WAYSIDE SCHOOL

BENEATH THE CLOUD OF DOOM

LOUIS SACHAR

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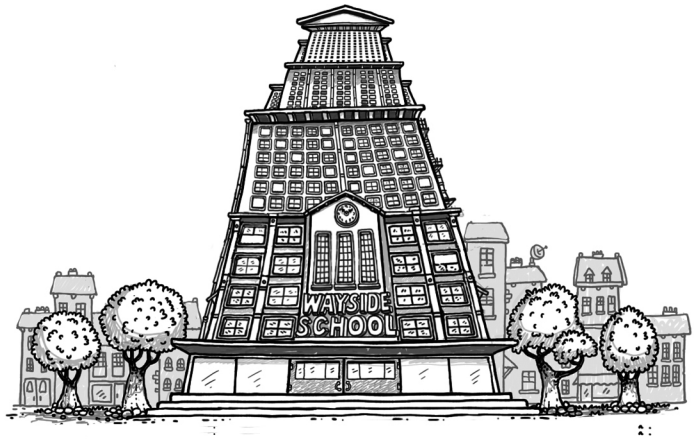
A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This is the fourth book about Wayside School. I wrote the first one, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*, more than forty years ago.

I'm a lot older now, but in my heart I'm still Louis, the yard teacher, passing out the balls and playing with the kids at recess.

To fully enjoy this book, you should read the other three first, wait forty years, and then read this one.

Or you can just read it now.



1

THE BELLS OF WAYSIDE

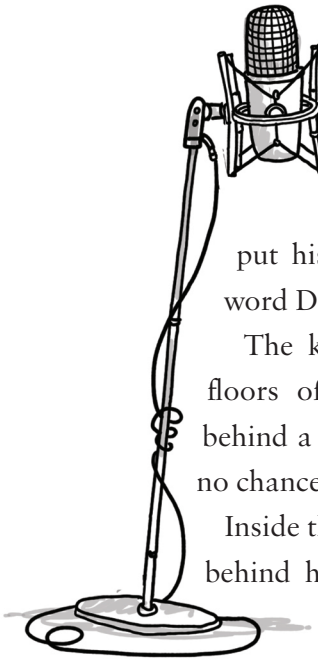
It is very important that the children at Wayside School know the bell system.

The first bell in the morning sounds like this: *WHOOP-WHOOP! WHOOP-WHOOP! WHOOP-WHOOP!*

When they hear it, they know they have sixteen minutes to get to class. That's not too difficult for those in Mr Hardgroves's class on the third floor.

But Wayside School is a thirty-storey building, with one room on each floor. So for those who happen to be in Mrs Jewls's class, way up on the thirtieth floor, they must be ready on first *whoop*.

Todd was in Mrs Jewls's class. He was stuck behind a



mass of kids outside the building waiting for the doors to open. He jumped up and down, trying to see over the heads of those in front of him. If he was late, Mrs Jewls would put his name on the blackboard, under the word DISCIPLINE.

The kids who went to class on the lower floors often dilly-dallied. If Todd got stuck behind a large group of dilly-dalliers, he'd have no chance.

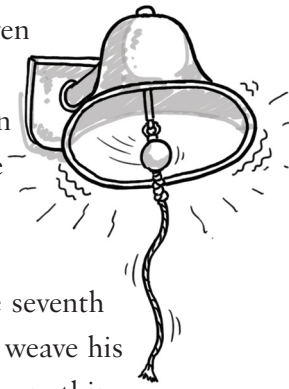
Inside the principal's office, Mr Kidswatter sat behind his enormous desk as he watched the clock. At the moment the second hand reached the number twelve, he shrieked into his microphone. '*WHOOP-WHOOP! WHOOP-WHOOP! WHOOP-WHOOP!*'

The doors unlocked, and the children stampeded into the building and up the stairs. Todd tried his best to weave his way to the front, but there wasn't a lot of room.

Eight minutes later, Mr Kidswatter tugged on the rope hanging through the hole in the ceiling, and the second bell rang. *CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!*

Todd counted the clangs. Eight. That meant he now

had eight minutes to get to class. Seven or nine clangs would have meant something completely different. Seven meant a helicopter was landing on the roof. Nine clangs meant a porcupine had entered the building.

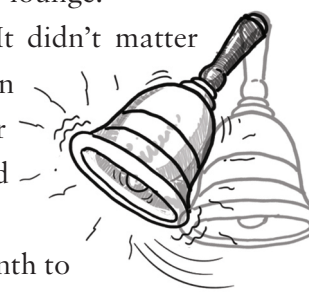


So far, he had only made it to the seventh floor, but he had finally managed to weave his way past all the dilly-dalliers. There was nothing to slow him down now.

When he reached the eighteenth floor, he heard this sound: *ching-a-ling, ching-a-ling, ching-a-ling*.

Nothing to worry about there. That just meant they were out of doughnuts in the teachers' lounge.

The scary bell was the late bell. It didn't matter where he was. It always sounded like an angry driver was slamming on a car horn, right behind him. It made Todd jump every time.



He quickly dashed from the eighteenth to the twentieth floor. There was no nineteenth floor.

His legs were sore, and he was breathing hard as he reached the top. Just ahead, he could see Joy entering the classroom.

'Don't shut the—' Todd shouted.

Joy shut the door behind her.

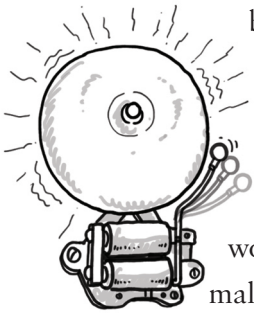
'Goozack,' said Todd.

He was just opening it when the horn blared, as if right behind him.

'You're late, Todd,' said Mrs Jewls as he entered the classroom. 'Write your—'

'I know,' he said. He wrote his name on the blackboard, under the word DISCIPLINE.

Other bells rang throughout the day. At noon, the lunch bell kaboinked three times. Three kaboinks meant macaroons and cheese.



The bell for recess was just a single *ding*, but nobody ever missed it.

At the end of each day, Mr Kidswatter would bang a giant gong with a large iron mallet. It was his favourite thing about being principal.

Todd sat at his desk, glumly looking at the blackboard. The day had started off badly for him and had only got worse.

There was now a tick next to his name, under the word DISCIPLINE.

Next to that, Mrs Jewls kept adding new homework assignments.

READ A BOOK. WRITE A BOOK REPORT. DRAW A PICTURE.

(DON'T FORGET YOUR PAPER CLIP!!!)
HISTORY – READ PAGES 55–59 AND ANSWER QUESTIONS ON PAGES 61 AND 62.
MATHS WORKSHEET – DO EVEN- AND ODD-NUMBERED PROBLEMS.
SCIENCE – READ PAGES 29–34, AND DO EXPERIMENT ON 37.

Todd had a sick feeling in his stomach, and it wasn't just the mac and cheese. In big letters, across the top of the blackboard, Mrs Jewls had written:

ULTIMATE TEST STARTS TOMORROW!

Mrs Jewls had been warning the class about the Ultimate Test all year. The test would last for three days. If he failed, Todd would be sent back to kindergarten.

And then he heard it – the most magical bell of all!

Ping … PONG!

This bell had only rung once in the history of Wayside School, and nobody knew who rang it. But everyone knew what it meant.

All around, kids began cheering and clapping their hands. Shouts of joy could be heard coming from every floor of Wayside School.

Todd just sat there, in stunned disbelief.

It rang again.

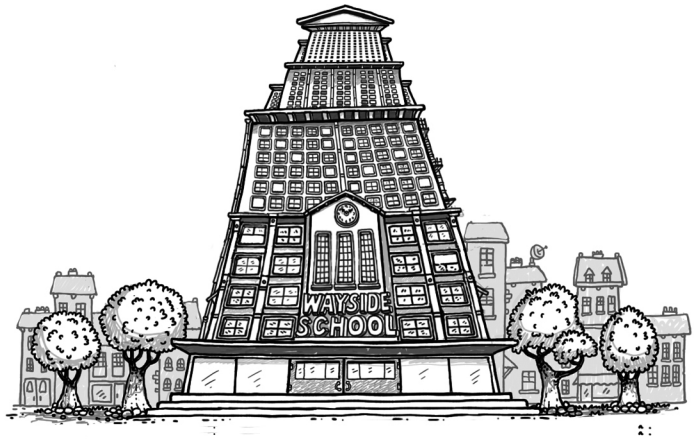
Ping … PONG!

It was the Erase-the-Blackboard bell.

Mrs Jewls had no choice. She picked up the eraser. Up and down Wayside School, teachers were doing the same thing.

Todd smiled as the homework assignments were wiped away. The Ultimate Test was cancelled. His name was removed from the discipline list, and even the word DISCIPLINE soon disappeared.

Deep in the basement, a man with a black moustache snapped open a black briefcase. Another man, also with a black moustache, placed a small silver ball into the case. A third man, who was bald, put in a solid gold ping-pong bat.



2

A MILLION

By the time Terrence got to school, he had already kicked ninety-nine different things.

It started the moment he woke up. He kicked his bed. He kicked Rocky, his favourite stuffed animal. When he left his bedroom, he kicked the door shut.

He kicked the wall as he sat at the kitchen counter and ate cereal. He kicked a table. He kicked three chairs. He kicked rocks on the way to school. He kicked the flagpole.

Still, as much as Terrence liked to kick things, it would take him his whole life to kick a million things.

'How much is a million?' Mrs Jewls asked her class.

'Ooh! Ooh! I know, I know!' said Mac, stretching his hand high.

Mrs Jewls called on Mac.

'A million,' Mac answered proudly.

'Well, yes, I suppose that's correct,' said Mrs Jewls. 'A million is a million. Anyone else? John.'

John lowered his hand. 'Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine …' He paused, then added, 'Plus one.' He smiled.

'Ooh, that's good, John,' said Dana, very impressed.

'John's really smart,' Joe agreed.

Terrence wasn't paying attention. His big toe hurt from all that kicking. His toenail was too long.

Sharie, who had been sleeping at her desk, suddenly awoke and said, 'Ten times ten, times ten, times ten, times ten, times ten.' She rested her head on her red-and-blue overcoat and went back to sleep.

'Is that right, Mrs Jewls?' asked Jason.

'Um …' said Mrs Jewls as she tried to multiply all of Sharie's tens. 'Well, if Sharie said it, it must be right!'

'Arithmetic makes my brain numb,' said Dameon.

'That's why they're called "numb-ers",' said D.J.

Terrence's big toe throbbed in pain. He couldn't think about anything else.

'There's really one way to understand just how big a million is,' said Mrs Jewls. 'And it's not by using

arithmetic. We need to collect a million *somethings*.'

'Dollars!' exclaimed Joy.

Everyone cheered. They liked that idea.

'Then we could have the biggest party ever,' said Deedee.

'We're not collecting a million dollars,' said Mrs Jewls. 'Any other ideas?'

'Pumpkins!' suggested Dana.

Everyone cheered Dana's idea too, but not as loudly as Joy's.

'I don't think a million pumpkins would fit in the school,' said Mrs Jewls. 'We need something small, and not too expensive.'

Stephen suggested, 'Little pieces of paper.'

Nobody cheered.

'Bo-ring,' sang Kathy.

Stephen felt hurt, but deep down, he had to admit that collecting bits of paper wouldn't have been a whole lot of fun.

Ron suggested mud, but that too was rejected. 'It's a good idea, Ron,' said Mrs Jewls, 'but you can't count mud.'

'Why not?' he asked.

'There's no such thing as one mud, or two muds,' explained Mrs Jewls.

'Why not?' Ron asked again.

'I don't know,' Mrs Jewls had to admit.

Terrence couldn't take it any longer. He took off his shoe, then his sock.

One desk over, Rondi stared at him, horrified.

Terrence's toenail was bent out of shape, and it had turned black and blue.

He opened his desk and took out his pair of safety scissors. Then, crossing one leg over the other, he started snipping.

'You can't cut your toenail in class,' said Rondi. 'It's against the rules.'

'Who says?' said Terrence.

It was one tough toenail, and the scissors weren't all that sharp.

'Mrs Jewls!' called Rondi. 'Terrence is cutting his toenail, right in class!'

Some kids laughed. Some said, 'Gross!'

Terrence pushed hard on the scissors. At last, a piece of his toenail fell free. His toe instantly felt better.

'Terrence! Come up here now!' demanded Mrs Jewls. 'And bring your toenail with you!'

Terrence picked up the clipping off the floor. One shoe off, one shoe on, he hobbled to the front of the room.

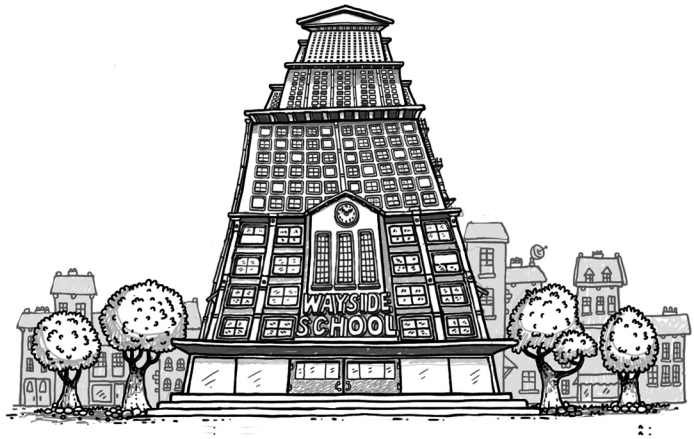
'Give me that!' Mrs Jewls demanded.

Terrence dropped the nail clipping into his teacher's outstretched hand.

‘You’re a genius, Terrence,’ said Mrs Jewls.

She held his nail clipping high in the air. ‘That’s one!’ she announced. ‘Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine … to go!’





3

UP AND DOWN

'Up!' said D.J.

'Down!' replied Kathy, who sat next to him.

'Up!' D.J. repeated.

'Down!' Kathy insisted.

In truth, Kathy didn't know what D.J. was talking about. She just liked to argue. No matter what D.J. said, she always said the opposite.

'Up!' D.J. said again.

'Down!' Kathy instantly replied.

'Shh!' said Dana, who sat behind Kathy. 'I'm trying to read.'

Kathy turned around. Dana's face was streaked with tears.

'Why are you crying?' asked Kathy.

Dana showed her the book she'd been reading. *The Lost Giraffe*.

'So?' asked Kathy.

'The giraffe is lost,' Dana sobbed.

'Well, what did you expect, stupid?' asked Kathy.

She didn't like Dana any more than she liked D.J.

'Up!' said D.J.

'Down!' snapped Kathy.

'Dana, Kathy, D.J.,' said Mrs Jewls. 'You are making a lot of noise for silent reading.'

'Sorry,' said D.J. 'I can't – up! – help it. I have the – up! – hiccups.'

Kathy turned red. She had been arguing with a hiccup.

'Has this ever happened before?' Mrs Jewls asked him.

'I've had the – up! – hiccups before,' said D.J., 'but they – up! – always went – up! – away.'

'Stand on your head and drink a glass of water,' Myron suggested.

'Eat a lemon,' said Jenny.

'Hold your tongue while you say the Pledge of Allegiance,' said Joy.

D.J. tried their suggestions. When he finished, his mouth was puckered, his shirt was wet and he still had the hiccups.

He felt very patriotic, however.

'I think you better go see Dr Pickle,' said Mrs Jewls. 'Kathy will take you.'

Kathy hopped out of her seat, glad she wouldn't have to read. 'C'mon, dummy,' she said, and led D.J. out the door.

'Up!' hiccuped D.J.

'Down!' said Kathy.

She couldn't help herself.

Dr Pickle's real name was Dr Pickell. His office was on the fourth floor. Kathy knocked on the door.

Dr Pickle opened it. He had a pointy beard and wore glasses. 'Yes?' he said.

'Stupid here got the hiccups,' said Kathy.

'Up!' hiccuped D.J.

'Down,' said Kathy.

Dr Pickle rubbed his chin. 'Very interesting,' he muttered, although he was looking at Kathy, not at D.J. 'Very, very interesting.'

He told Kathy to wait, and invited D.J. inside.

'And he smiles too much too!' Kathy called, just before the door shut.

D.J. sat down on a couch.

Dr Pickle sat across from him. He held a long gold chain. On one end hung a green stone shaped like a pickle.



Dr Pickle gently swung the stone, back and forth. 'Watch the pickle,' he said. His voice was warm and soothing.

D.J.'s eyes moved back and forth with the stone.

'I will count to five. And then you will fall into a deep, deep sleep.' Dr Pickle slowly counted. 'One … two … BOO!'

D.J. fell off the couch.

'Well?' asked Dr Pickle.

D.J. got up. He waited a moment. 'I think they're gone,' he said.

Dr Pickle led him to the door. 'First thing we learned in psychiatrist school,' he said, patting D.J. on the head.

'My hiccups are all gone!' D.J. told Kathy.

'Who cares,' said Kathy.

'Wait,' said Dr Pickle. 'Would you mind stepping inside my office, young lady?'

'Me?' asked Kathy.

'Please,' said Dr Pickle.

'But he's the sicko!' said Kathy, pointing at D.J.

'Please,' Dr Pickle repeated.

Kathy shrugged, then entered the counsellor's office. 'That beard is really ugly,' she said. 'I guess your face must be even worse, huh?'

* * *

D.J. sat on the floor in the hallway, with his back against the wall, waiting for Kathy. He smiled, happy that his hiccups were gone. Although he missed them a little bit too. Hiccups are annoying, but kind of fun.

Some time later, the counsellor's door opened.

'Thank you, Dr Pickell,' said Kathy, calling him by his proper name. 'You are very wise. And I like your beard.'

'That's very nice of you to say, Kathy,' said the school counsellor.

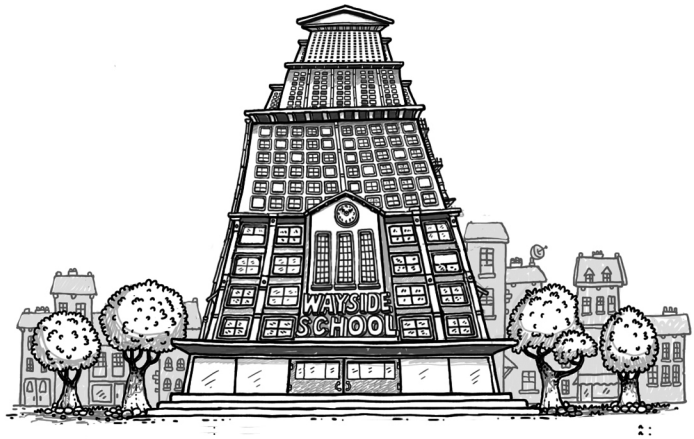
She stepped out the door. 'Hi, D.J.,' she greeted him. 'Thanks for waiting. You're a good friend.'

The smile left D.J.'s face. Something was definitely wrong with Kathy.

'Let's go up,' said D.J.

'Yes, up,' Kathy agreed.

Now he was really worried.



4

CONSIDER THE PAPER CLIP

Read a book. Write a book report. Draw a picture.

That was the assignment Mrs Jewls put up on the board.

Dana's picture showed a giraffe studying a map. She had drawn a large question mark over the giraffe's head.

Her book report only had to be one page, but she had written two whole pages. *The Lost Giraffe* was her favourite book ever!

Now all she needed was a paper clip.

She searched her desk.

She found quite a few pencils, mostly broken. There were lots of eraser bits and crayon nubs. There was also

a crumb-covered pink piece of paper that had come off the bottom of a cupcake.

'Oh no, oh no, oh no,' she moaned as she continued to search.

She raised her hand.



'Yes, Dana,' said Mrs Jewls.

'I need a new paper clip.'

'But I gave you one at the beginning of the year,' said Mrs Jewls.

'I know, Mrs Jewls. I'm sorry. I just can't find it!'

Mrs Jewls sighed. 'I'm very disappointed in you, Dana.'

'I need a paper clip too,' said Joe.

Mrs Jewls glared at him. 'What did you do with the one I gave you?' she demanded.

'I think I used it on my science homework,' said Joe.

'I handed that back yesterday,' Mrs Jewls reminded him. 'Didn't you save the paper clip?'

'I guess not,' Joe admitted.

Bebe was finishing up the last part of her picture. 'Paper clip, please,' she said, without looking up from her work.

'One for me too,' said Calvin.

Mrs Jewls slammed her hand on her desk. 'Do you think paper clips grow on trees?' she asked.

'I don't know,' said Calvin.

‘I gave each one of you a paper clip at the beginning of the year. It was your responsibility to take care of it.’ She opened her desk drawer, took out her paper clip box and opened it. ‘There are only six left,’ she said, shaking her head in dismay.

‘Ooh, can I have one?’ asked Joy. ‘I can’t find mine.’

Mrs Jewls was too angry to reply. She moved to the front of the room. ‘You children are so spoilt,’ she said. ‘Do you have any idea what it takes to make just one paper clip?’

She held up one of her last remaining paper clips. ‘Look at the perfect double loop. And the way it gleams in the light, almost like a mirror.’



Her anger seemed to melt away as she marvelled at the magnificent metal masterpiece.

‘It takes a lot of very talented people, and years of training and hard work,’ she explained. ‘First, there’s the wire maker. Paper clip wire has to be just right, not too stiff, but not too wiggly either.

‘Then there’s the wire polisher,’ she continued. ‘That’s who gives the paper clip its special gleam. And the wire cutter, who cuts each wire to the precise length.

‘And finally, and most important, the master bender. The bender carefully bends the wire into the perfect double loop.’ She put her hand over her heart. ‘Sadly, in these rush-rush, hurry-hurry days, not too many young

people study the art of paper clip bending. There are only a handful of master benders left in the whole world. And who knows, in ten or twenty years there might not be any. Everyone will have to switch to staples.'

'That is so sad,' said Dana.

Mrs Jewls gave the paper clip to Dana. 'Now don't lose it!'

'I won't!' Dana promised.

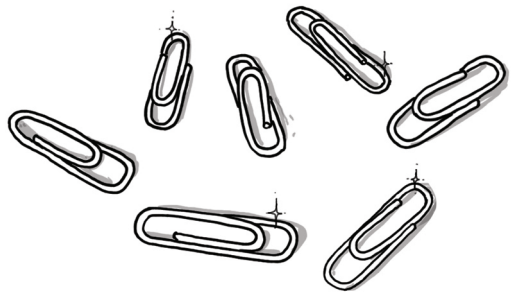
'Let me see,' said Bebe.

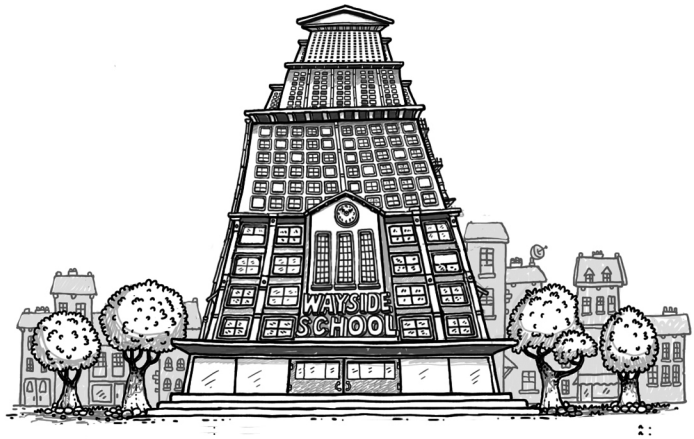
Dana proudly showed Bebe her new paper clip.

'It's so beautiful!' said Bebe, admiring the double loops. 'I never noticed before.'

'I'm going to be a paper clip bender when I grow up,' said Calvin.

Mrs Jewls smiled at Calvin. She had never been more proud of a student.





5

ERIC, ERIC AND *WHAT'S-HIS-NAME?*

Oh, that's right – Eric.

There are three Erics in Mrs Jewls's class: Eric Fry, Eric Bacon and the other one – who everyone always forgets – Eric Ovens.

Eric Fry is strong and fast. He is usually the first one chosen when picking teams.

Eric Bacon is funny, clever and just a little bit sneaky. Everyone in Mrs Jewls's class likes him, but no one completely trusts him.

Eric Ovens is kind, quiet and one hundred per cent trustworthy. Sadly, that kind of person is often overlooked.

But not today, he thought as he sat at his desk, patiently waiting for Mrs Jewls to finish taking attendance. Today would be his day of glory!

In his pocket was a plastic bag with eighty-three nail clippings!

Two numbers had been written on the blackboard: 71 and 2,677.

So far, the class had collected a total of 2,677 nail clippings. Seventy-one were the most brought in by any one kid.

They didn't just have to be toenails. Fingernails counted too.

Eric Ovens took his bag out of his pocket and placed it on his desk.

'How many you got?' whispered Kathy, who sat next to him.

Eric didn't want to jinx his big day by saying the number aloud. Besides, he knew Kathy would only say something mean, or mock him.

Mrs Jewls closed her attendance book. 'Anyone have any nail clippings this morning?'

Eric Ovens raised his hand.

'Yes, Eric,' said Mrs Jewls.

Eric Ovens quietly pushed his chair back, but before he could get up, he saw Eric Fry already making his way to the front of the room.

'Forty!' Eric Fry declared proudly.

Eric Fry had kept his hand in a fist all morning. Everyone thought he was just trying to be tough. Now he opened his fist and let forty nail clippings fall into the collection bucket.

'Well done, Eric!' said Mrs Jewls.

Everyone clapped their hands.

Eric Ovens smiled as he clapped his hands too. Eighty-three was more than double forty.

Eric Fry did the maths on the board.

$$\begin{array}{r} 2677 \\ +\ 40 \\ \hline 2717 \end{array}$$

'Halfway to a million!' cheered Stephen.

'Not quite,' Allison told him.

'Anyone else?' asked Mrs Jewls.

Again Eric Ovens raised his hand, but Eric Bacon had already hopped out of his seat and was headed towards the front of the room.

He handed Mrs Jewls a plastic bag full of nail clippings. 'Three hundred and forty-nine!' he declared triumphantly.

The class went wild. Sharie gasped. Stephen fell out of his chair.

Eric Bacon danced around Mrs Jewls's desk, like a football player who had scored a touchdown.

Mrs Jewls was sceptical of the spectacle. 'I could count them,' she warned.

Eric stopped dancing. 'Go ahead,' he challenged her.

Mrs Jewls stared Eric Bacon in the eye. Eric Bacon stared right back.

Mrs Jewls dumped the bag on her desk, and divided the clippings into four piles. She asked Dameon, Allison and John to help. They each took a pile, and then Mrs Jewls added their totals together.

'Three hundred and forty-nine,' she announced, 'just as Eric said.'

Again, everyone cheered, and Eric Bacon continued his victory dance.

'How did you get so many?' Mrs Jewls asked him.

Eric B. stopped dancing. 'I went door-to-door, asking my neighbours,' he said.

Everyone laughed.

Leslie had sold wrapping paper door-to-door, but she couldn't imagine asking people for their toenails!

'It's easier than asking for money,' said Eric. 'Everyone was happy to donate.'

He erased the number 71 and put 349 in its place. Then he did the maths.

$$\begin{array}{r} 2717 \\ +\ 349 \\ \hline 3066 \end{array}$$

'Almost a million!' Stephen called out.

'Not even close,' muttered Allison.

Mrs Jewls told Eric Bacon to take a Tootsie Roll Pop from her coffee can.

He took one. Then, when she wasn't looking, he took another.

'Anyone else?' asked Mrs Jewls.

Eric Ovens sat glumly at his desk.

'Raise your hand,' urged Kathy.

'Why bother?' he muttered.

Kathy got up from her seat and stood next to him. She grabbed Eric's arm and raised it for him. 'Eric Ovens brought a whole lot!' she announced.

'Bring them on up,' said Mrs Jewls.

He had no choice. 'It's just eighty-three,' he said, and then emptied his bag into the nail bucket.



'That's the second most ever!' shouted Kathy. She started clapping.

Amazingly, everyone else clapped too.

They were still clapping as he did the maths on the board.

3066
+ 83
3149

'That's closer to a million!' exclaimed Stephen.

Everyone cheered.

Even Allison couldn't argue with that.