

Cleo Edison Oliver

Playground Millionaire

SUNDEE T. FRAZIER

Illustrations by
Jennifer L. Meyer



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Summary: Fifth-grader Cleo Edison Oliver is full of money-making ideas, and her fifth-grade Passion Project is no different — but things get more complicated when she has to keep her business running, be a good listener when her best friend needs her, and deal with the bully teasing her about being adopted at the same time.

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◆ CHAPTER 1 ◆

A New Name, a New Business

Cleo wrote her new name in fancy lettering, the curlicue kind she'd learned from Caylee. It didn't look as good as it would have if her best friend had done it, but it would work. She took down the California license-plate door sign that said CLEO'S ROOM and hung her new sign in its place:

cleopatra edison oliver®, CEO.

Perfect.

Josh appeared from his and Julian's room. He stared at her door, slurping his Dum-Dum. "Edison's not your middle name."

No, it wasn't. Lenore was. But she didn't want that one. Not since Lexie Lewis had gotten ahold of it and started calling her "LeSnore."

"It is now." She started into her room.

"But you can't just change your name." *S-s-slurp.*
"Can you?"

She turned. Josh ran into her, jabbing her with his dumb Dum-Dum stick.

"Ow!"

"Sorry." *S-s-slurp.*

She rubbed her chest where the stick had poked her. "You can do anything you want with your name. It's *yours*."

Josh sucked thoughtfully, as if this obvious fact had never occurred to him. He followed her across the room. "But Edison is our grandparents' name."

Cleo reached under her bed and pulled out the signs she'd made the night before. "I don't think they'll mind."

"But you'll have two last names!"

"Women with two last names sound more professional."

Josh snorted. “You’re not a woman!”

“Well, I *will* be! Now, go away.” She grabbed the roll of masking tape from her desk drawer, dropped everything on her royal-purple comforter, and high-stepped onto the bed. She stood eye-to-eye with her poster of Fortune A. Davies.

Fortune had skin that gleamed like a polished chestnut, dazzling white teeth, and a sparkle in her eye that said, “I believe in you!” Her arms were flung wide, forever frozen in an almost-hug. How Cleo wished she could step into the picture and get that hug.

“Why’d you put your initials after your name?”

Cleo turned. The beads at the ends of her freshly braided hair clicked against one another. Josh was staring at her door again.

She jumped down from the bed and grabbed the signs and tape. “Those aren’t my initials. I mean, they *are*, now that I’ve changed my name, but —” She huffed. “Don’t you know anything about business, Josh?”

“Not really. Just what you’ve taught me.” He

grinned. He had a huge gap where his bottom two teeth had been.

What would he do without her? “CEO stands for Chief Executive Officer.”

Josh’s forehead wrinkled. “What’s that mean?”

“It’s the person in charge of a company.”

“Why don’t they just call it ‘Person In Charge,’ then? It’s easier to understand.”

Cleo rolled her eyes. She started down the stairs.

“But, Cleo, you don’t *have* a company.”

He had stopped following her. *Finally.*

“I do now! *Cleopatra Enterprises, Inc.!*”

Barkley greeted her at the bottom of the stairs, panting from his “long trek” across the kitchen. His tail slapped the wall. Cleo crouched to get her good-morning kisses. “Ew, Barkley. Not only are you seriously overweight, you’ve got a bad case of morning breath!”

Barkley barked.

“I think it’s this new low-fat dog food we’re feeding him,” Dad said, scooping kibbles from a ginormous

bag of Slim 'N' Trim Canine Sardine Meal. Mom wasn't about to switch dog foods until the whole entire bag was used, and as long as he had to eat that fishy stuff, Barkley's breath was doomed.

Barkley nudged the food with his nose but didn't eat any.

Mom turned from the counter where she was stirring something that looked like sticky birdseed in a bowl. Her T-shirt exposed her formidable arms. Not particularly muscular, but solid. "I don't think he likes it," Mom said, watching Barkley.

"I like it!" Julian slid into the room, wearing his Iron Man pajamas.

"What?" Mom's eyes popped wide.

"It's Fish Stick Cap'n Crunch!" Cleo's littlest brother snatched a piece of dog food and crunched it in his mouth. Barkley looked at him quizzically, then took a begrudging bite himself.

"When have you had Cap'n Crunch cereal?" Mom demanded.

"At Damon's house."