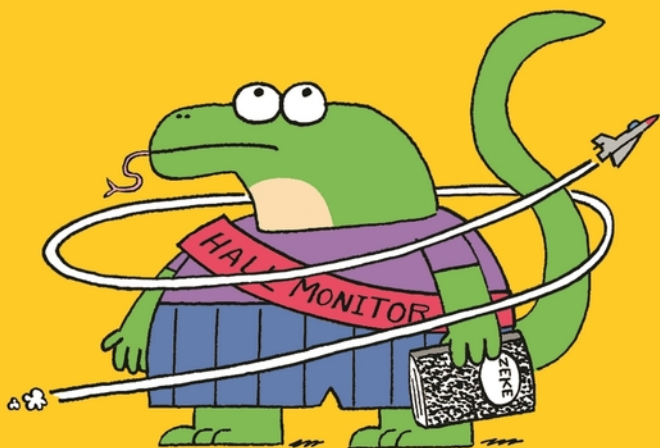


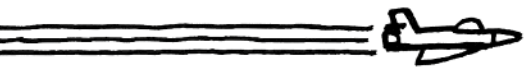
# CHRONICLES OF A LIZARD NOBODY



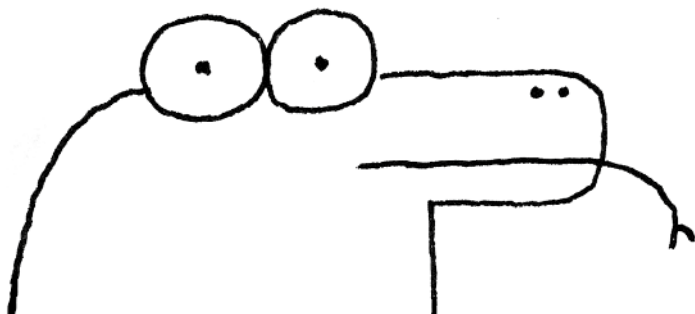
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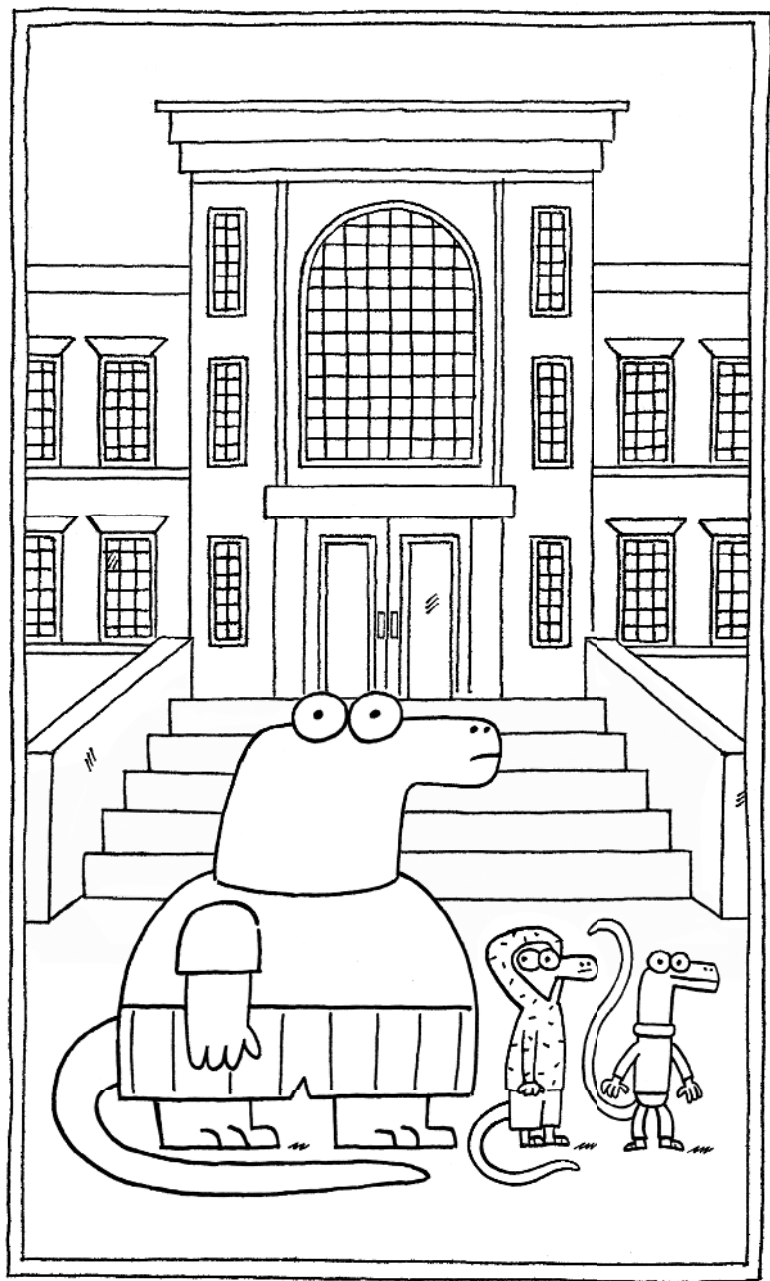
# PATRICK NESS

ILLUSTRATED BY **TIM MILLER**



**CHRONICLES OF A**  
**LIZARD**  
**NOBODY**





**CHRONICLES OF A**  
**LIZARD**  
**NOBODY**



**PATRICK NESS**

**ILLUSTRATED BY**  
**TIM MILLER**



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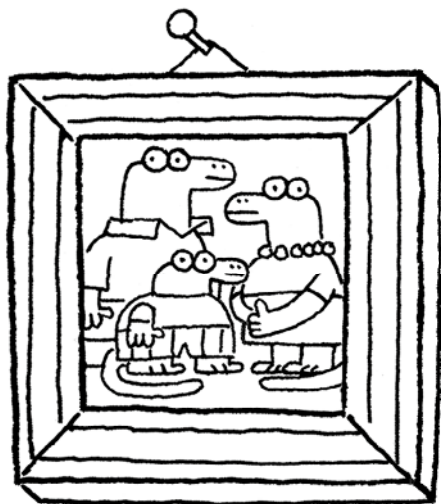
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**For Shamim and Hanan,  
beloved friends, filmmakers,  
mothers to godsons**



# 1

## HALL MONITORS

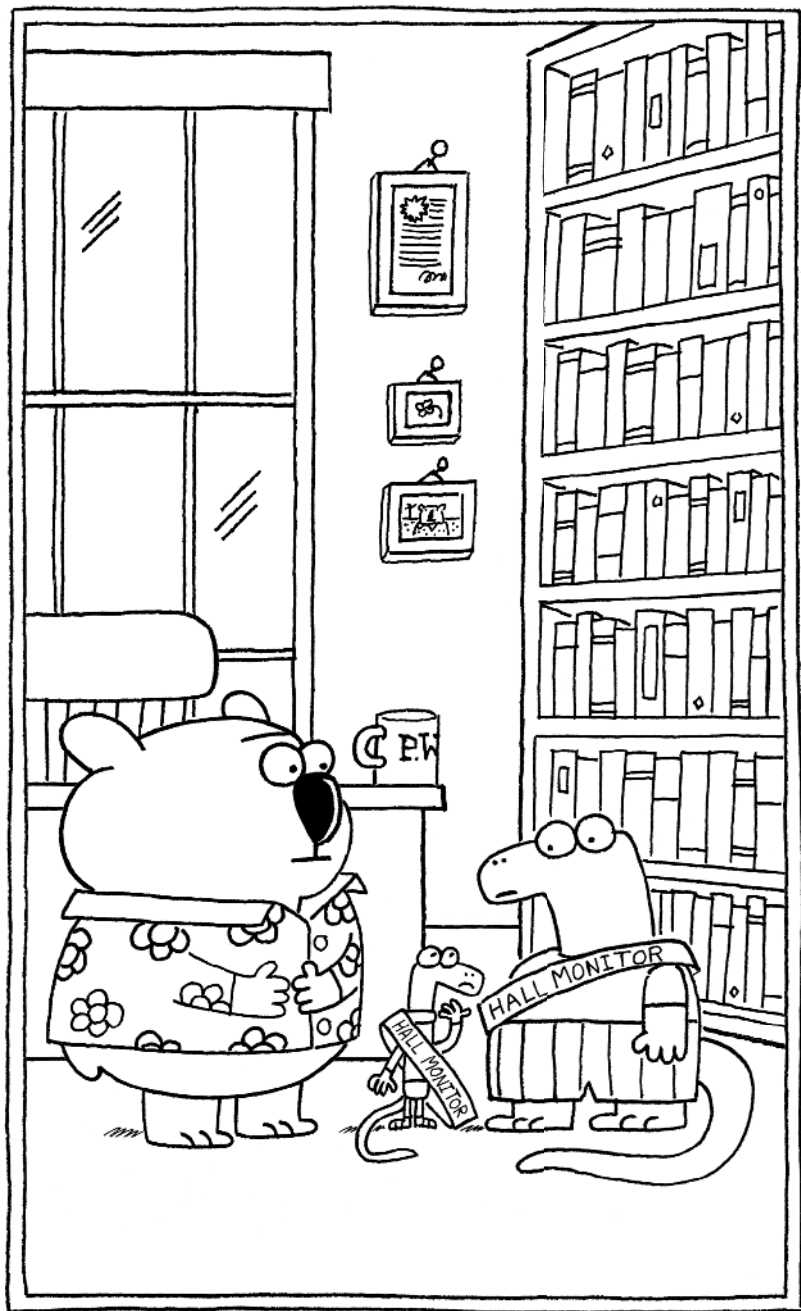
“I’m making you both Hall Monitors,” Principal Wombat said, though she quickly added, “This isn’t because you’re monitor lizards.”

Zeke couldn’t help himself. “But all the other Hall Monitors have been.”

“Coincidence,” Principal Wombat interrupted. “You’ll make sure other students aren’t in the hallways when they shouldn’t be. Which is why we *coincidentally* call it monitoring.” She looked slightly flustered, but what did it matter if a Principal was flustered? What sort of kid was going to point this out?

“You look flustered,” said Daniel. Zeke elbowed him in the side. “Ow!”





“It’s all pretty easy,” Principal Wombat continued, as if Daniel hadn’t said anything. “If you see someone out of class when you’re monitoring, you ask them for their hall pass. If they have one, all is well. If they don’t, you send them to me. Any questions?”

“I have a question,” Daniel said. “Is it true you can use your butt as armor?”

“Yes,” said Principal Wombat. “It’s a wombat thing. Anything else?”

“What if they don’t have a hall pass and they don’t want to go see you?” Zeke asked.

“Then you take down their name, and you tell me they didn’t want to go.”

Zeke thought about this. “This isn’t going to make us very popular.”

“But you’ll be serving the school.” Principal Wombat smiled. “And you’ll be making me happy.”

“Well, I mean, that’s a nice thing,” Zeke said, “but I can’t help but think it’s still something to

do with us being monitor lizards, me and Daniel.”

Daniel nodded in agreement, then said, “Getting back to the butt. Is it made of steel? Like a tank?”

Principal Wombat shook her head. “Just bone. If we’re under threat, we go headfirst into a hole in the ground, and our backside protects us from predators.”

“Cool,” Daniel said appreciatively.

“Because Alicia is a monitor lizard, too,” Zeke said, referring to the only other Hall Monitor currently in school.

“Another coincidence. Besides, I thought you’d be happy to be Hall Monitors with your friend.”

“Just because we’re lizards doesn’t mean we’re automatically friends.”

Principal Wombat looked surprised. “You’re not friends with Alicia?”

“Of course we’re friends with Alicia,” Zeke said, “but not just because she’s another lizard.”

“Oh, good,” Principal Wombat said, relieved.

“I do like my students to get along. Now, you’ll perform your duties in the morning after first bell and before and after lunch. You’ll get special permission to be late to your own classrooms! And”—she looked really excited now—“you get sashes!”

She held out two red sashes. Daniel and Zeke just stared at them. She tossed them across the desk with her furry, stumpy arms, basically throwing them over Zeke’s and Daniel’s heads. The one for Daniel came all the way down to his knees, but Zeke’s barely went past his shoulders.

Zeke fingered the plastic material and noticed it was slightly stained. Daniel looked up at Principal Wombat. “Can we get butt armor instead?”

## 2

# MONITORING THE HALLS

“I still think it’s because we’re monitor lizards,” Zeke said, standing in the hallway before lunch with Daniel and Alicia, all three in their grubby red sashes of various fits.

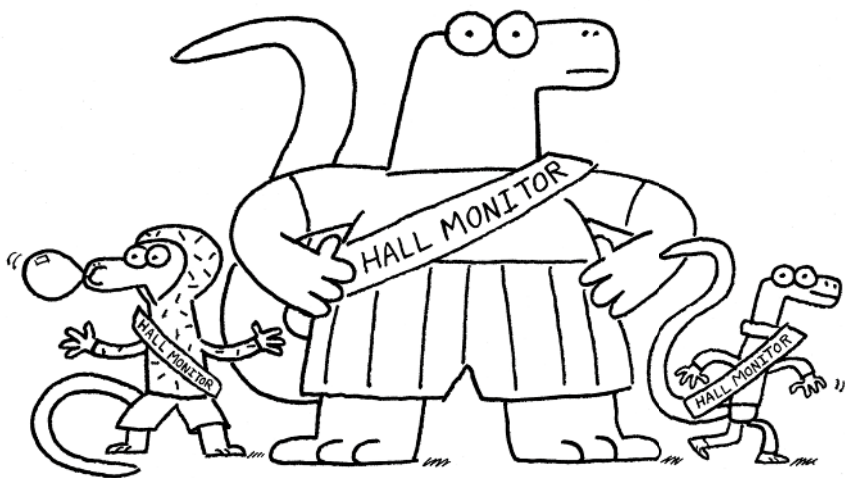
“What’s because we’re monitor lizards?” Alicia asked, absentmindedly chewing her gum.

“That Principal Wombat made us all Hall Monitors.”

“Nah, that’s just coincidence.” She moved her gum from one cheek to another. “So, it’s not the big kids you have to worry about,” she said. “It’s the little ones. They’re either crying about something or they think you’re their mom.”

Alicia stared down the hallway as she said

this, so Zeke wasn't sure if he was supposed to respond or not. Alicia was always like this, never quite looking you in the eye, possibly never even listening to you, almost certainly thinking about something else. Zeke and Daniel had known her since preschool, when they were teeny, tiny lizards, no bigger than newts, forty percent tail and fifty percent eyes. They'd shared an incubator—it was just a white towel under a light bulb—but once you shared an incubator with a lizard, that lizard stayed your friend.



“Do we get to blow them up if they don’t have their hall pass?” Daniel asked.

“Yes,” Alicia said.

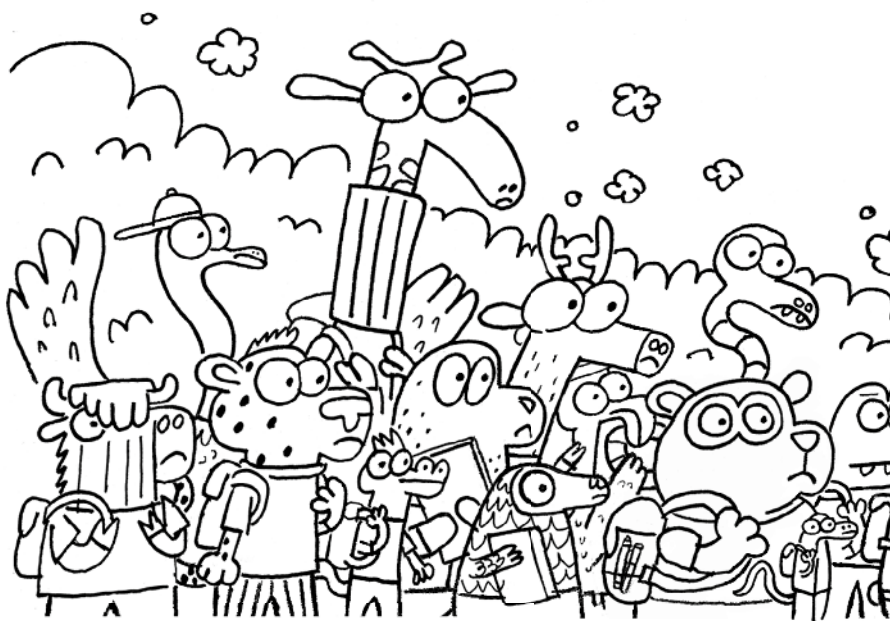
“No!” Zeke said. “Principal Wombat said to send them to her if they don’t have a pass.”

“And *she* blows them up,” said Alicia.

“No, she doesn’t.”

“We don’t know that,” Daniel said. “I think she does. With her butt.”

“Her armored butt,” agreed Alicia.



“There’s no blowing up—”

“Here they come,” Alicia said, still staring down the hall. Zeke and Daniel looked where she was staring. The hall was quiet. No doors opened.

“What?” Zeke asked, but then the lunch bell rang, every door opened, and they were suddenly stones in a river of their classmates.

“HALL PASS!” Daniel yelled at the top of his lungs. A small gazelle dropped her pencil case and started crying. “HALL PASS!” Daniel screamed at her.





“They don’t need their hall passes until the bell rings again and everyone’s supposed to be in the cafeteria,” Zeke said, helping up the gazelle, who took her pencil case from him, then bucked him in the knee and ran off. “Hey!” Zeke yelled after her.

“What did I tell you?” Alicia said. “It’s the little ones you have to watch out for.”

Zeke pulled up the leg of his shorts to make sure his knee and France were okay.

“You all right?” he asked his knee.

“Zut alors!” said a small voice. But this was what France always said when they got bumped, so he let his shorts leg go and readjusted his sash.<sup>1</sup>

The lizards waited as their schoolmates filed in to lunch. The other pupils mostly ignored them,

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*1 Do not worry, reader. We will get to the story of France and Zeke’s knee. It’s what scientists call “a doozy.”*



as they had ever since the lizards started being bused in from—if Zeke was being honest or someone else wasn't being polite—the poorer area of town as part of a program in the school district to get different types of students mixing together. Being ignored suited the lizards fine, usually. At this school, that included the three monitors, plus a group of geckos who played in the school marching band, and a Komodo dragon with terrible breath who everyone—mammal, bird, and lizard alike—avoided. “Gosh, poor Beth,” Zeke said, thinking about her. She was technically a monitor lizard herself, but Komodos were a whole other thing. They ate rotting flesh, for example, and that was always difficult to watch at lunchtime.

Daniel and Alicia were clouded monitors, while Zeke was a peach-throated monitor. His throat was indeed peach-colored. Clouded monitors (who weren't actually clouded but covered in little yellow spots) were supposed to be bigger than peach-throated monitors, but here Zeke

was, hulking over the other two like a resentful big brother who had to babysit.

He didn't resent them, though. I mean, look at them. Daniel with his inappropriate questions and his ADHD. Alicia, who could literally not move for an entire class period, even when the teacher was waving a pencil in front of her eyes. He didn't resent them.

He did kind of resent the school, though.

He looked up as a trio of giraffes wandered by, ducking their heads under the hallway lamps, and there was the jaguar who sang in the school choir but who was too shy to actually talk to anyone in class, and there was a whole herd of elk, all legs and wobbles and attitude. They mostly played lacrosse, the elk, a game that would pretty much instantly kill any monitor lizard who tried to join in.

It's not like Zeke and the others were picked on especially by all these others, or bullied. At least not any more or less than the other students. But

they did stick out a little here. Was it because they were a little less well-off than their classmates? Or was it the cold-blooded thing? No one ever said straight out, so Zeke had to guess. And frankly, Zeke could guess a lot of really terrible things if no one told him the truth.

“When do we get to yell at people, though?” Daniel asked Zeke and Alicia, a little crestfallen, as everyone just kept walking by.

“That’s not why we were picked for this,” Zeke said.

“Yeah, it is,” Alicia said. “Doesn’t mean you have to do it, though.”

“We weren’t picked to yell—”

“Mammals are afraid of being yelled at by reptiles.” Alicia shrugged. “Facts are facts.”

“That’s not true.”

“That’s totally true,” Daniel said.

Alicia still didn’t look at them.  
“They always think we’re hissing or biting or screaming.”



“Or about to start,” Daniel added.

“Principal Wombat is just deploying her resources like any good General would,” Alicia said.

“She’s not a General,” Zeke said. “She’s a Principal.”

“Titles make no difference to a soldier,” Alicia said.

“What does that even *mean*?” Zeke asked.

“War is the way of the world,” Alicia said.

“Yeah,” Daniel agreed.

“You don’t even know what you’re agreeing to!” Zeke yelled. “We’re Hall Monitors, not soldiers, and we weren’t chosen because we could yell—”

“You’re doing a pretty good job right now.”

“We were picked because—”

“Yes,” said a voice, booming from the end of the hallway, which had emptied almost completely while the lizards were arguing. “Why *were* you picked?”

Zeke, Daniel, and Alicia turned toward the voice, each of them rising slightly on their back feet without really noticing, giving the monitor lizard signal for threat.

Because coming down the hallway, a sneer on his stupid face, flanked by his stupid lackeys, was Pelicarnassus.

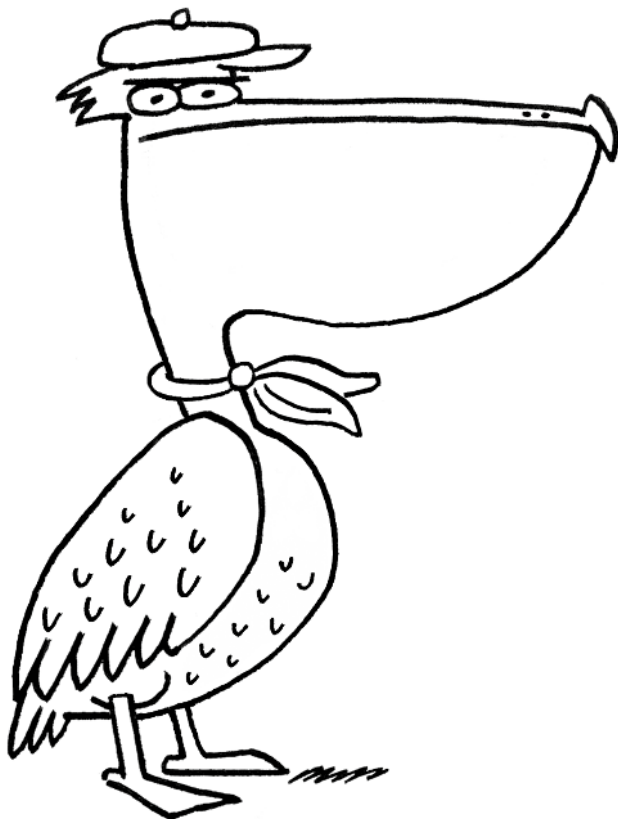
### 3

## PELICARNASSUS

Birds held themselves above most of the rest of the school. And yes, that was literal. They could fly, and they never let anyone else forget it. Well, except for the emus and the ostriches, but they seemed more like bears anyway, if you asked Zeke. It's not that there weren't nice birds, but the worst bird was always worse than the worst lizard, Zeke thought.

Then he wondered if he thought that only because he was a lizard.

Didn't matter. Pelicarnassus was the worst. A huge pelican who terrorized the school. He'd left the lizards alone until now—he probably thought they were beneath his notice—but *everyone* in the



school knew who Pelicarnassus was. So of course he would be the first person who—and there went the bell to signal the start of lunch—was without a hall pass in the hallway the Hall Monitors were monitoring.

“Pelicarnassus,” Alicia hissed. And Zeke thought, Okay, maybe we do hiss a little.



“Lizards,” Pelicarnassus returned, almost as a greeting.

“HALL PASS!” Daniel yelled.

Pelicarnassus patted his sides as if he were searching for one, then looked under his little hat—Pelicarnassus always wore a little hat, it was infuriating—and even in his voluminous jaw, which warped in and out like a balloon that might stab you. “You know,” Pelicarnassus said, fake surprised, “I don’t seem to have one.”

“Then we’re allowed to destroy you!” Daniel yelled.

“No, we’re *not*,” Zeke said.

“I vote destroy!” Alicia said, staring at Pelicarnassus.

“You have to go see Principal Wombat,” Zeke said.

“She’s got an armored butt!” Daniel said.

But Pelicarnassus didn’t seem too bothered. He walked toward them down the hallway, his two little lackeys by his side—both egrets, both

named Norman somehow, also in hats (birds had a thing for hats shared by no other kind of animal)—sneering with every word he said. “I’d like to see the lizard that could force me to go to the Principal if I didn’t want to.”

“Beth could,” Alicia said.

Pelicarnassus thought about this for a second. “That’s true, she could, but she’s not here right now, is she? All I can see here is a skinny little runt, a daydreaming daffodil, and a giant loaf of bread.”

“Are you calling me fat?” Zeke said.

“I don’t see anyone,” Pelicarnassus continued, ignoring the question and stopping just in front of the lizards, “who could stop me from doing exactly what I want, when I want. And yes,” he said, no longer ignoring the question, “I did call you fat.”

Zeke punched him in the beak.




## WHICH WAS A HUGE MISTAKE




Which was a huge mistake. Pelicarnassus fell backward in a cloud of feathers, his little hat flipping up into the air. He flung his huge pelican wings out to catch himself, but only succeeded in knocking down both Normans, too.

“What did you do?” Alicia asked Zeke in wonder.

“You’re the ones who wanted to destroy him!”



“Well, yeah,” Daniel said, also agog, “but it’s all talk, isn’t it? He threatens to destroy us, we threaten to destroy him, nobody destroys anyone and we all go home without the world ending.”





Because that was the other thing about Pelicarnassus: not only was he a bully, he was also the son of an international supervillain and could basically wipe out the lizards and their school and their town with one brush of his wing . . .

If his mom said it was okay.

She was a big deal, his mom. She'd once led an army of robots to attack Canada, not because they had anything she wanted, just to show that she could. She'd also teamed up with aliens and transported the entire White House to the moon last summer. That all got sorted out without too much war and everyone got snow cones afterward, but she was such a good supervillain that she was still free and living in the biggest house in town, on the very top of the tallest hill, looking down on everyone else, as if being able to fly wasn't enough.

Her son liked to think of himself as a supervillain, too. But so far, the only thing he'd managed to invade was other people's personal space in school. He was a bully, one who deserved to be taken down a few pegs, no matter who his mother was.

Zeke knew he shouldn't have hit him, though.

He regretted it before it was even over. Violence

never solved anything. Except in every single movie and TV show and online video anyone his age ever watched. Also, every book, now that he thought about it, and every game. Then again, all those things had heroes who were seemingly allowed to be violent now and then in the face of supervillains.

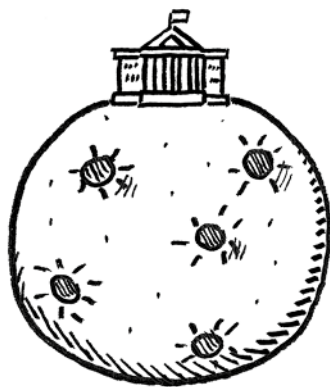
What this school needed was a hero.

That hero wasn't Zeke. Even Zeke knew that.

Pelicarnassus looked up in shock from where he lay on the floor. "Just wait till I tell my mother."

"You deserved it," Zeke said.

"I wonder what Principal Wombat will say to that," Pelicarnassus said with a sneer.



## 5

# WHAT PRINCIPAL WOMBAT SAID TO THAT

“You’re expelled,” Principal Wombat said, looking very unhappy.

Zeke couldn’t believe his ears. “Expelled?”

“We don’t tolerate violence at this school.”

“Pelicarnassus tried to drag us all down a wormhole to hell in our science module last year.”

“Well, yes, but it didn’t *work*, did it? And I had a nice chat with his mom then, who had a good talk with him.”

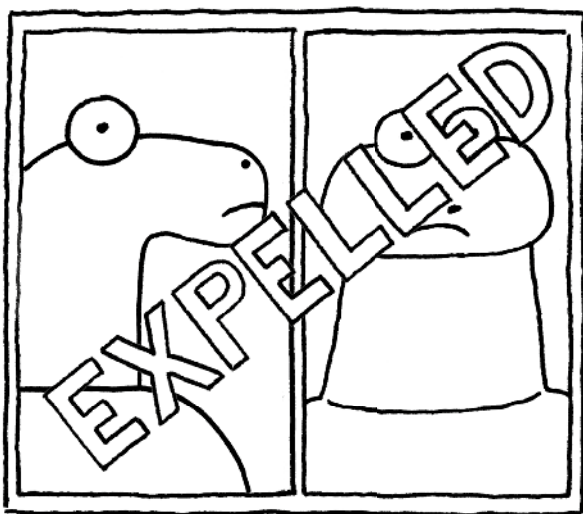
“Why can’t my mom have a good talk with me?”

It was a desperate question, but it surprisingly made Principal Wombat look thoughtful.

“I mean,” Zeke continued, pressing his luck, “why does he get a second chance, and I don’t? I’ve never done anything like this before. Plus, he was being really mean.”

“Not an excuse for violence,” Principal Wombat said, but she still seemed like she was considering it. She clicked her tongue like she’d made a decision. “Okay, I’ll talk to your mom.”

Zeke’s stomach sank as he realized what he’d just done. “Do you have to?”





“You’re the one who suggested it, Zeke.”

“I know but—”

Principal Wombat reached out a paw. “I’ll need your sash back.”

“My sash?”

“You obviously aren’t ready for the responsibilities and privileges of being a hall monitor, Ezekiel.”

Embarrassed, Zeke took off the worn-out, too-small sash from his shoulders. He handed it back to the Principal.

“You’re going to have to earn my trust again,” she said, caressing the sash with one furry paw. “I’m very disappointed.”

“Yes, Principal Wombat,” Zeke said, ashamed of himself.

“And you’re going to apologize to Pelicarnassus.”

“What?”

“You heard me. And the two Normans.”

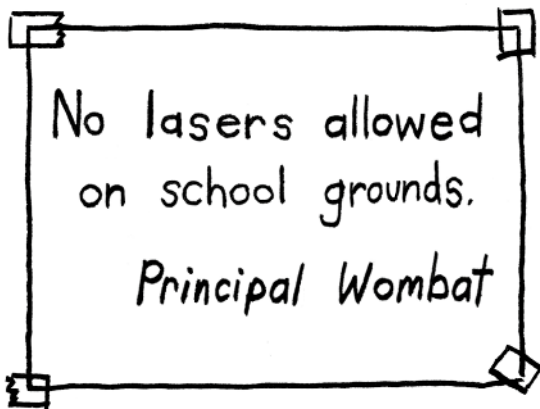
“But he’ll probably try to destroy me with, like, a laser or something!”

“No, he won’t. He knows lasers aren’t allowed on school grounds.” She came around the desk and put a hand on Zeke’s shoulder to guide him out the door. “In fact, I bet you two will end up close friends after this!”

*“What?”*

She smiled at him. “That’s what happens in all the best stories for kids!”

Still smiling, she shut the office door in his face.



## 6

# HONEY

“I have to apologize to him,” Zeke told the other two monitor lizards on the bus ride home.

“No way,” Daniel said sympathetically.

“And the Normans.”

“Oh, they don’t count,” Alicia said. “But apologizing to Pelicarnassus is hard stuff.”

“At least I didn’t get expelled.”

Alicia frowned. “Everyone acts like that’s the end of the world. As if there’s no way back from it and your life is over. There are ways back from everything. It doesn’t matter what mistake you make or what consequences you have to face from that mistake, it’s what you do afterward that’s important.”

Zeke and Daniel stared at her after this little speech. She still didn't make eye contact.

The bus was a loud, squawky place, filled with all the poorer students whose parents couldn't pick them up. The bus driver was a small shrew who didn't bother much with discipline, as he was too busy trying to see far enough over the steering wheel to drive without killing anything.

"And I'm no longer a Hall Monitor," Zeke added.

"Well, that's no surprise," Daniel said. "You clearly can't be trusted with that sort of responsibility."

"Hey!" Zeke said.

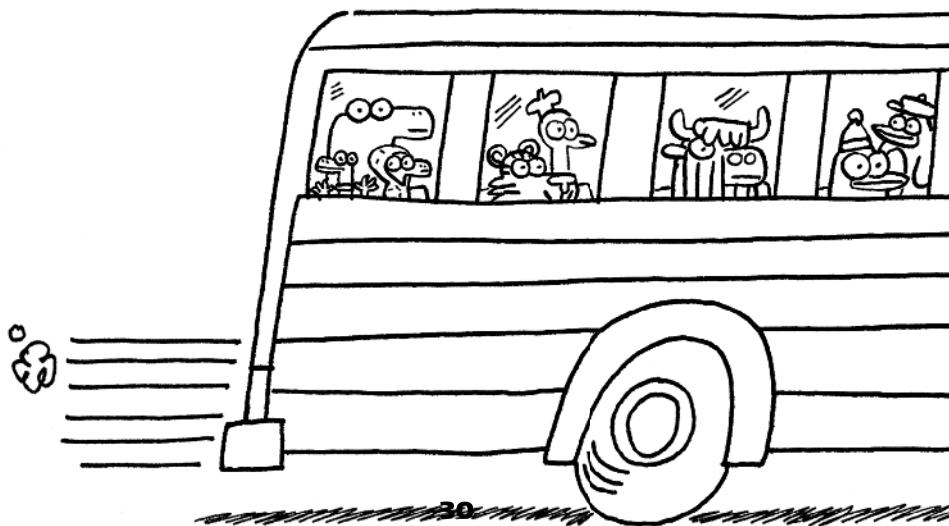
Daniel shrugged. "I don't make the rules."

"Who's the hawk?" Alicia said, still staring ahead.

Zeke and Daniel looked toward the front of the bus (all lizards sat in the back, near the engine, where it was warmest). There they saw an enormous—and enormously upright—hawk

sitting immobile on the back of the front-row bus seat, his claws digging terrifyingly into the plastic not-leather cushion. Even when the bus swerved, which it did constantly, the hawk didn't sway with it, just gripped a little tighter, his tiny, ferocious hawk face glaring straight ahead.

But that wasn't what made him stand out. There were three things that did. One, he didn't wear a hat like all the other birds. But two, he *did* wear sunglasses. Sunglasses weren't allowed at school. Principal Wombat didn't like them, said they contributed to unruly behavior, but that hardly

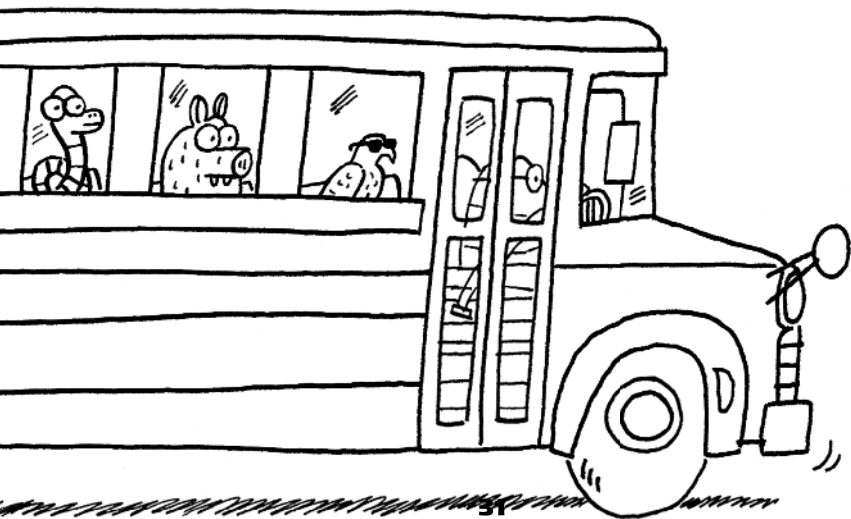


mattered as what kid ever wore sunglasses? Yet here was the hawk with very expensive-looking sunglasses across his beak like he had been born with them.

The third thing that made him stand out was that he was a bird on the bus. Most birds just flew home. Why wouldn't they? Or, if they were Pelicarnassus, they rode in limousines with a private driver employed by their mother.

"He was in class today," Alicia said, "but he didn't say anything."

"Is he new?" Daniel asked.



Zeke shrugged “How would we know? What birds ever talk to us?”

“Yeah, I never got that,” Daniel said. “I mean dinosaurs were giant bird-lizards. We’re practically family.”

“Some people find their families difficult,” Zeke said. Even Daniel, distracted as he always was, would have noticed the heavy feeling behind this, but that was the exact moment Alicia rose from her seat and walked up the aisle to the hawk.

“Where’s she going?” Daniel asked, following her.

“Don’t follow—” Zeke started, but what was the point? He got up and followed as well.

Alicia was already talking to the hawk. She turned to Daniel and Zeke as they arrived. “This is Miel,” she said.

“IT MEANS HONEY!” said Miel in the angry, shouty voice all hawks were stuck with.



“He’s a red-tailed hawk,” Alicia said.

“I AM A RED-TAILED HAWK!” said the hawk.

“Why does he wear sunglasses?” Daniel asked.

“I AM SITTING RIGHT HERE!” Miel said. “IT IS RUDE NOT TO ADDRESS ME DIRECTLY!”

“Sorry,” Daniel said meekly. Hawks were natural predators of lizards, but no one ate anyone anymore. Right?

“THAT IS PERFECTLY OKAY!” Miel replied. “IT IS A COMMON ERROR WITH THE BLIND!”

“You’re blind?” Daniel said.

“He’s blind,” Alicia said. “I was going to tell you.”

“That’s why you’re on the bus,” Daniel said.

“THAT IS WHY I AM ON THE BUS!”

There was a small silence. No one was sure where the conversation was supposed to go from here. The lizards had satisfied their curiosity, but there was still a big gulf in social status between them and a hawk.

“TELL ME!” Miel said, in a way that was



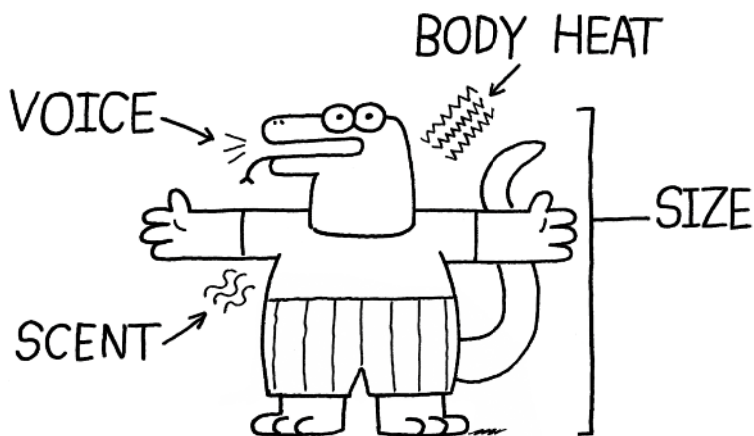
probably meant to be friendly but came out as a command. “ARE YOU LIZARDS?”

“How did you know that?” Zeke asked, surprised.

“I AM BLIND! I AM NOT AN IDIOT!”

Zeke hurried to apologize. “I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean—”

“NO, I AM JUST MESSING WITH YOU! IT IS FUN! HA HA! I COULD TELL YOU WERE LIZARDS IN MANY WAYS! SCENT, SIZE, BODY HEAT, TIMBRE OF YOUR VOICES!”



“The what of our voices?” Daniel asked.

“TIMBRE! HOW YOU SOUND! DEPENDS ON THE SIZE AND SHAPE OF THE AIRWAYS IN YOUR HEAD! EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT! THIS IS MY STOP!”

And it was his stop. The lizards hadn’t even noticed the shrew hitting the brakes, nor was there any signal as to how Miel had known. But there they were. Miel hopped off the back of the seat. “IT WAS MY FIRST DAY! THANK YOU, LIZARDS, FOR BEING FRIENDLY! EVERYONE ELSE WAS TOO AFRAID TO APPROACH!”

And with that, he hopped out the door, where his even more terrifying-looking hawk dad was waiting for him and threw his wings open to hug his son. As the bus pulled away, the lizards watched the pair hop happily up the driveway to their house.

The school needed a hero, Zeke thought.

He wondered if it had maybe found one.