

A Boy Called Bat – Chapters Eight and Nine

Good morning! My name is Kyle Holly and I'm happy to be from Santa Rosa County and here with you in Santa Rosa County this morning. We are at the H Ranch that is in a part of the County called East Milton up above Navarre Beach. And I have with me my horse Tuffy. And so this morning we wanted to talk just a little bit about some fun facts about horses in general. So, one of the funnest facts is that they eat a lot. Another fun fact is that they - like people and like kids - like to be with other horses, they like to be in a group. That makes them safe. When kids stay in a group that makes them safe. So they are very much like us.

I think some of you know that apples are good for teachers, but also apples are good for horses. So, I'm gonna let my horse have a couple of pieces of Apple this morning if he'll wait for me. When we take one Apple and we cut it into two pieces then we say that each piece is $\frac{1}{2}$ of the whole. I'm gonna feed my horse one half of the Apple at a time, because - like kids - you're not supposed to eat too much at once. You can choke. So, let's let him finish his grass, and then we'll give him one half of the whole yeah. So, that's good huh? Very good.

So, horses... He weighs eleven hundred and ninety pounds. He is an American Quarter Horse. Those are particularly popular horses in Santa Rosa County and in Florida. There are about 14,000 of them that live here , so that's about half as many students as are in the whole school district. Okay? So, other fun facts is that they they know what to do in a storm. When the storm comes - we had a storm last night - when the storm comes, the horses all go together, and they turn their backs into the wind, and they let the rain go across their backs, and they all put their heads down. So, they automatically know to stay calm in an emergency, to stay calm when there's a storm, and to stay together, so that they could be safe. So, I'm gonna just kind of wrap things up a little bit right there and put the horse back in the pasture, so he can do his job, and i'll do my job this morning, which is to read to you guys.

Today we're reading A Boy Called BAT. The book is written by Elana K. Arnold, and I'm gonna read with you Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine.

Okay, so Chapter Eight is titled Sixteen Eyelets.

Sometimes Bat wished that Janie went to his school, because it would be kind of neat to see her in the hallways and at lunchtime. But most of the time he was glad that his school was something he didn't have to share with her. Janie attended the Robert E. Willett Elementary School, but this was her last year. Next fall she would be going to junior high school. Bat went to a private school. It had smaller classes than the public school, and his parents thought it was a better fit for him, which was fine with Bat.

Mr. Grayson was a good teacher who never yelled, and who usually let Bat wear his earmuffs if things got too loud. Also, his school, the Saw-Whet School, was named after a type of owl. The main hallway of the Saw-Whet School was a busy place until 8:35 a.m., when class officially started. Until then it was full of parents walking the younger kids, those in kindergarten and first grade, to their classrooms and older kids walking themselves.

All while the principal, Mrs. Martinez, stood outside of the administration office smiling and being friendly. "Bat," called Mrs. Martinez, waving and smiling. Bat didn't feel like talking to Mrs. Martinez, so he pretended he didn't see her and slid to the far side of the hallway as he passed. That way she couldn't reach out and rumple his hair. Bat hated it when people ruffled his hair, and Mrs. Martinez loved to rumple hair. She had never yet ruffled his hair, and Bat wanted to keep it that way. Bat liked the main hallway better when all the other kids were in the classrooms. Right now, Luca and Israel, two kids in Bat's same class were struggling out of their rain boots on the big rubber mat. It wasn't raining, but dark clouds peppered the sky in a way that could mean that recess would be wet.

At Saw-Whet School, one of the philosophies was that students should go outside, rain or shine or snow. Bat hadn't worn rain boots, so he didn't have any that he needed to take off. He didn't carry an umbrella either, because the Saw-Whet School didn't allow them in the hallways or classrooms, which Bat agreed was a wise decision. He skirted around a kindergartener whose mother was kneeling in front of him holding a tissue to his nose. "Blow," she said. And he dodged between a couple of big kids, sixth graders, who were tossing a small red rubber ball back and forth. "Balls are supposed to be kept outside," Bat told the slightly smaller of the two big kids, a boy he recognized by the red glasses he wore. "Not this ball," said the boy. "This is a special ball." Then he threw the ball over Bat's head to the other kid, a very tall girl, who caught it expertly with one hand and laughed. "It looks like a regular ball", Bat said. "It's not a regular ball," said the boy with red glasses. Bat had a weird feeling in his stomach, like the boy was tricking him. He didn't know what to say.

Just then Luca and Israel came by without their rain boots. "Hi, Bat," Israel said. "Do you think it'll rain?" "Maybe," Bat said. "Well, eventually yes, but today, maybe." Relieved, Bat watched the two kids move away toward their classrooms still tossing the ball. "What do you think was special about that ball?" he asked Israel. "Nothing," Israel said. Then Miss Kiko came out of the kindergarten room and rang her hand bell. It made a gentle tinkling sound way better than the harsh painful scream of Janie's electric school bell system, which Bat had heard last year during a school play. He'd gone to watch. "To class, to class. It's time for another day." Miss Kiko had a beautiful voice, which was probably why it was her job to announce the start of school.

Bat followed Luca and Israel into Mr. Grayson's third-grade classroom. "I brought two sandwiches for lunch today," Luca was telling Israel, "In case you want to trade cookies for one of those." "Why would I want to do that?" Israel answered. "I brought my own sandwich." Bat knew why Luca would think Israel wanted to trade. Yesterday he had heard Luca tell Israel that she didn't really like her cream cheese sandwiches, and Israel had replied that he didn't like the turkey one his mom always made. "I would trade anything for a cream cheese sandwich," he said. He listened to see if Luca would remind Israel of what he had said, but she didn't.

"Probably Israel was just being nice," Bat interjected, "To make you feel better about bringing cream cheese sandwiches to school every day. He probably didn't really want your sandwich." Israel turned around. His face was red and his eyebrows pointed toward each other, making a wrinkly crinkle in his forehead. "Dude!" he said to Bat. Bat waited for Israel to say more, but he didn't - just that one word, "Dude." Then Luca started crying, and she shoved past Bat to go into the hallway. He watched her run into the girl's bathroom. Mr. Grayson came over. He was wearing his bright orange tennis shoes, today. Bat liked it when he wore those shoes. It was like he was wearing suns on his feet. "What's the problem friends?" he asked. "Bat embarrassed Luca," Israel said really loudly, making Bat wish he had his ear muffs. They were in his backpack on his back. "I'm sure you didn't mean to embarrass her. Did you, Bat?" asked Mr. Grayson.

There were 16 eyelets on each of his shoes. Bat counted 8 on the left side, 8 on the right side. That made 32 eyelets. "Bat, can you look up at my face?" Mr. Grayson asked. Bat shook his head. Many - 16 eyelets - 4 on each side of each shoe. Mr. Grayson said, "Okay, Bat, Go sit at your table." Bat wondered if anyone in the class had more eyelets in their shoes than Mr. Grayson. He kept his eye on the shoes as he walked through the classroom. Nope, no one did.

So... The next chapter is Chapter 9 Open-Door Babycakes Policy

Mr. Grayson was a good teacher for lots of reasons. He let kids eat snacks at their desks, if they were hungry. He didn't make students ask permission to go to the bathroom. He didn't believe in making people apologize. "You can't make someone be sorry," he always said.

And he believed in class pets. That's how he put it. "I believe in class pets," he had said on the first day of class, when he introduced them to Babycakes, the class rabbit. Babycakes, a white angora bunny that looked like a giant fluff ball, lived in a pen in the back of the room near the bookshelf. It was a big pen with a gate. "If anyone ever needs to cuddle," Mr. Grayson said, "Babycakes is there for you." And that was the thing that made Mr. Grayson the best teacher Bat had ever had; his open-door Babycakes policy, which meant that any time a kid needed to cuddle, he or she could go visit Babycakes, no permission needed, no questions asked.

Babycakes liked carrots and apples and put up with the cuddling. Bat knew the rabbit liked treats better than kids, but he also knew that Babycakes was smart enough to realize that the

two often went together. The thing about Mr. Grayson's open-door Babycakes policy was that none of the kids wanted to ruin it by overusing it. Bat was Babycakes most frequent visitor. Israel visited the second most often, and then probably Jenny was third.

A couple of months ago Israel had given Bat a drawing he'd done of Babycakes. It was pretty good. Bat usually tried to visit Babycakes during recess or lunch, when a visit wouldn't mean leaving group time, but today he didn't think he could wait until recess. Maybe because he missed the baby skunk so much. When Mr. Grayson had everyone pull out the money game "Payday," that they played on Fridays, Bat slipped away from his table and headed to the back of the room. Today Babycakes wasn't sleeping. She was just sitting in her favorite spot on top of the plastic hutch where she slept. She looked like white cotton candy. Bat sat close to Babycakes and put his hand on her back, just to let her know he was there. He didn't want to startle her.

"Break into groups of four," Mr. Grayson said. "Choose a banker and pay everyone two hundred dollars." For a moment Bat thought maybe Mr. Grayson was going to let him skip the game and just hang out with Babycakes, but then he said, "Bat, five minutes." Bat didn't want to play Payday. He didn't want to join the class in five minutes, but the open-door Babycakes policy didn't mean it was okay to skip stuff that the class was doing. It was one of those unspoken rules that Mom was always talking about. Those things that people are supposed to know without having to be told. Bat hated unspoken rules, but he loved the open-door Babycakes policy, so when five minutes later Mr. Grayson said, "Okay, Bat, time's up." Bat reluctantly scooted Babycakes off his lap, where he had set her and rejoined the class. Games were all arranged. Jenny Pearson had dealt out \$200 for Bat.

Luca, Bat saw, had returned from the bathroom with red-rimmed eyes. She was in a different group. "Ready?" Jenny asked. "I guess," said Bat, and he sat in the empty seat between Jenny and Raymond. Across from him, Corey rolled the dice. Bat sighed. It was going to be a long day.

I'm here to just comment a little bit about some careers that you might choose around... In and around livestock. So you can't have livestock without land. For example, land gives you pasture to support the livestock, but land also can produce. One crop that you don't hear a lot about and that crop can be trees. Okay, so pine trees is an important part of agriculture in Santa Rosa County - growing pine trees, knowing everything you can know about a pine tree is important. You can make money, because the pine trees can be harvested to create lumber.

Sometimes a piece of land that has pine trees on it - has pasture - also has cows. These are purebred Brahma cattle. This is my horse, Tuffy. I use my horse to help me find these cows out in the woods and bring them up. That's important, because I have to keep these cows really

healthy in order for them to produce for me the product that I sell. I sell the calves. Okay, the calves I'm making, we call them replacement heifers.

Okay, so a cow man wants to buy these kind of cows from me, so that he can make his herd last longer, and so that he can make his cows tolerate the heat better and the disease better. Okay, so I sell replacement heifers. So I use my horse to help take care of these cows, who produce these calves for me, and then people from all over the southeast come and buy these calves, so they can raise them up to make baby calves for them. And then they sell their calves to make money to support their families.

Okay, so that's just the way some jobs can be - some jobs can be about pine trees - growing those, some can be about growing cattle, and some can be working with horses. So a horse is really important. There are jobs like being a veterinarian, that are really important. There's also a job called being a farrier. A farrier is the man or woman who works on the horse's feet all the time. I can have a beautiful horse, but if he doesn't have good feet, then my tool for doing my work is ruined. Right? Like a car or a tractor has to have good tires, a horse has to have good feet. So, a farrier is the person who comes and keeps the hooves of the horse really clean. It's hard work, but it's a very good job, and it pays very well. So, I think that is where I'll round out, now. That's just a couple of jobs that are very important - that are needed in Santa Rosa County and needed in Florida. So, I hope you guys have a good day!