

# ELIZABELLA

## and the Great Tuckshop Takeover

Sometimes  
you've gotta  
bend the  
rules to  
straighten  
things out!



Zoë Norton Lodge  
Georgia Norton Lodge

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and the

## Great Tuckshop Takeover



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★ with illustrations by ★

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For Rufus



# Chapter One



It was a hot and windy Bilby Creek day. The kind of day where both your hands are in constant use, one to wipe the sweat off your forehead and the other to pull your school dress down so it doesn't fly up in your face. That is if you are wearing the school dress, which Elizabella definitely wasn't. Because she *hated* the school dress. And also because it was Sunday.

But it hadn't *always* been Sunday that day.

That morning Elizabella had woken up tired,

her eyes stuck together with sticky, yellow sleep. She'd prised them open with her fingers and gone to look in the mirror.

Elizabella had brown eyes and brown freckles on her face and in her brown hair she had a giant knot that she teased every day to make it a little bit bigger. She was ten and a half and in Year Four at Bilby Creek Primary School.

*Bleuueueueueugh*, she thought. *I don't want to go to school today.*

This was unusual for Elizabella who actually liked school, even though she often found herself in the Think About What You've Done Corner. Elizabella huffed and sighed as she pulled off her pyjamas, got herself dressed in her school shorts and T-shirt and packed all her things in her backpack. Then she lumbered out to the kitchen with all the enthusiasm of a slug. She expected to find her dad out there packing her lunch, but the lights were off.

*Weird...*

She went to her dad's bedroom and knocked on the door.

“Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad!” she said, knocking over and over with increasing volume.

He threw off the sheet and jumped out of bed, suspecting there might be a burglar. Elizabetha’s dad’s name was Martin. He had dark, knotty hair, much like Elizabetha’s.

“What is it? Are you okay?” he asked.

“No!” cried Elizabetha, petulantly. “I don’t want to go to school today.”

“Well, that’s good,” said Martin, a smile coming over his face as his heart stopped racing. “It’s Sunday.”

These were the two sweetest words Elizabetha had ever heard in her whole life. And suddenly, like a blossom in the springtime, she started to fill with life.

“It’s Sunday!” she yelled as she ripped off her school uniform so quickly it may as well have been on fire.

“It’s Sunday!” she shouted to Minnie down the phone.

“It’s not *just* Sunday,” Minnie replied. “It’s also the last day of the school holidays!”

“Aaaahhhhhh!” Elizabetha screamed at this second

revelation. “We can’t waste it!”

Minnie had moved all the way from Beijing and had enrolled in Bilby Creek Primary School last term. Minnie was as tall as a tall teacher and her hair was as long as a whole Kindy kid. Elizabella and Minnie were very ambitious and they were always plotting and scheming. But they were *both* natural-born leaders and, unfortunately, most situations only require one of those. After a rocky start, Elizabella and Minnie had ultimately decided that they were better as a team and they had been inseparable for the whole holidays. They’d climbed trees in the park, gone tenpin bowling at the Bilby Creek Bananas Bowling Bonanza and watched new couples on dates through the window of L’Escargots Bilby, inventing the conversations they were having.

Elizabella had invited Minnie over to her house. She’d shown her all the half-finished projects on the front porch like the toilet roll telescope-to-be and the old TV fish-tank-in-progress and she’d introduced her to all the worms in Squiggly Manor and Larry the Frillneck Lizard. Minnie even helped her

build a cage on the roof for Larry to escape to when he needed some Me-Time. Elizabetha hadn't been able to introduce Minnie to her big brother Toddberry, because he was always at the Bilby Creek Swimming Pool where he had recently got a job.

That summer their dad had noticed that Toddberry spent so little time outside he was actually turning see-through, so Martin organised for him to start working at the pool. Toddberry wasn't thrilled about having to spend his summer in the sunshine when he'd much rather have been in a dark room finishing his favourite video game, *Fierce Frogs IV*, but he did like the idea of earning his own money so he could buy *Fierce Frogs V* when it was released. Part of his job was to help shut the pool down at the end of the day. Elizabetha had watched him do it once and as he pulled the huge silvery foil cover over the pool, and turned out the big fluorescent lights, Elizabetha thought it looked like Toddberry was tucking the pool into bed for the night, like a giant, wet baby.

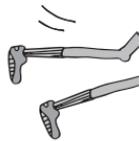
Now, in the park on this hot and windy last day of

the school holidays, Elizabella and Minnie were having a competition to see who could launch themselves the furthest from the swings. Minnie had gone first and was now sitting on the ground, marking the spot where she had landed, an impressive distance away. Now it was Elizabella's turn. She lurched forwards, making the swing fly onwards and upwards, then when she was basically parallel to the ground, high in the air, she kicked until she swung all the way back. When she came forwards again even higher than before, she let go of the swing's chains and flew through the air.

"I'm the best penguin!" Elizabella cried as she sailed through the sky. She landed on the ground, quite short of where Minnie was sitting. Minnie had just jumped off the swing herself, and remained on the ground where she landed, so that they could tell who went the furthest.

"Penguins can't fly, Elizabella," said Minnie.

"I know, silly!" said Elizabella.



“Not *normally*, that’s why I’m the *best* penguin. Duh!”

“Hmmp,” said Minnie, folding her arms. “I won by at least a metre.”

Elizabella looked at the gap between where she’d landed and where Minnie was. She couldn’t argue with that.

“*Of course* you won by a metre,” Elizabella said. “Your legs are about a metre longer than mine.”

“A bad worker always blames her tools,” Minnie said.

“My *legs* are *tools*?”

“In this situation, yes. Besides, you’re lighter than me, so you should fly through the air like a feather.”

“Think about trying to throw a feather, Minnie.” Elizabella picked up an imaginary feather from the ground. Then she pretended to drop it and as she did she watched the imaginary feather fall to the ground, commentating as she went to make her point. “A feather goes slowly, back and forth, wavy and lazy, until it hits the ground not very far from where it was thrown.”

“Fine,” said Minnie. “You’re more like a galah with

feathers *attached* to it, so you should soar through the air.”

“Hmmm,” said Elizabetha. “If that’s the case then you’re an emu with your long legs. And given emus can’t fly at all, *considering* that, I guess you did a pretty good job.”

“Thank you,” said Minnie, satisfied with this conclusion.

“You’re welcome,” said Elizabetha. Even though she’d definitely lost this competition, she was happy to be a galah.

A few minutes later, they were sitting on one of the park benches having a brainstorm. All holidays they’d been thinking about what exciting plan they could execute on the first day back at school.

“We could invent a new language!” Elizabetha suggested.

Minnie pondered the notion. “Yes ... a new language would be very handy indeed. We could talk freely anywhere about plans and schemes without fear of having them sabotaged or stolen ...”

“Yes!” said Elizabetha. “And then one day we could

write an Elizinnie to English dictionary and make a fortune.”

“Hmmm ... I think Minbella might be a better name for the language than Elizinnie. And yes, a Minbella to English dictionary is a great idea.”

Elizabella considered her, one eye squinted. “We can decide on the name later,” she said. “Besides, I don’t think we can invent the whole language by tomorrow. We’ll have to think of something else to kick off the term.”

“Well,” said Minnie, “I *have* been thinking about a dog grooming service. But one where the dogs groom people rather than the other way around.”

“Cool!” said Elizabella. “So all we have to do is to teach the dogs of Bilby Creek how to style hair with their paws, make some business cards and we’re in business!”

“Should be simple enough,” said Minnie. At that moment they saw two German shepherds covered in a sticky, pink mess. It seemed the lucky dogs had stumbled on a family of four’s recent ice cream disaster and were eating the abandoned treats.

They licked and slobbered and were most uncoordinated, sometimes missing the ice cream altogether and licking the grass instead.



“On second thought, it might actually be easier to finish Elizinnie by tomorrow than to teach all the dogs in Bilby Creek how to style hair by tomorrow ...” said Elizabella.

“Minbella ... but you’re right.”

They watched the dogs and thought.

“How about a puppet show?” Elizabella offered.

“I’m listening,” replied Minnie.

“All you need to make puppets is a mouth and something that looks like eyes. The rest can all be

imagination. So we should think of something in the school that could become a mouth.”

They pondered this for a moment.

“The bins,” said Minnie. “We could stand behind two bins and use the handles to lift them up and down like mouths.”

“Yes!” said Elizabella. “And we could wheel them around the playground to make them walk.”

“And for eyes we can use paper plates from the tuckshop.”

“With doughnuts stuck to them for pupils!”

“Perfect.”

“Freddy! Teddy!” The owner of the two German Shepherds ran over. He’d gone to the bubblers and obviously hadn’t realised that his dogs were having dessert.

“What have I told you about eating ice cream?”

The dogs kept licking up the sticky, melting mess.

“You can only have ice cream on your birthdays!”

Elizabella and Minnie laughed.