

..... Chapter 1

Cleda Bethers looked out the window on the rainy day. Mud splattered as her Dad's car drove down the driveway. She went to her desk and looked at the blueprint she had made of a small wooden car. Her hands ran over the paper. She took the sheet and crumpled it up, throwing it in an artistic arch to the trash can. She missed, like always, and then went to pick up the large pile of paper balls on the floor. She had been working on this design for too long.

Cleda Bether was a young girl of 11. She lived in Amherst, NH. She was the top student in her school, The Academy for Engineering and Design, or AED. She loved to engineer and build new things, like this

toy car she had been designing for her younger brother.

“Cleda, get down here for dinner!” her mother called. Cleda put down her pencil with a sigh and ran down the stairs.

“Yep,” she said. The rain pattered on the roof and made a hollow sound throughout the house. In the kitchen, her mother was placing slices of fresh chicken on the plates with crispy potato slices which had been baked in the oven. A bowl at Cleda’s elbow was full of peas and a serving spoon was stuck inside. Her father came up behind her and hugged Cleda. For a moment, Cleda’s tense muscles were relieved until her father let go.

“How’s my little engineer?” he said, turning her around by her shoulders. Cleda smiled and replied.

“Good, and not good. I can’t get the design right so that the wheels will be able to have suspension and fit in the other parts at the same time.” she said. Her father smiled affectionately.

“You can show me after dinner,” he said. Cleda nodded and began to bring plates over to the dinner table. Her brother was already sitting down.

“Mom, can I start eating?” James said. The tall woman nodded and the young boy started to dig into the meat and bite down on the potatoes. Cleda joined him after getting milk for her brother and herself. She began to think about the model. *Hmm, I will try that later*, she thought to herself.

Once dinner had finished, she went to her room and started to sketch out another design. Her time and effort was rewarded, as the weight measured out to a perfect 36 grams! She smiled and then went to a second desk, cluttered with wood scraps and nails. She started to saw the pieces, and then looked for her many screws. She hammered the nails into the correct parts, and then tested it out on the ramp. It rode straight down, increasing speed quickly.

“Yes!” she shouted and punched the air. Now, her last step was painting it. She got a piece of paper and sketched out fire. She cut it out, making a stencil. She painted the whole car red, and used her paper

stencil to paint orange and yellow fire. Her wheels were painted black, and she finished with a light blue for the windshield. She turned on a small desk fan and then waited for a couple minutes. After it was dry she picked it up and ran up the stairs to her father's office.

“Dad!” she yelled. “I finished!” Her dad spun around and picked her up off the ground.

“Great job, Cleda!” he said. “Now, go give it to your brother. I’ll come too.” They both descended the creaky wooden stairs and went to show James. Her dad’s tan suit made a crinkling sound as he walked.

When Cleda presented the brand new race car, her brother’s face lit up since the time his old car broke. He hugged his older sister and set to building a large ramp. Cleda was happy that her brother was playing again, and also that she had finally worked out the design!

..... Chapter 2

Cleda rolled out of her bed, still groggy from her sleep. It was Monday, so she dressed in a sweatshirt and shorts for school. She slung her backpack over her shoulder before her alarm rang its noxious tone. She quickly shut it off and ran downstairs. Her mom had set up the cereal, her favorite, Sunny Bunny Loops.

“Thanks!” she said to her mom with her mouth full as she rushed out of the door with James. His car was in his hand. As they boarded the bus, another girl of Cleda’s height waved and pointed at the seat

beside her. Cleda went over and sat down. Her brother sat across with his friend and Cleda's friend's younger brother. James began to show off his car.

"I finally finished his toy race car!" she said excitedly to her companion, whose name was Hannah. She nodded and pulled out a binder.

"I also finished a piece," Hannah said and showed a painting of a wolf in a winter scene. Hannah was a passionate artist.

"Wow," Cleda said. The bus neared the school and the kids raced to get off first. As the school day raced by, Cleda kept thinking about a new invention. *New ideas, new ideas*, she thought. By the time the school P.A. told the 6th graders to go to clubs, she had thought of a design. She hurried to her bus and started to plan it out. She was going to make a large table setter for her mother. It would get the utensils, napkins, and plates by the number of people you entered into the screen. She rushed up to her room once she got into the house.

Cleda pulled out another piece of graph paper from her drawer and started to draw her design. This

was easy for her, except the programming. All she had to make were wooden fingers, arms, and boxes for the plates, utensils, and napkins to fit into. She took the measurements and started to write down the numbers.

“Cleda! It’s time for dinner!” her mom yelled to her as the aroma of beef & barley floated to her bedroom. Cleda slammed her fist on the desk in frustration and then ran down. She went to the dining table and decided she wouldn’t tell her mother, but surprise her which is what she mostly did. The beef and barley burned her tongue and she gulped down the refreshing water. After dinner, she ate yogurt and raspberries. Her mother helped James unload the dishwasher and then load the stained bowls and plates. Cleda then remembered to have to add bowls to her design, so on her blueprint she added another section. It was coming together. She went back over to her desk and started to make the containers. By the time she was done cutting and nailing the boxes, it was 9:00 P.M. She took a shower and then crept into her bed, reading a book she had

just gotten on Amazon. It was called *An Introduction to Engineering for Young Minds*. She soon became tired, so she snapped off her lamp and put the book under her pillow with the scented Strawberry Bookmark.

The next morning she woke up at 5:00 to work. The glue had dried and she started the programming after assembling the parts. She attached the wires and then programmed the parts. She struggled, and constantly had to search up things to make it, but she persevered and finished. After 2 hours of working, she had finally done it. Her touchshield showed a line and a microphone button. She pressed it and said: “4”. The machine started to move its arm and got 4 plates, 4 bowls, 4 knives, and 4 napkins. It put it all onto a wooden tray she had made the night before. She grimaced. The model was supposed to pick up the forks as well. She sat down at her desk and opened her laptop. She typed in her password and re-read her code over and over. Then, she found the error and fixed it.

“4,” Cleda said again, into the microphone. This time, it picked up all the plates, bowls, utensils, and napkins. She grinned. Now Cleda put it on a roll-able cart and wheeled it downstairs. Since it was 7:00, her brother was downstairs playing with the car.

“Shh!” Cleda said and smiled as she put her finger to her lips. She wheeled the large cart to the kitchen sink and attached a tag that wrote: *For MOM*. Then she went back upstairs with a new idea. She would wait for her carpentry class to do it, though.

..... Chapter 3

Cleda went downstairs after drawing her design. She placed it safely in her backpack pocket and went to the kitchen. Her invention was holding a pile of plates, bowls, utensils, and napkins. Her mother went to Cleda and hugged her.

“Thank you, Cleda!” she said and went to the tray. Taking it off, her mom set up the plates and bowls with the cereal. Cleda would surprise her mother once more later, but for now she ate her cereal and went to school.

“... with liberty and justice for all.” Cleda finished the pledge of allegiance with her class and

sat down. Lunch came and went quickly, and Cleda went to her next class.

Her English teacher, Mrs. Wiceral, handed out the test and then went back to her seat. Though Cleda was a whiz at engineering, she was not so great at English and struggled with the questions. The 30 minute period ended, and Cleda turned in her paper, doubtful of her answers.

“Okay, you may now open up your english books and we will discuss a new topic. Please write unit 7, Prepositions...” her teacher's voice droned on. Cleda wrote down the text on the blank paper. She quickly raised her hand as the teacher asked a question.

“Yes, Cleda.” she said. Cleda answered and then started to scribble in her book.

“A preposition is a group of words used before a noun to show the direction, place, or time.” she said. Mrs. Wiceral nodded and wrote her key points on the whiteboard. Before long, the clock hands were pointed at 3:15, and the class slowly filed out of the room. Once in the hallway, Cleda hurried back to her Homeroom in Mr. Janson’s class. She sat down at her

desk and her teacher started to hand out the homework.

“This is due on Wednesday, please submit on time.” he said, flashing a look at one of the students.

Cleda opened her backpack and stuffed her notebooks in the open bag. She left out one red one and a pencil before she zipped it up and walked out of the classroom.

“Bye Mr. Janson.” she said and hurried out. With the red notebook in her non-dominant hand, Cleda quickly completed the sketch she had been working on that whole day. It was done. She realized she was standing at her destination, Room 303, or the Engineering Club. She was just elected as president, so she couldn’t be late. She started to put her paper on the whiteboard, secured by a magnet. She stood next to the door just as the P.A announced for all kids to go to their clubs, buses, or the pickup hall. Students started to come into the classroom, greeting Cleda. She nervously waited for the rest of the people before she started her class.

“So, today we will be making a new design. This must have wheels that are programmed to move with a remote control and have at least 1 extension.” she said. The kids whispered excitedly to each other at the mention of this new assignment. Cleda glanced at the clock and then told the class they could get started. She began making her own design on the teachers desk in the corner. After a couple of minutes, a young girl with braids went up to Cleda.

“Um, hi Cleda.” she said. “Is this good?” she pointed at her design, scribbly, but Cleda could see it.

“Yes, just maybe go over your lines with a ruler and then erase the old ones.” she replied. The girl, Annabelle, was one of the youngest members. Cleda then remembered that the 100th day of the Engineering club was nearing. She would have to take on the responsibility of parties too, now that she was elected.

One by one the kids finished and began the wood-working. Soon, it was 4:15 and the class left. Cleda turned off the lights and closed the door behind her as she left. Her mother’s car pulled up

and she jumped inside. Her brother soon came out of the school, coming back from his chess club. The car which held Cleda, her mother, and James, slowly drove from the school.

..... Chapter 4

Cleda woke up to the smell of burning wood. Her dad was wood burning something upstairs. Cleda rubbed her eyes and got out of bed, still dressed in her pajamas. She put on a t-shirt and jean-shorts. Cleda tied her hair up in a tight pony-tail and looked at the clock. *5:00 A.M, enough time to work*, she thought. She set to building her newest design. Then, Cleda started cutting out the wood pieces and fitting them together with nails, bolts, and rods. She then attached the small tray to the bottom. It was a small cereal-pourer. It was based like a weight, so when you put on the bowl it would tip over and pour. Once you took off the bowl, it would stop and lift the box.

Cleda put a bowl in the tray, but nothing moved. She inspected the framework. Coming to the bolts, she realized that the rod was too thick and wouldn't move. Cleda took it out and sanded it down carefully. When Cleda placed the rod through the hole, it slid it easily. She started to use her wood burner and added fancy designs to it. She smiled at her creation. Now it was 6:00, and she decided to go back to bed. She slept for a little longer and woke up to get breakfast. She carried her creation downstairs and then sat at the table. She decided to make her own breakfast, and loaded the pourer with a box of cereal and put her bowl below it, fitting it in the tray. She quickly pulled the bowl at the right level and filled it with milk. She remembered she still had a lot of homework to do, so she grabbed her backpack and started to fumble through the papers. She started to do the problems. Soon, light flowed through the windows as the sun rose from the trees. She got her backpack ready and set it by the door as her mother prepared her brother's breakfast.

The brakes of a bus screeched as James and Cleda ran towards it. They jumped aboard and went to their seats. In a couple of minutes they were at the school. Cleda's first class was Math, and Mr. Janson greeted her by handing out her yellow folder. She quickly started the problems and finished quickly. She opened her red notebook and looked at her design. Cleda put her head on her hand and finally thought up another idea. She added some new arms and wheels and decided her blueprint was ready.

“Class, it is time to review your warmups. Clara, please answer the first question.” Mr. Janson said. Clara, a girl with bright blue eyes, wrote the problem on the board, and then solved it. Cleda leaned her head in her hand and flipped her pencil in her hand. She finished the problems in her notebook and the class ended shortly because of the test in the other class.

Mr. Janson handed out the papers to the students. Cleda took the homework and stuffed it in her folder, cluttered with crinkled sheets. She left the room and hurried to her next class. Mrs. Wiceral sat

scowling at the test grades. When she saw Cleda, her face brightened a tiny bit.

“Cleda, you did an excellent job on the English test. You got a perfect %100, very good!” she said. Cleda grinned and went to her desk. She sat down and took out her folders and books. She began to write down words that came to her mind, some correct and others wrong. *Mom will be proud of me*, she thought as Mrs. Wiceral passed out the graded tests and winked at Cleda when she passed hers. Cleda smiled.

“Alright,” Mrs. Wiceral said. “We will begin our new words for this week.” Mrs. Wiceral displayed a slideshow on the projector. It showed a list of words and the meanings. Cleda jotted them down in her notebook.

“Alright, the slideshow is on your Google Classroom, now please put all of your items down on the floor.” Mrs. Wiceral said. Cleda put her water-bottle and pencil bag on the floor, leaving her pencil and eraser on her desk. Before she knew it, the

end of class had come and she hurried out to her engineering class.

..... Chapter 5

Cleda sat down as her Engineering teacher paced at his desk. He greeted her and then sat on the small desk before the whiteboard. More and more students came and sat down, and Mr. Truso marked attendance. He began his class.

“Good afternoon,” Mr. Truso said. “I hope you all brought in your newest designs?” he questioned. Cleda and other students brought out their models and she lifted hers. The large device filled up the space on her desk and she shifted her notebooks to the side to compensate for the design. One by one, all the students walked to the front of the classroom and explained about theirs. After the line of students

came to Cleda's desk, she stood up and walked to the desk in front of the whiteboard. Placing her design on the table, she explained.

"Since this is a completely weight-independant model, I made a cereal pourer where the weight of the bowl makes the box tip over." Cleda demonstrated with a bowl of Cheerios, pouring the bowl empty into the box when done. The class clapped and Mr. Truso nodded approvingly. Cleda hoped hers was the best. After a couple more students walked up, 11:50 came and Mr. Truso stepped up.

"Alright class, I would like to say that those who presented today did an excellent job. Tomorrow we will have a few more people and complete the assignment. I would also like to announce a contest for those who love to engineer," he said, winking at Cleda. She smiled and he continued. "You will create your best model and bring it to class next Friday. Then, during your Reading period you can bring it to the Auditorium. You can get a flier up here." he pointed to the stack of paper beside him. Mr. Truso

walked to his desk and opened his laptop. Cleda walked to the papers and took one. She glanced down at it before she stuffed it into her paper strewn folder. Cleda dropped her backpack off at her locker and ran to catch up with Hannah who was walking out of her English class. They joined and started to walk to the cafeteria.

“I am so excited for the competition!” Cleda said as she got in line for the school lunch. Hannah nodded and took the tin box from the lunch-lady. Cleda took a box too and they walked to a vacant table.

“I really love their casserole!” Hannah said and took another forkful, shoving it into her mouth. Cleda picked at her plate and disdainfully took a small bite. Though it was not her favorite, she still ate it and quickly finished.

12:15 came quickly and Cleda and Hannah went back to their separate classes. Cleda walked a long way to reach her Science class. She sat in her seat as her teacher, Mrs. Krilie walked in. Her stern look

made all the students sit straighter up in their chairs. Mrs. Krilie started to speak.

“Alright, please show your homework.” she said. There was the sound of rustling papers as all the students slowly picked out their homework. Cleda lifted hers up. Mrs. Krilie nodded and walked to the whiteboard. She slowly began to write out the initials of the people that had forgotten theirs. Then, Mrs. Krilie collected all the homework from the students desks and brought them to her wooden table. Setting them there, Mrs. Krilie began the day's lesson.

“Okay, let's start our test. You can have 5 minutes to study with your friends.” she said. Cleda glanced at another girl in the seat behind her, who nodded, smiling.

“Perfect!” the girl said and handed Cleda back her notebook.

“Thanks,” Cleda said and put the red notebook away. Mrs. Krilie started to pass out the tests and then went to her desk to grade the last week's tests.

Cleda's hand flew through the first few questions. They were always the easiest. Then, seeing the fifth, Cleda slowed down to focus. The question said: *What is a mitochondria? Write a small paragraph.* Cleda started to write, her hand waking up from just circling answers. Before long, she had finished both sides of the test. Cleda checked both sides as other students turned it in. Cleda checked once more, and then turned it in too. She sat at her desk, reading a book. One by one, all the students finished and Mrs. Krilie ended the class with two sheets of homework.

“This is due on Wednesday,” her teacher said as she called on another girl to pass out the papers. Cleda raised her hand and Mrs. Krilie nodded. She handed Cleda the graded tests to pass out. Cleda smiled when she came to her paper. It said ‘*%100 Great Work!*’ written in Mrs. Krilie’s scribbly hand.

“You may leave class!” Mrs. Krilie’s loud voice interrupted. All the kids gathered their belongings and walked out.

Before long, the school day had ended.

..... Chapter 6

“Hi Mom!” Cleda said as she and James jumped off the bus. Their mother was standing in the doorway, waiting for them.

“Cleda, I want to talk to you for a moment,” her mom said. Cleda nodded and walked with her mother into the dining room.

“I’ve been planning a surprise party for James’ birthday!” her mom said. Cleda covered her mouth with her hands in excitement as her mother continued.

“I will be inviting most of his friends, and I was wondering if you would like to have Hannah come over too.” she said. Cleda nodded and replied.

“I would love that! But I need to finish some Science and Math homework before I can help you.” Cleda said, running up the carpeted stairs. Her mother smiled and watched her daughter. She walked into the living room to plan more. Cleda, now in her room, began to do the homework, still thinking about a special gift for her brother. She kept doing her homework. Finally, she was finished and she ran downstairs to help her mother. The party was to be in three days, and so was her brother's birthday. Cleda knew the plan. Her brother would go to the Chess club and then come home later. Cleda would go home early to help her mom set up, and then surprise her brother. Cleda rushed back to her room, thinking about her brother's gift. She started to draw out her idea on the graph paper, marking lines and lengths with her ruler. Finally, she was finished and before her lay a new blueprint of her brother's gift, which was a scooter, fit for her brother. She started to cut

out the pieces, first the front leg and then the foot holders. Then, Cleda carved out the bolts, wheels, and the rods. She quickly assembled the large wooden scooter. Now that it was done, she painted it in her brother's favorite color. Using a Navy Blue, Cleda painted it all. Then, she used a small plastic stencil from her birthday and wrote out:

SuperScooter, in bold, black letters. She hid it in her closet as her brother thumped up the stairs. Cleda rushed downstairs to help her mother cook dinner, since it was already 6:00.

“Oh, hello Cleda!” said her mom. Cleda smiled and replied.

“Hi! What are you making?” she said. Her mother pointed to a recipe on her phone. Cleda looked down at the page which said: Mac and Cheese, your best dinner. Cleda helped her mother and got some of the ingredients.

“How was school?” her mom asked as Cleda rummaged through the fridge for a packet of American Cheese.

“Okay,” she replied as she found the bag and carried it to the table. She set it on the counter.

“Can I start the cheese sauce?” she asked and got out the milk. Her mother nodded.

“Okay, and I’ll do the pasta.” her mom said as she got out a box of Barilla pasta. Cleda poured the bag of cheese into the pot.

“There’s a contest for engineering. What do you think I should do?” she asked, whisking the mix together.

“Maybe something based on Spring!” said a voice behind her.

“Lana!” Cleda said and ran into the young woman's arms. Lana was her older sister who had gone off to college 2 years ago.

“You didn’t tell me she was coming, Mom!” Cleda said, still hugging Lana.

“I wanted to surprise you,” her mom said as she poured the raw pasta into the boiling water and turned towards them. Cleda hugged Lana one more time before returning to the stove.

“Does James know?” Cleda said, pouring the milk into the pot and stirring. Lana nodded, coming to her pot and smelling the aroma.

“That smells delicious!” she said and walked to the pasta. “Mom, it’s ready!” Lana said and used the ladle to spoon out the small elbows. She put them in a bowl and Cleda lifted the heavy pot off the stove and poured the thick, creamy sauce on top of the pasta. She mixed it until it was fully combined. Lana got two spoons and handed one to Cleda.

“This tastes great!” Lana said as she swallowed the hot, gooey mix. Cleda nodded in agreement.

“James! Get down here!” their mom called up the stairs. The sound of footsteps came from above them and James appeared at the door.

“Yum, dinner!” he said and rushed to the bowl. He got his own smaller one and spooned large amounts of the mac and cheese. Lana and Cleda both got theirs and then sat with James.

“So, what have you been learning since my last visit?” Lana said to James and Cleda.

“I am learning cursive in English class!” James said, spooning two mouthfuls of Mac ’n cheese into his mouth.

“Nice. And what about you, Cleda?” Lana replied, looking at her younger sister.

“Well, I’m learning Algebra.” she said. Lana nodded and they finished dinner.

After cleaning the dishes and having a soap fight, Lana, Cleda, and James went upstairs to shower. Before Cleda went to bed, Lana came to say good night.

“Hi Cleda. Good night!” she said and walked to James’ room to tell him a story. Cleda snapped off her lights and went to bed, thinking about a Spring themed project. Before she could finish her idea, she fell fast asleep.

..... Chapter 7

Cleda fell fast asleep. The next moment she realized her alarm was blasting her eardrum. She got out of bed and quickly changed. She rushed into Lana's room to see the bed neatly made. She smiled, remembering Lana always woke up early. She ran downstairs and saw Lana cracking eggs in a bowl.

“Hi!” Cleda said, coming up to her sister's shoulder. Lana looked at her and smiled.

“Hi. I’m making waffles.” she said and put flour and some other ingredients into the glass bowl.

“I’ll get out the iron,” Cleda said and reached into the cabinet to get the large machine. She helped Lana pour the batter into the molds and press down.

When they were halfway through the batter, she started to cut strawberries and put them on a platter. Then, she mixed heavy cream and sugar together with some vanilla extract. After whipping the mixture, she got a nice, stiff whipped cream. She put it into a bowl and started to plate the waffles. By the time her mom had come down, the table was set and breakfast was ready. James came down in a short while the moment he heard the word ‘waffle’.

“These are really, really good!” Cleda’s mother said, chewing on a piece. Cleda nodded, slathering whipped cream and berries all over hers.

“Mom, where’s my pencil bag?” Cleda called as she stuffed a waffle in a napkin for the ride to school.

“The study room.” her mother answered. Cleda quickly retrieved it and ran back to her backpack. She slung it over her shoulder and started to run outside where her brother was. Cleda waved to Lana as she hopped onto the bus. Cleda breathed a sigh as the bus drove towards the school. She unwrapped the waffle and took many bites as she wrote her ideas out

for her contest model. Hannah sat still, focusing on every precise line on her new photo. Now it was coming together as the shape of a red-tailed hawk perched on a tree limb came into view.

Soon, the bus came to a stop at the school and they all ran off of the bus, unknowingly walking into a death trap.

Mrs. Krilie started to pass out the graded tests. She grimaced at another boy with a %72. Many slackers were in Cleda's class, and she won many awards on the weekly test scores. Always, she came in first, Benji in second, and Clara in third. Cleda looked happily down at her straight 100.

“Alright, let’s start a new topic.” Mrs. Krilie’s voice droned on. Cleda looked out the window. She saw a white van pull up to the school and many men wearing dark black hats jumped out of the back, holding crates. *The lunch people are delivering early today*, she thought. The men knocked on the door and walked inside quickly. Cleda looked back down at the worksheet she had lying in front of her. She quickly answered the questions and turned

in the paper. She looked back outside. The van was parked in the lot. *Normally they leave right away*, she thought. She pushed it aside and began to look at her design in her notebook. She began to add on some parts, bolts and screws here and there. She remembered a small bit of waffle and munched on it as she finished her book. She closed it and put it back in her bag, zipping it tightly.

“Alright, class. Please turn in the paper regardless if it is finished or not.” Mrs. Krilie said. “We will be doing an expir—” her sentence was cut short as all the light went out. Outside, the clouds covered and rain came pouring down. Scared murmurs went throughout the classroom. It was true. They were stuck in a Blackout.

..... Chapter 8

Cleda looked around her classroom, scared. Many faces looked worriedly around the room. Cleda bit down on her lip. The rain pattered around outside. Everyone sat in silence except for the few whispers that bounced around like a shout in the stillness.

Cleda walked up to Mrs. Krilie's desk.

“May I use the restroom?” she said. Mrs. Krilie nodded and tried to use the phone. Cleda walked out of the door.. In the hallway she looked into a 7th Grade classroom. All the students sat on the floor, their cellphones in their hands. Some watched downloaded videos, others tried to reach their parents, calling with no avail. One kid was watching

a war video. She went to the bathroom to wash her face. In a few moments, she heard a loud explosion. *Probably the video*, she thought. Walking out, she smelled smoke. Coming to her senses she began to run. When she saw the door to her classroom broken down, she knew she had to get away. She ran at top speed through the hallways. Smoke filled the air and she squinted to find her way. The thick wall of gray fumes blocked her vision but she found her way to the front doors. Opening the left door, a thought struck her. *What about her classmates and teacher?* She turned back and ran towards the nearest classroom. Looking into another room she saw a large fire burning the wooden desks into ashes. Blood covered the walls, making a landscape of fire. She turned around to a man pointing a gun at her.

Cleda woke with a start, sweating and terrified.
Was it all a *dream*?

Cleda went back to bed, her head still covered with sweat. She was breathing hard. Before she fell asleep, she thought about the vividness of the dream.

The next morning, she woke up to the smell of waffles.

..... Chapter 9

At first, Cleda thought it was a coincidence, until she saw that Lana was wearing the same polka dot blouse as in the dream. Cleda shook it off and started to help her sister prepare the waffles.

“I’ll get out the iron,” Cleda said and reached into the cabinet to get the large machine. She helped Lana pour the batter into the molds and press down. When they were halfway through the bowl of the thick substance, she started to cut strawberries and put them on a platter. Then, she mixed heavy cream and sugar together with some vanilla extract. After whipping the mixture, she got a nice, stiff whipped cream. She put it into a bowl and started to plate the waffles. By the time her mom had come down, the table was set and breakfast was ready. James came

down in a short while the moment he heard the word ‘waffle’.

“These are really, really good!” Cleda’s mother said, chewing on a piece. Cleda looked up, awestruck that her mother had said the same thing. Cleda nodded, slathering whipped cream and berries all over hers.

“Mom, where’s my pencil bag?” Cleda called as she stuffed a waffle in a napkin for the ride to school.

“The study room.” her mother answered. Cleda quickly retrieved it and ran back to her backpack. She slung it over her shoulder and started to run outside where her brother was. Cleda waved to Lana as she hopped onto the bus. Cleda breathed a sigh as the bus drove towards the school. She unwrapped the waffle and took many bites as she wrote her ideas out for her contest model. Hannah sat still, focusing on every precise line on her new photo. Now it was coming together as the shape of a red-tailed hawk perched on a tree limb came into view.

Soon, the bus came to a stop at the school and they all ran off of the bus, unknowingly walking into a death trap.

Mrs. Krilie started to pass out the graded tests. Color drained from Cleda's face as she saw a %100 on her paper.

“Alright, let’s start a new topic.” Mrs. Krilie’s voice droned on. Cleda looked out the window. She saw the white van pull up to the school and many men wearing dark black hats jumped out of the back, holding crates. *The lunch people are delivering early today*, she thought, not paying regard to the dream any longer. The men knocked on the door and ran into the building.

“Alright, class. Please turn in the paper regardless if it is finished or not.” Mrs. Krilie said. “We will be doing an expir—” her sentence was cut off as all the lights went out. Cleda started to shake. This was just like in her dream. Would everything happen just the same? Rain poured down. Murmurs went throughout the classroom. It was true. This time, she was truly stuck in a Blackout.

Cleda quickly thought, but she knew she would only get through if she did things the same. Quickly, she got up and ran to Mrs. Krilie's desk.

"May I use the restroom?" she asked. Mrs. Krilie nodded and Cleda ran out of the room. Running down the hall, she saw the students once again, watching the video. She started to run through the hallways, and sure enough, smoke filled the air. She rushed until she saw the door with smoke billowing from underneath. She quickly opened the door and saw the fiery mess, just like in the dream. Quickly, she turned around. Stealthy, she peeked around the corner. A man with a dark mask over his head and a gun in his hand was strutting in the hallway. Cleda fell back against the wall and thought. Then, she started to run. She ran out into the hallway. She kicked up and hit the man's chin, sending him onto the ground. Cleda started to uncover his mask, stomping on his stomach every time he came to.

"Wolf, get over to the D Mod now. Sheriff is gone." a voice blared from the radio. Cleda jumped up and quickly took a photo of the unmasked man.

She then ran back to her classroom. Cleda saw nothing but a man in a black suit, looking around the room. She quickly crept away and ran to her engineering club room. On the table was a huge, sharp toothed claw. On the back was the name: Trudy.

“I owe you, Trudy.” she said as she heaved the claw and its twin model off the table. Holding the wood in hand, she went back into the hallway. The man was walking in front of her. She quickly looked around and saw that the coast was clear before jumping on the back of the man and clawing his throat. The man fell to the ground in a faint. Cleda removed the mask and took a photo of the face. Then, she ran off to get another. Cleda neared her homeroom, but didn’t go a step further when she saw the fire, creeping out to the hallway. Cleda looked at the photos on her phone. There was something tattooed on the second man’s face. Zooming in, she read: لَقْدْ وَلَدْتْ لَا قُتْلْ. Cleda went to translate and copied the symbols. What she read shocked her. It said: *I was born to kill*. Cleda shut off her phone and

picked up the walkie talkie. Strapping it to her belt, she ran to the cafeteria. Cleda slowed when she heard low voices. She crept to the wooden doors and peeked out. 5 men were standing in the middle of the room. Cleda could overhear their conversation.

“Blade, you look for the guy who got Sheriff and Needle, look for the person who got Wolf.” a tall, towering man said as two men nodded.

“Yes, Bear.” they said in unison.

“Mirror and Hood, you guys’ll be helpin’ me get the gold.”

“Yep, we got this in our hands, Bear.” the other two said.

“And we’ve still got Snoop on the inside,” said Hood. *An inside man? They thought of everything,* Cleda thought. As the men walked out through the back door, Cleda ran into the cafeteria. A small note had fallen out of Bear’s pocket. Cleda fell to her knees and skidded to pick it up. It was a small clip of the Daily Magazine that was always in the grocery store. It said: *Academy for Engineering and Design holds the new Golden State Trophy.* Cleda shook her

head. She got up and started to run where Bear, Hood, and Mirror had gone. Finally, she caught up with them. They were talking to a man. Cleda somehow felt like she knew him, and more when she heard them talking.

“Snoop, I can’t believe you would drag us into this mess without the prize. We can’t find it anywhere.” Bear was saying. *Snoop is Mr. Truso?* Cleda thought. Carefully waiting until they were gone, she sneaked to the front desk and dialed 911. In a moment, the call was picked up.

“911 emergency, how can I help you?” the voice said.

“My school is being ransacked and burnt for a trophy!” she said, shakily. The other line replied.

“Please, stay calm and tell me your school’s name.” she said. Cleda breathed hard.

“Academy for Engineering and Design.” she breathed out. A sweet odor came from the halls, and now, creeping forward, was a thick, green, smoke. Fainting fumes, she thought as she became drowsy. All of a sudden, a bomb exploded in the cafeteria,

sending pieces of cracked marble into her arms and legs. Before she could stand up again, she had passed out.

..... Chapter 10

When Cleda woke up, she was bound and gagged. She worked ruthlessly to untie the bonds that held her. She finally loosened the rope on her hands and undid the rope that held her ankles. When she got up she bolted out the door. At that moment, she knew her duty. She took off running, not noticing that her cuts were bleeding everywhere. She just kept on running, helping the classrooms each get outside to safety. But when she came to her classroom, it was ablaze. A bomb had gone off, and a message scratched on the wall. Cleda walked over to get a closer look, but stopped halfway. On the ground was the body of Mrs. Krilie.

Cleda stepped over her and ran to the wall. It said: You were a great student, cleda. I know it will be you to find this, so I want you to know you can still save your school.

Cleda looked at the sign, and she knew she would do it. She could save her school. Cleda ran to the fire extinguisher and started to blow out the flames that covered the room. Then, she ran off to the trophy.

She knew that there was a secret place for it, in the janitor's room. Cleda picked up the heavy block of metal and heaved it out of the glass window. She slowly walked out of the secret room. Holding it tightly, she began to walk to the main entrance. Suddenly, Bear stepped in front of her.

“You didn’t think we’d let you walk outta here with *our* prize, did ya?” he said. Cleda gripped it.

“You won’t get it!” she yelled and began to run out. Bear and his sidekicks looked at each other. They snickered and began to run after her.

Cleda could hear the sirens blasting outside. She could feel the thump of Bear and his mens shoes as they gained on her. Cleda could feel her strength

dying, but she pushed on, diving in and out of hallways. Finally, she had shaked them off her tail and she went to rest in one of the rooms. Outside, police and ambulances started to arrive. Cleda, still holding the trophy, ran outside. Handing it to a cop and taking his walkie talkie, she ran back into the building.

“I’m Cleda.” she said into the walkie talkie as another voice asked her.

“Well, based on the pictures you sent us, you shouldn’t be inside of that building right now.” the officer said. Cleda kept running until she reached Mrs. Krilie’s room. Inside, the group of masked men were tying the unconscious Mrs. Krilie and the rest of her class to chairs. Benji looked wide eyed at Cleda in the doorway.

“Shh!” she said and ducked from sight. Forming a plan in her head, she ran off to the bathroom. In that classroom, the people were tied up too. Cleda motioned to one girl and started to creep into the room. She quickly untied her and then left. The

other girl went about the room, untying the others. Cleda whispered into the radio.

“The men have hostages!” she said quietly. “Almost every classroom.” she added. She crept through the halls, checking every room. In one, she saw a small canister lying on the floor. She walked in and picked it up. It was marked: GAS, and was unopened. Cleda tucked it in her pocket. All the rooms were saved, except the one that had been burnt: Mr. Truso’s classroom. Cleda quickly ran to the principal’s office. Inside, all the people were on the floor, victims of the deadly fumes used on all the people in the school.

Cleda began to inch towards Mrs. Krilie’s classroom once again. Inside, all the men were grouped up, discussing their predicament.

“We could just start shootin’ them until they hand it over.” Hood suggested.

“Naw, then we’ll be in even more trouble if we’re caught.” Bear said.

Cleda was now right outside, in the next room. Before she could get out of there, Mirror came through the hallway carrying a bag of doritos.

“Hey guys, look what I found in the Cafeteria!” he said, opening it up and crunching on one of the chips. Bear knocked it out of his hands and let it spill on the floor. Mirror looked at him with distaste.

“This was all your idea anyways. Why do I have to listen to you!” Mirror retorted. Bear growled. As the two quarreled, Cleda thumped her feet and scurried to the next room.

“What was that?” Bear said. The trio walked out of the room and into the next. Cleda opened the canister and threw it into the room. The three men fell into a faint. Quickly, Cleda untied all the people, and one by one they all went to go and untie others.

“I’ll stay here.” Cleda said. Mrs. Krilie nodded.

“Thank you, Cleda, for having the courage,” she said and walked out. Cleda slightly smiled. She pressed the *PTS* button and spoke into the walkin talkie.

“I freed the hostages, but there are 7 men that need to be taken care of.” Cleda said.

“Great Work, Lass!” the officer said. Cleda heard cheering over the radio.

.... Chapter 11

“We would all like to reward Miss Cleda Bethers for her outstanding actions during the time of an immense Blackout. We present to you The New Cleda Bethers Award!” the principal said, handing Cleda a medal. Cleda smiled happier than ever before.

Z