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# KYLE

I look up at the clock. There's still an hour left until the school bell rings and class is dismissed.

Actually, there are sixty-four minutes and eleven seconds left.

Now, sixty-three minutes and forty-four seconds.

It's only Monday and I'm already looking forward to the weekend.

I want to raise my voice and yell, "Let me go home! Yow! Yow! Yow!"

Yow. Yow. Yow. That's what my favorite cartoon character, Squiggle Cat, always says when he's annoyed or angry or just wants to shout something.

Now there are sixty-three minutes and twenty-one seconds remaining in class.

Yow. Yow. Yow.

Don't get me wrong. School isn't totally awful. But learning is hard, and Ms. Bryce doesn't make it any easier.

Just this morning I walked up to her desk with my math sheet and said, “Ms. Bryce, I don’t understand why—”

She didn’t even let me finish, she just barked, “Before you add fractions, you need a common denominator.” She jabbed her finger on my paper.

“What’s a denominator again?”

“Look it up!” she said with a nasty frown. And that was that. I felt stupid.

Who cares what a denominator is, anyway? Fractions are stupid, not me.

I stab my notebook with my pencil, and the tip breaks. So I lean over and grab Seth’s pencil from his hand. Seth frowns at me and fishes another pencil from his desk.

The class pencil sharpener broke last week so we’re supposed to bring backups, but I forgot.

I can picture my extra pencil on the kitchen counter of our apartment, right where I left it, next to the carrots Mom cut up for my lunch. I forgot those, too.

I bet if Mom put the pencil next to some cookies, I wouldn’t have left it behind.

But Mom never gives me lunch dessert. That’s why I always swipe one from somebody else during lunch. Usually I grab a cookie, but sometimes it’s a brownie or cupcake. I’m not picky. But a lunch without dessert is like a classroom without a pencil.

Meanwhile, Ms. Bryce drones on about something. I'm not really paying attention.

My pencil tip breaks. Again. I reach over to grab Seth's pencil, again, but he turns his body to block me.

"C'mon. Give me your pencil," I whisper to Seth, holding out my palm.

"Then what am I supposed to use?" Seth asks.

"I don't know," I say. "Steal Cooper's."

"What's going on back there?" Ms. Bryce hollers way too loudly. When I look up, she's frowning and staring at me. I think screaming is Ms. Bryce's second favorite thing to do in the whole world, right after sending kids to the principal's office. "Is there a problem?"

There is a problem, but it's our teacher. She has way too many rules. Except I can't say *that*. So I just shrug and say, "No problem. Sorry."

I look up at the clock. There are now fifty-nine minutes, thirty-six seconds.

Yow. Yow. Yow.