Rhyme Time

The girl had a notebook and a clipboard. The girl wore a blue plaid skirt, like a school uniform, and not one but TWO watches. The girl had a pencil behind her ear. The girl was very noticeable in her blue-green glasses.

The girl came over to Judy Moody's lunch table and plopped herself down in between Judy's friends Rocky and Frank.

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She, NOT Judy Moody, looked like she was in a reporter mood.

Who was this important-looking, glasses-wearing girl anyway, Judy wondered.

"Amy Namey, Girl Reporter," said the girl. "What's the scoop?"

"Um … Screamin' Mimi's chocolate mud?" asked Judy.

"Not the ice cream kind of scoop," said the girl. "The story kind of scoop. I'm a reporter," she said. "Like Nellie Bly, Daredevil Reporter."

She, Judy Moody, could not believe her ears.

Frank asked, "Is that like Elizabeth Blackwell, First Woman Doctor?"

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Judy leaned in closer.

"Check!" said the girl. She wrote something on her clipboard. "I'm from Ms Valentine's class, 3V. Can I ask you a few questions? For my newspaper?"

"You've got your own paper?" asked Frank Pearl.

"Sure!" said the girl. Just then, Super-Important Girl Reporter held out a ketchup-bottle microphone.

"What's your favourite school lunch?" she asked. "Hawaiian pizza, southern fried chicken, or French toast?"

"French toast is *breakfast,*" said Judy.

"Pizza!" screamed Rocky and Frank at the same time.

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"Check!" said the girl. She ticked the list on her clipboard.

"I bring packed lunch," said Judy.

"How many times a week should the canteen have pizza?" she asked.

"Three," said Frank.

"Five!" said Rocky. "Every day! With extra cheese!"

"Check!" said the girl.

Who was this list-ticking, clipboard-carrying Pizza Reporter, anyway? And why were Rocky and Frank, Judy's best-ever friends, talking to her?

"You can't really get us pizza for lunch every day," said Judy.

"Why not?" asked the girl. "My mum

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knows the dinner ladies. Besides, it's a free country."

"Hey! That's what *you* always say!" Frank said to Judy.

"Do not!"

"Do too!" said Rocky and Frank at the same time.

"Question Number Three," said the girl. "What else would you like to change about Virginia Dare School?"

"Snack machines!" said Frank.

"A swimming pool!" said Rocky.

"A skate park!" said Frank.

"No School Photo Day!" said Rocky. Girl Reporter was writing as fast as they could talk.

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"No Pizza Reporters bugging us at lunchtime," said Judy. The girl stopped writing. The girl did not say "Check!".

In spite of herself, Judy got caught up in the moment. "OK. I have an idea! For real!" said Judy. "Chewing gum in school!"

"Yep," said Rocky.



"Yes!" said Frank.

"Check!" said the girl.

"I could work on my ABC gum collection at school," said Judy. "Start one under my desk. Not just at home on the lamp by my bed."

Girl Reporter was writing again.

"*ABC* stands for *Already Been Chewed,*" said Judy.

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"I know that," said the girl. "I collect gum too. I've been to see the world's best-ever collection of ABC gum. The biggest in the world."

"Huh?" asked Judy.

"Sure!" said the girl. "Bubblegum Alley. It's in California."

"I went to Boston," said Judy.

"I went there during the summer holidays. You walk down this alley between two buildings and there's a Wall of Gum on each side. Chewed-up gum that people stuck there. Some people have even made pictures and stuff out of gum. I chewed five black gumballs from the machine they have there and added it to the wall."

"No way!" said Rocky.

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"Way!" said the girl. "It's like a Gum Hall of Fame. Or a Gum *Wall* of Fame." The girl cracked herself up.

"Double cool!" said Frank.

"I sent away for a Make-Your-Own-Gum Kit," said Judy. Nobody said a word.

"I'd really like to see a *Wall* of Gum!" said Frank.

"I have a picture of me standing in front of it," said the girl. "It was in the last issue of my paper. See?" She pulled out a page from the back of the clipboard.



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"Whoa!" said Rocky. "Weird. Look at all that chewed-up gum!"

"Wow," said Frank. "You really were there!"

"I had my picture in the *real* newspaper once," said Judy.

"Yeah, your *elbow*," said Rocky. Frank and Rocky cracked up.

"Thanks for your ideas," said the girl. "I've got to go and talk to Mr Todd."

"Mr Todd? That's *our* teacher," said Judy.

"I know. He has a big scoop for me."

"We already know he's getting married," said Judy.

"She tries to predict the future," Rocky explained.

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"And once she predicted Mr Todd was getting married. And he is!" Frank announced.

"Wow!" said the girl. "That's a good scoop!" Judy sat up taller.

"Do real reporters wear pencils behind their ears?" asked Frank.

"Check!" said the girl. She looked at both of her watches. "Later, alligators!" she called, tucking the pencil behind her ear.

"Wow!" said Frank. "That girl is just like you, Judy!"

"Nah-uh," said Judy.

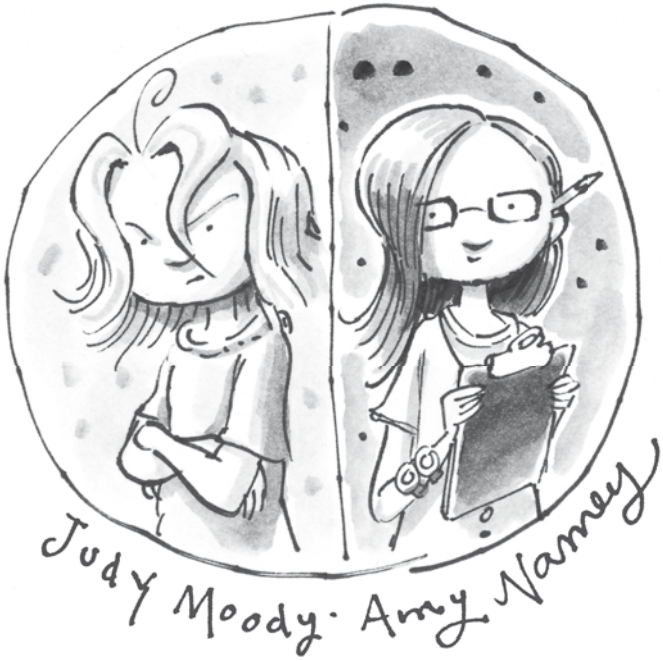
"Yah-huh!" said Rocky and Frank together.

"You're like twins or something," said Frank.

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"Two of a kind," said Rocky.

"Name one thing the same," said Judy.



"Amy Namey. Judy Moody. Her name rhymes. Your name rhymes. Same-same!" said Frank.

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"So? She has long, not-messy hair and dimples. And she wears glasses," said Judy. "I don't wear glasses."

"She dresses up like Some Lady, First Woman Reporter," said Rocky.

"I only dressed up like Elizabeth Blackwell, First Woman Doctor, once."

"And she collects ABC gum and likes getting her picture in the paper," said Frank.

"And don't forget she gets scoops," said Rocky, "which is like trying to predict the future."

"She probably likes Band-Aids and pizza tables, too," said Frank. "We should ask her."

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"And she says weird stuff like 'check' all the time," Rocky added.

"I do not say weird stuff all the time," Judy protested.

"It's like they took a machine and made a copy," said Rocky.

"Maybe she's your clone!" said Frank.

"ROAR!" said Judy.

She, Judy Moody, liked being one of a kind. An original. Her mum said she was unique. Her dad said she was an individual. Mr Todd said she was in a class of her own (even though there were twenty other kids in Class 3T!).

Being unique made Judy feel special. That's the way it is, was, and always would be. *Should* be.

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Until now. Until Amy Namey, Gum-Chewing Girl Reporter, moved in.

Now she felt like a NOT-one-of-a-kind, machine-made copy. A two-of-a-kind, unoriginal, boring old not-stand-alone clone.



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