

# Part One

One frosty morning in early December, a small parcel mysteriously appeared in front of the main doors of Bowen school. The package was wrapped in tan paper and tied with a thin piece of twine. A tiny note was tucked underneath the twine; the text upon it was so small, it was nearly impossible to read without the assistance of a magnifying glass.

This particular morning had already proved itself to be a peculiar one. Brandon and Bryan had arrived at school at 6 am, as usual, and made their way down to the K-1 Stars Freeplay room. They didn't even notice the strange package at the front door. But, the moment they entered the Freeplay room, they began to discover oddities that could not be explained.

The first strange occurrence they noticed was that the green compost bin was on the floor, lying on its side, with absolutely nothing inside of it.

"Bryan, look!" Brandon exclaimed, "Yesterday, the compost bin was full of orange rinds and banana peels, but today, it is empty and on the ground!"

"Don't go jumping to conclusions, Brandon," Bryan replied, "There's got to be a reasonable explanation! Let's go ask Will if he happened to clean out the compost bin early this week."

Brandon and Bryan walked together to the office to speak to Will.

"Excuse me, Will," Brandon began, politely, "Did you clean out our compost bin already? It seems to be empty!"

"Brandon, I simply don't have time for your shenanigans." Will snapped. "Of course I did not empty your compost bin early. I'm a man with a plan; a man with a schedule! I would never stray away from an efficient, successful routine. I empty the compost bins on Fridays. ONLY FRIDAYS."

"Will, we're serious!" Bryan interjected. "There is not a single scrap inside our compost bin."

"It doesn't sound like much of a mystery to me," Will remarked sarcastically. "It sounds like you two haven't been doing a good job encouraging composting among the kindergarteners and first-graders."

"That's not it, Will!" Brandon exclaimed, pleadingly. "It was full last night when we left, but this morning, it was on the ground and its contents were nowhere to be found!"

"Well, it wasn't me." Will explained, in a calmer tone, but still with an air of suspicion.

Brandon and Bryan returned to the Freeplay room to try to find more clues to solve this Compost Conundrum.

Brandon first began looking in the library area.

“Bryan,” Brandon called out, “I haven’t found much, but there are tufts of fur on the couch and in the rug. I don’t remember seeing fur here before. Ooh, it’s so soft...maybe I’ll just take a nap on top of it...” Brandon slipped his hands under his head and started to settle down onto the rug.

“Brandon!” Bryan yelled, “Snap out of it! We have a mystery to solve here!”

It was at this moment that Christie entered the room. She stopped by the sink and looked thoughtfully at a collection small brown circles.

“Hi guys!” She greeted. “Who left these Cocoa Puffs here? Yum!” She began to lift one of the circles up toward her mouth.

“Nooooooooooooo!” Brandon & Bryan screamed.

Christie froze with her hand in the air, inches from her mouth, and turned to stare at Brandon and Bryan, questioningly.

“Christie, we have never had Cocoa Puffs for snack. I do not think those are Cocoa Puffs.” Brandon explained, solemnly.

“In fact,” Bryan began, “we have an empty compost bin, tufts of fur, and small brown lumps. I think some animals have been hanging out in our Freeplay room. And I think those are animal droppings.”

“Ewwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!” Christie screamed, throwing the droppings in the trash, and running from the room.

The three did not uncover any more clues or learn any more information until Fran and Tim arrived that afternoon.

As Fran and Tim were entering the school, they noticed the package by the main doors.

“Fran, did you see this parcel?” Tim asked, “I wonder what it is and how it got here! It doesn’t have a label on it, so it couldn’t possibly have come through the mail or another delivery service!”

“Hmmm...that’s strange!” Fran replied, “Let’s bring it inside and try to learn more.”

Tim picked up the package and carried it downstairs to the Freeplay room.

“Hi everyone—wait until you see what Tim and I found!” Fran declared.

“Ooh—open it!” Bryan and Brandon demanded excitedly.

Tim quickly untied the twine and unwrapped the parcel. As he explored the package, the tiny note flew onto the ground, unnoticed.

Inside the package, there were two items. One was a pocket-sized book that was practically ripped to shreds. The second was a piece of tree bark.

“Gee, what is it, my birthday? What a thrilling gift!” Tim blurted out, jokingly.

Christie came back in the room and instantly noticed a small yellow piece of paper on the ground.

“Alright, who left this paper on the ground?” Christie queried, accusingly.

“Not me!!” they all answered.

Christie picked up the paper and read it aloud.

It said:

***A Message to the Two Legged Creatures who inhabit the large structure labeled “BOWEN SCHOOL”***

***Dear Giant Beings,***

***We are sorry for entering your “school” without being invited. We were in grave danger and required a safe place for ourselves and our young. We also apologize for helping ourselves to food from the green container marked “compost”. Please accept our sincere apology and the humble gifts inside this box. We know it’s not much, but it’s all we have and we wanted to share it with you to show our appreciation.***

***Love, The Rabbits of the Upper Field***

“Well, now the contents of the box make more sense!” Fran laughed.

“And now we know what kind of animals were in here,” Bryan said, “...rabbits!”