

ALAN SILBERBERG

# MiLO

FIND  
THE



# BUTTON

DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION

First published in Great Britain in 2011 by Simon and Schuster UK Ltd  
A CBS COMPANY

First published in the USA in 2010 by Aladdin, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's  
Publishing Division, New York.

Copyright © 2010 by Alan Silberberg

This book is copyright under the Berne Convention.  
No reproduction without permission.  
All rights reserved.

The right of Alan Silberberg to be identified as the author and illustrator  
of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections  
77 and 78 of the Copyright, Design and Patents Act, 1988.

Simon & Schuster UK Ltd  
1st Floor, 222 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8HB

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either  
the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance  
to actual people living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-85707-190-3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed by CPI Cox & Wyman, Reading RG1 8EX

[www.simonandschuster.co.uk](http://www.simonandschuster.co.uk)  
[www.silberbooks.com](http://www.silberbooks.com)

*For my mom*







## gesundheit

**S**UMMER GOODMAN NEVER KNEW WHAT hit her. That's because it was me, and as soon as I collided with her in the hallway – scattering every one of her perfectly indexed index cards – I disappeared into the mob of kids who'd arrived to help re-alphabetise her life.

I love Summer Goodman but she barely knows I exist, which I'm pretty okay with because when you love someone, they don't have to do anything – and Summer does nothing, so I think it's all going to work out great.

• 1 •

One possible problem is, I've never actually spoken to Summer, except the time I said "sorry", which was after I sneezed on the back of her neck the first day in science class.



It was a really wet one – and she didn't sneeze back on me or have me suspended, so that's just another reason I think she's so great.

What isn't so great is that I'm the "new kid" again, which isn't as bad as it sounds unless you think about how awful it is. That's why I put all my focus on the more important stuff, like Summer Goodman and how my germs have actually bonded directly onto her skin!

The way I see it, surviving this year is all I have to do. Start to finish in one whole piece and then I win. Of course, being me, winning doesn't come

easy, which is why I created an alias, a supercool guy who will step in when I mess up or can't talk or both.

Dabney St Claire is mysterious, smart, and popular without even trying. I talk to him out loud sometimes, but mostly he's just in my head, along for the ride, telling me how he'd do what I'm doing, only without doing it so wrong.



My sister thinks there's something the matter with me, which is why she tells her friends I have a metal plate in my head, which would actually be a cool thing because then I would never have to fly on airplanes because my skull would set off alarms. Her friends always look at me with sad puppy-dog eyes, and even though I don't have a metal plate or even a *paper plate* in my head, I stare back at them and speak my favourite language: SAPTOGEMIXLIKS.

This is just another reason my sister wants to move again.



\*TRANSLATION: My sister eats her fingernails and sleeps with a teddy bear named Snuggly.



## name game

**M**OVING IS SOMETHING I AM ACTUALLY good at, and I don't mean in the "get down and boogie" kind of way. I'm what my mom called an "A-1 Klutz King", which is why I crash into things (like Summer

Goodman) and trip off of kerbs a lot. I guess it's a skill or maybe a defective gene that is slowly mutating inside of me. The only good news is that Dabney St Claire is smooth on his feet ALL THE TIME, so I know there's hope.

My latest house is 22 Marco Place and it's the fifth house I've ever lived in.

Seeing how I'm almost thirteen years old, that means I move about once every 2.5 years. I'm sure there are kids who move a lot more than that, and I know some kids still live in the houses they were born in and I bet they get to live in those houses forever and get buried in the backyard with all their cats and dogs and turtles (R.I.P.).

The best part of moving a lot is you get good at the worst part, which is the packing and unpacking. The reason I'm *supergood* at this is that after the last two moves I figured out all I had to do was pack and unpack one box and leave the other seven in my closet.

My one box is labelled ESSENTIALS and has all my best stuff in it, including but not limited to: books; action figures; signed arm cast from when I fell off the swing and my mom drew a picture of the Hulk on it, which looked more like a huge sick frog, but it was the thought that counted and I still have it.

The other boxes . . . I've actually forgotten what's in them. So I guess whatever's inside isn't that important anymore. Lots of stuff isn't important anymore, but that's just the way it is.

One thing about a new school is they always mess up your name so that by the end of your first week no one has a clue who you really are. To be honest, getting called the wrong name is one thing that I actually like. Bob. Steve. Rick. Those are the kind of names that put you smack in the middle of the Cool Name Club.

When you have a Cool Name Club name, it doesn't even matter what you look like. You just know you're destined for GREAT things, like



Student Council or the lead in the school play, which hopefully is *not* a musical because no matter what name you have, you're still an A-1 Klutz King!

But Milo Cruikshank is not the name of the guy

who plays Macbeth. That's the name of a kid who *maybe* gets to help out backstage and just gets in the way and probably doesn't even get his name in the program. Milo Cruikshank is a loser name, which is obviously why it belongs to me.

My dad is always trying to get me on the "same page" with the whole "Life Changes" thing, which makes no



sense to me. If you're supposed to accept that life is always changing and be fine that today may be okay but tomorrow might be the worst day in your life – EVER – then how do you do your homework? Why do you brush your teeth? And who's going to be there in the kitchen to make you pancakes and let you have a tiny sip of coffee (with tons of milk)?

But life does change, which is why I'm so glad

that I love Summer because she is part of the “good” changes and not the “bad” ones that follow me around like shadows.

I first saw Summer Goodman even before school started. It was August and we’d just moved into House #5. She was buying gum at the Pit Stop down the street, which is one of those mini-mart places that sells pretty much everything, like bread and milk and car air fresheners shaped like pine trees, which is so stupid because they don’t smell like any tree I’ve ever smelled – they smell like dog pee, so if you need one of those to make your car

smell *better*, I’d hate to know what it smelled like before.



We needed toilet paper for the new house, and since my sister gets to sleep late just because she’s a “teenager”, my dad made me walk to the Pit Stop for an emergency T.P. run.

Now, if you ever plan to meet the most pretty girl in your whole life, there's two things you don't want:

One: You don't want to have one of those haircuts your dad gives you because he owns the bluntest pair of scissors in the world.



And two: You don't want to be holding a jumbo twelve-pack of two-ply super-soft toilet paper!

NOTHING could be more embarrassing . . . unless you forget to wear trousers, which luckily I did not.



So there I was, crop-chop haircut and hiding behind a mountain of toilet paper, when Summer Goodman first walked into my life. Seeing her actually made my heart beat faster, which is cliché and stuff, but that's how pretty she

was in her white shorts and tank top. Her hair was the colour of lemonade, and I don't mean the pink kind.

She walked straight to the candy rack, grabbed a pack of Strawberry Squirt bubblegum, and went right past me to the counter to pay. She looked at me just once, which again makes me want to say: Why toilet paper? Why didn't we need something cool, like laundry soap or a fishing licence?

Anyway, Summer Goodman looked right at me and said the six best words I've ever heard in my life: "That stuff really is supersoft."

And then she was gone, and I knew this was going to be the best move we ever made.



# missing

W

HAT DO I MISS?

I miss laughing.

I miss orange peels.

I miss staying home from school just because she says it's okay.

I miss a dinner table that doesn't feel lopsided and a kitchen that's full of her.

How do you know that every day is the last chance to fill up on the good stuff; to jam-pack your pockets with a whole life's worth of everything you're going to miss forever?

“When you don't have something anymore, you learn to live without it.” That's what my dad told me that first night after he found me sleeping inside a closet underneath a pile of my mom's clothes. All the different smells of her were still there and the memories were alive even if she wasn't.

I looked up into his face and wondered why would I ever want to learn to live without her? That felt like she really would be gone forever, and I wanted to limp on the broken piece of me so I could feel her there all the time.

But I didn't say anything to my dad. I just let him lift me up and hold me close to him and I felt him breathe her in too. And we stayed that way for a long time, both frozen in the smells of what life was like before the fog swallowed us whole.

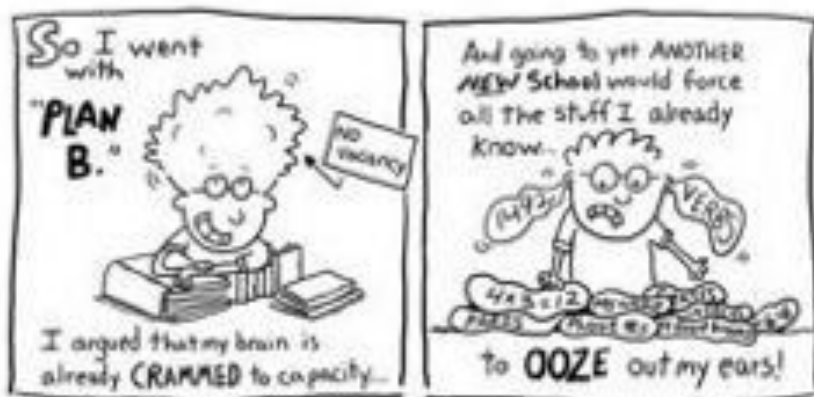
## restart button

**S**TARTING OVER IS LIKE HITTING THE restart button on a game that makes you lose all your points and wipes out any of the good stuff you've spent hundreds of hours learning, like how to navigate the slime

chasm and beat Level 8, where the only way to survive the dragon's breath is to use the invisible lava rocks and *not* your lasers.

Being in a new house means I had to go to another new school. There was no way around it. I was starting over all over again.

It wasn't like I didn't do everything I could to get out of it, like trying really hard to stop time so I could stay in my pyjamas forever. But apparently time doesn't stop unless you take out the battery from the kitchen clock, which your dad figures out and just replaces.



My dad's eyes roll up into his head a lot, and that is what happens when I tell him about my new plan: home-schooling. Apparently, there are millions of kids who get to go to school in their houses, and I am sure this means they sleep until ten and then watch the Discovery Channel until lunch, which I bet is a quick drive to a fast-food place. Home-school sounds like my kind of place, especially because my bed is so soft, and so that's what I debate with my dad for two hours and



fifteen minutes without a single bathroom break.

The answer is the same as if I hadn't argued at all: "Milo, I know it's tough, but you have to go to school."

Sigh. So that's the way it is – I have to start over. Again. Only this time it isn't just any kind of school, it's *junior high school*. Seventh grade. This time hitting that reset button and losing all my points won't make a difference because junior high school is a whole new game.

My first day at the new school, the one called Forest Grove Junior High, I did everything right, and by "right" I mean the way Dabney St Claire told me: Keep my eyes straight ahead and stay out of trouble.

Of course, Dabney St Claire doesn't have to worry about getting lost looking for the one boys' bathroom that the kid named Mikey Guzzman says is the "safe" one. And Dabney St Claire knows nothing about standing in the wrong lunch line

because you are paying with *real* money and not some electronic card that is what the line you've been standing in for twenty minutes is for!

The day lasts forever, starting with the formalities of sitting in the office where no one knows where to put me, which is pretty great because I missed two whole periods and one of them was gym.



Finally, a boy who I swear smelled like a can of cat food had been rubbed all over his body shows up and simply says, "Follow me." And then he silently leads me down the empty

hallway where kids inside classes watch us through their open doors as if I am being escorted to the electric chair.

"You'll like it here," Cat Food Boy says as he picks his nose. "Everyone does."

But what he doesn't know – what I know too

well – is that I’m not like “everyone”. I’m much more of a “no one” kind of guy, so I know right away that the chances of me liking Forest Grove are like a million to zip.

And then – just before we turn the corner to go up to the second floor where my locker is – I see her, the pretty girl from the Pit Stop, sitting perfectly in her front-row chair looking out the door at Cat Food Boy and me. I want to wave but my arms are too full with all the books they’ve given me; so I smile instead, and this is how cool she is: She doesn’t smile back. Awesome!

“Hey,” I say to this boy who really needs a bath or new laundry soap, one made from smells that are not pet food. “That girl back there. Do you know her?”

He tosses a look behind us. “Sure. Summer Goodman. Everyone knows her.”

And that is all the information I need, because up until that moment I had no idea who the girl I

saw at the Pit Stop was, but from that moment on I had her name and the knowledge that EVERYONE knows her – and I make up my mind that this school year I will become an “everyone” and leave the “no one” me behind in the dust.

The rest of that first day is a blur of kids moving full speed ahead while I bump along in the breakdown lane. My schedule is pretty full and there aren't nearly enough slots on my sheet that say *Do Nothing*. English. Gym. Geography. Maths. Art. Science. Spanish. Health. Suddenly the school year looks like a highway that is going to stretch on and on without any exit ramps – just lots of homework.

Another bell rings, and I just shrug because I know I'm late for something . . . but I also know I can use the “new kid” excuse at least for a few days.

“You're Milo.” This comes from a girl to my left, and since I don't know her, I decide to play it cool in case she is some sort of spy and wants to steal my locker combination which, luckily for me, I

have already forgotten. “You live on my street.” She keeps walking with me even though I am now doing my double-time quick walk. “Next door, actually. Weird, huh?”

Now, lots of things in life are weird:



But the fact that this girl lives in a house that happens to be next door to mine just doesn't hold a candle to something *totally* weird, like a guy who can hammer nails into his nose.

I don't say any of this to her. I just stop walking

and nod and say, “Yeah. Really weird.” And then we both just stand there.

Whole minutes go by, and we’re still just standing in the empty hallway not talking. Of course, if this is some sort of test, there is no hope she can win because if she thinks she can outmute me, she is in for one big surprise. Not saying stuff is one contest where I know I am the king.

“Okay then,” she says. “See ya around.”

And then she walks off and I am free, and the sweat on my upper lip and I breathe a sigh of relief until I hear the sound of someone running, and I don’t even dare look around because I am 53 per cent sure those footsteps belong to her.

“Sorry. I forgot to tell you my name.”

I don’t have it in me to tell her I really don’t care, so instead I use my *mind-control powers* to convince her to just leave me alone.

Apparently, my brain is not up to the task because she keeps talking.



“Hillary Alpert,” she says, thrusting her hand out at me like it’s one of those levers you pull on a slot machine. “Next-door neighbour extraordinaire!”

Stuck in the hallway, with no escape in sight, I give her a real look-over and notice her skinny legs look like tent poles. Her smile is like a curly French fry, and her eyes are brown and wide and seem to stay open all the time. And there’s a smell I pick up that is definitely gum-related. Maybe watermelon.

“Well?” she says with her slot-machine hand just waiting for me to try my luck. “What do you say?”

And though I say nothing, I stick out my hand

and we shake two quick times before she zips off to wherever a girl like that goes – which hopefully is not where I am going, which is science.

The good news about that first day is I learned one great thing: Summer Goodman is the name of the prettiest girl I'd ever seen. Also important, but way less exciting, I learned that I will probably never understand Spanish, and that even after asking the janitor for help, I still can't get my locker open.

The bad news about my first day has to do with the girl with the watermelon smell. By the time I got home, there was a purple note taped to our front door that read *Nice to meet ya, Milo!!* And it was signed with *her* name.

