

Let a Smiley Face Be Your Umbrella

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book

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Part Five of a Five-Part Story
Written by J.F. Blane • Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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Editor's note:

Charly's adventures span five parts in a leveled book format. Each part of the series can be read on its own, but Reading A–Z encourages using the across-text connections in the five-part series. This is part five.

CHARLY SERIES

1. Charly Did It
2. Charly's New Year's Revolution
3. Charly Dances 'til It Drops
4. Raining Cats, Dogs, and Other Animals
5. Let a Smiley Face Be Your Umbrella

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In Part Four, Charly's experiments resulted in an out-of-control dog, cat, raccoon, and squirrel chase. But at least now it was raining on Charly's garden in Brewster Hill Park.

When Gattie (my Great Aunt Tess) wants to tell me to be careful about doing something I really want to do that I know I shouldn't do, she says, "**Curiosity** killed the cat." Luckily for me, I'm not a cat, but a ten-year-old girl with a boy's nickname, Charly. Anyway, if I were a cat, I definitely would have been killed a couple of times over after what I did in the last few months.



First off, I dug up Mr. Head-of-the-Parks-Department Rooney's flowerbeds in Brewster Hill Park so I could sow my wild oats. Secondly, I made it rain on my town's spring parade, ruining it for all the kids who were marching and all the adults who were watching. The third thing is that I messed up my Great Aunt Tess's Scrabble party. I wasn't totally **responsible** because a bunch of wild raccoons, squirrels, and some stray cats did the messing-up part. I just did the letting-them-into-the-house part.



You see, I was trying to find out what a cat—not raccoons or squirrels—drags in, as when someone says, “Look what the cat dragged in.” Now I know that cats drag in raccoons and squirrels, which I also learned are called wild animals for a reason! Did you know that their claws could rip apart sofa cushions, pillows, and even wall-to-wall carpeting?

Before I found out what else they could rip apart, my Labrador retriever, Murray, chased all the **critters** out of the house. He chased them down the street, across the field where kids were playing pick-up baseball, and into Brewster Hill Park.

I know this was the **route** because I followed the chase on my bike. And it was a good thing I was on a bike. Ethan Jordan and his pack of dried-off-but-still-angry kids were heading right toward my house! I think you already know with whom they were angry.



Ethan and his mob caught up with me and the chase just as Murray was about to run into, of all places, my garden—my finally-rained-on and nicely growing garden of watermelons, apples, and oats. They couldn’t stay away from the garden I planted as a New Year’s resolution to create something beautiful that would put a smile on everyone’s face. The garden that if it wouldn’t put a smile on everyone’s face, my Aunt Dee would have to repay Mr. Rooney for two flowerbeds and a new playground with a plaque—with his name on it.

Murray ran into my garden. A cat ran out. Murray ran in again. Two raccoons ran out. Murray ran in once more. Three squirrels ran out, followed by four chipmunks, five baby rabbits, and a groundhog. *Where did they come from?* I didn't really care, because Murray chased them away from my garden. *Whew! Maybe they didn't damage it too much.*

Uh-oh. I may have 'whewed' too soon. Now all the animals were running into Mr. Rooney's newly planted flowerbeds! (The ones he planted to replace the ones I sowed with oats.)



The animals zigged through the flowerbeds. Murray zigged after them. The animals zagged through the flowerbeds. Murray zagged after them. Zigzag, zigzag, zigzag. After awhile, I couldn't tell a zig from a zag! What's worse, the animals circled back to my garden. This time they **trampled** it. Around and around and around they went.

"Stop, Murray!" I cried.

"Ha, ha, your stupid garden is ruined," said Ethan Jordan. "And so is Rooney's. And it's your fault. When he finds out—"

At that moment, Mr. Rooney showed up carrying a large rose bush. "What's going on here?" he cried.

He got his answer right away. Five baby rabbits **scooted** out of my garden and ran right through Mr. Rooney's legs. Four chipmunks, three squirrels, two raccoons, and a cat followed.

"What the . . . ?" said Mr. Rooney each time another animal ran through his legs.

But when Murray, who has trouble fitting his 100 pounds of slobbering dogginess into the back of our van, went barreling through Mr. Rooney's legs, all he could say was, "Whoops!"



Up flew Mr. Rooney. Up flew the rose bush. Fortunately, the rose bush landed one moment before Mr. Rooney, so it helped cushion his fall. Unfortunately, rose bushes are covered with thorns.

"Yee-ouch!" cried Mr. Rooney.

"Ha, ha," said Ethan Jordan.

"Ha, ha," said Ethan's mob.

I was just about to give Ethan what he deserves when that stray cat who started this whole fiasco jumped up to avoid Murray's chomping jaws—and landed right on Ethan's head.

"What the . . . ?" cried Ethan. "This crazy cat is tap dancing on my head."

Personally, I thought it was more of a Can-Can.



"I'd say she's doing the Macarena," my Aunt Dee piped in. Aunt Dee must have been out for a jog and stopped to see what the **commotion** was all about. Dee took the cat off Ethan's head, helped Mr. Rooney get up, and silenced Ethan's pack of laughing hyenas with one squinty-eyed look. Murray must have seen that look, too, because he immediately stopped barking and sat at Aunt Dee's feet, whimpering softly. The look didn't seem to work on Mr. Rooney.

"You," he said to me, "are a **menace** to this park. Look what you've done to my flowerbeds. I ought to ban you from this park."



"You can't do that," said Aunt Dee.

"I can!" said Mr. Rooney. "I'm in charge of the Parks Department."

"Ha, ha," said Ethan Jordan, but very quietly.

"Grr," said Murray, not so quietly.

"But then I won't be able to take care of my garden, and you will win the bet unfairly!" I said. "You wouldn't do that."

Mr. Rooney looked at me, and then he looked at my trampled garden and smiled. "You're right, young lady, I wouldn't do that. I don't need to do that. For the next 30 days, you can still use the park, but **ONLY** to care for your garden. After that, we will have the official opening and judging. We'll see whose garden puts a smile on people's faces. And Miss," he said to Aunt Dee, "for that new playground with my name on it? I spell 'Rooney' with an e-y."



I spent the next 30 days tending my garden. I watered it, weeded it, and read articles to it about realizing its potential from beauty parlor magazines. My hard work paid off, too, because my garden looked “fabulicious,” which, according to one of those magazines, meant fabulous and delicious at the same time. The places Murray and the animals trampled were still bare. But on judging day, I thought my garden looked “magtastic,” which is a word I made up that means magnificent and fantastic. It definitely put a smile on my face.

What would everyone else think?

It seemed as if half the town came to judge my garden. The problem was it seemed like it was the half that was still mad at me. Mr. Rooney and the Parks Department people were there, of course. Ethan and his crew, and Gattie’s Scrabble friends came, too. Even my doctor, Dr. Green, and his staff showed up.

First, everyone walked through Mr. Rooney’s flowerbeds, admiring the South African Something-or-others and the New Zealand Whatcha-ma-callits. They *ooohed* and *ahhed*, and complimented Mr. Rooney on the clever way he laid out the paths.

“The sharp angles of the walkway are an ideal way to appreciate the **contrasts** of the flowers and range of colors,” said one of Gattie’s Scrabble friends.

“But I didn’t . . .” Mr. Rooney started to say. “In fact, I . . .” Then he looked at me, and at Murray. Then he said, “Thank you for noticing. I thought about that pattern for a long time before I decided on it.”

Thank you? Murray and the animals had created the zigzag path through the flowerbeds during their chase!

Then everyone turned his or her attention to my garden. The watermelon seeds and apple pits had sprouted into green shoots; buds and tiny yellow flowers had bloomed on some of them. Most impressive, though, was the field of wild oats.

"It's just a bunch of overgrown grass," said Ethan. "I'm glad I don't have to mow it."

"Ha, ha," said his pals, who were now officially all tied for my second-worst enemy.

"But look at the colors: browns, yellows, and greens," said my Dad. "I think it's beautiful."



"It is enjoyable in an **uncultivated** way, I guess," said Gattie's Scrabble friend. "Ah-choo! As long as you don't have hayfever."

Sneezes and coughs rose up from the crowd. *Now* what did I do?

"Any other comments before the final judging?" asked Mr. Rooney.

Here it came, do or die. I had tried my best to make something beautiful that put a smile on people's faces.

"Wait!" said Aunt Dee. "Everyone step back ten yards. Now look at Charly's garden. What do you see?"

"A bunch of grass that needs to be cut," said Ethan.

"The need to stock up on allergy medication," said Dr. Green.

"The future home of the Rooneyland playground," said Mr. Rooney.

“Doesn’t anybody else see a face in the garden?” asked Aunt Dee.

“Woof,” answered Murray.

“Meow,” answered the stray cat that had caused all the commotion.

I looked at my garden again. Then I saw what Aunt Dee saw! The circular path where Murray chased the animals around and around was the head. Two dark spots where animals dug holes were the eyes. The small half-circle where the animals ran in and out of the garden was the mouth.



“Now that you mention it, I do see a face, and it’s smiling,” said Gattie’s friend. “It’s quite charming! What a lovely way to welcome spring. Congratulations to the artist.”

For the next 20 seconds, which felt like 20 years, everyone “hmmmed” while looking at my garden. They stroked their chins in thought. They “hmmmed” some more. Then everyone, not counting Mr. Rooney, started to applaud! And most importantly, they were all smiling!

“Thank you, but it was a team effort,” I said, beaming the biggest smile of everyone.

“Woof,” said Murray.

“Meow,” said the kitty.

“You’re still weird, Charly,” said Ethan. “But I have to admit, you really did it this time.” Then he, too, smiled and stuck out his hand for me to shake. I guess my number one enemy spot is now open.

Winning felt fabulous! But building a new playground at the park would make summer so much more interesting. So I talked to Aunt Dee.

It would be a magtastic summer!



Glossary

commotion (<i>n.</i>)	noisy activity (p. 11)
contrasts (<i>n.</i>)	differences (p. 14)
critters (<i>n.</i>)	living things, usually small animals (p. 5)
curiosity (<i>n.</i>)	an interest in knowing or learning something (p. 3)
fiasco (<i>n.</i>)	a ridiculous situation (p. 10)
menace (<i>n.</i>)	someone who is always causing trouble (p. 11)
responsible (<i>adj.</i>)	able to be trusted or depended on (p. 4)
route (<i>n.</i>)	a path from one place to another (p. 5)
scooted (<i>v.</i>)	to have moved quickly (p. 8)
trampled (<i>v.</i>)	to have walked heavily and caused damage (p. 8)
uncultivated (<i>adj.</i>)	not polished or prepared to a particular standard (p. 16)