



**LENNY
LEMMON**
and the
**Trail of
Crumbs**

illustrated by
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**BEN
DAVIS**

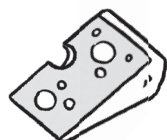
*nosy
crow*





Have you read?

**LENNY
LEMMON**
and the
**Invincible
Rat**



SHOUTOUT TO KATE LOWE FOR THE
SCHOOL DOG IDEA AND TO FLOYD FOR
BEING THE REAL LIFE CRUMBS.


B. D.



TO MY AMAZING WIFE MARTY AND
OUR LITTLE BELLY BOY.

J. L.





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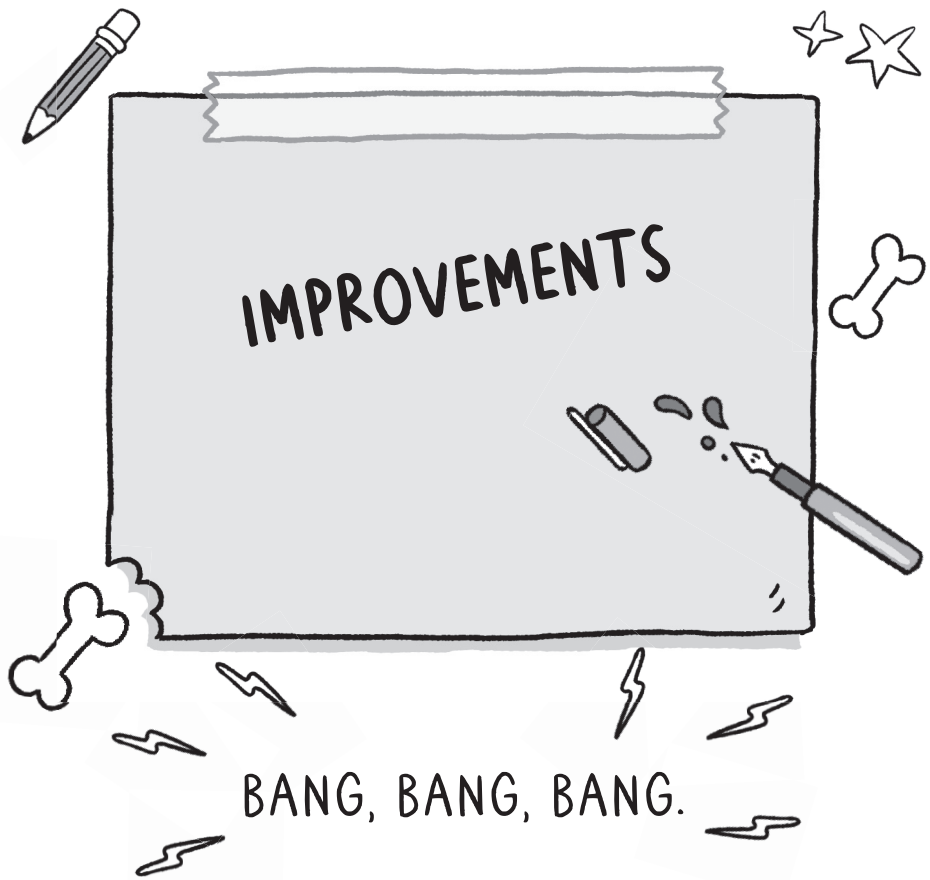
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The thudding from the corridor outside our classroom is so loud, I can barely concentrate on my daydreaming. I glance over at my best friend, Sam, and see he's covering up one

ear with his right hand and scribbling down long-division answers with his left. My other friend, Jess, sits opposite, and I can tell she's not going to stand it for much longer.



“Ms Bottley!” she says to our teacher, not even bothering to put her hand up. “What’s with all the racket?”

“Just some improvements taking place,” Ms Bottley yells back from her desk. “I know it’s distracting but please get on with your work.”

I’m curious as to what’s going on, so I get up, pretending to be going to the bin to sharpen my pencil even though the point could already pop a blimp. Mum always tells me I’m a “curious person”. She says it explains why I’m always getting into trouble at school and that it’s not my fault really.

I stand over the bin and peer through the window in the classroom door. I see Mr Greenford, the headteacher, picking up a framed certificate and beginning to hammer it on to the wall.

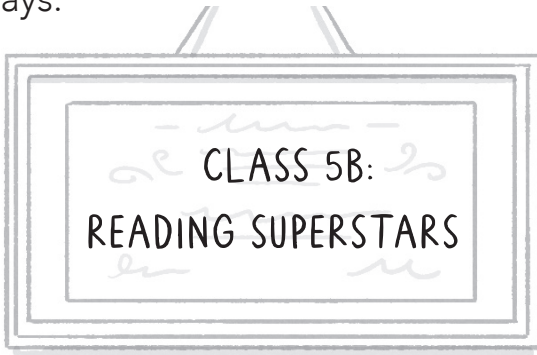


1998? When even was that? Was it a school for dinosaurs? Why would he be putting that up? My curiosity is even stronger now.

"Ms Bottley," I shout over the hammering.
"Can I go to the toilet, please?"



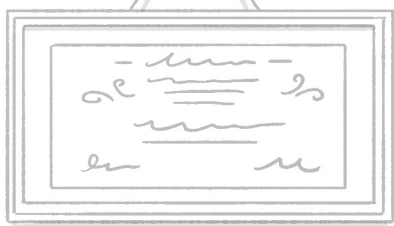
Ms Bottley would normally argue with me about how often I use the toilet, but she's too busy cutting out sugar paper for a poster that says:



"Yes, but be quick," she murmurs, with sticky tape clamped between her teeth.

Out in the corridor, I decide to get to the point.

"Mr Greenford!"



Mr Greenford, who has his back to me, screams like he's been jolted with an electric shock and accidentally hammers his hairy thumb.

"LENNY!" he yowls, clutching at his throbbing hand. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF CLASS?"

"Toilet," I say. "What's with the certificates?"

I can now see he has lined the entire corridor with them. By the looks of things, the school won an award every year until the year I started. Weird.

"Why do you want to know?" he asks,



holding up his thumb. It's starting to go purple.

"Curious," I reply.

"Well, you know what curiosity did to the cat, don't you?" he grumbles.

"No, but I really want to know!" I say.

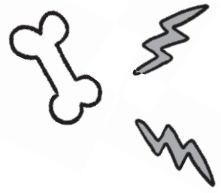
Before Mr Greenford can reply, Bill the caretaker galumphs down the corridor, his shoes squeaking like mad.

“Where have you been?” Mr Greenford moans. “I’ve had to do these myself and I think I’ve broken my thumb!”

“Don’t blame me, blame whoever blocked the staffroom toilet,” Bill shudders.

I can tell Mr Greenford isn’t going to answer my question, but I still want to know what’s happening. There’s something not right with how nervous all the teachers are. Just this morning I saw Ms Patel from Year Two scrubbing the school sign with a toothbrush.

I linger around the corner and listen. At first it’s just Bill moaning at Mr Greenford to tell the teachers they’re not supposed




to flush memos down the loo, but then Mr Greenford takes over, his voice dropping.

“We need this school shipshape for the chief tomorrow.”

Chief?! Like a police chief? Why would the police be coming to Fleurwood?

Back in the classroom, I stand by Ms Bottley’s desk and announce the reason for the teachers’ weirdness:

**“THE POLICE ARE
COMING TOMORROW!”**



A murmur of excitement
ripples across the room.

"Good!" says Amelia
Kelly. "Maybe they're
coming to arrest
YOU!"

I stick my tongue
out at her. She is
the Joker to my

Batman, the Thanos to my Avengers, the ...
Amelia Kelly to my Lenny Lemmon.

I glance at Sam. He has turned as white as the whiteboard. Sam always thinks he's in trouble, even though he always follows the rules. Honestly, if Mr Greenford made up a rule that all kids called Sam had to dive into a vat of cow poo, he would do it. With a triple somersault.





“Can everyone calm down, please!” Ms Bottley says, standing up and giving me a “back to your seat” look.

“What Lenny probably heard is that a chief is coming tomorrow,” she says. “But it is not a police chief, it’s the school’s chief executive.”

Another murmur spreads across the class.

“It’s nothing to worry about,” says Ms Bottley, even though her face actually looks really worried. “It’s just to see how brilliant you all are, OK? I will say this again: there is absolutely no need to worry.”



"I'm worried," says Sam as we line up on the playground outside school.

"Well, there's a surprise," chuckles Jess. "If there was an Olympics of Worrying, you'd take gold every time."

"No, he wouldn't," I say. "He'd be too

worried to go to the stadium.”

“Listen,” Sam snaps as we giggle. “I’ve been reading about these chief executives. Did you know they can close schools down?”

I gasp and my eyes go fuzzy. This could be my dream. No school! I’d spend all day doing fun stuff: playing, gaming. I’d never have to deal with Mr Greenford and his wacky rules ever again. No more tests, no more long division.

“Lenny!” Sam snaps his fingers in my face. “I know exactly what you’re daydreaming about and it’s not going to happen. All they’ll do is send us to the nearest school.”



"But the nearest school is—"

Sam nods, a grim expression falling across his face. "Birch Hill."

Oh no.

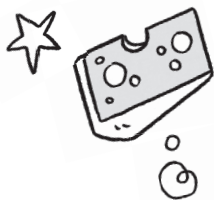
Jess nudges me, confused. "What's BIRCH HILL?"

I sometimes forget how new Jess is. She fits in with us so well, it feels like she's been around forever.

"BIRCH HILL is the worst school in town," says Sam. "No, scratch that – in the country. No, scratch that – in the

KNOWN UNIVERSE."





"What's so bad about it?" Jess asks.

Sam and I exchange a glance. We've heard the stories about Birch Hill. And we know the golden rule: if you see a kid in a Birch Hill uniform, **RUN**.

"At Birch Hill, the kids are in charge," says Sam.

Jess shrugs. "That sounds pretty cool."

Sam shakes his head gravely. "It isn't. It's chaos. Anyone considered not tough enough is terrorised."

Jess chuckles. "But I am tough."

"For Fleurwood, yes," says Sam. "But not Birch Hill. That place will eat you alive."

Jess glances over at me. Sam always exaggerates stuff like this, but not this time.

"We can't let the school get closed down," says Sam. "And that means none of your," he waves his hand at me, "adventures."

"What do you mean?" I say.

"Well, like when we were doing **OLDEN DAYS SCHOOL** and you thought it would be a good idea to bring in a **RAT.**"

I roll my eyes. "You need to stop living in the past, Sam. It's going to be fine."

Sam shakes his head. "Why didn't your



dad tell you what's happening, anyway? He's a dinner lady here, isn't he?"

I sigh. "He's actually a lunchtime supervisor. And only on the little kids' playground. And they don't tell him any official school business."

Even if they did, he'd probably forget as soon as he got down to his lab in the basement and started trying to invent stuff. The other day he made a housework robot, but it went on a rampage through the neighbourhood and Mrs Hassan had to whack it with a frying pan until it fell into her pond and blew up.



A black car swishes into the car park on the other side of the playground. Mr Greenford sprints towards it and stands next to it, grinning. It must be the chief.

Our entire class is watching now. The door opens and a tall lady climbs out. Her hair is a cloud of fluffy white.

“She’s scary,” Parvati gasps.

I can’t hear what Mr Greenford is saying, but I can see how the chief is staring over his shoulder, straight at us.

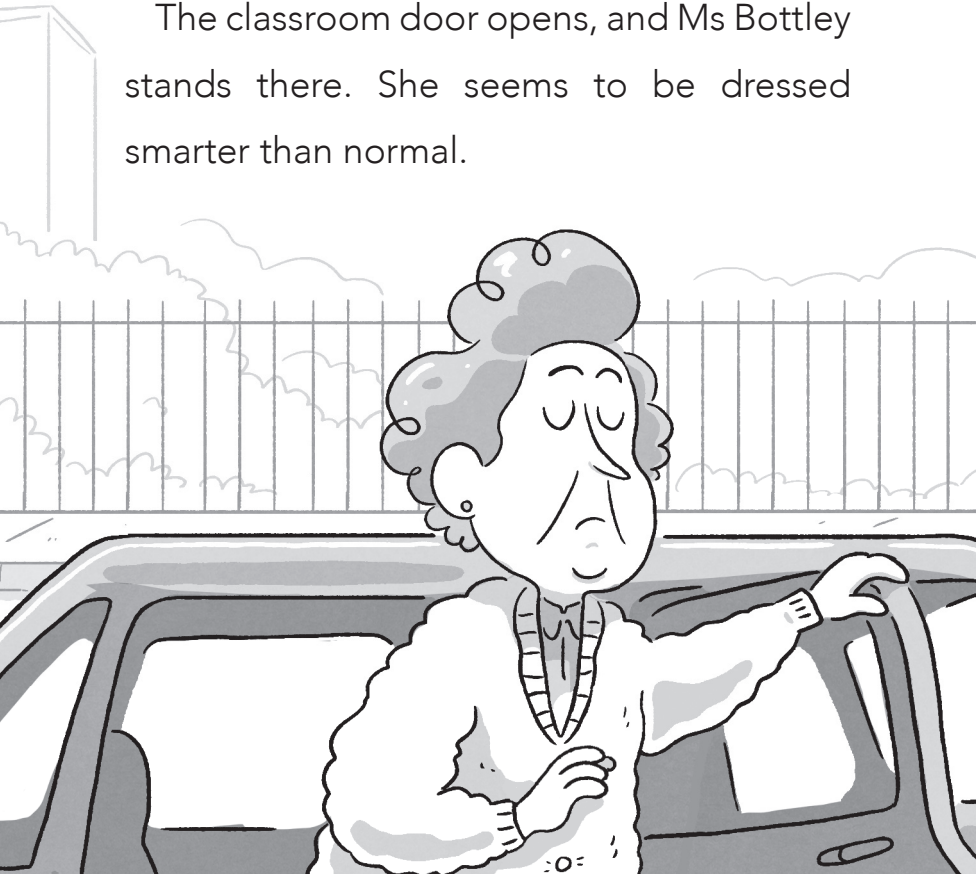
“Why is she looking at us?” Kieran Roscoe whispers.

“She’s probably been warned about

Lenny," says Amelia Kelly snootily.

I want to stick my tongue out at her like I normally do, but the chief is still staring at us and I'm worried my tongue will shut down the entire school.

The classroom door opens, and Ms Bottley stands there. She seems to be dressed smarter than normal.



"OK, everyone inside," she says.

We all file in, but as my friends and I go to pass her, she holds out a hand.

Amelia Kelly shoots a look at us over her shoulder and almost bonks her head on a bookcase.

"Is everything all right?" I ask.





Ms Bottley waits until everyone else has gone inside before she speaks. "I'm sure it's fine," she says. "It's just Mr Greenford has asked that the three of you go up to the PE storage container on the school field. He's got a special job for you, apparently."

I frown, confused. "What special job?"

"He wouldn't say," replies Ms Bottley. "Just that it's important and will be a big help."

We look at each other. I can tell by Sam and Jess's faces they're unsure, but it looks like we have no choice.

"What do you think this is about?" says Jess as we make our way to the field.



“I don’t know,” says Sam. “But quite frankly, I could do without it. My stress levels are through the roof!”

“I don’t know either,” I say. “But if it’s going to impress the chief, then it has to be worth it. No way do I want to go to Birch Hill.”

Sam shudders at the mention of the name. “We’d better do the best job we can,” he says.