

Chapter 3

The Zucchini Disposal Squad

Miss Scrimmage's sister was in town from Port Hope, and various girls had been selected to prepare for tonight's dinner party. Cathy Burton and Diane Grant were entrusted with baking the cake, an apple-crumble confection that was the Headmistress's favourite dessert.

Without much enthusiasm, Cathy sprinkled the final spoonful of brown sugar onto the crumble topping. "Okay, Diane. Fire up the oven. We're ready to roll."

Diane made no move. "Cathy, is there something wrong?"

"Why would you think something's wrong?" asked Cathy morosely.

"Because you mope twenty-four hours a day," replied Diane readily. "And you climb up to the roof every afternoon to watch Macdonald Hall practise football. And you do nothing but crab about how lousy they are. And now, for the very first time in your career as my roommate, you're about to serve Miss Scrimmage and her sister a *real* cake. No extra ingredients — no horseradish, no Tabasco, no ground jalapeno pep-

pers. Why, I'll bet you're not even planning to drop it on the floor. What's the matter with you?"

Cathy sighed. "I'm bored. All the excitement has gone out of school this year."

"It's only the second week," Diane pointed out.

Cathy nodded. "And by this time any other year, Bruno would be on some big crusade, and we'd be right up there with him."

"Risking our lives," Diane added feelingly.

"Having a *great time*," Cathy amended. "But this year, all they care about is football, which, as Bruno so kindly pointed out, is a man's game." Her face twisted. "We used to be part of what was going on at the Hall, Diane, and now we're left with this — baking a *crumb cake*!"

"I know the real reason for all this," Diane challenged. "You're jealous because they have a football team, and you used to love playing so much."

They were interrupted when Miss Scrimmage herself breezed in. "Now, let's see how our little dessert chefs are coming along." She dug a small spoon into the batter, tasted it and paused thoughtfully. "Hmmm. Very nice. But it does lack that particular zing that you girls always put into your baking." Smiling, she whisked out of the kitchen.

"Okay," shrugged Cathy. "Break out the curry powder."

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It was half an hour after lights-out, and eerie shadows played upon the walls of room 306 in Dormitory 3. Bruno and Boots, both holding flashlights in their dishpan hands, hunched over their desks, finishing their homework.

“This is your fault, you know,” Boots said, not for the first time. “You were so busy thinking about Hank the Tank and football that you let The Fish sneak right up and zonk us from point-blank range.”

“You know, it’s beginning to get on my nerves, too,” said Bruno thoughtfully. “I mean, twenty-some-odd toilets block, and only we get put on dishwashing duty.”

“But we’ll never be bored,” said Boots with bitter sarcasm in his voice. “We’ve got classes till three-thirty, football practice till six, and we have to eat dinner, put in two hours of dishwashing and finish all our homework by ten. It’s a full life.”

“It’s only for a week,” Bruno said soothingly. “We’ve got a bigger problem to deal with. What are we going to do the next time those zucchini sticks show up? I mean, Hank the Tank is a prince of a guy, but he’s got a blind spot when it comes to that deep-fried soap he makes. We need a plan.”

“I’ve already got a plan,” Boots growled. “The next time somebody hands me a plate of zucchini sticks, I’m going to take it and throw it in the woods.”

Bruno leapt to his feet. “That’s a great idea! The woods behind the school! The Tank’ll never go there! Boots, you’re a genius!”

“I was joking! You can’t throw stuff in the woods. That’s pollution.”

“It can’t be,” Bruno argued. “Nobody goes there. It’s like the famous philosopher who said, ‘If a zucchini stick falls in the forest and there’s no one there to see it, does it make a mess?’”

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