

GREEN PEAS RULE 1

THE FIRST RULE OF GREEN
PEAS IS SHHHHHH!



I try to hide my nerves as our sports teacher, Ms Mezher, explains how Cross Country Day is going to work.

‘And next Friday, Years Five and Six will meet in their assigned groups on the bottom oval at . . .’

I hold my breath and close my eyes. Here it comes . . .

Beep beep. Beep beep.

Ms Mezher stops for a moment and scans the school assembly. I keep my eyes fixed on the

maths folder on my lap. That's only the first alarm clock. It's stuck to the bottom of a seat over near where Year Three sits. It's the little black clock with the red numbers. The first few I set to go off are the quieter ones: they'll build up slowly with one going off every minute until the grand finale under Mrs Keiren's butt.

Ms Mezher tries to ignore it, probably assuming some kid forgot to put their phone on silent, and continues with her weekly sports news.

'Um, at the beginning of lunch so that we can make sure . . .'

Beep beep. Beep beep.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

Some kids are starting to notice and look around. Teachers as well. I can't look too interested yet. The next one will go off under the seat just two rows in front of me – then I can pay attention. For now, I focus on my maths folder. My name is spelt out with stickers on the front and I pick at the 'W'. It was already partially coming off and I keep

picking until it breaks in half so my name now reads ‘Casey Vu’ instead of ‘Casey Wu’.

Ms Mezher is trying her best to stay on track.

‘Er, make sure that everyone is checked off before we . . .’

Beep beep. Beep beep.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

Merp. Merp. Merp.

That’s the one. The one two rows in front of me, under Amelie Berger’s seat. She jumps into the air a little, looking around her. This alarm clock’s louder than the first two. The kids near me start to giggle. Teachers stand up. I can pay attention now without looking suspicious.

Merp. Merp. Merp.

It’s a pretty horrible sound – I can’t imagine anyone wanting to wake up to that. Everyone’s paying attention now. Ms Mezher has given up on her speech and is looking to the teachers on stage

for help. A murmur spreads through the assembly. Heads turn left and right, confused. I join in, looking around. But I'm not confused. I know the next one will be in the Year Five section. And it'll be a good one.

I spent a lot of time planning this event. I tested all the alarm clocks and put them in order from quietest and most subtle to loudest and most obnoxious. Obnoxious is a great word. It sounds like some kind of disease and it has an 'X' in it. 'X' words always sound like they are attacking something.

I sat in assembly for weeks, secretly mapping out the chairs in my notebook and marking where everybody sits. Then I plotted where each alarm clock would go. I did test runs at home – syncing the clocks and setting them a minute apart. I laid them out in order on my bedroom floor, listened to them go off and adjusted everything for the right effect. All with Grandpa downstairs, happily watching his shows with closed captions on, no idea what I was up to just above him. It's one of the upsides to Grandpa being deaf – alarm clock testing doesn't bother him at all.

Zeke grins at me from the row in front, but I glare back at him. It's one of the Green Peas rules. 'No acknowledgement of other members during an event.' We moved it down on the list. Number 32, from memory. That doesn't make it any less important. But Zeke can't help himself. He's just so . . . Zeke!

I look at my watch. Here we go . . .

Beep beep. Beep beep.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

Merp. Merp. Merp.

Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way. Oh what fun it is to ride on a one-horse open sleigh. HEY!

I try my best not to smile as I think of the little Santa alarm clock gaffer-taped to the bottom of a Year Fiver's chair. I had to tape Santa around the stomach because his arms and legs move back and forth like he's making a snow angel when the alarm goes off.

Tess Heckleston catches my eye and gives me a wink. She's kept a pretty low profile since she got

busted with that money thing a couple of months ago, but I should thank her for funding this event before she became as broke as the rest of us.

The assembly's in full chaos now. Kids are laughing and teachers are trying to calm everybody down – but it's not working at all. I knew it would go like this. That's why after the Santa clock, I set them all thirty seconds apart.

Beep beep. Beep beep.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

Merp. Merp. Merp.

Dashing through the snow in a one-horse open sleigh.

Buzz buzz buzz. Buzz buzz buzz.

Bring brrriiiiiing. Bring brrriiiiiing.

It's 8:40 am on WBS 107.2fm, and it's another beautiful day in Watterson.

BRAYNK! BRAYNK! BRAYNK! BRAYNK!

Driiiiiing. Driiiiiing.

Full pandemonium has set in now. I love the word 'pandemonium'. It sounds like what it is. I love words that do that.

And as I look around me at the mess our school assembly has become, there could not be a better word than ‘pandemonium’.

Kids are standing on chairs or looking under them. Everyone can hear the noise, but hardly anyone knows where it’s coming from. The teachers are shouting now, trying to get us all under control and find the source of the alarms. It’s not going to work: I placed the clocks away from the aisle seats where the teachers are, and the kids are enjoying this way too much to help the teachers locate my clocks. This act of defiance is nothing if not well thought out.

I look at Mrs Keiren. Her face is turning slightly red, maybe even a little purple. Her hands clutch the armrests of the big wooden chair that sits on stage, fingernails digging into the wood. She looks like a kettle heating up. I know what’s coming next, and my guess is it will be just enough to make her boil over.

I can see the back of Cookie’s head from where I’m sitting. She doesn’t turn around. She can follow the Green Peas rules way better than Zeke, but the

tension in the back of her neck tells me she can't wait for the next bit either.

I look at my watch. 8:44 am. Seconds to go.

Beep beep. Beep beep.

Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding.

Merp. Merp. Merp.

Over the hills we go, laughing all the way. HO HO HO!

Buzz buzz buzz. Buzz buzz buzz.

Bring brrriiiiiing. Bring brrriiiiiing.

Reaching twenty-four today with clear skies and no chance of—

BRAYNK! BRAYNK! BRAYNK! BRAYNK!

Driiiiiing. Driiiiiing.

And three, two, one . . .

BWAK BWAK BAGAAAAARK!

The chicken alarm clock goes off under Mrs Keiren's butt . . . and the kettle boils over. SHE . . . IS . . . FUMING! I can almost see the

steam coming out of her ears. The entire school stops and turns to face the principal.

BWAK BWAK BAGAAAAARK!

Mrs Keiren leaps up like she's just laid an egg, and the school erupts into laughter. She reaches under her chair and rips off a chicken alarm clock covered in gaffer tape. The plastic chicken in her hand flaps its wings.

BWAK BWAK BAGAAAAARK!

With that, timed as perfectly as I'd hoped, a banner drops from the ceiling of the school hall.

WAKE UP! DINOSAURS THOUGHT THEY HAD
TIME TOO. SAVE OUR PLANET NOW.

I smile proudly. It's fine to do that now; my grin will be lost in the craziness around me. None of the teachers suspect that the quiet kid with the maths folder is behind the elaborate protests. Or, as Mrs Keiren is calling them, 'pranks'.

But I, Casey Wu, am not just a prankster. I am an activist. I may be only eleven years old, but I have a lot to say, and I will be heard. No matter how loud I have to be.

Sometimes, you need to take action to make a difference. Everyone can stand up in their own way. Every activist has their own superpower.

And mine is pranking.

I slide one of Mum's cards out of my folder. It seemed appropriate to bring this one with me today.

Trixie Wu's Thoughts On . . .

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

You only get one life, Casey-baby. Make it count. Make a difference, whatever you want that to be - big or small, to one person or to the whole world. Be the change you want to see. Find your strength and use it.

xMum

