



## Piia Biscuit and the Snippet Snapper

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In the third part of the beloved "Piia Biscuit" book series, Piia starts school. Right from the start it is obvious that something strange is going on in their classroom: there are purple footprints on the wall, a chocolate Easter bunny is ripped out from the calendar, and someone is murmuring from a locker! Piia and her friends set out to find out who or what has moved into their classroom.

At the same time words keep on disappearing, not only from the ABC books but from the blackboard and elsewhere as well... words like SWEETS, PUDDING, and even HAGGIS. Who's behind the mysterious message HOTDOGSWITHKETCHUPHOLDBACKONM USTARD and what are they on about?



## Reading sample

### Chapter 1: MYSTERIOUS FOOTPRINTS

Footsteps rang out. A key rasped in the lock. The door to 1.a opened.

Silence reigned in the classroom. Dust was idling on the cupboard-tops. The eraser was scratching its behind. Flies were snoring. The globe was sticking its tongue out at the board, and a spider was tickling the midges flailing around in its web. The calendar picked its nose and stuck the bogeys onto the heads of the snoozing flies, like hats, setting them at a jaunty angle in the French style. Everyone was bored with summer and eagerly awaiting the children.

May the cleaner was waiting too. Oh yes! September was her favourite month! There was always a week or two of bedlam when unless she was careful she might end up deafened. The school would shake so much from the din that the soup would splatter onto the dining hall ceiling and the meatballs hit the lampshades. And the building swam with sweet wrappers! May's eyes beamed. She already had sixty drawers jam-packed with them at home.

May dusted off the board when she spotted something sparkling under the door. A toffee-paper, maybe? Jabbing her spectacles onto her nose, she shouted, "Oh, a creepy-crawly!"

There were purple footprints on the wall. They came under the door, jumped over a socket and scurried straight across the map. From there they tracked downwards to the calendar. May lifted a page and sank onto a chair. Someone had cut out all the strawberries from the picture for July! The chocolate bunny from April had been removed. And the raisins had been winkled out of the cakes for December. The footprints then marched towards the wall cupboard.

May dragged a chair over towards it and stood there for a moment, wavering. She cast her eye over the wall once again. Then she abandoned the cupboard and set off downstairs. The caretaker, complete with pie in his beard, was crouched in front of a door, oiling the lock.

"Charlie, there are footprints on the wall of 1.a," she whispered.

"Eh?? What are you on about?" he mumbled, laughing. "I've just been in there, I took the ABCs up."

"It's true! Come and see for yourself if you don't believe me."

Now Charlie was standing by the wall with her, stroking his beard in bewilderment. He touched the footprints. Some of the purple came off on his fingers. He gave them a sniff and whistled. "What on earth? Strawberries?"

"And this one here smells of chocolate..." murmured May.

Charlie puckered his brows, climbed onto the chair and poked about on the top of the cupboard.

"So, what can you see?" May asked.

"There's nothing here, just the ABCs."

May touched the footprints in bafflement. Then she picked up a cloth and began wiping.

As she cleaned she completely failed to notice that she was not alone in the classroom. Someone was hiding behind the cupboard, as still as a statue, hardly daring to breathe.



## Chapter 6: SPECIMEN NUMBER 186

The children gawped at the purple creature. It was furry and tubby with tiny crooked legs and a tail.

"What are you staring at?" the creature grumped.

"W-who are you?" Uku stuttered.

The creature scratched its bulging furry belly. "Snippet-Snapper number 186. The best in the nest. And they had the nerve to throw me out!"

"Who did?" Alex asked.

"My uncle His Maj and my relatives. I wouldn't eat my words. I smudged them under some flax and chucked them out the window. My uncle His Maj was very angry and said 'there's nothing else for it but to cast you out of my sight, young'un.' That's when I decided I'd had enough. Stuff 'em. The next night I did a runner."

Piia stared at the creature. "So... Why do you eat words?"

"What else would I eat? Potatoes and gravy?" The Snippet-Snapper's tail drummed the floor in indignation.

"I love potatoes," Uku murmured.

"What a load of rubbish," the Snippet-Snapper cut in. "Potatoes are for weeds. Real Snippet-Snappers eat words. Words like

**JAM and  
ICE-CREAM and APPLE CAKE and  
HOTDOGSWITHKETCHUPBUTNOMUSTARDTHANKS.**

He fished a ball of paper out from under his arm, greedily tore a snippet off and munched it noisily.

Alex looked at the crumpled paper, grabbed the calendar from the wall and leafed through the pages as far as April. It sported a gaping, rabbit-shaped hole. And right where the word BUNNY was... well, look at that ... it was no longer there.

"Chocolate bunnies are my faves," the Snippet-Snapper informed him, contentedly.

"How did you manage to get here from the snippet-snappers' world?" Alex asked.

"The 'Snippet-Snappers' World'? To what are you referring? I think you'll find you mean the 'Venerable Worldwide Kingdom of the Snippet-Snappers!'" shouted the Snippet-Snapper, offended. "Piece of cake. Climbed over the fence, didn't I, and made for the woods. From there I kept to the tree-tops so I wouldn't get my tail wet." the Snippet-Snapper gently stroked its silky tail, which was tipped with a furry tuft. "When I reached the town I noticed a sweet smell coming from a building. The

window was ajar, so I just climbed in. There was no-one there, just some boxes. A cookery book was lying around in a corner so I had a bite of that, as my tummy was rumbling."

"Then what?" Piia asked.

"It got dark," whispered the Snippet-Snapper. "I put my head down for a while and well, that was it. Next thing I know, here I am."

Alex was deep in thought. "Hmmm.... Which box was it?"

"Which box you say, which box? Any old box!" the Snippet-Snapper grumbled. "There were books at the bottom and bubble-wrap on top. It had a fresh smell. I was popping the bubbles, and..."

Footsteps in the corridor. Piia locked the Snippet-Snapper's cupboard.

The door opened. It was Laura, the children's teacher. She looked round and clapped her hands. "Finished already? You're super speedy!"

The children fiddled with this and that in front of the cupboard. They could hear scratching noises inside.

"Cat got your tongues, has it?" the teacher teased, smiling, as she took her keys out of her pocket. "Well, never mind. We've finished for today."

The children left and Laura turned the key in the lock. There was some rustling in the cupboard then everything fell silent. Laura's heels echoed out as she left the room.

The children were standing in the yard. "A living snippet-snapper..." Uku exclaimed. "It must be a protected species, I've never seen one before!"

"We should feed it somehow," Piia said. "How about we snip some words out of the paper for it?"

"We don't get a newspaper in our house," Alex sighed.

"Oh well, we've got a kitchen full of cake recipes," Piia reported. "But I mustn't touch the chocolate cake one, or Dad will be cross." The entire Biscuit family knew that an Angry Dad was to be avoided at all costs. "And not a word to anyone at the moment," she added.



## Chapter 8: A MYSTERIOUS BOX

The next day the three snippet-snapper-finders couldn't wait until home time. When the moment finally arrived Uku jerked the cupboard door open.

"It's gone!" he told the others sadly.

Piia poked her head into the cupboard.

"Snippet-Snapper! We've brought some words for you! Come and taste them!"

Silence.

"And doughnuts," Uku added.

"What flavour?" came the immediate reply. "Give them here, let me see. Doughnuts are my faves. His Maj never made any." The snippet-snapper squeezed into view from a corner of the cupboard.

"And I've got some vareniki," said Alex, holding out a label saying

ВАРЕНИКИ

to the Snippet-Snapper.

"Eh... varin... what are they? And what kind of writing's this? That's a B, not a V!" the Snippet-Snapper sulked.

"In Ukrainian we use a different alphabet and the letter 'B' says 'V'. And vareniki are a kind of dumpling, my Grandma used to make them in Kyiv before we came here for Mum's work," he explained.

The Snippet-Snapper swooshed the vareniki onto the floor with its tail and started nibbling a

DOUGHNUT.

A new thought was rattling round in Alex's head.

"Hey, Snippet-Snapper, which box was it that you fell asleep in?" he asked.

"Just some book box. Smelt fresh. His Maj in his mouldy kitchen would have had a stroke he'd have been so jealous!"

"And what day was it when you woke up in the classroom?" Alex continued.

"A couple of days before school started," the Snippet-Snapper shrugged. When the cleaner came to tidy up."

Alex scratched the back of his neck and turned to his friends. "I reckon I know where it came from."

"Ooh, tell us!" Piia exclaimed.

"I think it was sent from a publisher's," Alex said. "It arrived in a box with the ABCs."

"The ABC box?" Uku said in surprise.

"Yes, it must have dozed off in there and the boxes were delivered while it was asleep. And they put it in our cupboard," Alex concluded.

Piia whistled. "You might just be right."

"Huh! Some breakthrough!" snapped the Snippet-Snapper. "Any dimwit can see I'd be

a superb character for an ABC. But first things first, I have to eat. Or are doughnuts the only thing on offer in this place?"

It put its hand into the stack of paper and rifled through nervously until it found  
HOTDOG.

"I'm off now for a nap." The Snippet-Snapper tucked HOTDOG under its arm and slammed the cupboard door.

"Is it going to live here now?" Uku whispered. "Someone should look after it."

"We will," Piia announced. "But first we'll have to tell the others. Who's on monitor duty next?"

