

Leila, Chirpy and the Story-Writing Competition

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PM

Contents

Chapter 1	Butterflies	5
Chapter 2	An Empty Head	10
Chapter 3	Escape	15
Chapter 4	Gotcha!	22
Chapter 5	Chirpy the Entertainer	29
Chapter 6	Now That's an Idea!	36
Chapter 7	The Long Wait	41

Chapter 1

Butterflies

It was Monday morning. Leila was upstairs in her bedroom, getting ready for school. She made her bed and put her piano music into her backpack. Then she ran downstairs and skipped excitedly into the kitchen.

Her brother, Akeem, and her little sister, Maryam, were already sitting at the table eating their breakfast. Mum was at the bench, making their lunches for school and for work. Chirpy, the family's cheeky green parrot, was flying in and out of the kitchen through the door that led to his aviary.



"I can't wait to get to school!" Leila told everyone. "Today, Ms Layton is going to tell our class how to enter our school's new story-writing competition."

"That sounds exciting," said Mum.

"It is!" said Leila, who loved writing stories. "I'm so excited about the competition, I have butterflies in my stomach!"

"Chirpy's excited, too," said Akeem, as Chirpy let out a loud screech.

Chirpy flew around and around the kitchen and landed on Akeem's shoulder.

"Good morning, Chirpy," said Akeem.

"Good morning! Good morning!" shrieked Chirpy.

"Clever Chirpy!" giggled Maryam.

Mum put a little dish of chopped fruit and vegetables on the window ledge. "Here's your breakfast, Chirpy," she said, as Chirpy flew over to eat it.



“Don’t forget to eat *your* breakfast, Leila,” said Mum, putting some warm bread on Leila’s plate.

But Leila felt too excited to eat. All she could think about was the story-writing competition, and what the rules might be.

“Whose turn is it to fill Chirpy’s water dish?” asked Mum, looking into Chirpy’s aviary.

“Mine,” said Akeem.

“Hurry up, then,” said Mum. “And fill it right to the top. It’s going to be a very hot day.”

Mum looked at Leila. “Make sure you check that Akeem has closed the door to the aviary when he’s finished in there,” she said.

Leila sighed. She was the oldest child in the family, so it was her job to check that Chirpy was safely locked in his aviary every morning.

“I won’t forget,” she told Mum.

After breakfast, Akeem went into the aviary to fill Chirpy’s water dish. Chirpy followed closely behind him.

Leila went upstairs to get her backpack and clean her teeth, but she was still so excited about the story-writing competition that she forgot to put toothpaste on her brush!

“Hurry up, Leila!” called Mum from downstairs.

“It’s time to leave for school. We’re waiting for you.”

Leila rushed downstairs and out to the car.

She wished the butterflies would stop fluttering in her stomach.

Chapter 2

An Empty Head

Leila and Akeem hopped out of the car at the school gate.

“Don’t forget about your piano lesson with Ms Ho after school,” said Mum to Leila. “She’ll bring you home as usual when it’s over.”

“I won’t,” said Leila, as she waved goodbye to Mum.

Leila ran all the way to her classroom, and slid into her seat between her best friends, Alissa and Jessa. Ms Layton was standing at the front of the room.

“Good morning, everyone,” Ms Layton said. “I hope you all had an enjoyable weekend, and that you’re feeling full of fresh ideas to use in our story-writing competition.”

Leila’s heart went thump, thump, thump. It was so loud, she glanced sideways at Alissa and Jessa to see if they could hear it, but they were looking straight ahead at Ms Layton.

“The reason we’re having the competition,” said Ms Layton, “is because a past pupil of the school, who is now an author, suggested it. His name is Mr Wagner, and he’s donated book vouchers for the prizes.”

