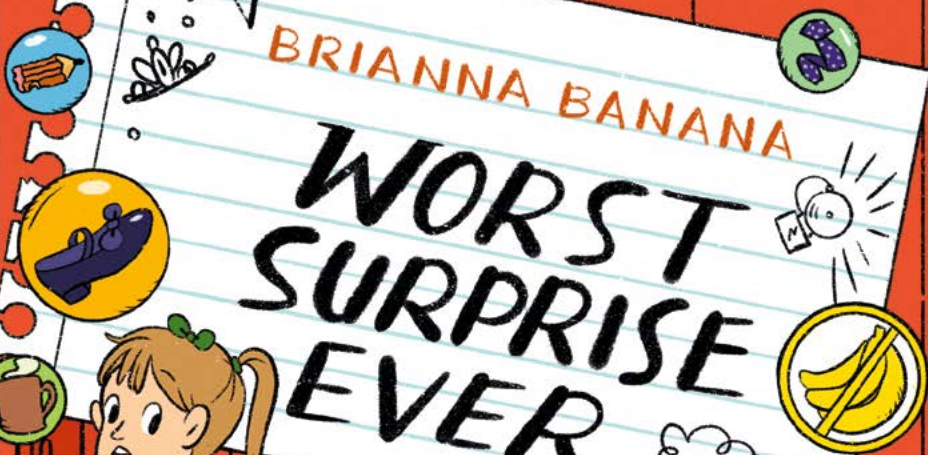
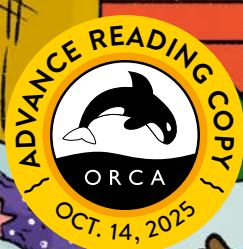


BRIANNA BANANA

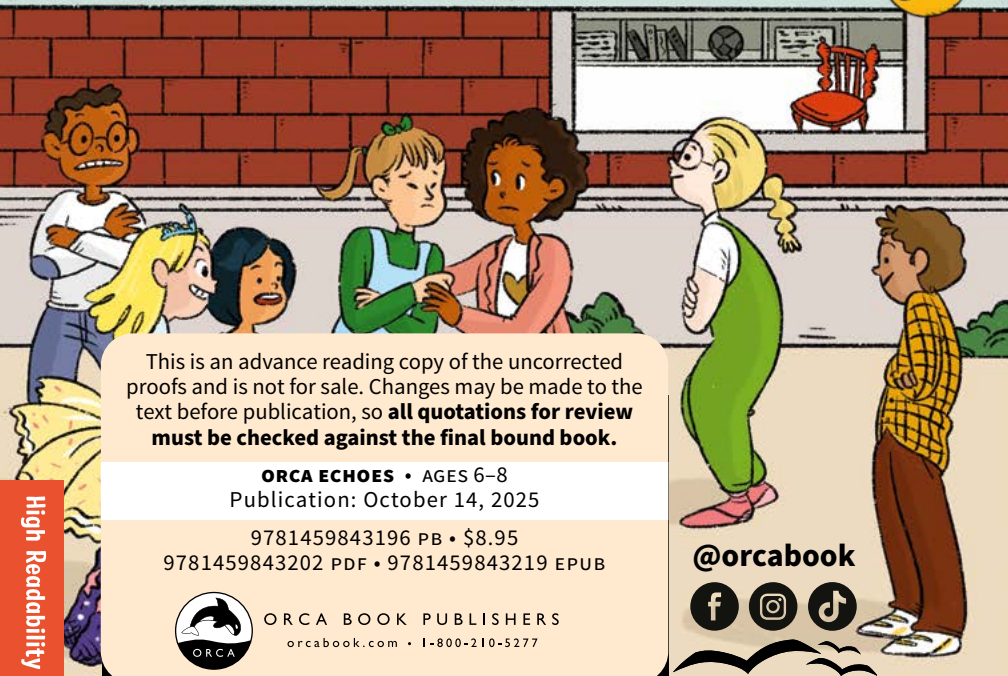
WORST SURPRISE EVER



Brianna has been waiting for this moment **HER WHOLE LIFE!**



Brianna Banana has the best secret in the history of Grade 3: she knows she is Helper of the Day! But when a new substitute teacher takes over her class and doesn't know anything about Helper of the Day, all Brianna's hopes are dashed. Soon she's in trouble for yelling and the principal is giving her another lecture. Then a fire drill is called and Brianna realizes that there is more than one way to be the Helper of the Day!



This is an advance reading copy of the uncorrected proofs and is not for sale. Changes may be made to the text before publication, so **all quotations for review must be checked against the final bound book.**

ORCA ECHOES • AGES 6–8

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BRIANNA BANANA

WORST SURPRISE EVER

AUTHOR: LANA BUTTON
ILLUSTRATOR: SUHARU OGAWA

October 14, 2025

In this illustrated chapter book, Brianna's dreams of finally being the classroom helper are foiled when her class has a substitute teacher.

FORMAT	PAPERBACK	PDF	EPUB
5.25 x 7.625" 96 pages	9781459843196 \$8.95	9781459843202	9781459843219

KEY SELLING POINTS

- In this funny and feel-good story of helping and heroism, quirky Brianna misses out on being Helper of the Day when a substitute teacher takes over the class, but she realizes that by adjusting her expectations she can still be a helper without the title.
- Although Brianna doesn't have a diagnosis through which to understand her challenges, readers who have experienced big feelings, social struggles, emotional dysregulation or difficulties with attention will find Brianna a sympathetic and relatable character. Her family and school do their best to offer support, guidance and kindness as she navigates the everyday ins and outs of school.
- Brianna recently moved in with her grandmother and she is grappling with these changes as she navigates her struggles at school.
- Author Lana Button has a passion for social-emotional literacy and found inspiration for this story from her experiences as an early childhood educator and parent. Growing up, her own nickname was Lana Banana!
- Illustrator Suharu Ogawa is Japanese Canadian and immigrated as a teenager. Suharu's playful illustrations bring Brianna's unique and humorous voice to life.
- This high readability book features a dyslexia-friendly font, cream paper and increased line spacing to increase accessibility for dyslexic and other striving readers.

★ "Reminiscent of Junie B. Jones. Well-meaning Brianna's smart narration relates her struggles coping with family upheaval, bullying, and frequent communication snafus and misunderstandings with adults as well as her yearning for a best friend. Grayscale illustrations by Ogawa evoke Raina Telgemeier vibes and bring funny scenes of this charming read by Button to vivid life."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review for *Brianna Banana, Helper of the Day*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LANA BUTTON is an early childhood educator and the author of more than a dozen books for children, including *Brianna Banana*, *Helper of the Day*, *Stay My Baby*, *Tough Like Mum* and the *Kitty and Friends* series. Her books have been shortlisted for the Blue Spruce Award, Shining Willow Award, IODE Jean Throop Book Award and Rainforest of Reading, and they have been recognized as Canadian Children's Book Centre's Best Books and an IBBY Outstanding Book for Young Children. Lana is a former actress

who considers every read-aloud a mini performance. When not writing new stories, Lana spends her time travelling to schools and festivals to share her passion for social-emotional literacy. She lives in Burlington, Ontario.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

SUHARU OGAWA is a Toronto-based illustrator. Her love for drawing started in a kindergarten art school after being kicked out of calligraphy class for refusing to convert to right-handedness. Formally trained in art history and cultural anthropology, she worked for several years as a university librarian until her passion for illustration called her out of that career and into the pursuit of a lifelong dream. Since then, Suharu has created illustrations for magazines, public art projects and children's books, including *Why*

Humans Work: How Jobs Shape Our Lives and Our World in the Orca Think line. She also teaches illustration at OCAD University in Toronto.

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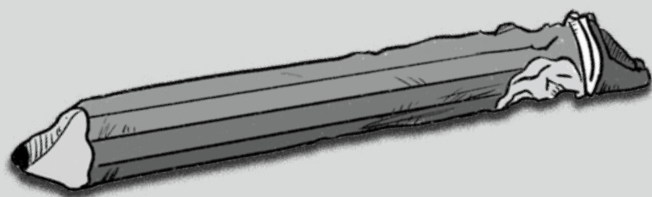
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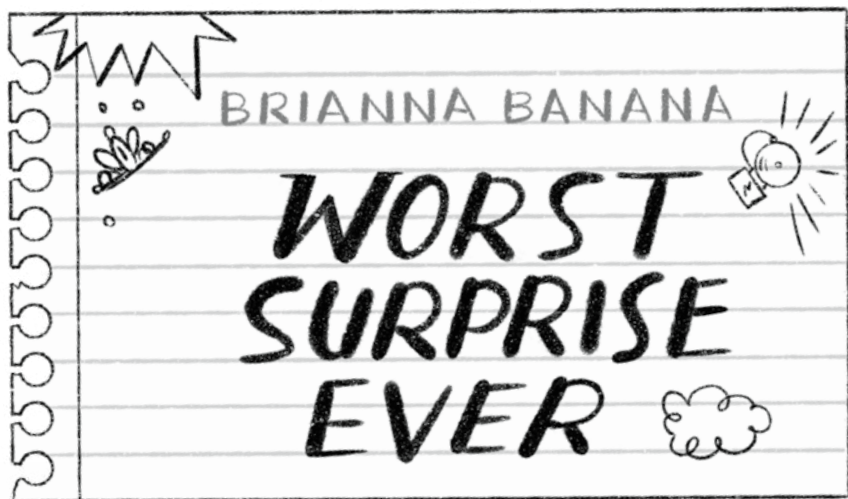
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LANA BUTTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
SUHARU OGAWA


Orca Echoes

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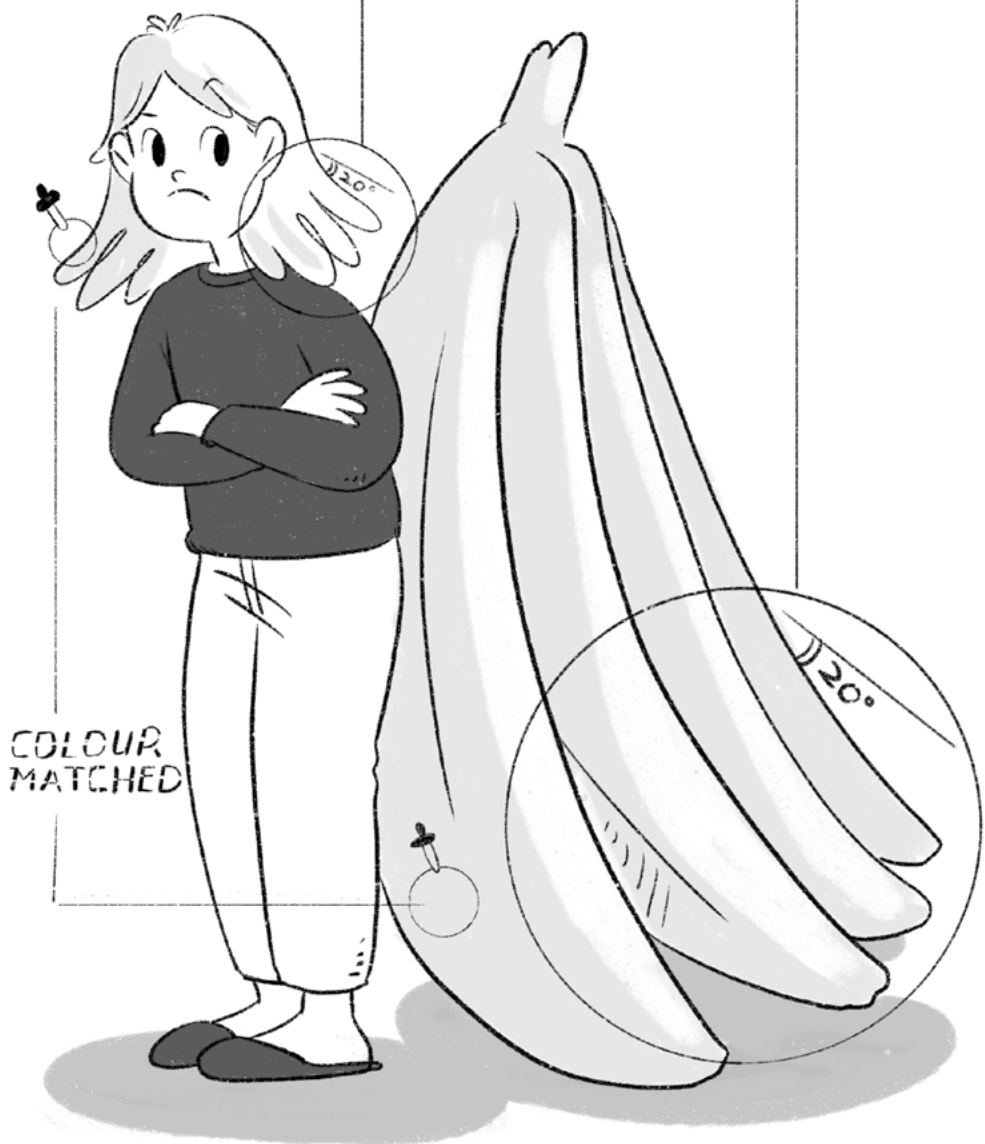
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PRINTED AND BOUND IN CANADA.

For Miss Button's grade 3 class
at St. Gabriel Elementary

ANGLE
MATCHED





Hurry Up, Lily!



Bang, bang, bang!

“Lily! Hurry up!” I yell at the door of Grade 8 Lily’s house. “Get your keister to school!”

My fist stings from all this banging. So I stop and practice my surprise face. I make my eyes big and shocked! “Huuuuuaa?” I make my mouth pop open like I can hardly even believe it. “Huaaaaaa!”

Then the reason for my surprise face makes my tummy do an excited swirl! I have the best secret in the history of grade 3 secrets!

“Lily!” I go back to banging and yelling.

The door makes a click. “It’s about time,” I say when the door starts to open.

“Surprise!” I say to Lily, very cheery.

But it is not Grade 8 Lily. This is a giant man with drippy hair. He is Lily’s dad, probably.

“Hello?” he says to me like it is a question.

“Lily is a paid employee of my nanny,” I tell him. “She walks me to school.” And I watch a water droplet slip from his hair. It slides down his nose.

“Oh...you must be Brianna Banana.”

Yeah, so here's the thing. I am just Brianna. NOT Brianna Banana, like everyone in town calls me. I give that wet dad the stink eye.

My mom says Brianna Banana is just a fun thing to say. But it sounds mean to me. Because my hair is a banana shade. And I am a tall banana shape. And I think my mom should have thought that through before calling me Brianna (way too rhyme-y with *banana*). When I am a grown-up, I will make everyone call me Grace. Because there isn't a fruit out there that rhymes with Grace.

"I think Lily is still getting dressed," the wet dad says.

"I bet she's putting a bunch of eyeliner on, isn't she." I roll my eyes at that dad, like I know all about teenagers.

“It is a little *early* to go to school, don’t you think?” He looks down Princess Street. It’s empty. And it’s still a bit darkish.

That is the exact thing my nanny said to me this morning. You can see Nanny’s house just three doors down. Now Nanny’s house is my house too. Mom and I live at Nanny’s now because of two sad things:

1. My grampie died. And everyone is really sad. But he was Nanny’s only husband, and so she is the saddest.
2. My dad moved away. He got a new job way out west. He is my only dad, so I am the saddest about that.

When my mom and dad and I lived in the trailer, out in Upper Mills, I took the bus to school. But now that Mom and I live at Nanny's, Lily walks me to school.

I remember why I am early this morning. A fun smile peeks out of my lips. "Well, you know, Lily's Dad, my nanny says the early bird gets the worm!"

He does a steamy breath from his nose.

"Plus," I go on, "I love going to school! It is my favorite place to be!"

I giggle at myself. Because this is called an "inside joke." Most days, school is not my favorite place to be—because grade 3 is hard and third graders are mean. But today I have a fun secret! And, like magic, I want to go to school.

This secret is going to burst out. My nanny says if you want to keep a secret, you've got to keep your trap shut. So I trap my lips with my teeth. And, finally, here comes Lily.

"Hi, Lily! Nice eyeliner!" I give Lily a thumbs-up. Then I roll my eyes at that dad again.

"Sorry, Dad," she says.

Lily looks at me. "Brianna Banana, why are you so early?"

"Well, like my nanny says, you gotta make hay while the sun shines."

"Okay..." Lily's eyeliner eyes are frowning at me. "And you look so...um... so...dressed up today."

"What, this old thing?" I pretend I am shy. But that sneaky smile comes out again. This morning my nanny told me

I look *ridiculous*. I think I look especially sparkly!

I unzip my coat to show my whole getup. I have:

1. A shiny bodysuit with a sticking-out skirt (from when Mom did tap at Susan's School of Dance back in the old days).
2. My fluffy Christmas tights with the gold stars.
3. My fancy Easter shoes that are almost high heels.
4. My princess crown from last year's Halloween.

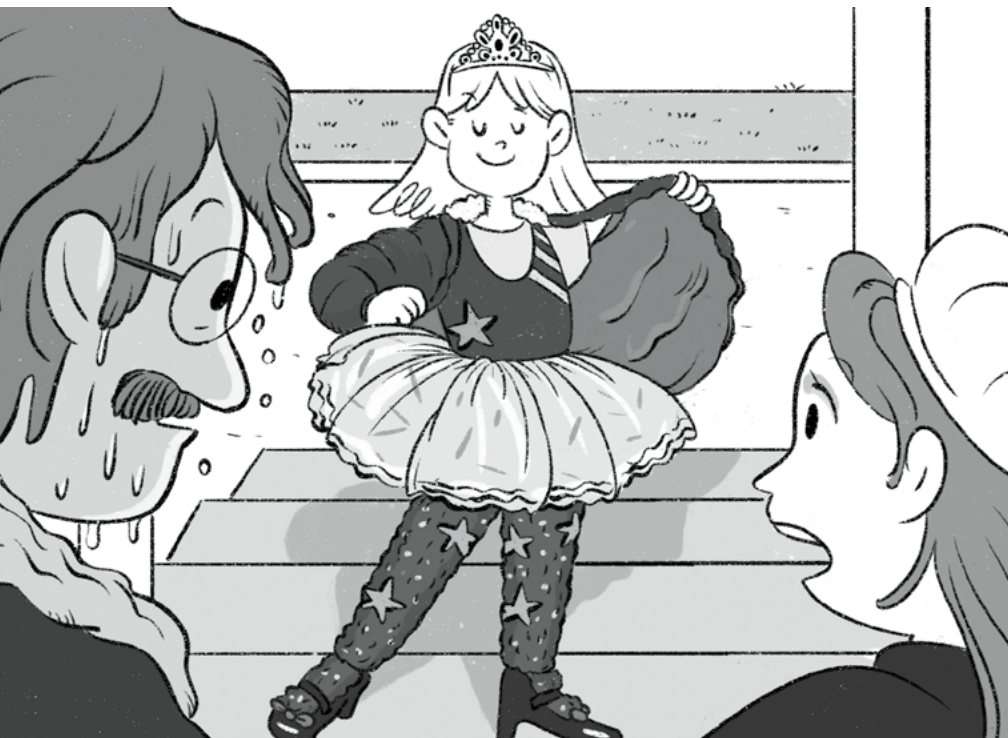
“Um...okay,” says Lily. “I just need to grab my bag and we’ll go.”

I usually walk slow and glum up Princess Street. And I make wishes about having a fun day at school. But today Lily has to keep up with me!

“What’s the matter?” Lily looks worried at me.

“I am practicing my surprise face,” I say.

“A surprise face?” she says. “Why?”



“Because—” But I trap my lips again. “You never know when you might need to be surprised,” I tell her. “My nanny says surprises happen right out of the blue!” My sneaky smile comes out again. “And you don’t even know what hit you!” I tuck my smile back in. And I walk even faster to school.

2

Secrets with Leslie

“Leslie!” I yell. “Get your keister off that bus!”

I have been waiting against the wall of this school for a million years! If getting to school early was a contest, Lily and I would have won first place. But now the school has kids in the playground, and it looks like it’s open for business.

And good thing the bus is finally here, because this secret won’t stay trapped for one more second. I need to tell someone.

And my someone is the little second-grade boy Leslie. Last year we sat together on the bus. We made a good pair. He is quiet. And lousy at yelling when kids tease him. So I yelled for both of us.

I rush right up to him.

“Hi, Brianna,” says Leslie.

“Guess what? You will never guess what?!!” I say, super excited.

“What?” says Leslie.

I whisper-yell in Leslie’s ear, “Today I am Helper of the Day!”

“You say that every day,” Leslie says. He is not even impressed.

“I DO NOT SAY THAT EVERY DAY, LESLIE!” I yell. “I say *PROBABLY* I am going to be Helper of the Day! And I *WISH* that!” I give him some shoulder shakes, so the news sinks in.



“But I am not saying *PROBABLY*, Leslie! I am saying *FOR SURE!* I AM HELPER OF THE DAY BECAUSE **I SAW IT ON THE BOARD!!**”

I clamp my hands over my mouth. I look to make sure kids are minding their own beeswax. And then I get excited all over again. “I am finally Helper of the Day!”

“Oh,” Leslie says quietly. “Yay for you.”

“I know, yay for me!” I scoot Leslie to the side of the school. And I tell my whole secret story.

“Yesterday I forgot my agenda. So I snuck back to my locker. And I peeked in our classroom. Because what the heck does my teacher, Mrs. Newberry, even do when she finally gets a little peace and quiet from us kids? I saw her at the whiteboard! Right at the spot

where she writes the Helper of the Day's name. And she was, for real life, writing B-R-I-A-N-N-A!"

That happy memory makes me dance Leslie in a circle. But then I stop.

"Only now I want the surprise!" I say. "It's supposed to be a surprise. You walk into room 109 and *surprise!* There's your name! And everyone cheers! I have been waiting my whole grade 3 life for that moment," I say.

"Oh," says Leslie.

"I have been practicing." I show him my surprise face. "What do you think?" I ask.

"Super surprised," Leslie says quietly. "You will have a fun day."

"I will!" I say. And I get my fingers ready to count out all the best reasons.



“It is finally my turn to...one. Sit in that helper’s chair. Two. Hold Mrs. Newberry’s fantastic donut-shaped pointer stick. Three. Be boss of passing out papers. Four. Be line leader. And...” I pause to let Leslie answer.

“Five. Library,” he says.

“Yes, library!” I say triumphantly. “I will take the books to the library. And I will pick a friend to go with me.”

“Fun,” says Leslie.

“Everyone will be soooooooo nice and play with me *aaall* day. Just so I pick them! But ha! They will just have to suffer and wait to see who I pick.”

“Who will you pick?” Leslie asks.

“This is who I will not pick!” I get my fingers ready to count at him:

“One. Markus Poopy Potato—because he always calls me names. Two. Andrew Apple Pants—just because he is a smarty-pants. And that is annoying. Three. None of the Cheese Girls—because they won’t let me join that group. And most of all,” I say, “I will never in the history of Helper of the Day, **EVER** pick my biggest elbow enemy at my table—Kinsley!”

“Who will you pick?” Leslie asks again, like I’ve forgotten the question.

“My bestie,” I say.

Rumi is my brand-new bestie. She is new because:

1. She is new to our school.
2. She is new to our whole country.

And she is my *bestie* because:

1. She is my only friend in that class of meanies.

She is still my bestie, even when I got her in a teeny bit of trouble. Because, by accident, I plowed us into our tall principal, Mr. Tilly. And he fell on his keister. And that was the first time Rumi ever got in trouble, probably. Getting in trouble is a regular thing for me.

Usually I blow my top a few times a day. That's what my nanny calls it when I get mad. Mr. Tilly and I are getting good at doing belly breaths and calming down. But I won't even need one of those belly breaths today.

The bell rings, and I march right to my line. *Bring on my surprise!*

I will be the best Helper of the Day in the history of room 109!

"You kids better get ready to like me!" I mumble under my breath. "And you better just watch your step," I mumble in my best boss voice. "Today I am the helper! And today it is ILLEGAL to call me Brianna Banana!"

3

Surprise!



I am in the girls' washroom. I am at the mirror, practicing one more surprise face.

SURPRISE! I make my face say, *What, me??*

SURPRISE! My surprise-eyes say, *I had no idea!!*

"Very surprised!" I tell myself in the mirror. And wow, I look like a YouTube sensation! But this bodysuit is giving me a fluffy-tights wedgie.

I yank it out and give one more giant surprise face to say, *Oh, this is such a big surprise!*

“Brianna Banana, what are you doing?” says Kinsley. She and Clare have snuck up on me. And they just about scare the crown off my head.

Kinsley is the leader of the Cheese Girls. She is the girl in my class that everyone likes. Even though she is super mean.

I give her my best stink eye.

“What you are wearing?” Kinsley asks like she smells something bad. “You look ridiculous.”

“Oh yeah?” I say, like that didn’t hurt my feelings. “You dress like my nanny!”

Saying that mean thing doesn’t make me feel better. And it isn’t even true.



Nanny would look *ridiculous* in Kinsley's blue overalls and green turtleneck.

"Where are your shoes, Brianna Banana?" asks Clare, who is like the assistant boss of the Cheese Girls.

I look down at my fluffy-tights feet. My toes are feeling much better. It turns out that my Easter shoes are very pinchy. So I kicked them off at my locker.

I am not in the mood for these fart faces. Besides, I'm the boss today. So instead of answering her nosy-parker questions, I hold up my two fingers like they are a peace sign. Then I point to her eyes, back to my eyes, then back to hers. That means "I've got my eye on you today, Miss Mean Cheese."

I yank out my wedgie, straighten my crown and stick out my tongue. Then



I fluffy-tights slide past them straight down the hall.

Rumi is standing beside my locker.

“I like your sparkly dress,” she says.

Rumi is shy and hardly makes a peep when she is in room 109. But when it’s just her and me, Rumi’s voice comes out regular, like she uses it all the time.

“Thank you, Rumi.” I smile at her.

Being friends with Rumi is the best thing that ever happened to me since I moved to Princess Street. I can't wait to make her grade 3 dreams come true when I pick her to help deliver the library books.

"Did you see the surprise in our classroom?" Rumi asks me, very serious.

"A surprise?" My sneaky smile will just not stay off my face. "Oh, my goodness gracious me, Rumi. What could it be? I wonder! I wonder!" I say with a giggle.

Then I take a breath, yank at my bodysuit wedgie and fluffy-tights slide with the biggest Helper of the Day grand entrance room 109 has ever seen.

I yell, "WHAT A SURPRISE!!"

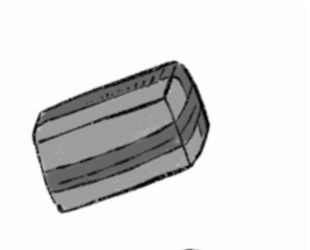
But what I see makes my eyes almost bulge out of my head because:

1. No one is yelling my name.
2. No one is rushing to me.
3. My name is **NOT** on the whiteboard!
4. A **STRANGER** is standing in Mrs. Newberry's spot.

Worst. Lousy. Surprise. Ever.



Who Are You?



“Who are you?” I ask the stranger. She is touching stuff on my teacher’s desk like she’s lost something.

She is wearing white glasses. They match her necklace, which has little white balls on it. She has a pink teacher dress on. Her hair is in a fancy pile on top of her head, like she is ready for picture day. She looks like she’s dressed up like a teacher but isn’t big enough yet.

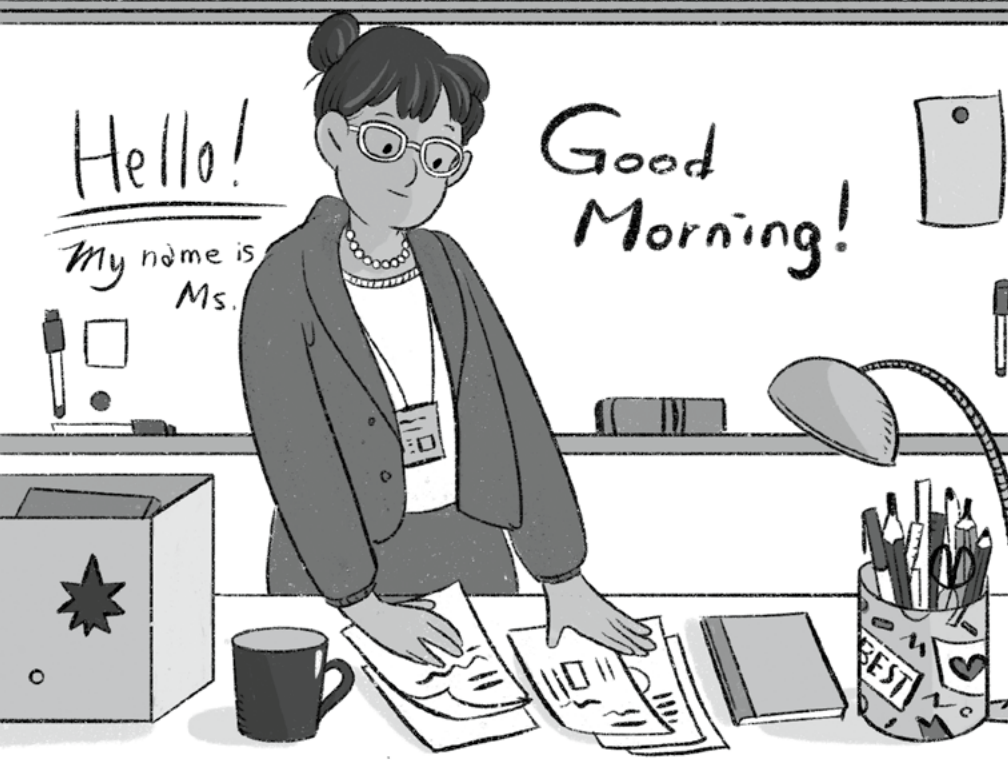


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Hello!

My name is
Ms.

Good
Morning!



MRS.
NEWBERRY

HELP
EACH
OTHER



She squats down at me like I am five, smiling like she is so excited. “I am Miss Dee,” she says. “This is my very first day as a supply teacher. I am so happy to meet you.” She holds out her hand. “What’s your name?” She smiles at me again.

I just stare at her. Because I haven’t got time for this foolishness.

“Her name is Brianna Banana,” Markus says behind me.

“Oh, my goodness, Brianna Banana, that is the cutest name I have ever heard.”

In the **history** of being called Brianna Banana, this is the first time I’ve been called Brianna Banana by a *teacher*! That is **illegal**, probably!

“I am not Brianna Banana!” I say in her face. And then I shove Markus. “Markus...Moldy Cheese!!”

“Oh my, let’s use kind words,” Miss Dee says in a nervous, singsongy voice.

“Where is Mrs. Newberry?” I demand.

“She is absent today.”

“She can’t be! Not today! I am Helper of the Day today!!” I say loud and mad.

“Says who?” Clare says. She points to the whiteboard. It’s blank.

“Says me! I saw! I saw it yesterday when I was leaving! Mrs. Newberry put it on the whiteboard!”

This is no time for secrets. I have to go and tell on myself about seeing Mrs. Newberry. Because this is a Helper of the Day emergency.

“Well, I did wipe the whiteboard nice and clean when I arrived early this morning,” says Miss Dee. “I don’t recall what was written on it.” She looks

nervous, like she will get arrested for making a mistake.

“I thought that was yesterday’s work,” Miss Dee says. “I am still looking for Mrs. Newberry’s lesson plans for the day.” She is playing with the little balls of her necklace.

“Excuse me, Miss Dee?” Kinsley says, all super sweet. “I think that maybe Brianna is *hoping* her name was on the white-board. Because she really wants to be the helper, but...” Kinsley shakes her head and makes a fake sweet face. “You could just pick someone to be helper today,” she says. “And I would be happy to volunteer.”

“NO!” I yell. “No fair! That is a sneaky, stinky, no-fair move, Kinsley!”

“Kind words,” Miss Dee says. She plays with her necklace and smiles like she is scared and happy at the same time.

Rumi is tugging on my arm.

I lean toward her, and she says quietly, “Maybe you should do that belly breath.”

Oh yeah. I forgot about those stupid things. I’m supposed to do them when I need to calm down. They are dumb and don’t work. Except I do one. And I feel a bit calmer.

And then Rumi says in my ear, “Maybe Mrs. Newberry wrote it down.” Rumi is pointing to our teacher’s desk.

“YES, Rumi! That is a great idea, Rumi!” I go right to that desk and open Mrs. Newberry’s drawer.

I pull out Mrs. Newberry’s teacher book and flip it open to the last page. There is a lot of teacher writing I can’t read, but then—

Tuesday, October 1

Helper of the day

↳ Rumi Nishikawa (MONDAY)

↳ Brianna Ross (TUESDAY)

Morning activity:

- Song



- Chitchat time



“AHA!!!” I yell. “Look right here! I definitely see B-R-I-A-N-N-A!” I say to the class. And then I add, “Not Banana!”

“Oh my.” Miss Dee comes to me quickly. “Let’s not touch Mrs. Newberry’s things.”

But then she looks down at the book and says, “Oh, thank goodness, yes!” Miss Dee holds onto her heart and lets out

a sigh. “Here are Mrs. Newberry’s plans! Thank you for showing me, Brianna Ba—” Miss Dee stops herself from talking. She takes a little breath and says carefully, “Thank you, Brianna. Let’s see. Yes, here you are, Helper of the Day.”

I smile a *you’re welcome* at Miss Dee.

Then I stick my tongue out at Kinsley.

“All right, let’s get started,” says Miss Dee.

“Excuse me, Miss Dee,” Kinsley says so sweetly. “Mrs. Newberry has a rule that we always wear shoes.” Kinsley is pointing at my fluffy-tights feet. “And sometimes Brianna forgets the rules.”

I do a glare at Kinsley.

“Oh my, where are your shoes, dear?” asks Miss Dee.

“They pinch my feet,” I tell her.

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. But we need to wear our shoes,” she says.

I just keep looking at that new teacher.

“It’s a safety rule,” Miss Dee says with a smile. “In case there is a fire drill and we have to rush outside.”

“I’ll take my chances,” I say to her.

“Um...we can start as soon as you get your shoes on,” she says. And she doesn’t look like she is budging from this decision.

“Fine.” I roll my eyes at her. Then I make peace-sign fingers. And I go from my eyes to all the kids in the class. “The boss of room 109 will be back in a flash,” I say. And I slide right out that door to my locker.

5

Champion Slider



But I don't go right back inside. Mr. Tilly is doing the announcements. That's when you have to stand still. And pretend you are listening. I'm not very good at that part.

Plus, this is prime time for a few fluffy-tights slides. It turns out these tights are the perfect amount of slippery on this deserted hallway. And the bigger the runs I take, the longer and slipperier my slides get. I think I am very talented at this sport of hallway sliding.

I s-l-i-d-e up and down the hallway, getting faster and faster! If they put hallway sliding in the Olympics, I will be a gold-medal winner!

But, too bad for me, my slide gets too slippery. And some kid with a bathroom hall pass comes around the corner. And he scares the bejeepers out of me.

And so I have to do some fast moves to find my fluffy-tights brakes.

The good news about this situation is that I don't crash into him! But the bad news is that I do crash into the grade 4 lockers.

And then more good news. It turns out that lockers are pretty bouncy.

But then more bad news. It turns out that plastic Halloween crowns make lousy helmets. There is a *clang* like



marching-band cymbals when my crown crashes against the lockers. And a few princess jewels go rolling down the hall.

“Watch it, Brianna Banana,” says that boy I don’t even know. And he just keeps on walking.

The crash sound makes the grade 4 teacher poke her head out at me.

And so I get up super quick. And I fluffy-tights hustle back to my locker to grab my shoes.

When I get back to room 109, I open the door and look around the room to make sure kids have been behaving themselves.

“Okay, let’s start our day,” Miss Dee is saying to the class.

“STOP!” I say. “You have to put my name on the whiteboard.”

“Okay,” says Miss Dee. “Brianna is the Helper of the Day,” she says while she prints.

“Ta-daaa!” I say with a pose and wait for the cheers.

But everyone just stands there. And no one runs and claps at me. That is a let-down, I tell you.

So I remind everyone, “That’s right! Brianna is the boss around here today!”

“And Brianna is the—” Miss Dee starts to say. But then she stops. And smiles and puts her kindergartner voice back on. “Actually, Brianna, I think I would be the boss of the class today.”

“Do you know how to boss this class?” I ask her, kind of doubtful.

“Of course I do!” Miss Dee says this like she has never really had any boss

practice yet. “I went to *teachers college*, where I learned all about being boss—I mean, I learned all about being a *teacher*. And today Mrs. Newberry is away, and I—”

“Why?” Markus interrupts. “Is she having surgery?”

“Oh...” Miss Dee looks like she is thinking for some words.

Andrew Apple Pants yells out, “My grampie had surgery. He got a brand-new knee! Is Mrs. Newberry getting a brand-new knee?”

“What would they do with her old knee?” asks Daniel. “Would she get to keep it?”

“Ew!” squeals Clare. “That is so gross, Daniel!”

Miss Dee looks panicked, like this conversation is illegal and she does not

know how to stop it. So I use my best boss voice at them. “Never you mind, Mr. Nosy-Parker Markus! Mrs. Newberry’s top-secret surgery is probably *confidential*.” I say that big word and then explain to the class in my best boss voice, “That means ‘none of your beeswax’!”

Miss Dee is doing everything wrong. She doesn’t even know that Mrs. Newberry starts every morning singing her babyish “Good Morning” song to us. And I don’t even like it. But I really wish it was here. So I sing, super loudly, “GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE!” Then I growl at those brats, “IT’S TIME TO START OUR DAY!”

Everyone covers their ears.

“Ouchie, Brianna!” Kinsley whines. And then she looks at Miss Dee. “My mother says I have sensitive ears,” she says, all sulky.

“Let’s use our indoor voice,” Miss Dee says to me with a teacher look I think she has been practicing.

“Well, that is how the day starts around here!” I grouch at her. “And now I do the calendar.” I march to the front of the class.

Everyone sits on the carpet.

“Good morning, Grade 3.” Miss Dee follows me to the front.

“STOP!” I yell.

“Miss Dee, that yelling hurts my ears,” whimpers Kinsley.

Miss Dee is looking at me like she is flabbergasted. That is what my nanny says when she doesn’t even know what to make of me.

“I get to sit in the helper’s chair!” I say.

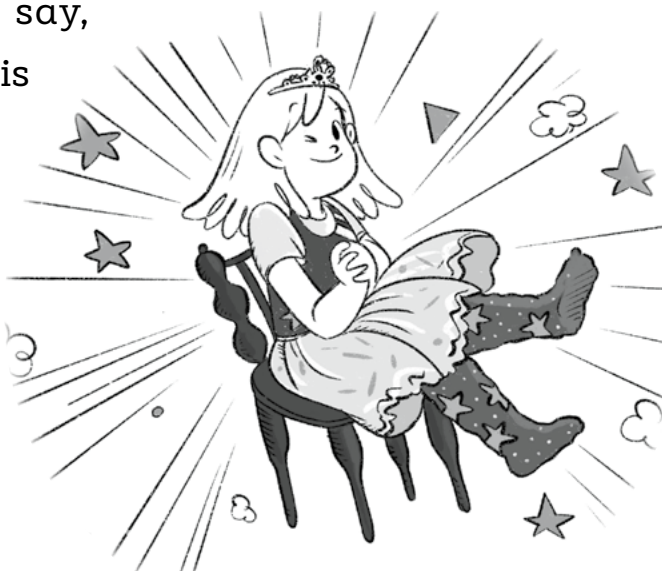
Mrs. Newberry has the most special, shiny-red, smooth wooden Helper of the

Day chair. And you can only sit there when you are the helper. My butt has been waiting my whole grade 3 life for this.

“Where is it?! We can’t start without it!” I yell. Then I see Rumi pointing to a spot in the corner. The red chair! What a Helper of the Day relief! I march right over there and drag that chair to its special spot.

I sit down quickly. I straighten my crown. And I take one of those belly breaths. Then I sit up like I am the boss! And I sneak my fluffy tights out of my shoes and say,

“Let’s get this morning meeting started!”





Calendar Catastrophe



The morning meeting is when Mrs. Newberry talks about our day. And sometimes she tells us a funny story about what happened to her cat the night before. And sometimes she asks the Helper of the Day to share something. Nanny calls this having a little chitchat. And my tummy does a sad flop. Because I am missing my real teacher. Miss Dee doesn't know anything about morning chitchat.



And that is why my bum hardly even gets comfy in that helper's chair when Miss Dee says, "Let's look at the calendar."

"STOP!" I yell.

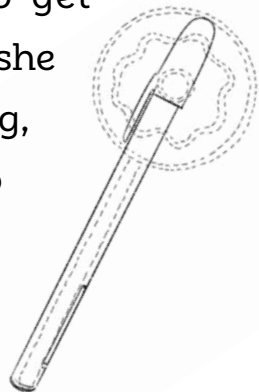
"Ouchie," whimpers Kinsley.

"Please stop yelling, Brianna," says Miss Dee.

"I get to hold Mrs. Newberry's doughnut-shaped pointer stick!" I hold out my hand, empty, like this is a crime.

There is no Helper of the Day happy ending here, because I look and look but can't find that doughnut pointer anywhere.

Miss Dee says we need to get going with our morning. And she hands me her small, boring, no-fun pen. She says to pretend that it is the most fun doughnut pointer stick that I have been waiting my whole life to hold. And my fingers are miserable holding that pen, I tell you.



Then she breathes a big breath. "Now what?" she asks me.

"Now I point and we skip-count all the numbers on the calendar," I tell her.

But then I see another super-sad thing. Today is day one of October.

Day one! That is **only one lousy point!** One stinking boring lousy point!

And that is it! With no pointer stick! And no Mrs. Newberry chitchat! This is a crime against the Helper of the Day position. This is the worst calendar job ever to exist in the history of grade 3!

But I keep going anyway. “Repeat after me. ONE!” I yell with a boss voice.

Everyone looks at me like counting to one is for kindergartners.

“Let’s try that again with feeling, everyone! **ONE!**” This is what my nanny calls “milking it.”

“Thank you, Brianna. You can have a seat, please.”

I sit back down in a grump while Miss Dee explains a paper. But then she takes me by surprise. She says,

“Would someone volunteer to pass out papers?”

That is a Helper of the Day job!

But Kinsley’s hand shoots right up and she says, “I will, Miss Dee.”

“NO!” I scream.

Kinsley has those papers in her hands faster than I can say, *You rotten little Sneaky Pants!*

“I am **HELPER!**” I yell. “Helper of the Day passes out papers!”

Miss Dee looks shocked at this news. But Kinsley starts passing out papers like she is in a race against time.

Which is why I chase that job stealer.

Kinsley sees that I am after her. She does a squeal. And she runs for her life.

I am usually pretty speedy. But I get distracted when my crown flies off

my head. And it turns out it is not easy to chase when you are wearing fluffy tights. So that is why I need some help to catch her. So I reach out to grab Kinsley by her ponytail. Just to slow her down.

And then my fluffy feet slip. And so I crash to the floor. And Kinsley and her ponytail come with me.

And papers go flying.

And wow, Kinsley is as mad as a wet hen, I tell you. We get into a little bit of a tussle. A tussle is what my nanny calls it when two kids are rolling around yelling and pushing on each other's faces.

And the rest of the kids are watching like they are at a wrestling match.

“STOP IT RIGHT NOW!” Miss Dee yells.

We stop. Right in our tracks! Because wow! Who knew the brand-new teacher



had a yell voice like that in her? I wonder if she learned it in teachers college.

And by the look of her, Miss Dee is as surprised as we are.

But before she can get out another yell, our door opens. Mr. Tilly peeks his principal head into our classroom.

Mr. Tilly is the tallest man I know, and he wears a tie with different prints on it every single day. And one day I would like to ask him how he ties that thing. But usually when he shows up, it's not a good time for chitchat.

"Is...everything okay?" His eyes move around the room like they are investigating. Then they stop. On me.

And that is when Kinsley puts her hand on her ponytail and cries like she is in kindergarten. "She pulled my hair!"



Mr. Tilly Trouble



“NO, Mr. Tilly!” I yell right at that principal. “NO, things are NOT okay! She STOLE my job!” I point at crybaby Kinsley.

“And SHE doesn’t know anything about teaching grade 3!” I say that mean thing right at Miss Dee. Because I am so mad, it feels like a fire in my tummy is exploding.

Mr. Tilly has very serious eyes on me. He holds up just one finger. Which makes me stop. And there is silence in

that room, I tell you. And then Mr. Tilly breathes in a really big, long breath. And his eyes tell me to do it too.

And I do.

And when I breathe out, some of that mad breathes out too. Then Mr. Tilly's finger points down. To my fluffy tights.

Which is telling me loud and clear that I better go get my shoes. So I do.

Then he points to the door.

And I walk out of room 109.

My nanny would say this has all the earmarkings of the Helper of the Day being in big trouble.





Mr. Tilly and I go for walks in the hallways sometimes. That's the part about getting in trouble that I kind of like.

Because Mr. Tilly wants to hear all about what the heck got me so upset.

"I saw Mrs. Newberry write my name yesterday," I say.

And Mr. Tilly listens to the whole story. Right down to the part where I pulled Kinsley's hair. And I hate that part of the story, I tell you.

Mr. Tilly takes another belly breath before he starts talking.

“Brianna, I understand that it is hard when your teacher is away unexpectedly,” he says.

I nod.

“And having Mrs. Newberry away on what was supposed to be a special day is not easy.”

“Yeah,” I say quietly.

“But it is never”—he pauses to make sure I’m listening—“never okay to react by saying hurtful things.”

I nod. Because this is not new news to me.

“And it is never okay to put your hands on someone else, like you did with Kinsley.”



I nod again. And I bite my bottom lip. Because I don't want to cry about it.

"I think it would be best if you stayed in for lunch recess," he says. "It will give you a chance to make an apology note to Miss Dee and to Kinsley."

I nod my head again. And I pretend I don't think that plan stinks.

And then he says, "And I have decided to pause Helper of the Day until Mrs. Newberry comes back."

I don't nod this time.

Instead I yell right at that principal. "Are you FIRING me, Mr. Tilly? I know about getting fired—my dad got FIRED! He got fired from the Flakeboard!"

I yell that embarrassing family secret so loud that two kids with bathroom passes stop and stare.

Then I have to give them the stink eye and yell, "MIND YOUR OWN BEESWAX!"

So while Mr. Tilly and I take some more belly breaths, I think about why the heck my dad even got fired.

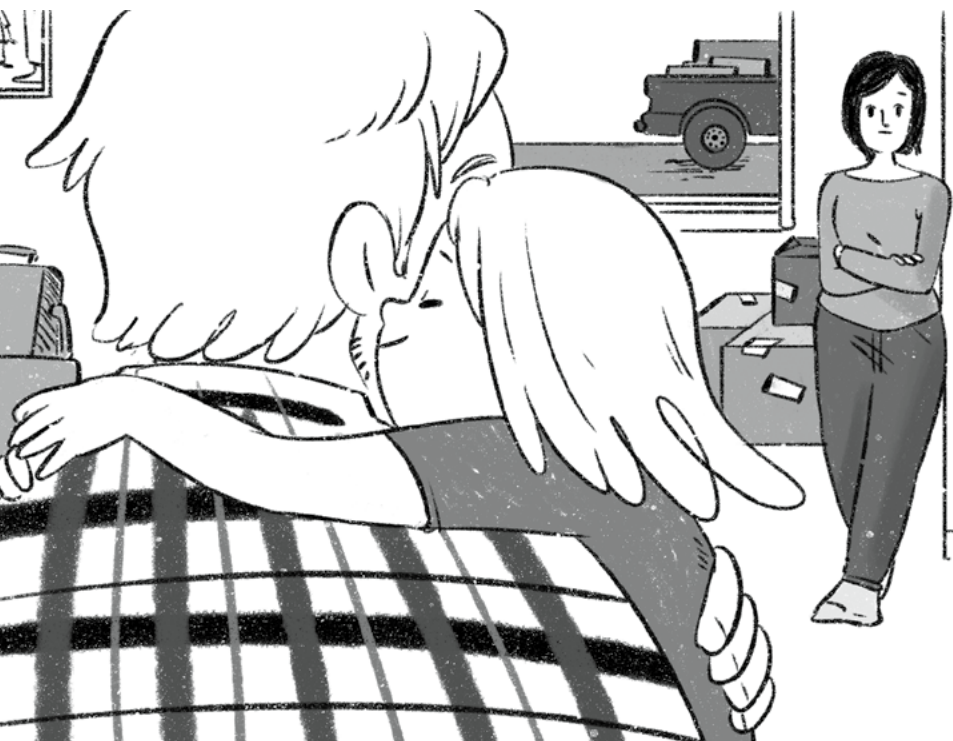
The Flakeboard is where they make walls for your house. Lots of people in town work there. I think Dad might be the only person in the history of the Flakeboard to get fired. I don't know what he did. Maybe he pulled someone's hair.

"Mr. Tilly," I say, "my nanny is going to be madder than a wet hen about this. She says getting fired is really bad!"

My dad is really good at being a dad. When I am sad, he always says, "Cheer up, Buttercup." And that works like a charm, I tell you. But I heard my nanny

say “Good riddance” when my dad left for his new job way out west.

The day he left, my mom just kept her arms crossed. So I got the biggest hug. When I asked, “Dad, when are you coming home?” that man didn’t say a word. So I said, “Cheer up, Buttercup,” and gave him one more hug.



That's when Mom and I put all our stuff in boxes. And we moved right into Nanny's.

"Getting fired is bad," I tell Mr. Tilly again. And then I put my head down because I guess I am just like my dad.

Mr. Tilly stops walking and waits until I look at him. Then he says, "You are not fired, Brianna. We are just going to wait for Mrs. Newberry to return."

Being Helper of the Day with Mrs. Newberry here would be way better. But I am still glum about this news. Plus, all this hall walking is giving me a wedgie. And my Easter shoes are pinching my toes to death.

Mr. Tilly keeps talking. "But I want you to be helpful to Miss Dee today, Brianna. You can be a really good listener for

the rest of the day. I am sure she would appreciate that.”

“Yeah, she needs all the help she can get,” I say. But then I fake-smile at Mr. Tilly. Because he didn’t like that little joke, probably.

“Are you ready to go back to class to try again, Miss Ross?” he asks.

I nod my head at him. When Mr. Tilly calls me Miss Ross, he means business. So I decide to spend the rest of the day in room 109 being good and following all the rules. Right after I slip off these shoes.



Moo!



Miss Dee and I are the only ones in room 109. Everyone else is out for lunch recess, living their best lives. Except for poor Grade 2 Leslie. He is probably getting yelled at all over the place, because I'm not out there to help him. I am in here making apology notes.

Actually, I am in here trying to fix my crown. It's got a crack from when I was chasing Kinsley and it flew off my head. Plus, it's lost another jewel. So I'm using

my markers to color in the jewel holes and cover up the crack.

It's hard to see how my repair job is turning out, though, because I am keeping my hands under the table while I do this. Just in case Miss Dee thinks that coloring crowns with markers is a bad idea.

Miss Dee is sitting in Mrs. Newberry's seat. She is writing stuff down right at my teacher's desk, like she owns the place. Sheesh, I miss Mrs. Newberry. Because that teacher knows how to handle me. And from the look of Miss Dee's messy hair, she is in over her head today.

While I work on my crown, I make a list in my head of the worst parts of this day:

1. I got fired from being Helper of the Day.

2. Mr. Tilly put a note in my backpack. So my getting in trouble isn't even over yet. My nanny will definitely have something to say about this.
3. I feel like I am in grade 3 jail. I got moved to the desk right beside Miss Dee. (Mr. Tilly thought Kinsley and I could use some space from being elbow partners. But now I am in the bad spotlight for the rest of the day.)



4. When kids find out I have been fired as Helper of the Day, they will all think I am the baddest kid in grade 3.

That's when I hear moo-oo-oo.

I stop coloring and listen.

Moo-oo-oo.

"What the heck is that?" I say. It's just me and Miss Dee in this room. And definitely not one cow in sight.

I lift up my head and listen harder. Sure enough, I hear it again!

Moo-oo-oo-oo.

My eyes search. They land at Miss Dee.

Her eyes stay on her paper like she does not even hear any farm sounds happening around here.

But it just gets louder. *Moo-oo-oo-oo!* It is coming from Miss Dee's tummy! But she does not look like she would like to discuss this with me.

"You know what my nanny says, Miss Dee?" I say.

"What?" she asks, not looking up from her paper.

"When something is happening and people don't want to talk about it, that's called an elephant in the room."

"Uh-hum." Miss Dee nods. Her face is red.

"I think there is an elephant in this classroom," I say. "Because we are pretending that your tummy is not making—"

Moo-oo-oo.

“—cow sounds,” I say.

Miss Dee clears her throat, but I can still hear moo-oo-oos coming from her tummy.

“What the heck did you eat for lunch?” I ask her.

“Well,” Miss Dee says, “someone brought cheese scones into the staff room. And I was trying to be polite. And so I ate one.”

Miss Dee takes an uncomfy breath. “And I am a bit moo-oo-oo lactose intolerant. I think that scone didn’t agree with my stomach,” she says.

“Agree?” I say. “It sounds like there is a barn fight going on in there.” I feel bad for her upset tummy.

“Mrs. Newberry has a kettle.” I point to the counter. “She makes tea in the

afternoon. My nanny says hot water does the trick to settle down an upset tummy. You should try that.”

“Thank you, Brianna. That’s a really good idea.” Miss Dee gets up and turns on the kettle.

When she sits back down with a mug of hot water, she says, “Maybe my tummy is a little excited about my first day as a grade 3 supply teacher.”

“I get that,” I say. “My nanny says some days you can bite off more than you can chew. And it is not easy being a teacher in room 109. Because some of these kids in here are a handful,” I say. “But you are going to chew just fine for the rest of this afternoon, I bet.” I give her a thumbs-up. I slide her a note that says *I am sorry.*

Miss Dee smiles a nice smile at me. “Brianna, this afternoon is a good time for us to turn over a new leaf,” she says.

“What?” I ask.

“That means this is a good time to try again. To start over.”

“Can you turn over a new leaf? Even after you’ve been fired?” I ask her.

“Absolutely,” Miss Dee says with a smile.

I smile at that thought. And I think about my dad. I need to tell my nanny about this new leaf.

The bell rings for the kids to come in, and Miss Dee’s eyebrows go up like they are getting panicked. So I add, “You know, Miss Dee, Mr. Tilly gets me to take these belly breaths when my tummy starts acting up.”



I take one to show her how.

And she does one back at me.

“Thank you for helping me, Brianna,” she says.

“Anytime,” I tell her. “I am excellent at chitchat.”

Kids from room 109 are coming down the hall. In a minute they will be here, happy from all that fresh air and playing. And when I don't deliver the library books, they are going to find out I got fired.

And so I put my head down and scribble on my crown. Because my tummy does a twirl. I think I even hear a little moo-oo-oo.

You Know the Drill



“Why are you sitting there, Brianna Banana?”

“None of your stinking beeswax, Markus Snot Rocket!” I tell him.

Miss Dee puts her hand on my shoulder to get my attention. She is looking at me with friendly eyes, and she is taking a belly breath. And I take one too.

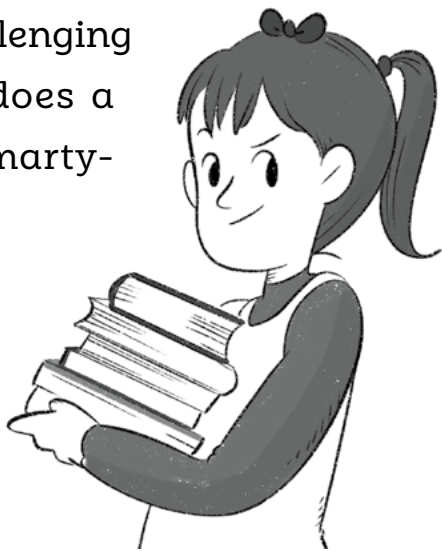
That woman is getting the hang of this teaching thing.

“Excuse me, Miss Dee,” Kinsley says sweetly. “Brianna has her shoes off again.”

I jam my feet in my shoes faster than you can say *tattletale*.

Kinsley keeps talking. “Also, Mrs. Newberry likes to have the library books returned now. My book is *already* in the bag because I am *already* finished reading it.” She keeps yammering on. “My mother says I am an *advanced reader* and I need more challenging material.” Kinsley does a smile like she is Smarty-Pants of the Year.

“Thank you, Kinsley. I will be taking care of the library books today.”



My tummy does a sad flip.

“Why?” Kinsley asks. “Is Brianna not allowed to?”

My lips press tight to my face.

“But that’s the helper’s job.” Andrew Apple Pants sounds shocked. “Is Brianna Banana not the Helper of the Day anymore?” he asks.

“Ha, ha! Brianna Banana is the NOT Helper of the Day,” Markus Mustard Brain cheers.

My face is burning hot. Every eyeball in room 109 is gawking at me. And it makes a big lump get in my throat.

“Is that why she’s sitting next to you?” Clare asks.

Heat from all those eyeballs is laser-beaming me! I am suffocate-y. My nanny says, “If you can’t take the heat, get out

of the kitchen.” And I can’t take the room 109 heat for one more second! I stand up.

“Brianna,” Miss Dee says, like she is worried.

My fluffy feet are not in the mood for listening. They stomp me straight to the door. I need to get out of here.

“Brianna, please stop,” Miss Dee says.

It is probably illegal to take a hallway walk without Mr. Tilly. But this is a belly-breathing emergency. I turn the handle on the door. *I gotta get out of here!*

But then I get the bejeepers scared out of me. The loudest alarm in the history of school alarms is blaring.

Fire drill!

My hand is still on the doorknob. But I hear Miss Dee say, “Brianna.” She says it like she needs something.



I look back. And from the look on her face, and the way she is twisting her white ball necklace, this is the very first fire drill of Miss Dee's entire supply-teaching life. And she could use my help.

"Ouchie. My sensitive ears," Kinsley whines.

"Woo-hoo! Fire drill," cheers Markus.

“What if it’s real?!” yells Andrew Apple Pants.

“Aaahh!” Clare lets out a yelp like she is a screaming-meemie!

Sheesh, Mrs. Newberry would not be impressed with this behavior.

“Come on, people, you know the drill! Get in line and head out the door!” I say.

This is our first fire drill in room 109. But we have been doing these things since kindergarten. I push the door open so the line can head to the playground. I tell them, “Move it, people.”

Then I hear Miss Dee. “Brianna, can you help?” she asks.

“Miss Dee, get your keister over here! It’s a fire drill. Did you miss this part in teachers college?” I rush over to her.

But then I see what she’s looking at.

“Rumi,” I say.

My bestie friend, Rumi, is under the table. She has her hands over her ears. And her eyes are shut tight.

I stick my head under the table. I grab Rumi’s hand and give it a squeeze. “Hey, cheer up, Buttercup. Everything is okay,” I say.

Rumi’s scared eyes open at me. And I remember that Rumi is brand new to our school. Maybe she is brand new to fire drills too.

So I give her hand a friendly yank. “Fire drills



are easy-peasy, Rumi,” I say. “We just need to skedaddle out of here.”

Rumi’s eyes are still looking super scared. But I keep a tight squeeze on her hand, and she lets me hustle her out from under the table.

“And you can’t even hear this ringing once you get outside.” I give her a big smile and a few more yanks to get her feet moving.

Then my bestie and Miss Dee and I hustle-walk out of room 109.

10

Not-So-Fluffy Tights and a New Leaf



“I told you it’s better out here,” I say to Rumi as soon as we get to the blacktop.

Rumi is still squeezing my hand super tight, and she’s looking with scared eyes at the lines of kids all staring at us.

“That’s the whole entire school right there, Rumi. It’s kind of like a big party. Only no one’s allowed to talk and have fun,” I tell her while I lead us to the back-field where room 109 kids are standing in a line.

“Hey, Grade 8 Lily!!!” I yell way over to the grade 8 side of the school. Lily is standing with her big grade 8 friends, looking like fire drills are the most boring thing of her whole life. My mom says teenagers are experts at making that bored face.

“Oh my gosh, Brianna Banana, did you get in trouble again?” Clare says before we even get there. “The whole school has had to stand here longer because of you!”

“Mind your own beeswax,” I say to Clare. And I get my bestie to a spot in the line.

Then I point to the red binder in Miss Dee’s hand. She quickly takes out the green paper and holds it up to tell Mr. Tilly that we all escaped the pretend fire, safe and sound.



“So now we just stand here super quiet until they say we can go back inside,” I tell Rumi.

And I stand in the backfield. And smile like everything is fine. And I pretend I do not feel wet, cold goo squishing between my toes. Because guess what? One puddle. And no Easter shoes.

Every kid is shivering because no one has coats on. And I pretend that I am not the coldest of everyone. My nanny would say “That’s what you get” for kicking my Easter shoes off again. The bottoms of my fluffy tights are sappy. I feel like I am standing in a giant bowl of cold soup. But I stand there anyway. And I fake-smile because this is the “lump it” part of “like it or lump it.”

I notice Leslie’s class beside me. “Hey, Leslie! Hi there, Leslie!”

Leslie's eyes dart to me real quick. "Hi, Brianna. Is it fun being the Helper of the Day?" Then his eyes go back to staring at the back of his teacher's head like we are all supposed to be doing.

"I got fired today," I tell him. "I got fired from being Helper of the Day."

"Ohh," Leslie says, like he feels sad for me.

And sad sinks back inside me like the puddle water between my toes.

I keep my sippy feet to myself for that whole fire drill so that no one notices. I have been in enough trouble for one day. But my soggy toe-cicles sure are relieved when Mr. Tilly finally lets us go back into the school.

For the rest of the afternoon, I sit at the bad-spotlight desk. I've got my fluffy

tights stretched way out so I can step on a dry part of them. And I don't even finish my work. It doesn't make any sense. And only Mrs. Newberry knows how to fix mixed-up things for me.

Plus, I am thinking about that note Mr. Tilly put in my bag. And what Nanny will have to say about it. So I feel happy and sad when it finally gets to be the end of the day.

"Thank you for a wonderful day today," Miss Dee is saying as everyone goes out the door. She is smiling but looking a little bit like she could use a nap.

"Brianna, could you come here, please?" she asks.

She is holding a paper. "Can you put this in your backpack, please?"

“Miss Dee!” I shake my hands no at her and that note. “I already have a note from Mr. Tilly,” I tell her. “My poor nanny can only take so much bad news in one day.”

“I think she will like this note,” says Miss Dee. And she opens it up and lets me read it.

Brianna was kind and considerate to a student who needed help during our fire drill today.

*Sincerely,
Miss Dee*

I smile, because my nanny will love this note.

“And I want to thank you for the tips on drinking hot water and taking belly



breaths,” says Miss Dee. “I found them very helpful.”

I give Miss Dee a thumbs-up. And head out the door.

Rumi is at my locker. She stays quiet, but she gives me a picture.

It says *TO MY BESTIE*. And Rumi drew me in my Helper of the Day outfit. And I look spectacular, I tell you.

Just before I head out the door, I look at the three notes. They tell the whole story about how I:

1. Got fired today.
2. Turned over a new leaf.
3. Was a real-life helper.

I put them in my backpack, right beside my crown and my Easter shoes. Then I get ready for a crusty-tights walk down Princess Street.



TO MY BESTIE



IAN CRYSLER



Lana Button is an early childhood educator and the author of more than a dozen books for children, including *Stay My Baby*, *Tough Like Mum* and the *Kitty and Friends* series. Her books have been shortlisted for the Blue

Spruce Award, Shining Willow Award, IODE Jean Throop Book Award and Rainforest of Reading, and they have been recognized as Canadian Children's Book Centre's Best Books and an IBBY Outstanding Book for Young Children. Lana is a former actress who considers every read-aloud a mini performance. When not writing new stories, Lana spends her time traveling to schools and festivals to share her passion for social-emotional literacy. She lives in Burlington, Ontario.

DARCY MACQUARRIE



Suharu Ogawa is a Toronto-based illustrator. Her love for drawing started in a kindergarten art school after being kicked out of calligraphy class for refusing to convert to right-handedness. Formally trained in art history and

cultural anthropology, she worked for several years as a university librarian until her passion for illustration called her out of that career and into the pursuit of a lifelong dream. Since then, Suharu has created illustrations for magazines, public art projects and children's books, including *All Consuming: Shop Smarter for the Planet*, *Cities: How Humans Live Together* and *Why Humans Work: How Jobs Shape Our Lives and Our World*. She also teaches illustration at OCAD University in Toronto.