

Emily's Rumbling Stomach

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L unchtime was near. Emily sat at her desk, doodling on her math sheet. She was about to answer one more subtraction problem when her stomach began to churn.

"Yi, yi, yi," Emily groaned, placing her hand on her belly. "Not this again."

From under the desk came the most amazing noises. RRRRRR! MMMMM! RRRRRRR!

The sounds filled the quiet classroom. Emily sank in her seat. She blushed to her toes. She knew what would come next—the giggles and snickers. This was the worst part. Every time her stomach sounded off in class, the giggles and snickers of her classmates soon followed.

First Roger, who sat behind her, giggled. Then the girls on both sides of

her snickered. Quiet laughter came from all over the classroom.

Meanwhile, the teacher sat at her desk grading papers. Now she turned to check the clock above the blackboard. "Lunchtime, class," she called out. "Make a straight line at the door."

Emily, one hand still clamped on her belly, slipped to the end of the zigzag line that formed at the door.

"Why, oh why, oh why?" she kept saying. "Why does my stomach make that embarrassing racket?"

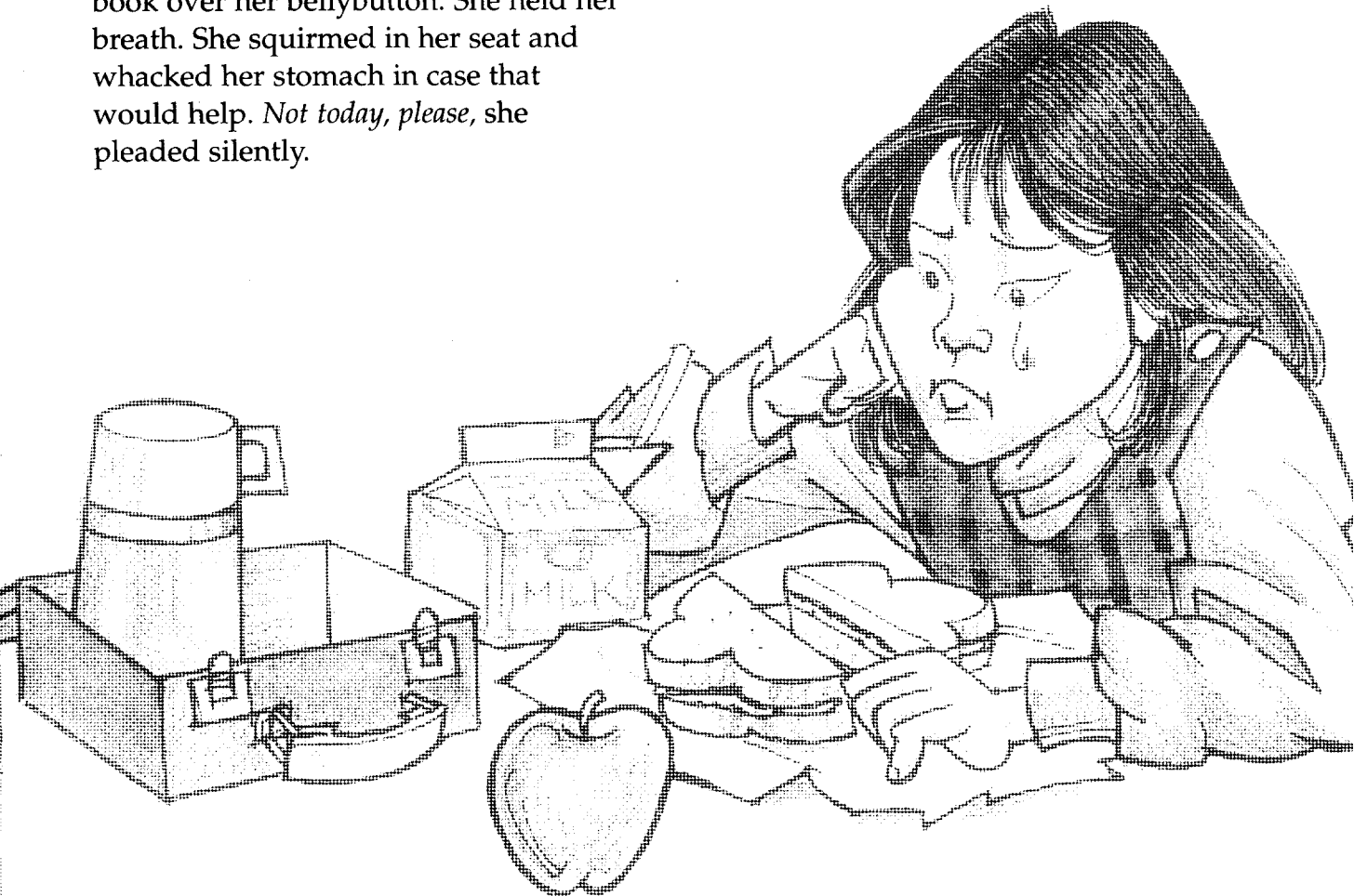
The next day was the same. Minutes before lunchtime, Emily's stomach spoke up again. She placed her math book over her bellybutton. She held her breath. She squirmed in her seat and whacked her stomach in case that would help. *Not today, please*, she pleaded silently.

But the wild eruption came anyway. *RRRRRRR! GURGLE! GURGLE! RRRRRRRR!*

"Lunchtime, class!" the teacher announced shortly afterward.

That day in the lunchroom Emily sat alone. Every so often a tear oozed from her eye, rolled off her cheek and popped onto her peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

"I'm going to run away from school and live with bears," she muttered. "Then my stomach can growl all it wants to. Bears would never laugh at me."



Emily took a bite from her soggy sandwich. She chewed as though she meant business. But when she swallowed, she made a remarkable discovery.

"My belly stopped rumbling," she told herself. "As soon as I ate something, it got quiet. Maybe my stomach only growls when it's empty. Maybe if I keep it full, it will never embarrass me again."

So Emily made a plan. The next day she showed up at school with her pockets stuffed with soda crackers.

Lunchtime approached. Emily was doodling on her math sheet when she

felt hungry. Quickly she reached into her pocket. In one swift motion she stuffed two soda crackers into her mouth. She chewed and chewed. After swallowing, she checked the time. It was twelve o'clock—lunchtime—and not a sound came from her stomach. Those crackers had done their job. Emily smiled contentedly and went back to work.

Yet something was wrong. At five minutes past noon, the teacher still sat at her desk grading papers. Emily found the entire class staring at her.

Two minutes later she heard Roger whisper, "Emily, what's wrong? What



happened to the lunch alarm?"

Emily was baffled. She could only shrug.

Finally, at quarter past lunchtime, the teacher glanced at the clock. "My, we're late for lunch, aren't we?" she said.

"Let's make a straight line at the door."

Whoosh! There was a stampede toward the door, and the usual crooked line formed. Emily stood in front of Roger.

"Man-oh-man! I'm starved!" Roger said in her ear. "I thought she'd never dismiss us. What's wrong with your stomach, Emily?"

"Huh?" was all Emily could say.

"What happened to the lunch alarm? You know, the way your stomach makes those noises right before lunch."

Emily scowled. "Yeah, you guys think it's a big joke."

"Are you kidding?" said Roger. "Your stomach is the only thing that reminds the teacher it's lunchtime. She only checks the clock when your stomach sounds off. That's what cracks us up."

Emily placed a hand on her belly. She looked at her cracker-filled pockets. "Well, what do you know?" she muttered as the hungry line marched out the door.

