

Mítzi Mufflin, Príncípál for a Day

Líz Cooper

Table of Contents

Hello, Mitzi and Tappity!	1
Triple Trouble	8
20/20 Hearing	21
Blackmail!	30
The Mysterious Disappearance	36
Principal Mufflin	41
Substitute Silliness	47
Lunch is Served	56
The Book Brigade	61
Stranded	65
Who's Calling?	71
Up Tree, Down River	77
The Grand Tour	80
In the Dark	90
It's All Good	101
There's No Business Like Dough Business	104
New Beginnings	109
About the Author	111
About the Illustrator	111
Depth of Knowledge Questions	112
Activities	114

Hello, Mitzi and Tappity!

Rain, rain, and more spring rain. It had been pelting and pounding Mortimer Potts Elementary School for days. A small figure carefully made her way through the rows of parked cars in the crowded parking lot and headed toward the building.

A few minutes earlier, Mitzi had slipped away from her parents when they stopped to talk to somebody they knew. It was her first day, and there was no way she was going to look like a baby being escorted into school by her parents. She liked to be independent. She had been blind her whole life, and in her opinion, there wasn't anything she couldn't do.

Mitzi couldn't see where she was going, but she located a curb and stepped up onto a sidewalk using Tappity, her cane, while paying attention to any sounds that would give her a clue as to the location of the school entrance. She heard two men's voices and two sets of heavy work boots clumping along, noises that were accompanied by the sound of a rolling cart of some sort. Figuring that these workers were probably heading toward a door, she decided to follow them into the building.

Even though she stayed a good distance behind the men, the sound of their feet splashing through the puddles was easy to follow. When the men finally stopped to open a door, they appeared to have a problem.

“Whoa, this crate won’t fit through the door!” exclaimed one of the men. “We’ll have to open it here. Help me move it under that awning over there, and we can use hammers to loosen the boards.”

Mitzi heard the men banging on the wooden crate with their hammers. She hoped their backs were to her and they would be too busy to notice her entering the building through the door they had propped open. Once inside, she moved her hand along the wall and discovered it was made out of painted cinder blocks. Her shoes squeaked slightly on a smooth tile floor. *Ha! It’s a typical school hallway and not some sort of storage room.*

Nobody called out to her, so Mitzi smiled in relief and continued on her way with Tappity, listening for certain sounds to help her locate the main office. When she found the door she thought was the right one, she pushed it open and stuck her head inside.

“Hi!” she announced loudly. “Anybody home? My name is Mitzi Mufflin, and this is my cane, Tappity. We’re here to enroll in your school.”

The school secretary paused over her keyboard and looked up. She saw Mitzi standing in the doorway, holding a white cane.

“It’s nice to meet you, Mitzi. I’m Miss Smith. There’s a bench eight feet directly ahead of you. You can sit there until your parents arrive. I assume you brought them along?”

Mitzi laughed, shaking the water off her raincoat. "Of course. They're coming."

"Wonderful. I'm glad you found the office on your own. We've ordered braille signs for all of the doors in the building to help you find your way around. They should arrive in a day or so. This darned rain has delayed some of our deliveries."

"That's okay," said Mitzi. "I usually just listen for sounds to decide which way to go. For instance, just now, I listened for office-type noises, like a copy machine running, keyboards clicking, or telephones ringing. That's how I knew as soon as I opened the door that I was in the right place."

Myra Frye stopped sorting the mail into the teachers' mailboxes and stared at the new girl. Myra loved working in the office as a student aide because she was the first kid in the school to find out new gossip. *Wait until the other kids hear about this blind girl!*

Mitzi suddenly twirled around and faced Myra. "Who are you?" Mitzi asked.

Myra was shocked. *How does this blind kid know I'm here?* She started to introduce herself but stopped short due to the sound of running feet coming from the hallway.

Bang! The office door burst open, and Mr. and Mrs. Mufflin rushed in. They were very upset.

“Our daughter is missing!” Mr. Mufflin sputtered. “I demand you stop whatever you’re doing immediately and conduct a search. She’s handicapped! Blind!” Mitzi’s father waved around the papers he was holding. “Don’t just sit there, Miss! Call the principal. Mitzi has never been in a regular school. She has always gone to a special school for the blind. There’s no telling where she went. She could have fallen down a flight of stairs or wandered into the street or—”

“Hi, Dad,” Mitzi said. “What took you so long?”

Meanwhile, in Room 14, which was down the hall from the main office, Hoops Russell was having a hard day. “I’m sick of this stupid rain,” he declared. “I was counting on practicing my hook shot. This indoor recess stinks!” He wadded up a piece of notebook paper and sent it sailing across the room into the trash can.

Mia and Kia ducked as the paper ball sailed over their heads.

“Hey, you’re breaking the rules,” said Mia.

“Yeah, you’re breaking the rules,” repeated Kia.

The twins had a strong sense of the law, and they took their jobs on the school safety patrol very seriously. Their parents were both police officers.

After taking notes about Hoops on small notepads, the twins exited the room. They weren’t actually in this class, but they liked to patrol the school during recess to investigate any crimes they observed.

Bonnie Skinks wheeled her purple wheelchair over to Hoops. “Relax, Hoops. You’re just nervous because the championship basketball game is tomorrow. I just know we’re going to win. Salty Ocean Elementary School doesn’t have a team half as good as ours!” She pulled a checkerboard out of a bag suspended from the arm of her wheelchair. “Let’s play a game of checkers. That will keep your mind off the game.”

Janie was sitting nearby and was trying to keep her head still because Marques, the best artist in the class, was drawing her portrait. “That’s right, Hoops,” she chimed in. “You have nothing to worry about. Our cheerleading squad came up with some great new cheers for the game. We can’t lose! Do you want to hear one? GIVE ME AN M, GIVE ME AN O—” Janie’s loud voice rang out enthusiastically before she was cut off by Miss Timmons, their teacher.

“Thank you, Janie. I’m sure everyone would love to hear your cheer, but it would be much better to surprise us with it tomorrow.”

This statement resulted in scattered applause from various parts of the room.

While Hoops allowed himself to be drawn into a game of checkers with Bonnie, Marques continued working on a sketch of Janie’s face. He was having trouble getting her mouth just right because she kept talking.

"I can't believe how nice Hoops is to Bonnie. He doesn't usually like anybody who isn't athletic," Janie said.

Marques nodded thoughtfully. "Hoops has mellowed since Bonnie joined the class last September. He doesn't care that she uses a wheelchair to get around. Maybe he's changed his ways."

"I hope so," Janie said. "He used to be pretty mean."

"Ha!" chuckled Frederick "French" Frye, skeptically. "Hoops has *changed!*?" I don't think so!" He then slipped into the seat next to Marques. The new boy in the room had just come from the main office, where his sister Myra worked as a student aide. He liked to make excuses to visit the office during recess time to see if Myra had any new gossip. Today, he had big news to share. "Hoops is going to have a fit. We're getting a new girl in our class, and she's blind!"

Marques stopped sketching.

"Blind? That's terrible!" exclaimed Janie.

Marques nodded. "I can't imagine not being able to see. How would I draw?"

He signed his name at the bottom of Janie's portrait with a flourish. It was a rather good likeness, although it looked a bit strange because Janie's mouth was open.

French Frye looked over at Hoops, who was playing checkers with Bonnie. "Yeah, I feel sorry for the new girl," French Frye said. "Hoops can't think before he speaks. Remember how he acted the last time somebody in a wheelchair came to school? I sure hope that Hoops doesn't give the new kid a hard time."

The others agreed. Their conversation was suddenly interrupted by the classroom door opening with a crash.

"Heads-up! Look sharp! I like to run over feet," yelled Mr. Jasper, the custodian, as he bumped through the doorway, pushing a cart loaded with a large box and a variety of smaller boxes. He unloaded the cart and whipped out a box cutter. "This just arrived. Where do you want the new computer set up, Miss Timmons?"

"Over here on this desk, please." Miss Timmons pointed to the empty student desk next to Hoops.

Hoops was pleased. *There's never enough time on the classroom computers. The desk seems like an odd place to put one, though.* "Hey, Miss Timmons," he called out. "Why are you sticking the computer in the middle of the room instead of on the back wall with the other ones?"

"Oh, that's not for the class, Hoops. It's for our new student, Mitzi. It has a specialized software program just for her use."

"Huh?" Hoops was dumbfounded. *That isn't fair. Why should a new kid get her own computer?* "I object!" he said loudly with a scowl.