

**Jim Benton's Tales from Mackerel Middle School**

**DEAR DUMB DIARY,**



**NOBODY'S PERFECT.  
I'M AS CLOSE AS IT GETS.**

**BY JAMIE KELLY**

**SCHOLASTIC inc.**

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HEY  
WANT TO  
HAVE AN  
AWESOME  
FUTURE?

WELL,  
Stop Reading my  
Diary **OR**  
You won't  
have any  
FUTURE  
AT ALL



THIS DIARY  
-PROPERTY OF-

Jamie Kelly

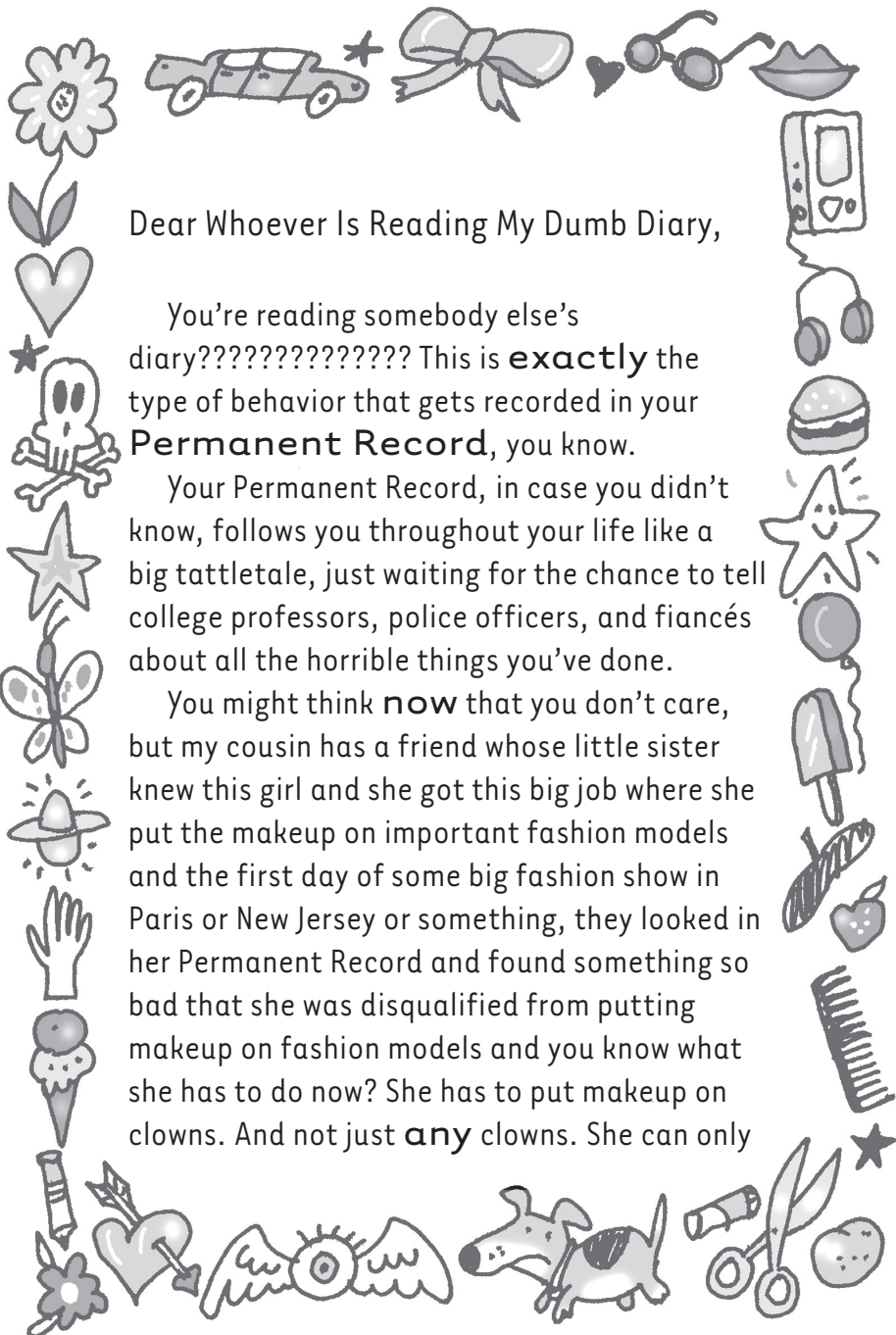
SCHOOL: MACKEREL MIDDLE SCHOOL

EXTRACURRICULARS: UM...

FUTURE PLANS: I don't really know...um...

COLLEGE GOALS: I DON'T KNOW

LET'S TALK ABOUT  
SOMETHING ELSE NOW

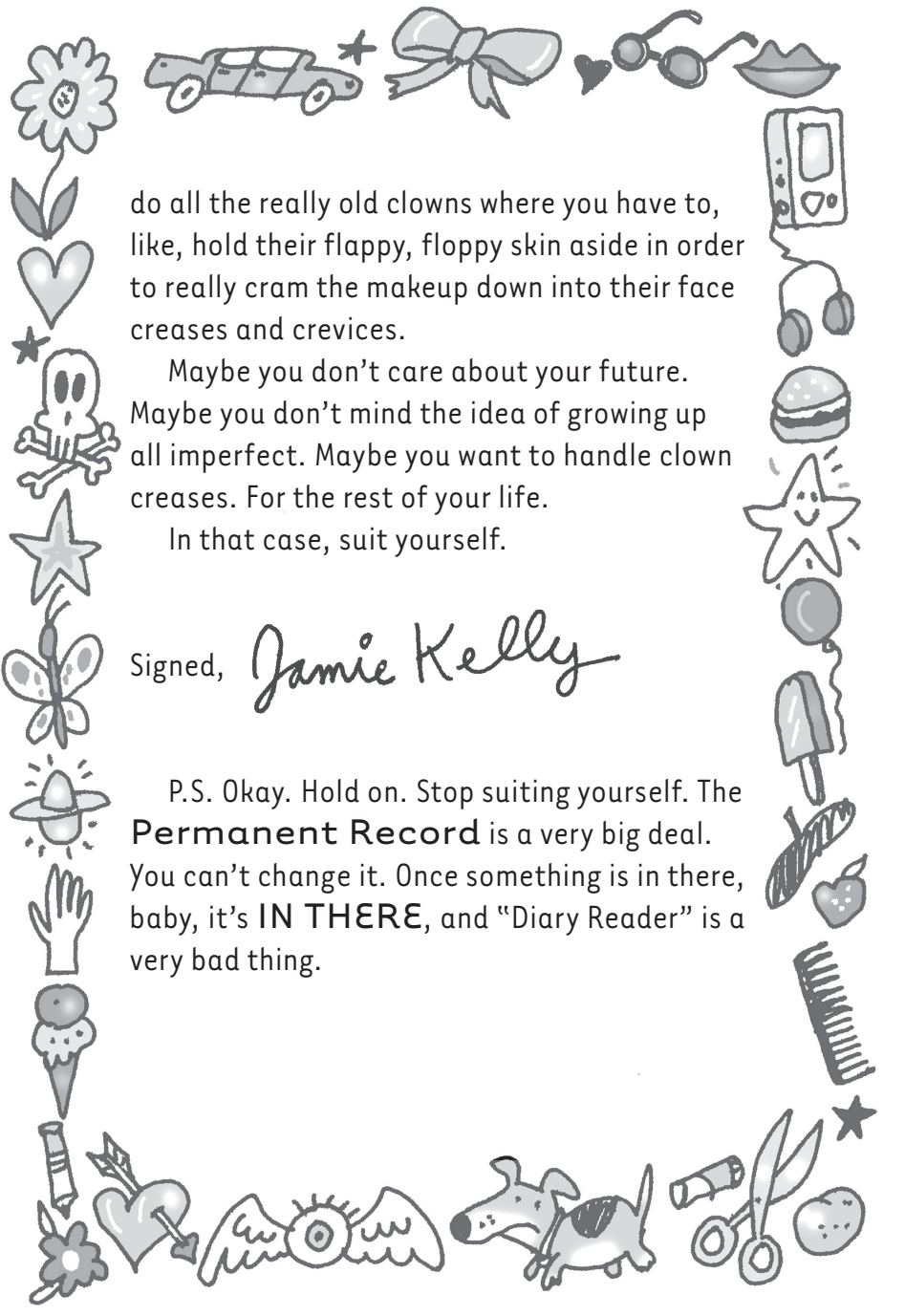


Dear Whoever Is Reading My Dumb Diary,

You're reading somebody else's diary???????????????? This is **exactly** the type of behavior that gets recorded in your **Permanent Record**, you know.

Your Permanent Record, in case you didn't know, follows you throughout your life like a big tattletale, just waiting for the chance to tell college professors, police officers, and fiancés about all the horrible things you've done.

You might think **now** that you don't care, but my cousin has a friend whose little sister knew this girl and she got this big job where she put the makeup on important fashion models and the first day of some big fashion show in Paris or New Jersey or something, they looked in her Permanent Record and found something so bad that she was disqualified from putting makeup on fashion models and you know what she has to do now? She has to put makeup on clowns. And not just **any** clowns. She can only



do all the really old clowns where you have to, like, hold their floppy, floppy skin aside in order to really cram the makeup down into their face creases and crevices.

Maybe you don't care about your future. Maybe you don't mind the idea of growing up all imperfect. Maybe you want to handle clown creases. For the rest of your life.

In that case, suit yourself.

Signed, *Jamie Kelly*

P.S. Okay. Hold on. Stop suiting yourself. The **Permanent Record** is a very big deal. You can't change it. Once something is in there, baby, it's **IN THERE**, and "Diary Reader" is a very bad thing.

# SUNDAY 01

Dear Dumb Diary,

You know the sound a coconut makes when it bounces off the rubbery side of a prize-winning hog?

**Wait.**

I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let me describe my Friday.

Let's say that you had a best friend and her name was, I don't know, Shmisabella. Okay, so Shmisabella is taking banjo lessons. She told you so and proved it by showing you her banjo case. She even played you some banjo music she has on her iPod — "I am way into banjos," Shmisabella says — but here's the thing: Shmisabella does **NOT**, in any way, have anything to do with the banjo. You just don't know that yet.





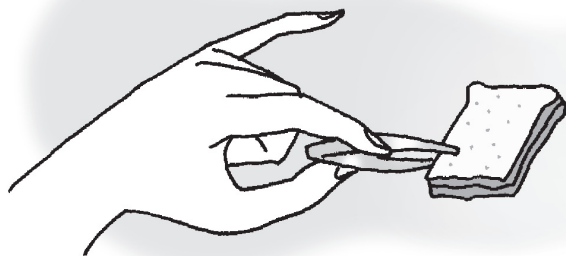
Perhaps you were at lunch a week before, and your friend said something about how one time she brought a kangaroo home from the zoo.

Sure, *you* know that Shmisabella actually did it, because it was your garage she hid the kangaroo in until she climbed into the kangaroo's pouch and you had to confess to your parents so they would call the paramedics to come and remove her from a kangaroo.

But another girl at the table, Yolanda, who is a dainty person — you know the type, eats popcorn one piece at a time, has those tiny little buttons on her clothing that people with regular human-sized hands can't operate — made this quiet, dainty *pffft* sound to indicate that she thought your friend was lying.

Now, Shmisabella didn't react to the *pffft* sound, so you knew that she either didn't care or just ignored it.

Yeah, guess what. **Wrong.** She noticed it.



The dainty  
also eat  
little sandwiches  
with tweezers.

You might think that your science teacher, Mrs. Curie, was out sick because teachers just normally get sick. Like maybe they got poisoned by that red ink they use to grade papers, or maybe the subject they teach finally just suffocated them in a big steaming pile of boredom.

You would never think that maybe Shmisabella had somehow **arranged** for the teacher to miss class that morning, maybe by calling her home and telling her that there was a large package waiting for her that had accidentally been delivered to a post office in the next town.

All of these things just don't add up until . . .



. . . until they all suddenly make sense when the substitute teacher bends over to pick up some papers that blew off the desk because **somebody** had piled them close to the edge and left a window open.

Then Shmisabella reaches forward, places the **tennis racquet** that she had been keeping in her banjo case into Yolanda's dainty hand, and throws a tennis ball at 100 miles per hour at the substitute's ample backside, making a sound a lot like a coconut bouncing off the rubbery side of a prize-winning hog. (You might recall I mentioned this earlier.)

Yolanda understood exactly how this looked, and since she's dainty, she's capable of swiftly slipping things like tennis racquets into another person's hand, **especially** if that person is kind of asleep and that person happens to be me.



A substitute science teacher is just like a regular science teacher in many ways: They bend over, their butts sound like prize-winning hogs when impacted, and they are good at figuring things out scientifically, like determining that the person holding the tennis racquet probably has something to do with the cooling ointment the substitute will be applying to their backside at lunch.

Now here's the surprise: This "Shmisabella" I've been telling you about is really Isabella, and all of this **really happened**. She tried to set up Yolanda for *pfifting* her kangaroo story, and I, an attractive and innocent bystander, got caught up in the scandal.

The sub sent me down to the office to talk to  
the assistant principal, but he wasn't there, so I  
have to see him first thing tomorrow morning. I am  
**SO SO SO SO SO SO SO SO SO SO SO SO**  
telling on Isabella.

