Jim Benton's Tales from Mackerel Middle School

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

SCHOOL. HASN'T THIS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH?

BY JAMIE KELLY

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Tell your teacher that you should get extra credit for reading this book.

Special thanks and an A+ to Kristen LeClerc and the team at Scholastic: Steve Scott, Jackie Hornberger, Anna Bloom, and Shannon Penney. Glad you've all gotten another year dumber, too.

SCHOOL. HASN'T THIS
GONE ON LONG ENOUGH?

THIS DIARY

IS THE PROPERTY OF

Jamie Kelly

HEIGHT: PERFECT

WEIGHT: PERFECT

EYE COLOR: PERFECT

FACIAL FEATURES: PERFECT

HAIR: LOOKS AREN'T EVERYTHING

GRADES: Really quite acceptable if you don't count the classes they are just making us take to be mean.

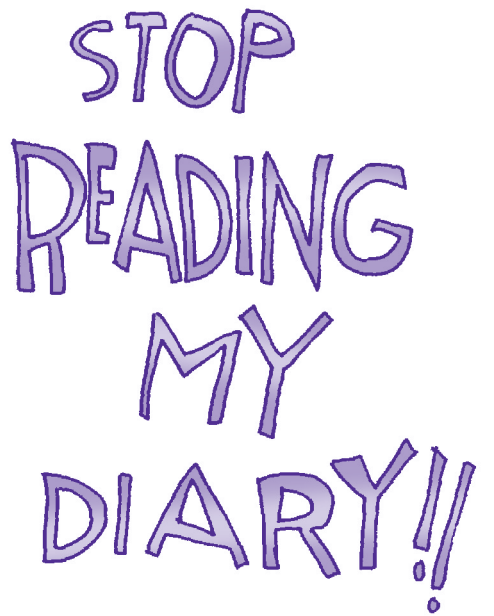
IF you're smart,

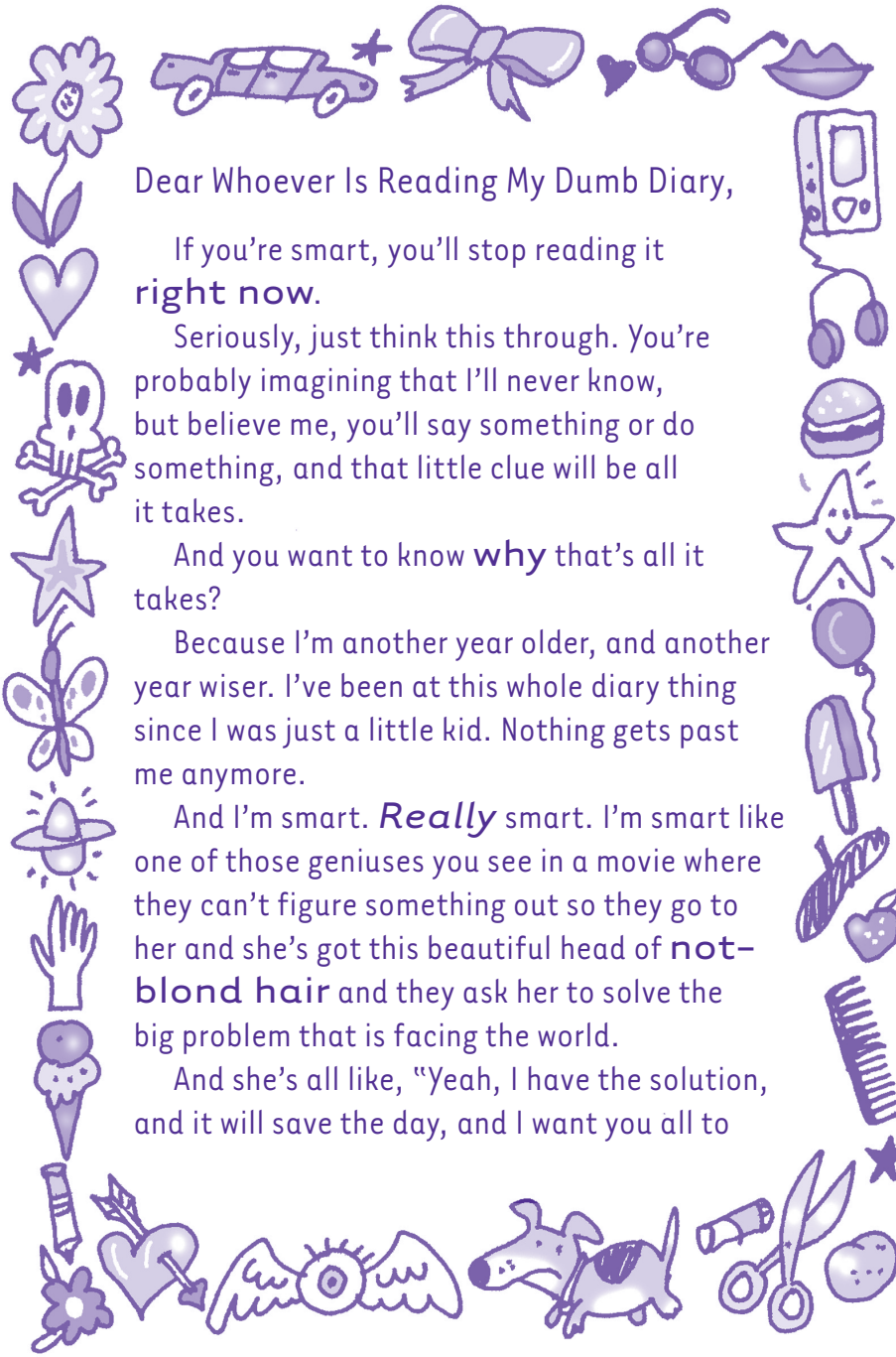
YOU'LL STOP READING MY DIARY

RIGHT NOW!!

IF YOU WANT TO LIVE TO SEE TOMORROW, ANYWAY.

Okay.
I understand that
if you're just going to
School tomorrow you
might not care that
much but still—





Dear Whoever Is Reading My Dumb Diary,

If you're smart, you'll stop reading it **right now**.

Seriously, just think this through. You're probably imagining that I'll never know, but believe me, you'll say something or do something, and that little clue will be all it takes.

And you want to know **why** that's all it takes?

Because I'm another year older, and another year wiser. I've been at this whole diary thing since I was just a little kid. Nothing gets past me anymore.

And I'm smart. ***Really*** smart. I'm smart like one of those geniuses you see in a movie where they can't figure something out so they go to her and she's got this beautiful head of **not-blond hair** and they ask her to solve the big problem that is facing the world.

And she's all like, "Yeah, I have the solution, and it will save the day, and I want you all to

notice how I'm not using the math I learned in school to solve it."

AND THE WORLD IS SAVED, and to show their appreciation, the citizens of the world make math illegal and eventually everybody is going on and on about how they've always secretly hated math and they're glad it's gone.

I'm smart like she is.

Signed, Jamie Kelly

P.S. I know you should never call people stupid or morons or idiots. But I didn't *call* anybody those names. I WROTE them here in my diary — my private, private diary that I KNOW my parents would never snoop through. They understand that I really trust them to respect my privacy, and I understand they would probably really hate to lose that special, intelligent, mature trust that we share.

P.P.S. I know that friends of mine (and friend-like people, also) wouldn't read my diary. Not because they don't want to lose trust, but more because they don't want to lose consciousness.

SUNDAY 01

Dear Dumb Diary,

Mark has 100 grapefruits. If his friend Sean takes 10 and his brother Brad takes 4, how many grapefruits will Mark have left?

This is a problem they asked me to solve one time in math.

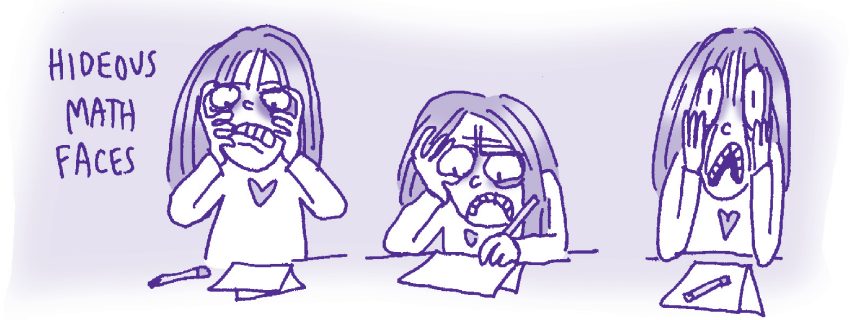
The solution was obvious: Mark is irrationally hoarding grapefruits and it's not helping that the people closest to him are stealing them.

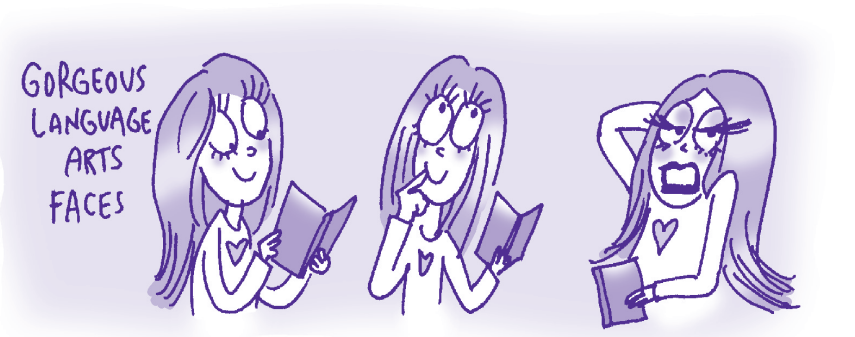
They told me I was wrong, but I really believe I nailed it, and they just couldn't accept the fact that making Mark face his grapefruit problem **was** the solution.

Although it's really Math himself that needs to address things.

I, for one, believe that somebody needs to sit Math down in a chair and say, "Math, it's time that you stopped creating issues like this for yourself. If you won't, we think you should start solving your **own problems**, and not come crying to us whenever you want to know the solution to some imaginary drama that you've cooked up.

"Also, Math, you make us do really ugly, contorted faces while we're working on you, and that's just **unfair**."





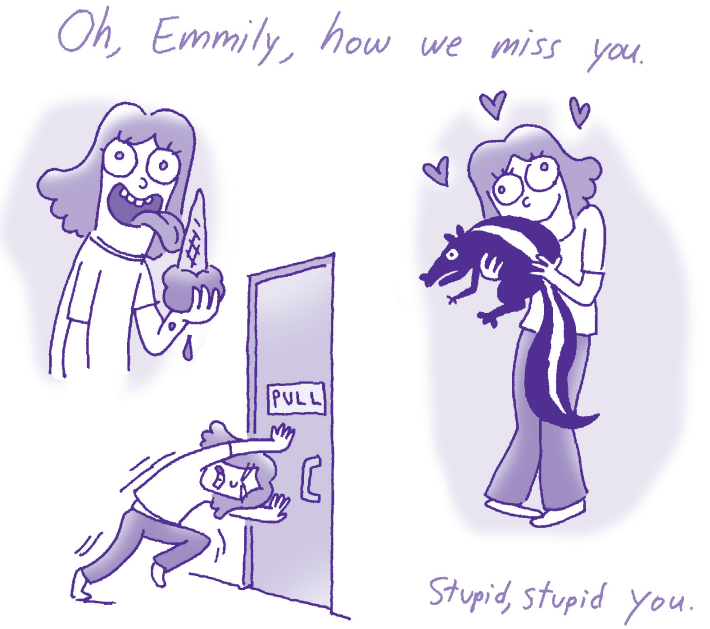
And here's a surprise: I'm not doing great in math class.

It's not because I'm stupid, because I'm NOT. Ask anybody. They'll tell you I'm not stupid.

(Actually, there is a custodian with an eye patch who might tell you that I am, but I was just a third grader at the time and lots of third graders get talked into playing indoor golf by their best friends.)

A moment of nostalgia: For many people, it's very hard to mention the word **"stupid"** without thinking of one of your very dearest friends.

In my case, that friend is Emmily.

You remember how Emmily's dad got a really great job offer and they had to move, right? Just like that, Emmily stumbled into our lives, and then just like that, she stumbled back out again. (And also, while in it, she mostly **stumbled**.)

I still miss her every single time I see somebody push on a door marked "pull," or bite their own finger while eating, or ask something like, "If vampires can't be seen in mirrors, how do they know if their jeans make them look fat?"