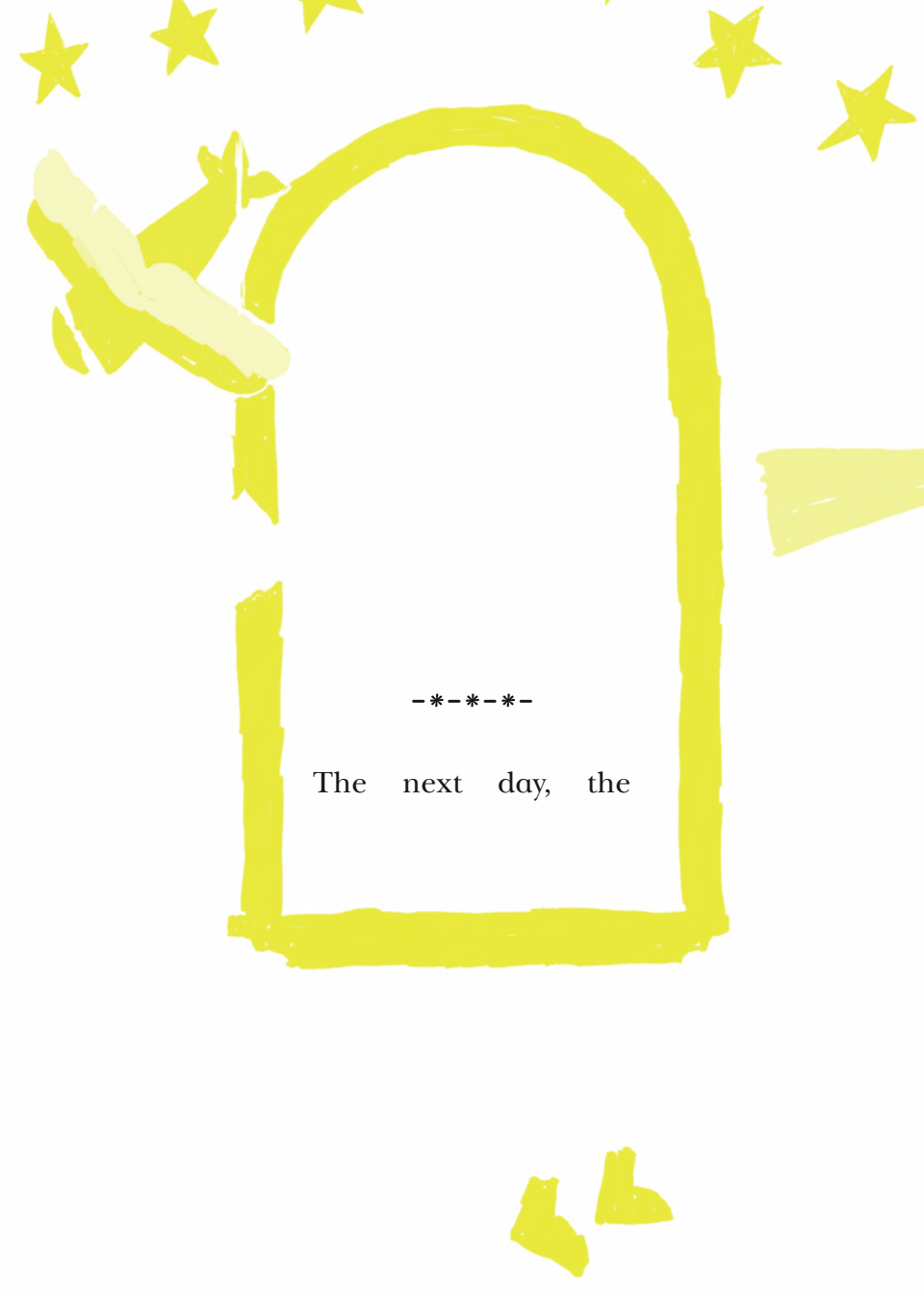
chocolate. Even white chocolate. I'll take chocolate over boring tea anytime. Wouldn't you?"

The girls nodded in perfect synchronization.

Miss Khan looked satisfied, but the girls knew there was still more to the story. Rita looked at Miss Khan, then at the fat book that was on the table, and then once more around the room. There were too many coincidences. Like Peggy, all she wanted to do was ask Miss Khan a thousand questions until she could say for certain what was going on. But their whole mission would be ruined if they got busted now! So, instead of asking more questions, she sipped and chatted until it was time to go home.

That night, the girls slept at Rita's with their bellies





-*-*-*-

The next day, the

girls lazed around the clubhouse, still thinking about their mysterious encounter with Miss Khan. Peggy was on the floor, paging through the *Daily Herald*. Most girls their age didn't read the *Daily Herald*, but they were a spy club, and it was of the utmost importance for them to stay informed.

Today, however, they were feeling sluggish after their late night, and because of this, Peggy was looking for the comics section.

“What could it all mean?” Rita wondered out loud, for what felt like the hundredth time that afternoon.

Peggy let out a long whine. “Would you please let it go?” How exasperating!

Dot was practicing handstands in the corner. “Yeah, Rita, it was no big deal. That cocoa was the most exciting part, and besides”—she cartwheeled out of her handstand and then launched into another one—“it's Miss Khan. She's just our teacher. That's all there is to it.”

“Yeah!” Peggy snorted. “It's not like she has some sort of other life.”



Dot chuckled and joined in. “Ha! Yeah, or Miss Khan is secretly an alien!”

Rita glared at them. This time her look said, *You’re not funny and you stink.*

“Or she has a room of pirate treasure!”

“Or she is a mad scientist!”

“Or a world-famous movie star!”

Dot tumbled from her acrobatics in a fit of giggles. “Or, I’ve got it— she has a secret identity and we accidentally caught her!”

“Ha, secret identity.” Peggy snickered and flipped to the next page. Then her giggles s t o p p e d .



“What in the world!” she cried.

Rita and Dot rushed over to see what the excitement was. They both gasped when they saw a familiar face right there on page six.

“That’s one of the women from behind the door!” Rita gasped. “I knew it!”

In the newspaper was a photograph of a beautiful woman in a feathery cap. Underneath was her name, Josephine Baker, spelled out in thick black letters. The headline read, “Beloved performer, socialite, and philanthropist suspected of ties to espionage.”







“Espionage?!” The girls were stunned and intrigued. Without a moment’s hesitation, Dot grabbed the flashlight and

Rita grabbed the radio. Peggy didn’t know what to grab, but she hopped up anyway because this was all very exciting and she wanted to be helpful. Their new mission was clear.





In a hurry, they laced their galoshes, buttoned their raincoats, and sped out of the house with the torn newspaper page in their hands.



KNOCK

KNOCK

KNOCKS.

The door opened a crack. Out peered two blinking eyes.

“Miss Khan?”

The door opened some more.

“Girls! What brings you back here today?”

Peggy took a deep breath.

“We know that you’re spies.”

Miss Khan blinked at them.

“Please, my dears, do come inside.”





The house was full of wonders. All around them, the women whom they had spotted last night were doing lots of interesting things, like listening to radios and pointing to maps. Some were playing pool or piano or having lively conversations. It was a Secret Spy Society.





Mary Jane Richards Denham: formerly enslaved, and a very courageous undercover expert

Virginia Hall: frequently undercover and in disguise

Yolande Beekman: very kind, wireless code expert



Cecily Lefort, code name Alice: skilled at code-breaking, sailing, and high-society manners

Violette Szabo, code name Louise: expert navigator, escape artist, and joke-teller

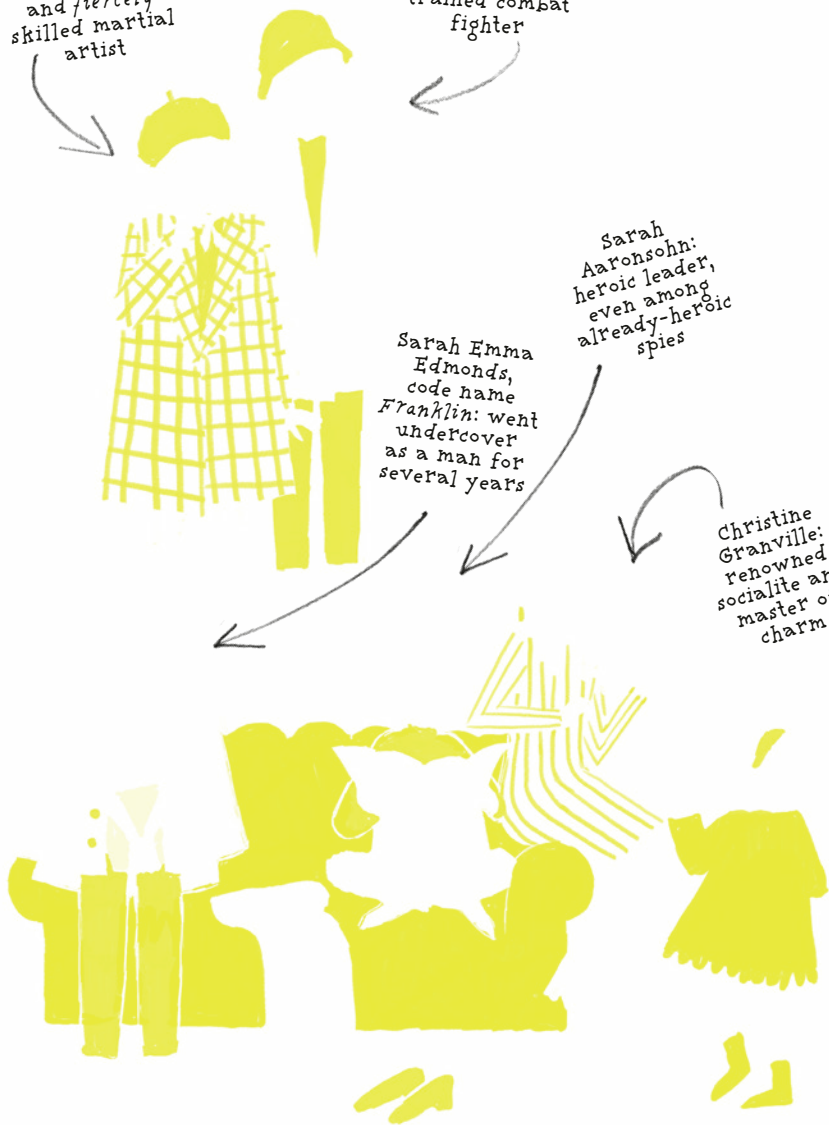
Nancy Wake:
self-taught
journalist,
charm master,
and fiercely
skilled martial
artist

Odette
Hallowes, code
name *Lise*:
seemingly
ordinary but a
trained combat
fighter

Sarah
Aaronsohn:
heroic leader,
even among
already-heroic
spies

Sarah Emma
Edmonds,
code name
Franklin: went
undercover
as a man for
several years

Christine
Granville:
renowned
socialite and
master of
charm



Barreling from room to room, they almost smashed headfirst into a tall, slender woman.

“Who are these three?” she asked. The woman peered down at them through long eyelashes. A smile danced across her face. It was Josephine, the woman from the newspaper!

“I’m Rita!”

“I’m Dot!”

“I’m Peggy! And we want to be spies, too!”

Miss Khan followed in behind them.

“It’s true,” she said. “Their skills are quite promising and they followed me all the way here yesterday, even in the middle of the storm!”

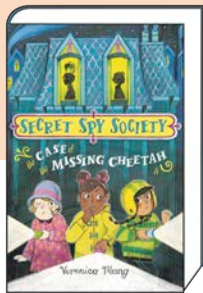
Josephine gazed down at them, thinking. Her nose wrinkled.

“Spies, you say? Well, well . . . we may just have a job for you after all.”



Secret Spy Society: The Case of the Missing Cheetah

By Veronica Mang

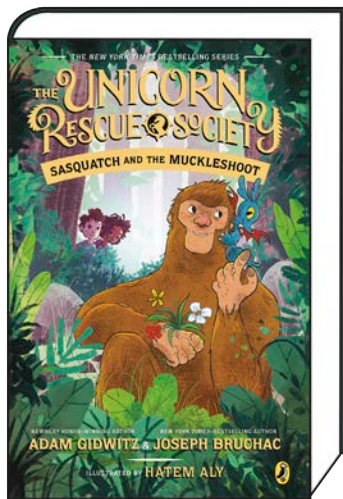


What did you think after reading a few pages?

What did you think of the cover?

Would you share this book with your students? Why or why not?





9780735231788

The Unicorn Rescue Society: Sasquatch and the Muckleshoot

By Adam Gidwitz and Joseph Bruchac

Illustrated by Hatem Aly

The Unicorn Rescue Society travels to the fir trees of the Pacific Northwest to save the famously elusive creature, the Sasquatch.



CHAPTER ONE

Uchenna Devereaux looked around the classroom.

Something was wrong.

All the usual kids were there. Jimmy, the big boy with the crew cut, had learned to fart to the tune of “Happy Birthday” over the weekend, and was showing his new skill to his pals Jasper and Johnna. They were singing along. Janey was staring out the window, digging into her nose with a finger—no, now two fingers. Pai Lu was wearing black eyeshadow, black nail polish, and black lipstick,

and she sighed heavily as she read from a book of poetry by Algernon Swinburne called *A Ballad of Death*.

All of this was normal.

And yet, there was definitely something wrong. . . .

Their teacher, Miss Vole, was trying to teach them about trees. “Do you children know what an oak tree is?”

Uchenna sighed. Miss Vole always treated them like they were in kindergarten.



“An oak tree is one of the tallest trees here in New Jersey. But on the West Coast, in states like California, Oregon, and Washington—” She paused. “Have you heard of the West Coast, children?”

The lesson made Uchenna want to stick a pencil through her ear canal and into her brain. Which meant Elliot, her best friend and an expert on pretty much everything, was probably ready to throw himself through one of the hermetically sealed classroom windows. Uchenna glanced at him. . . .



Elliot! That's what was wrong. Where was Elliot?

Uchenna swiveled around in her chair, looking for Elliot Eisner, the only other kid in the school who was a member of the incredibly secret Unicorn Rescue Society. What happened to him? Why wasn't he in school? Was he sick? Had there been an accident? Maybe one of their enemies had captured him! Or was it—

BAM!

The door flew open, knocking three framed pictures off the wall.

Standing in the doorway was a tall man with a black-and-white beard, crazy hair, a threadbare tweed suit, and eyebrows that looked like something out of a science experiment.

"Buenos días, Miss Vole!" Professor Fauna exclaimed. Professor Fauna was the school social studies teacher. Everyone thought that he was a weirdo, and that he believed in unicorns, and that his office was a torture chamber under the school.

Only Uchenna and Elliot knew the truth: that he was definitely a weirdo, that he did believe in unicorns, and that his office under the school was not a torture chamber, but rather the headquarters of the Unicorn Rescue Society. “I am so sorry to interrupt you,” Professor Fauna continued. “But I need to, ahem, borrow Elliot and Uchenna for a moment.” His eyes landed on Uchenna, and his face lit up. He whispered to her, “It’s about Bigfoot!” But because she was halfway across the room, his whisper was loud enough for everyone to hear.

“Did you just say it’s about Bigfoot?” Pai Lu demanded, her words dripping with sarcasm.

Professor Fauna suddenly straightened up and looked very awkward. “Er . . . ah . . .



um . . .” Everyone was staring at him. “Yes!” he said at last. “I did say Bigfoot! My big foot. You see, my right foot is bigger than my left. On the bottom of that big foot I have a horrible wart.” The children all grimaced. “It is very painful,” the professor went on. “And . . . and infected! So I need Elliot and Uchenna to help me!”

Miss Vole looked confused. “Why do you need Elliot and Uchenna to help you with your wart?”

“Right. Well . . . um . . . because . . .,” Professor Fauna stammered. “Because . . . I must drive to the doctor! But I cannot press upon the gas pedal because the wart is so painful! So one of them must do that for me while I drive. And . . . I have another wart on my thumb! So I cannot steer! So one of them will push the gas, and the other will steer, and I will sit in the driver’s seat, telling them what to do.”

Everyone stared at the professor, their mouths hanging open.

“It is no problem,” Professor Fauna added. “We have done it before.”

Finally, Miss Vole said, “Professor, that doesn’t make any sense.”

“*¡Mala palabra!* Am I not a teacher? Since when do teachers make sense? They are coming with me. Elliot, Uchenna, let’s go.” Then he looked around the room. “Wait, where is Elliot?”

Uchenna shrugged.

“Come! *¡Vámonos!* We will find him on the way!”

And with that, Professor Fauna turned and swept from the room. Uchenna hurried after him, glancing back at her class as she left.

Their mouths were still hanging open.

Then Jimmy farted the final two notes of “Happy Birthday.”





CHAPTER TWO

Elliot Eisner poked his head out of the cafeteria.

He looked to the right, in the direction of his classroom. There was no one in the hallway. Perfect.

By dawdling, hanging back, and, finally, hiding behind one of the big cafeteria doors, he had waited just long enough to avoid the crush of the morning crowd. Crowds made him nervous. Actually, everything made him nervous. Even his best friend, Uchenna, made him nervous sometimes.

To be clear: Uchenna was awesome. She knew

a ton about music, she always dressed like the lead singer in a punk rock band, and she didn't even mind that he obsessively read books like *Deadly Beasts of Kazakhstan*. And *Scottish Poisonous Snakes*. And *The Ten Thousand Worst Ways to Die*, volumes 1, 2, and 4 (volume 3 was missing from the public library).

Of all the things that made Elliot nervous, though, there was something that made him more nervous than anything else.

Actually, not something. *Someone*.

Elliot looked to the right again, down the hall, and then to the left, in the direction of the stairs that led to the subbasement. It was all clear. That certain someone was nowhere to be seen.

Perhaps it was going to be a good day. Perhaps he was finally going to do only normal stuff. Learn about something boring, like commas or trees. Not about supposedly mythical creatures that turn out to be real, like Jersey Devils and vicious dragons with magical saliva.

Not today, Elliot thought. Please let this be a boring day.

He shouldered his backpack and stepped cautiously out into the hall. Still nothing.

He began to walk toward the classroom. His shoes squeaked on the newly waxed floor.

No mythical creatures, he thought. No evil billionaires, no hazardous quests, no plane crashes. And not *him*. Please, not *him*.

Elliot glanced behind, at the stairs to the sub-basement. Still clear. He turned toward the door of his classroom—

SMACK!

Elliot blinked. He was now staring at the ceiling, lying flat on the floor.

And *he* was looking down at Elliot. The one person in the world Elliot really did not want to see this morning. It was a wild-haired, black-and-white-bearded man with a very intense look on his face.

No, Elliot thought. Let this just be a bad dream. He closed his eyes, hoping that when he opened them again he would be waking up at home.

“Elliot!” Professor Fauna whispered. “This is no time for a nap! Come on!”

Elliot opened his eyes. Uchenna was grinning down at him.

She said, “We’re going to rescue Bigfoot.”

Elliot closed his eyes again, sighed, and said, “Of course.”





CHAPTER THREE

Professor Fauna pushed open the doors of the school and marched toward the parking lot.

“Bigfoot?!” Elliot said, trying to keep up. “Seriously? Bigfoot doesn’t even exist! That myth has been debunked hundreds of times!”

Uchenna was singing softly to herself:




g *What is a Bigfoot?*

Do we even know?

In the deepest winter,

Is it white as fallen snow?



 *Living in the jungle,* 
Is it orange like an ape?
Hiding in your lunch box,
Is it purple like a grape? 

Elliot looked at her. “I have to admit,” he said, “that was one of your better songs.”

Uchenna grinned.

“If Bigfoot is a myth, Elliot,” Professor Fauna was saying, “why did I just get a call from Mack gəqidəb?”

“Mack guh-kay-dub?” said Uchenna, trying to pronounce the unfamiliar word. “That’s an unusual name.”

The professor raised an eyebrow. “You think so? I have known a number of people named Mack! There is even a tasty sandwich named that. Have you never heard of the Large Mack Donald?”

“I don’t think that’s what it’s called.”

“Anyway, Mack is a member of the Muckleshoot

Indian Nation. His name, ɡəqɪdəb, in Muckleshoot means ‘bright minded.’ His people live in the state of Washington. Now that is an unusual name, is it not? Washington? Why would someone name anything after two thousand pounds of laundry?” Professor Fauna shook his head. “Anyway, Mack and his family, like many of the Muckleshoot, are concerned about protecting the natural world . . . including creatures unrecognized by science!”

They had come to Professor Fauna’s blue-and-white airplane, the *Phoenix*. It was in its usual three parking spots, between Principal Kowalski’s sea-foam-green hatchback and Miss Vole’s Harley motorcycle.

A shiver skittered down Elliot’s back. It was not just that the *Phoenix* was scarred with rust and dents, or that its front window was spider-webbed with cracks. It wasn’t even that on their last flight, the plane had crashed. It was that, as Professor Fauna happily admitted, the *Phoenix* crashed on



every flight. But somehow the professor and his friends always got it flying again. Elliot wished they would stop doing that.

Professor Fauna flung open the passenger door of the small plane and helped Uchenna in. Elliot hung back. Inside the plane, Uchenna picked up a camouflage backpack with holes poked all over the main compartment. She unzipped it. A small blue creature popped out. Its head looked like the head of a tiny deer. A tiny blue deer.

“Hey, Jersey,” said Uchenna.

Jersey, the Jersey Devil, stood up in the bag and spread his bright red wings. Then he licked Uchenna’s face.

Uchenna looked through the open airplane door at Elliot. “Aren’t you coming?”

Elliot was staring at the *Phoenix* like it was trying to kill him. Which, as far as he was concerned, it was.

Suddenly, Jersey leaped from Uchenna’s arms and glided on outstretched wings over to Elliot. The little blue creature dug his claws into Elliot’s shirt. Then he licked Elliot on the nose.

Elliot sighed.

“Okay,” he said. “Let’s do this thing.”



CHAPTER FOUR

The little plane careened down the school driveway toward the busy intersection, where trucks and buses rumbled across their path.

Imminent death, Elliot thought. Destruction. Doom. Disaster.

Of course he didn't say those words. He was too busy screaming.

At the last possible second, the professor yanked back on the yoke. The *Phoenix* zoomed upward, grazing the top of an eighteen-wheeler truck.

"ALL RIGHT!" Uchenna whooped, over the



panicked blast of the truck's horn.

Elliot stopped screaming. He was still terrified. He'd just run out of air in his lungs. He took a deep breath and considered whether he should start screaming again. He decided against it. He'd save his voice for the crash landing.

Uchenna gazed out the side window as the plane banked and headed west. Below them she could see their school, the forest, and the smokestacks of the Schmoke Industries power plant.



Jersey climbed up on her head for a better view.

The professor said, “Elliot, you said Bigfoot was a myth.”

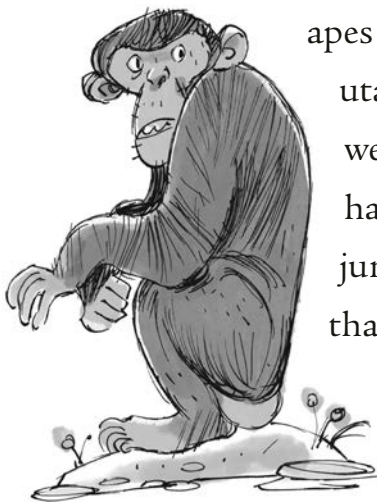
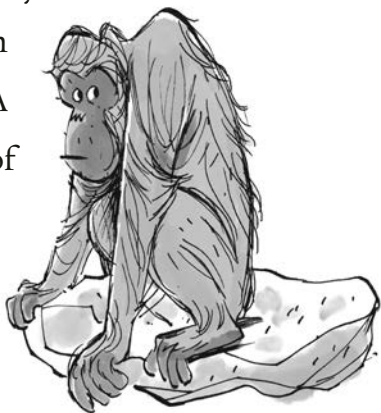
Elliot exhaled. They were flying smoothly now. He pushed back his mop of curly hair and sat up straighter. Discussing mythical creatures with Professor Fauna was one of his favorite things.

“I did. Every single photo or video has been revealed as a fraud. Thousands of people search for Bigfoot every year, and yet there’s still no evidence that it exists.”

“Ah . . . but, Elliot, surely you are aware of the common mistake you are making. A dearth of proof is not a proof of dearth.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Uchenna asked.

“For centuries,” Professor Fauna said, flipping some switches on the dashboard of the little plane—switches that definitely did not do anything—“the scientists of Europe believed that giant apes of all kinds were myths. Orangutans, gorillas, even chimpanzees were unknown, and stories of hairy, manlike creatures in the jungles were thought to be only that—stories. The French believed that orangutans were merely humans living without the



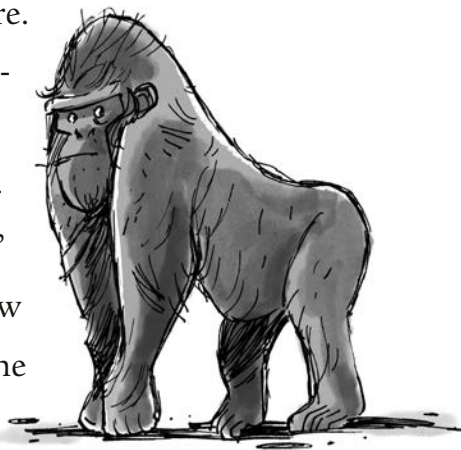
benefits of roads and toilets. *¡Qué raro!* Do I look like an orangutan to you?” Then Professor Fauna made a face like an orangutan.

Uchenna said, “Sorta?”

Professor Fauna ignored her. “Europeans encountered chimpanzees only four hundred years ago! And, until very recently, they didn’t even realize that there are two different species of chimpanzees: chimps and bonobos.”

Just then, Uchenna noticed that the sky was turning black and the clouds were getting thicker. She nudged Elliot. But he was too engrossed in Professor Fauna’s lecture. Jersey had curled up in Elliot’s lap and fallen asleep.

“The case of the gorilla is truly interesting,” the professor went on, now completely ignoring the sky and the airplane’s



controls. “There were reports more than two thousand years ago about giant apes in tropical Africa, twice as big as a human! But, until 1847, scientists



believed that the gorilla was no more than a story! That is barely a hundred and fifty years ago!”

The little plane was starting to shake as it entered the black clouds. Uchenna said, “Elliot, have you checked your—”

“Shhh,” Elliot hushed her. “I need to learn this before we meet Mack gəqিদəb and the

Muckleshoot.”

“All over the world,” the professor went on, “there are stories of giant ape creatures. There are the yeti of the Himalayas, the orang pendek of Indonesia, the yowie in Australia. . . . If the gorilla



was discovered only a hundred fifty years ago, might not all of these apelike creatures exist?”

“Maybe,” said Elliot.

“But—”

“Elliot,” Uchenna interrupted, tightening her seat belt.

“You’d better—”

“Uchenna,” Elliot said, “can it wait just one min—”

Suddenly, a massive gust of wind hit the plane so hard that the *Phoenix* turned upside down. Elliot found himself pasted to the roof of the little aircraft and then, as the plane righted itself, back in his seat. “Gunnnh,” he groaned.

Uchenna reached over. “Your seat belt’s not on.” She strapped her friend in.

Elliot muttered, “Thank you,” and closed his eyes.





CHAPTER FIVE

A few hours later, the *Phoenix* started to rumble and rattle.

Elliot and Uchenna had fallen asleep on each other, with Jersey stretched out between their laps. But all three jerked awake at the sudden turbulence.

“Are we there?” Uchenna asked, wiping her eyes with her sleeve. “Will we be on the ground soon?”

“No and yes,” Professor Fauna replied. “No, we are not quite there. We seem to be about three hundred miles south of our intended destination.”

Elliot stretched his arms above his head. “What’s the ‘yes’ part then?”

“Yes, we will be on the ground soon because we are out of gas.”

Elliot shot a panicked look at Uchenna.

“Don’t worry!” Professor Fauna held up his cell phone. “I have informed Mack, and he is driving down from Washington to meet us.”

Uchenna looked down at the forest ahead of them. “Those trees are big,” she said.

“They look like Douglas firs,” Elliot said. “Some of the oldest are thirteen hundred years old and over three hundred feet tall.” He suddenly turned on Professor Fauna. “We’re not going to try to land there, right?”

“Ah . . . ,” Fauna said, as the plane’s engine began to sputter. “Not exactly . . . You see, there is another very small problem.”

“Which is what?” asked Elliot.

THE UNICORN RESCUE SOCIETY

“We lost our landing gear when we hit that truck on takeoff.”

“WHAT?”

“Sooooo,” Professor Fauna said, pulling hard on the yoke to level the plane into a glide, “we are not going to land among the Douglas firs. We are going to crash among the Douglas firs.”

Elliot grabbed Uchenna, who grabbed Jersey, who grabbed Elliot’s face. Elliot screamed.

And the plane plummeted into the trees.



**The Unicorn Rescue Society:
Sasquatch and
the Muckleshoot**

By Adam Gidwitz and Joseph Bruchac
Illustrated by Hatem Aly



What did you think after reading a few pages?

What did you think of the cover?

Would you share this book with your students? Why or why not?





9780593095713

Astronaut Girl: Journey to the Moon

By Cathy Hapka and Ellen Vandenberg;
Illustrated by Gillian Reid

Can Astronaut Girl save the day with a little help from science? Find out as she and her space crew make their debut in this chapter book series!

Chapter 1

SUMMER DAY SPLASHDOWN!

“Wake up, Astro Cat! Pay attention to the controls,” I said. “We need to practice splashdowns.”

Astro Cat yawned. He is a little lazy, but he’s a pretty good first mate.

“Val,” Mom called from across the yard. “Please watch the Baby—he’s squashing my petunias.”

Mom was working on some experiments in her garden. She’s a botanist. That’s a scientist who works with plants.

I am a scientist who works in space! Daddy is one of those, too. He is an astrophysicist. He was working at his lab today. And I was working at my lab. That's the gazebo in our backyard. Today I was pretending it was the Apollo 11 spacecraft.

"Sure, Mom," I said. "The Apollo 11 had a crew of three. The Baby can be part of the team."

Soon the three of us were in the spaceship. I double-checked my book, *The Universe*, to make sure I was getting everything right.

"Okay, let's focus, people," I told my crew. "A splashdown is how spaceships come back to Earth. A parachute helps them slow down as they fall through the atmosphere. Then they splash into the water to soften their landing."

Astro Cat yawned again, and the Baby was watching a butterfly. I wasn't sure they were

paying close enough attention. But that was why I was the commander!

“We’ll only have one chance to land back on Earth, so it’s important to be prepared,” I warned. I put on my helmet and set my stomp-on rocket launcher at the edge of the gazebo. “Begin the countdown, second mate!”

The Baby gurgled. He tossed a Cheerio out of the gazebo. That reminded me to put his helmet on, too. Astro Cat was sleeping, so I decided to let him be.

“Five!” I counted.

More Cheerios went flying.

“Four, three, two, one . . . liftoff!” I yelled.



I stomped on the launcher. The rocket flew toward Daddy's birdbath, ready to splashdown—and then right over it!

“Oh no!” I cried. “Malfunction! Malfunction! It went over the hedge!”

Suddenly the hedge started shaking. Then a face I'd never seen before poked through the leaves!



Chapter 2

MEETING WALLACE

“Hi,” the face said. “I’m Wallace. We just moved in.”

Then a hand appeared. It was holding my rocket.

“Is this yours?” Wallace asked.

“That’s my rocket,” I told him, grabbing it back.

Mom looked up. “Oh, hello,” she greeted Wallace. “I heard we had new neighbors with an eight-year-old! Look, Val—a kid your age right next door! Come on over, Wallace. Welcome to

the neighborhood!”

He came in through the gate. “Thanks,” he told Mom. “My parents and Gramps and I just moved in, but we’ve been visiting for ages. My aunts and uncles and cousins all live here.”

“How nice,” Mom said with a smile. “That should make it a little easier getting settled.”

“I hope so.” Wallace smiled back at her. Then he looked at me. “Hi,” he said. “Is that a spacesuit? I like it.”

“Yes, it is,” I said. “I made it myself.”

“Cool,” he said.

I noticed he was wearing a weird T-shirt. It said “Catch a Ride on a Comet.”

“Why would you want to catch a ride on a comet?” I asked. “It’s not like they go anywhere interesting. All they do is orbit the sun—just like Earth.”

“How do you know that?” Wallace asked.

Mom chuckled. “Val knows everything about space,” she said. “That’s why we call her Astronaut Girl.”

Wallace wandered toward the gazebo as Mom went back to work. “Wow!” he said. “That looks just like the alien rocket ship Commander Neutron used to breach a black hole in episode number sixty-three!”

Ugh! Now I knew where his T-shirt was from. “You watch *Comet Jumpers*, don’t you?” I said. “That’s a goofy show.”

“It’s not goofy, it’s great!” he said. “It’s my favorite show.”

I rolled my eyes. If that was his favorite show, we probably wouldn’t have anything else in common, either.

“I’ve seen *Comet Jumpers* a few times,” I



told him. “I wasn’t impressed. The science is totally wrong.”

Wallace shrugged. “The show is set in the year 3000,” he said. “I’m sure science will be way more advanced by then. Use your imagination! It could happen.”

I noticed the Baby trying to crawl down the gazebo steps. I picked him up before he could fall.

“Is that your brother?” Wallace asked.

“Uh-huh,” I said. “He’s my second mate. And that’s Astro Cat over there. He’s my first mate, but he’s taking a break right now.”

“Cool,” Wallace said. “Just like Gloob is Commander Neutron’s first mate.”

“Yeah, but we’re not the crew of some imaginary ship from a TV show,” I said. “We’re the crew of the Apollo 11 spacecraft.”

“Apollo 11?” Wallace said. “I think I’ve heard of that . . .”

I couldn’t believe my ears. Apollo 11 was only one of the most famous space missions in history! Daddy taught me all about it when I was still in diapers.

“I should hope you’ve heard of it!” I said. “The Apollo 11 mission was the first time humans set foot on the moon.”

“Cool,” he said. “Now I get why they call you Astronaut Girl.”

“That’s right,” I said. “And did you know Apollo 11 almost never landed at all? There was a problem with the ship’s computer, and Neil Armstrong had to take over and steer it himself. When they landed, there was only twenty-five seconds’ worth of rocket fuel left, and—”

“Did you say rocket fuel?” Wallace interrupted. He pulled a battered notebook with a pencil stuck in the middle like a bookmark out of his pocket. “Cool term, I should use that in my story.”

“What story?” I asked.

He explained that *Comet Jumpers* was running a contest for fans to send in story ideas. The best one would become a future episode.

“But I’m going to do better than that,” Wallace

said. "I'm going to write an entire script! I already have lots of notes and ideas. See?"



New Idea:

Zixtar activates the Beamatron with his hooked tail when the bad guys tie up his tentacles.

I read what he wrote. “Who’s Zixtar?”

I asked.

He pulled something else out of his pocket. It was an action figure.

“I made it myself,” he said proudly. “This is Zixtar. He’s a new character I created for my episode. He’s an interstellar pirate!”

He held out the action figure, and I grabbed it for a better look. It was

actually pretty cool.

Zixtar was made

out of polymer

clay, like the stuff

I used to make

my solar system

project for the

science fair. He had

five tentacles. Each was a



different color and had a different tool on the end.

“What does the hook on his tail do?”

I asked.

“That’s for battling space monsters,” Wallace said. “His tentacles have all kinds of powers.”

I was a teensy bit impressed. Was Wallace really writing a TV script? Had he really created a whole new character?

Even so, I could tell he needed my help.

“That’s all cool,” I said. “But there’s no such thing as a Beamatron like on the show. You can’t mush everyone’s cells together into a giant ball of energy and then shoot them into space! They’d be lost forever. But there could be a way to move a spaceship full of people if it’s stuck somewhere without power . . .”

“Oh yeah?” Wallace said, suddenly interested.

“What would do that?”

“Solar sails,” I said with a grin.

“What’s a solar sail?” Wallace asked.

“It’s like a sailboat in space, but instead of wind, it uses solar power and mirrors to make ships move. See, you don’t need a silly Beamatron! Just use solar sails instead. Think like a scientist!”

“Hmm, interesting,” he said. “Solar sails could totally save the day when Commander Neutron’s spaceship loses power while battling giant space bees . . .” He jotted down a few words. “Hey, if your idea makes it into the show, maybe the producers will put your name on-screen.”

“They’d better,” I said. “Because I’m your new cowriter!”



Chapter 3

THE PERFECT TEAM

“My cowriter?” Wallace said uncertainly.

“Of course!” I exclaimed. “You know the show, I know the science. We’re the perfect team.”

“Hmm,” Wallace said. “I guess I could use some science help.”

“Great,” I said. “Let’s start right now.”

We decided to hold our first writers’ meeting inside the Apollo 11 spacecraft. Wallace started heading toward the commander’s chair, but I beat him to it. I grabbed my space pack off the second mate’s chair, since the Baby was playing

with some blocks on the floor and wasn't sitting there anyway.

"You can sit here," I told Wallace.

Wallace sat down and opened his notebook.

"Here's what I have so far," he said. "Zixtar is battling to save the endangered Cuddle Morphs."

"What's a Cuddle Morph?" I asked.

He smiled. "It's a new kind of alien. They can transform into any creature as long as it's furry." His smile faded a little. "My friend Carlos from my old neighborhood helped me come up with the idea."

He looked kind of sad all of a sudden.

I wasn't sure why. I decided not to mention that morphing isn't as simple as he made it sound. We could deal with that later.

"Okay," I said instead. "How does Zixtar save the Cuddle Morphs?"

Wallace perked up again. “He needs more weapons, so he goes to the moon to collect the biggest Thunder Rocks he can find.”

“Hold on a second,” I said. “Are you talking about *Earth’s* moon?”

Because there’s no such thing as Thunder Rocks.”

“Sure there are! They were on episode fourteen,” Wallace said. “They explode when you throw them at stuff, with purple thunderbolts and a big BOOM!”

I shook my head. “You need my help even



more than I thought,” I said. “There’s no thunder on the moon—in fact, there’s no weather at all. Moon rocks are made of many of the same minerals we have on Earth. They don’t explode!”

Wallace didn’t look impressed. “How do you know?” he asked. “Have you been there?”

“No, but I know the science,” I said.

Wallace grinned. “If you haven’t been there, you don’t know for sure that there’s no such thing as Thunder Rocks,” he said. “Anyway, this is just a TV show. Use your imagination!”

“Scientists use their imagination all the time,” I said. “But that doesn’t mean you have to make up stuff that doesn’t exist.”

“Whatever,” Wallace said. “All I know is if I had a Beamatron here right now, I could beam up to the moon and find some Thunder Rocks.”

I scowled. “You can’t just BEAM UP to the

moon!" I exclaimed. "Scientists and astronauts worked really hard for years to make space travel happen! If you think like a scientist, our script will be a lot better."

"Maybe, maybe not," Wallace said. "The Beamatron is really cool—you get in it, and then all your cells are scrambled and shot through a hole in space to get you where you're going."

"I already told you, that would never work!" I cried. "It's ridiculous! Anyway, the real story of space travel is way cooler than that kind of junk."

"Nothing's cooler than the Beamatron," Wallace argued. "Well, maybe Thunder Rocks are a little cooler . . ."

I couldn't take it anymore. "You know nothing!" I yelled. "I wish everyone had to go through basic astronaut training."

"I wish there really was such a thing as a

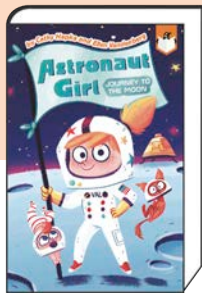
Beamatron,” Wallace said at the same time.

WHOOOSH! Suddenly the gazebo felt like it was tilting and spinning. Astro Cat squawked and hid under my space pack, and I heard the Baby gurgling happily. Everything went dark—except for a sky full of stars . . .



Astronaut Girl: Journey to the Moon

By Cathy Hapka and Ellen Vandenberg;
Illustrated by Gillian Reid

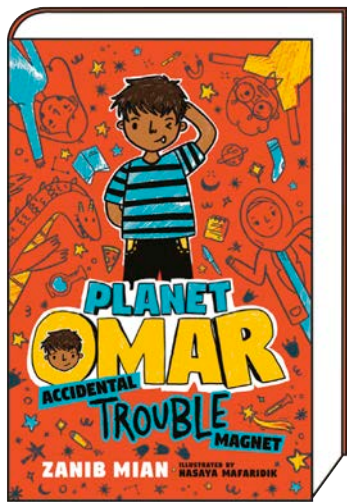


What did you think after reading a few pages?

What did you think of the cover?

Would you share this book with your students? Why or why not?





9780593109212

Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet

By Zanib Mian; Illustrated by Nasaya Mafaridik

Can Omar's huge imagination help him survive a new school? A new series starring a Muslim boy with a big imagination.

CHAPTER 1

**KHAA
TOOOO!**

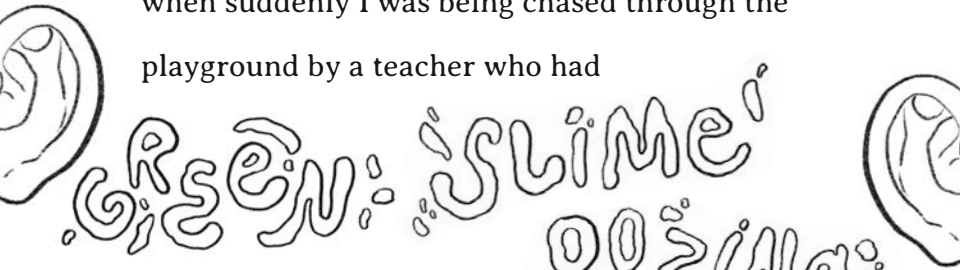
There was a big puddle
of spit on my little
brother's forehead.



It was mine.

But, **PHEW**, he was still sleeping.

Let me tell you what happened: I had been in my bed, attempting to have a good night's sleep, when suddenly I was being chased through the playground by a teacher who had

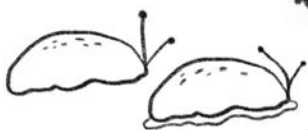


GREEN: 'Slime' oozing:

out of his ears and

SLUGS

for fingernails!



It was a dream. A **BAD** dream, of course. When I woke up, I was extremely happy that I wasn't about to be a monster's dinner. I breathed slowly to get my heartbeat back to normal, instead of like it was on a

trampoline.

I remembered that my mom told me to spit toward my shoulder three times if I have a nightmare.

That's supposed to get rid of 'SHAYTĀN', who is the uglyhead who causes bad dreams.

I REALLY wanted to get rid of Shaytan! So I conjured up a bucketful of spit in my mouth and 'SHOT' it out over my left shoulder.



I just hoped it would dry before morning so nobody would know I'd spat on my little brother by accident.

I put my head back on the pillow for an eighth of a second, but then I heard a really loud and really annoying sound.



(See? VERY loud and VERY annoying.)

It was Esa. I guess he'd noticed the spit ball after all and wasn't impressed.

Mom appeared at the door to our room in her pajamas, looking all bleary-eyed.



(UNIMPRESSED PARENT
CAN BE RECOGNIZED BY
HAND ON HIP AND
FURROWED EYEBROWS.
CAN BE SCARY, BUT DO
NOT RUN AWAY.)

She said, "What's the matter, Esa?"

Esa was still busy wailing, so I said, "Spit ball."

"Not again, Omar!"

"WAAAAA AAAAAA!"

I covered my head with the pillow.

Then Dad came in saying that it would be nice



if we could have

AT
LEAST **1** †
night †^o †

in the week where

poor Esa isn't woken up by my

SHENANIGANS.

I asked him what that means for the

BILLIONTH time. He rolled his eyes
for the **BILLIONTH** time.

I heard my big sister, Maryam, growling in
her room. (She definitely doesn't like mornings
very much.)

Mom said it was almost Fajr time anyway.

I wondered if Allah was going to give me a
reward for waking them up for Fajr.



FAJR
THE DAWN PRAYER



DHUR
THE NOON PRAYER



ASR
THE AFTERNOON PRAYER



MAGHRIB
THE SUNSET PRAYER



ISHA
THE NIGHT PRAYER

CHAPTER 2

The reason I had been having bad dreams, especially bad dreams about teachers, was because I was going to be starting at a new school. This made me feel like there were

SNAKES
in my
TUMMY



and some of them were sneaking up and squeezing my heart. I don't like things to change. It would be so much more convenient and better for everybody if things always just stayed the same.

Take my pajamas, for example. They are utterly comfortable pajamas, which have somehow molded their shape to my body and become my second skin. A weird second skin



that I can take off and put on, like some kind of cool human lizard.

My mom tried to throw them away and make me wear crispy pajamas that

DON'T EVEN HAVE
DINOSAURS ON THEM.



This is change. It's super annoying.

One big, fat, huge change had already happened to me. We had to move, which is the reason I had to start at a new school. All this happened because Mom got her



When she told me, I couldn't help wondering what she meant exactly by



Did it mean that adults have super-boring dreams all about jobs? If that was true, I wasn't

looking forward to being an adult, because at the moment I dream about fun stuff, like being on a

ROLLER COASTER

that turns into a  flying pig.

Sometimes, they're even better than movies! Well, apart from the scary ones that make me feel really lucky when I wake up and realize they're not for real.

So, anyway, the job that Mom must have dreamed about all the time was too far from where we lived before, so we had to move.

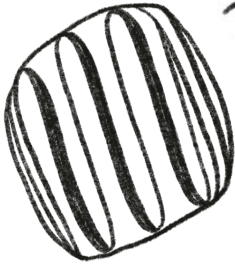
The moving bit was **very, very**
X 100 ANNOYING

because Dad said I couldn't put all the 1,267 important things from my room in the boxes to take to the new house. He didn't actually count my things, but he likes to say exact numbers when he is talking so he can sound smart. He said I had to choose the ones I love most and give the rest to charity.

Why didn't he understand that

I LOVE THEM ALL?

But then he said he would be very proud of me if I could choose, because I would have done better than Mom, who had already packed lots of what Dad called "boxes of hoarded goods." I like Dad being proud of me (especially because it normally means



pastries

for breakfast), so I chose 56 things to take with me. I counted them really carefully so I could be precise when Dad asked (and also make sure that nobody sneakily gave anything away without me noticing).

The good news was that the new house was super, super cool. When we first saw it, Maryam and I ran straight into the backyard and whooped, because it was at least twice the size of our old one. We planned out where we could put a soccer net and Esa's swing set, and Maryam did loads of cartwheels to prove just how massive it was.



That was the first time we saw the little old lady who lives next door. She peeped over her fence and said, “Humph.” And she put her nose higher in the air as if she was smelling something there that she didn’t like.

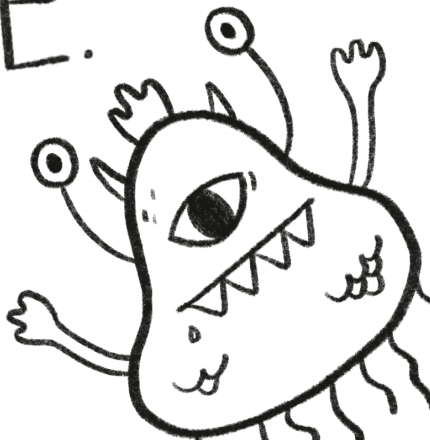


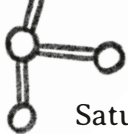


CHAPTER 3

School was going to start on Monday. Only two more sleeps before I had to walk into a brand-new classroom with everyone watching and a teacher who might or might not be an

ALIEN
ZOMBIE.





Saturday is always mosque day. My mom had decided that for the first few weeks after moving we would visit a different mosque every Saturday and pray Dhuhur there, to see what our new neighborhood was like. Dad normally works on Saturdays, so it was just me, Maryam, Esa and Mom.



My mom is a **VERY SMART SCIENTIST** and works out all sorts of different ways of



fighting cancer for the cancer research people.



But sometimes Esa's cuteness makes her lose her smartness.

IT'S LIKE HE HAS
*big, innocent,
smartness, melting eyes.*



They don't work on me, so when Esa wanted to buy a whistle from the gas station on the way to the mosque, I knew it wasn't a good idea. But Mom went right ahead and bought it for him, saying, "Because you've been such a good boy this morning!" and giving him a



on the top of his head. I knew it was gooey because she actually still kisses me like that, even though I've forbidden her to do it in front of my friends.

In the mosque, everyone prays together with the imam leading. It's supposed to be *super quiet*. Just after the prayer began, Esa decided to move from his place. I was praying in between Mom and Maryam. Neither of them moved. I wasn't sure if they'd even noticed that he'd gotten up.

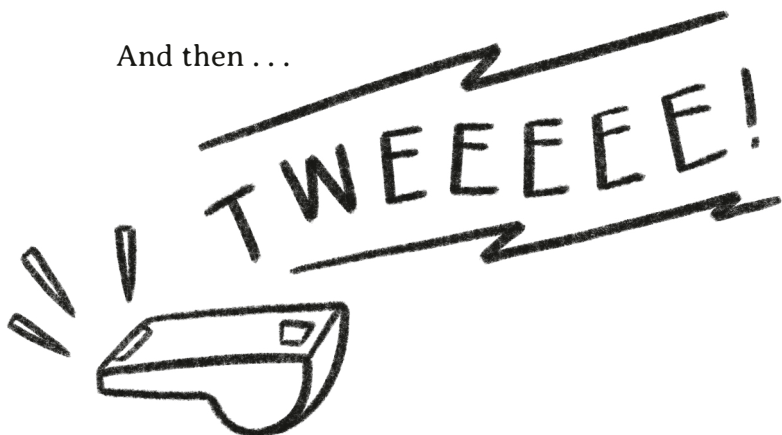
Now, Esa is annoying sometimes, but he IS my little brother, and I worry about him, so I quickly sneaked a look behind us. He was sitting at the back with



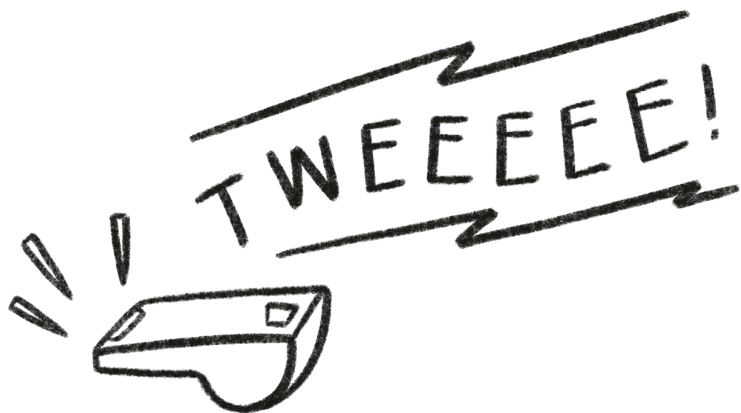
on his face. I turned back around and kept on praying. Then we went into Rukhu. That's when your hands are on your knees. Silence from Esa. Then we went into Sujood. That's when your nose and forehead are on the ground.



And then ...



The loud noise of a whistle broke through the silence, followed by Esa's voice: "One, two, three, four, five!" Then again:



And then the counting. It wouldn't stop.

I couldn't help myself. How could I? I



right in the middle of my prayer. I put my

hand over my mouth. I bit my tongue and I even pinched myself really hard, but I couldn't help it! I didn't have to wonder if Mom had heard. People on all floors of the mosque must have heard.

When the prayer finished, Mom and Maryam were a bright shade of pink. It looked as if their skin had suddenly decided to

compete with Maryam's socks for pinkness.



And they were looking everywhere except up at people's faces like they usually do when they greet people after prayers. Mom was motioning angrily to Esa to come to her. Luckily,

a few people came and patted Esa's head, which made Mom's skin return to its normal color.

As we were leaving, an old lady with a walking stick and brown abaya waddled over and said:



Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet

By Zanib Mian;
Illustrated by Nasaya Mafaridik



What did you think after reading a few pages?

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HELP SAVE MYTHICAL
CREATURES AND JOIN

THE UNICORN RESCUE SOCIETY

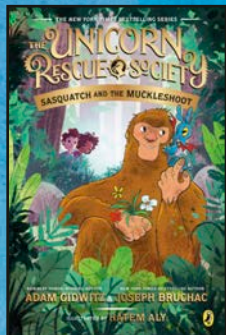
MYTHS AND FOLKLORE FROM CLASSROOM
FAVORITE AUTHORS!



ADAM GIDWITZ,
author of *A Tale Dark
and Grimm*



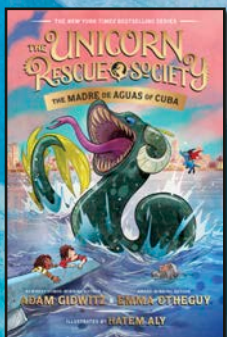
ADAM GIDWITZ,
author of *The
Inquisitor's Tale*



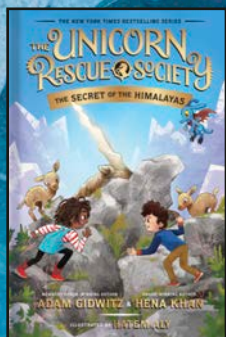
JOSEPH BRUCHAC,
author of
Code Talkers



DAVID BOWLES,
author of *They Call
Me Güero*



EMMA OTHEGUY,
author of *Marti's Song
for Freedom*



HENA KHAN,
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