



CRABTREE
SCHOOL

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CRABTREE SCHOOL

Year Two
Forever and Ever

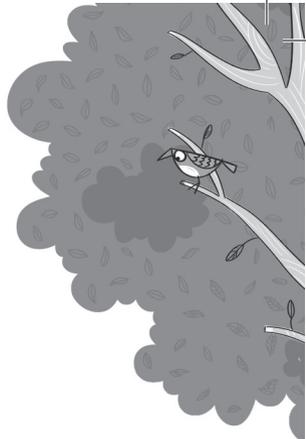


Lauren Pearson
Illustrated by Becca Moor

 SCHOLASTIC

For the real Ava and Johnny,
and their dad





Chapter



1

Breakfast Is the Most Important Meal of the Day

The first day of school can be the best day and it can be the worst day.

Ava Alexandra Hughes, who was seven years old, was thinking about this while she waited for her Weetabix to get soggy. Weetabix taste much better when they are soggy, and even better still once you've used your spoon to shape them into a castle or a tree or an animal. Weetabix sculptures are delicious.

It was the morning of Ava's first day of Year Three at Crabtree School for Girls. Crabtree School was quite simply the best primary

school in all of Great Britain, and probably the world. It had the kindest teachers, the cleverest students, and the best playground of any school, anywhere. Everyone said so. Girls came from miles around to go there, but luckily for Ava it was right at the end of her street. Being only a short walk away from the school was especially good because eating breakfast at Ava's house tended to take a long time.

Across the table, Ava's little brother was eating his Rice Krispies one by one. Johnny was four years old and he would never, ever eat Weetabix, soggy or crispy. Not since the terrible time he'd spread them all over the bottom of his bare feet. He did this because the Weetabix felt nice and squishy. But then squishy turned to sticky, and whilst Johnny stood at the sink washing the Weetabix off his *hands*, the Weetabix on his *feet* dried like cement. It took Ava dumping a whole pint of milk over Johnny's



feet to unstick him. Mum had not been happy.

Ava watched as Johnny dipped his fork into his apple juice. He wasn't the usual sort of naughty little brother that you always hear about. He tried so hard to be good, but most of the time it just didn't work out that way. (In fact, it almost never worked out that way.)

Today was Johnny's first day of school too. He was going to be in Reception at Dogwood School for Boys. Ava worried about what school would be like for Johnny without her there to watch out for him and pour milk on his toes. But Johnny didn't seem scared. And anyway, if you asked Ava, Reception wasn't like school at all. It was more like being at a soft play centre, with breaks for stories and snacks. Not nearly as serious as Year Three was going to be. Year Three was big time.

"Johnny!" Mum interrupted Ava's thoughts. "Stop trying to drink your juice with a fork!"

Come on, you two, eat everything all up!”

Ava slowly chewed a bite of Weetabix and went back to thinking about first days of school. Three years ago on her *own* first day of Reception at Crabtree School, Ava’s class sat down to lunch in the big school dining room. Or rather everyone else sat down. Ava fell down. She missed her chair and landed flat on her bum on the floor. She knocked the table as she went and then her jacket potato fell too. It landed on her head. There were baked beans and cheese dripping down her face, right in front of everyone. The teachers were watching. The older girls were watching. Her new classmates were watching. It was the worst thing that could possibly happen to you on your first day of Reception. Ava was so embarrassed she couldn’t move.

Then came an amazing moment: a girl in Ava’s class, Zoe, stood up from the table.

She picked up her lunch and she sat down on the dining room floor next to Ava. Zoe smiled at Ava. They both giggled. Then another Reception girl called Lottie brought her potato down too, and joined them under the table. So did a third girl, called Isabel. One by one, each of the Reception girls followed. They were all laughing, so Ava laughed too. She laughed so hard that she cried, while she picked beans out of her hair. Their entire Reception class had a jacket potato party on the floor. The rest of the school watched in amazement.

From then on everyone said that there was really something quite special about their year. The girls in Ava's class stuck together like a mixture of glue, syrup and honey.

Mum interrupted Ava's remembering again. "Finish your breakfast, I mean it now! We'll be late for school." The Weetabix were nice and mushy, and Ava had made them into a lovely

bird. She took a bite of the Weetabix bird's tail.

“Ava,” Mum went on, “have you seen the letter from Johnny's school? It was right here on the table and now it's gone.”

“I haven't touched it,” Ava replied.

Ava and Mum both looked at Johnny.

“Johnny,” Mum said. “Have you seen Mummy's letter? It says what we need to bring for your first day of school. I want to check we have it all.”

Johnny nodded yes. He was chewing on something. He knew better than to talk with his mouth full so Mum and Ava waited for him to finish. Mum tapped her foot and looked at her watch.

“Johnny,” she said when he had swallowed. “Where is the letter?”

Ava noticed that there were bits of chewed-up typed words around Johnny's mouth. He smiled and then Ava saw that a tiny scrap of

paper stuck across his top teeth read: PE KIT.

Johnny had eaten the letter.

Mum *had* said to eat up everything.

“Right,” sighed Mum, handing Johnny his cup of juice. “Wash it down. We’re off to school!”

So Ava didn’t have any more time that morning to think about her first day of Year Three. But someone who could see into the future (which Ava couldn’t) would have known that today was going to be the craziest, strangest, most totally unbelievable first day in the history of Crabtree School for Girls.



Chapter

2

Year Three, Here We Come

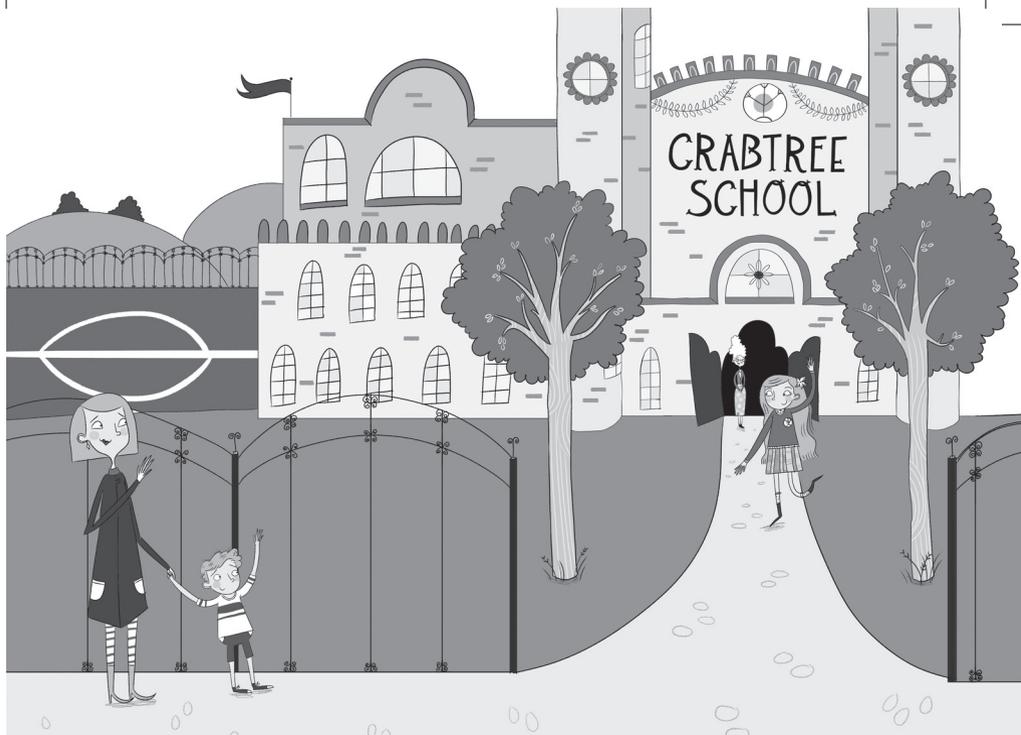
When Ava saw the huge red brick building with the rows of crab trees in front, she raced ahead of Johnny and her mum. It might seem strange to be excited that a long summer full of adventures was over, but Crabtree School for Girls was not just any school.

Crabtree School was on Crabtree Lane opposite Crabtree Park. Sometimes schools are named after roads or neighbourhoods, but in this case it was the school that came first. No one could remember what the road or the land was called before there was a school

there. Crabtree School had been around for hundreds and hundreds of years.

There was something very special about this lovely old building filled with clever, happy, kind little girls. Whatever that something special was, it spread through the whole neighbourhood. No one could pass by without feeling just a little bit good inside. It was almost like Crabtree School was enchanted, except that it wasn't. The magic in this school was the kind that comes from real people and not from fairies, wizards or magicians.

Ava waved goodbye to Mum and Johnny, and made her way through the gates and up the path. She stepped carefully on to the slick polished floor of the school's front hallway. One of the most important rules at Crabtree School was NEVER to run on this bit of marble floor. It was so slippery that it was like an ice rink, especially when it was wet.



What was more, the office of the headmistress was right by the school's front door, and if you walked slowly enough, you might get invited in. Mrs Peabody almost always had her office door open, and if she saw a girl passing through the front hallway, the headmistress might offer her a cup of hot chocolate and a biscuit. Mrs Peabody was a headmistress of legendary kindness.

“Good morning, Ava,” said Mrs Peabody

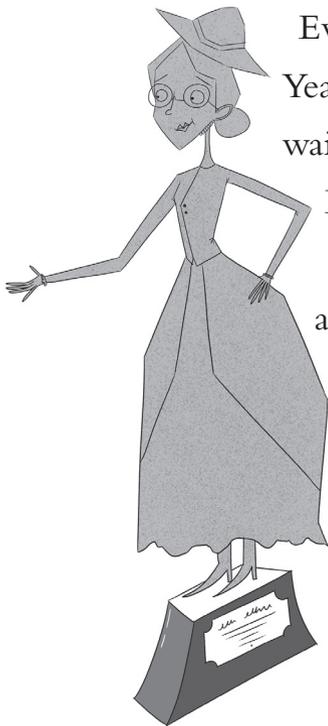
brightly. The headmistress was stood outside her office welcoming all of the girls, just as she was every morning when school was in session. Mrs Peabody was wearing a dress with very bright green and red flowers on it. It matched the colour of the crab apples on the trees outside. Mrs Peabody had fluffy hair that looked a bit like grey candyfloss.

“I hope you had a lovely summer,” she said to Ava. “Miss Moody is upstairs waiting for you. She is most excited to be teaching your class this year!”

After saying hello to Mrs Peabody, Ava turned to look at the other lady who was always in the front hallway of Crabtree School. She wasn't nearly as cuddly as Mrs Peabody. This was because she was made of stone.

Standing at the foot of the school's big, winding staircase was a statue of Lady Constance Hawthorne. Lady Hawthorne was

the very first headmistress of Crabtree School for Girls. Next to Lady Hawthorne's pointy, old-fashioned boots stood her little stone dog. He was called Baron Biscuit. Stroking him was meant to bring you good luck. Baron Biscuit had been stroked so many times by so many hands that his back was wearing away. These days he looked less like a dog and more like a camel with short legs.



Every morning of last year, a Year Six girl called Jessica would wait for Ava right here next to Baron Biscuit. Jessica was Ava's most grown-up friend. She always asked how Ava was and gave her a good-morning hug. Then Ava would watch Jessica go where all the big girls went: up the massive



staircase to the first floor. The classrooms for years Three, Four, Five and Six were the only rooms upstairs, so Ava had never had a reason to go there.

Until today.

Ava knew that Jessica was long gone now, off to senior school. Ava missed her already. But to be finally climbing up those stairs herself felt like being invited into Santa's workshop. Ava practically floated to the first floor.

Miss Moody was standing at the Year Three classroom door with a big smile on her face. She looked like she was in a very good mood. Ava was relieved. Miss Moody is not a good name for a teacher. (Although it wasn't as bad as Miss Cross. She taught Year Four.)

In fact, Miss Moody was actually quite nervous about meeting her new Year Three class. Ever since that first day of Reception, word had got round about this group of girls.

You never knew what they would get up to next. Earlier that morning the Year Two teacher, who was called Miss Cheeky, had told Miss Moody to get ready; this Year Three was going to be one to remember.



Inside the Year Three classroom, there was wild chattering. It had been a long summer and there was lots to catch up on.

To Ava's delight, being in Year Three meant no more tables. Each girl had her own desk, with space inside to keep her things. You even got to choose which desk was yours. The chairs were bigger, the whiteboard was whiter and the view was better. From the high classroom windows you could see right out over Crabtree Park. Ava was extremely good at daydreaming and this looked like the perfect spot for it.

On this very morning, the park was full of mums and dads and children heading to other

first days at other schools. There was also a woman without any children walking a huge dog. Maybe the woman was taking the dog to his first day of dog school. . .

“Ava!” called Zoe. “Ava, can you hear me? Sit here, next to me. Stop daydreaming and get that desk!”

The desk that Zoe was pointing to had Zoe on one side and the window on the other. It was perfect. Ava began to put her things away.

Zoe Eloise Ahlberg was Ava’s best friend. During the jacket potato incident, Zoe had been the first one in their Reception class to sit down next to Ava on the floor. Now Zoe was seven years, six months and three days old. Zoe liked to keep an exact count of her age. Like Ava, Zoe had brown eyes, but Ava was tall with messy blondish hair that looked a bit like a bird’s nest. Zoe was shorter – fifteen centimetres shorter, last they measured – with

curly brown hair. Zoe always wore six hair clips, three on each side of her head, so her hair was never, ever messy.

Right then Zoe was counting out five pencils and arranging them neatly inside her desk. Zoe had a separate pencil for every day of the week. She also always wore two watches, one on each wrist.

“Ava, it has been fifty-seven days since we have last been in school. And twelve days since our last play date.” Zoe loved numbers. A LOT. Ava liked to say that Zoe wanted to marry numbers.

“Where did you have your play date?” called a voice from the back of the room. Charlotte Christina Lewis was seven years old, too. Only her grans called her Charlotte, everyone else called her Lottie. Except her cousins, who called her Charlie. And her Dad, who called her Doodles. Lottie liked having lots of different

names. It made it harder for people to keep track of her.

Lottie had chin-length brown hair and huge brown eyes that were always looking about for things to watch. When she wore her glasses, her eyes looked even bigger. Lottie liked to know everything that was happening to everybody all the time. Whatever she found out, she wrote down in the purple notebook that she always carried with her. That way she could remember it forever.

Lottie had chosen a desk in the back by the window. From there she could keep one eye on the classroom and the other eye on the school gates and the park. If Lottie could have got away with it, she would have drilled a little hole in the floor so that she could spy on the class below too.

“The play date was at my house,” Ava told Lottie, and Lottie wrote that down in her

notebook. Lottie had filled so many purple notebooks since Reception that Ava thought she must have a whole room at home with used notebooks stacked to the ceiling. It must be a secret room too, because Ava had been to Lottie's house loads of times and had never seen it.

Lottie came round to Ava's desk and was filling in details on the play date from twelve days ago.

Ava watched Lottie fill in the entry. Usually play dates weren't top secret, unless you had an argument or did something really naughty.

"Isabel came to that play date too," said Ava helpfully, pointing at Lottie's notebook page. Lottie added Isabel's name.

Isabel Elizabeth Donaldson was eight years old, which is a huge difference from being seven. She had blonde hair that was always in two straight plaits, and freckles arranged neatly

across her nose. Isabel was quite tall, and she always stood very straight.

Isabel had also got down on the floor with Ava on that first day of Reception. That was really something, because Isabel was the best-behaved girl in their whole class. This could have made her boring, but it didn't.

That morning, Isabel had chosen a desk in the front row, right opposite Miss Moody's. She was sitting there now with her hands folded. She kept turning around to listen to Zoe, Ava and Lottie, but she didn't get out of her seat. Isabel wanted to make a good first impression on Miss Moody.

"Isabel had loads of play dates over the summer," said Lottie, flipping through her notebook. Ava knew that was because Isabel liked to get away from her little twin sisters.

Just then Miss Moody came into the classroom, still in a good mood. "Girls," she

said. “Welcome to my class! I have heard so much about you all. And I can’t wait to tell you all of the wonderful things we are going to get up to! But first let me ask you: what do you know about Year Three?”

Ava’s class knew a lot about Year Three. Zoe knew that Year Three meant that you were no longer in the youngest half of the school. In Year Three, you were precisely in the middle. Isabel knew it meant swimming lessons in the spring term, and someone else knew about the overnight camping trip during summer term. Lottie, of course, knew *everything* about Year Three, even more than Miss Moody, but she didn’t raise her hand because she was too busy writing down what everyone was saying.

“Wow, girls!” Miss Moody exclaimed. “You’ve heard a lot about Year Three! There’s even more to come, but right now we’ve got an assembly for the whole school. Line up, please!”



♥
YEAR
3

