



Evan Jacobs



Back to the Past Mazey Pines

Daylight Saving The Morning People

The Ghosts of Largo Bay Scream Night

The Lady from the Caves TV Party

Lucky Doll Virus



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Largo Bay

BLOOMINGTON



REA

Giardini's Pizza

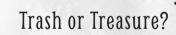












Does the furry blue doll cause bad luck? Abby and Clara throw it into the garbage.



Abby discovers a rare doll. Mrs. Bernal says she can keep it.





Home Invasion

Abby's house has been taken over. A tornado of dolls swirls in her living room.



This weather is strange," Mrs. Bernal said.

Abby stood on the other side of the classroom. She looked out the window. "Huh?" she said. "I thought it was going to rain."

It had been cloudy. Now the sun was shining.

"Yeah," a student named Nikki said. She stood by the window. "It was supposed to rain."

It was now the spring semester. Largo Bay Middle School was a busy place.

Abby had chosen a new class. She was a teacher's aide. The job was in a special education classroom. Mrs. Bernal was the teacher. Some of the students were non-verbal. They didn't talk. The kids could communicate, though. They used a tablet app.

Abby loved the class. She adored the eight students. They liked her too.

Mrs. Bernal was cool. Abby respected her. Students thought she was the bomb. The teacher had a unique style. She loved animals. Her house was full of pets.

The class had a full-time aide too. Her name was Melissa. She was nice. The two women managed Abby like an adult. Students were treated with respect.

"Class, don't forget," the teacher said. "Get those permission slips signed. Or no CBI this Wednesday."

CBI meant Community Based Instruction. Mrs. Bernal took the students around the city. The town was on the small side. So it was an easy trip.

Largo Bay was on the coast. Some homes

were on the beach. Others were behind the schools. It had many strip malls. CBI trips were usually to the shops.

The students packed their backpacks. Nobody needed help. This made Abby smile.

Abby was organizing a closet. It was full of craft supplies. Then she noticed something. It was a blue furry doll. The doll was seven inches tall. It had no feet, just two black wheels. There were no arms. The eyes were black plastic. A small yellow mouth was shaped like a beak.

"Mrs. B?" She had never seen anything like it. "What is this?" she asked, holding the doll.

"Cool!" a student named Austin said. He walked over and stared at it. So did some other students.

"Oh, that old thing?" Mrs. Bernal said. "That's a Lucky doll. I bought it when I was in high school."

Abby and Austin looked at the doll. There was an on/off switch. It used batteries. What did the toy do?

"Does it work?" Abby asked.

"No," Mrs. Bernal answered. "I couldn't get it to work. It was supposed to talk."

"Really?" How exciting! A talking doll was rad.

She turned it on. Nothing happened.

"Yes," Mrs. Bernal said. The teacher sat at her desk. "It would listen to other people. Then the doll would talk. I guess mine was defective."

Abby stared at the Lucky doll. It seemed to stare back at her.

"You can have it," Mrs. Bernal said. "You seem curious about it."

"Thank you!" Abby beamed. "I'm curious by nature." She was very interested in the strange doll.



"Abby," Will Chu gasped. He held the Lucky doll. "Do you realize how rare this is?"

Will was Abby's best guy friend. He was also super smart. One day he would become a scientist. His grandfather had died of cancer. Will would cure the disease.

"These aren't made anymore. This was the first AI kids' doll. It was supposed to copy speech."

AI was artificial intelligence. The Lucky doll was teachable. It would learn as humans did.

Of course Will would know about it. He loved gadgets and computers.

"Speak English, Will!" Abby laughed. Will always talked like a scientist. "Can you get the doll to work or not?"

"How do you know it doesn't work?"

"I turned it on. Nothing happened."

"Are there batteries in it?" Will asked.

"I didn't check."

They both cracked up.

Abby turned the toy over. "We need a screwdriver."

Will looked around his bedroom. He kept it neat and tidy. There was a computer and a TV. A table was covered with phones and tablets. Next to that was his guitar and amps.

"Maybe it does work," Abby said. She took out her phone. "This doll can give my class reports."

"I doubt it," Will said. He kept searching his room. "Where is it?"

Abby checked videos online. There were some about the doll. People made shows with their dolls. The toys didn't say much.

Some videos were like unboxing demos. Kids talked about the doll's features. The doll could move on command. Pressing a button made it speak. The button was on the doll's belly. Others described the toy's history. It first came out in the late 1990s.

"Found it!" Will said, grinning.

He took out the tool. Then he flipped the doll over. Next he unscrewed the battery cover. The new batteries were in. Will closed the cover. Then he turned it on.

Abby and Will watched it. The doll seemed to stare back.

"Hello, Lucky doll," Abby said.

Nothing happened.

Then Abby remembered. She touched the button.

"Lucky!" The tone was flat. It didn't sound like today's machines.

"Move forward," Abby said.

The Lucky doll didn't move. It had a blank look.

"That's it?" Abby asked.

"For its time, it was pretty cool." Will smiled.

"Boring."