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Mona Rebels

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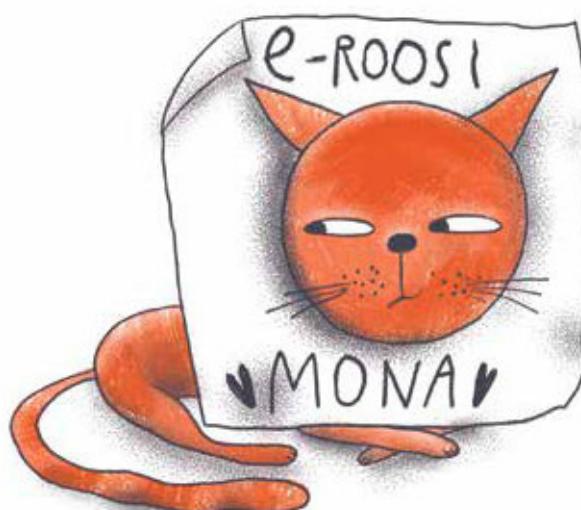
Age: 8+

One perfectly ordinary Wednesday, Mona realised that things simply could not go on like this. Ever since that famous Monday, when her father discovered his new hobbies, and the influential Tuesday, when her mother bought herself a calendar of special occasions, nothing had been the same. Father no longer had time for anything but his hobbies, and Mother's head was filled with nothing but holidays and different ways of celebrating them.

Sure, this gave Mona a great deal more freedom – yet she would have traded it all in an instant for some time spent together. But how could she win back her parents' attention? Should she bring home a bad report from school, invent devices to help them notice her, or perhaps declare a strike?

There's no doubt about it – Mona will find the very best way to set things in motion and achieve the result she's after.

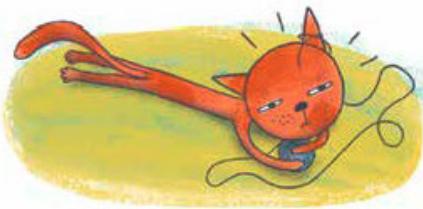
This book is the third and final book in the Mona's Family series.



Mona Rebels - excerpt

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Hello?!



One completely ordinary Wednesday, Mona realized that life as she knew it needed to change. Nothing had been the same since the infamous Monday when her dad discovered new hobbies and the all-too-familiar Tuesday when her mom acquired a calendar of important days. On the one hand, there were now things to await, celebrate, and enjoy, but on the other, that all left very little time for simply spending together. Instead, there were excuses, grandparents, and endlessly long waits.

“Mom, could we go to the store today? You promised to buy me a sweater with cats on it,” Mona reminded her, but received only a vague nod that meant absolutely nothing. No matter how often Mona repeated the question, there wasn’t even a discussion about buying her new sweater during that busy time.

“Dad, could you come to the library with me? I don’t like paying the late fee by myself. It’s kind of embarrassing,” Mona admitted, but received only a long thoughtful pause in reply. No matter how often Mona made the request, a trip to the library never fit into any day’s schedule.

“Hello?! I’m here, too!” Mona reminded her parents a few more times while Mom was zipping around the house decorating for special days and Dad was considering new hobbies.

Mom paused for a moment to hug Mona and Dad stroked her head. Mom gave her permission to visit friends and Dad handed her money for ice cream. Mom tucked Mona in at night and Dad said goodnight, but that wasn’t enough. Mona bravely endured the situation for a week and then an entire month, but still felt a terrible longing to do something exciting with her parents – to go on a trip go out to eat or simply spend a whole afternoon playing board games together. They hadn’t had time for those things in ages.

“I know! I know!” Mona yelled so loud that it echoed and stomped into the living room. But apart from their cat Roosi, there was no one with whom she could share much joy. On the coffee table was a note confirming that her parents had run off somewhere again.

DEAR MONA!
I WENT OUT TO TAKE CARE OF SOME THINGS. DAD HAS BEEN STANDING IN
A LONG LINE AT THE POST OFFICE SINCE THIS MORNING.
I DON’T KNOW WHEN WE’LL BE HOME. HEAT UP SOME LEFTOVER
PASTA FROM THE FRIDGE.
MOM

“Enough of all these holidays and hobbies! As far as I’m concerned, we could cancel my birthday party this year or not celebrate Christmas at all or cross marathons off the list or take all the artwork that Dad bought to a museum,” Mona said to Roosi with a worried sigh. The cat couldn’t quite understand what the girl was complaining about or what was troubling her.

“Meow!” Roosi finally said and asked to be taken on a little walk.

On the way to the park and back, Mona came up with some plans for what to do if it was indeed impossible to get her parents’ attention the ordinary ways. They ranged from bringing home a bad grade from school (a D, perhaps) to going on strike. That would certainly get the ball rolling and get her the results she wanted!

The Invention Competition

“Amazing!” Mona exclaimed when their teacher reminded her of the school invention competition. “That’s my chance!”

The invention competition was a long-awaited annual event with lots and lots of participants. The winner received an incredible prize, and the best invention was put on display for everyone to see for a whole year.

Mona was so excited that she rushed straight home after school and shut herself into her room. She had ideas galore to be tested. To be fair, Mona could have also stayed in the living room because no one would’ve bothered her there, and probably not even noticed her. That day, Mom was wrapped up in organizing Book Year. She tried to take part in every celebration, discussion, and book reading. And those weren’t few! Dad, on the other hand, reckoned he hadn’t been active enough and found it necessary to count his steps. He even did it at night: Mona could hear both snoring and numbers coming from her parents’ bedroom.

“Hmm... maybe I could invent a robot that reminds Mom and Dad when it’s time to play with me or go for a walk with me or cook for me or give me hugs,” she daydreamed while staring thoughtfully at her old teddy bear.

“Hmm... or I could invent new candies that must be eaten every morning and make them feel like I’m the most important thing in the world and that what they want to do most is play with me from morning till night,” she pondered, searching for good candy recipes online.

“Hmm... or I could invent glasses with lenses that go dark when parents haven’t seen their kid in a while or spent enough time with them,” Mona considered, studying her dad’s brand-new reading glasses.

Mona had lots of ideas but very little time. The invention had to be ready by the next morning. That whole afternoon, Mona tried breathing life into her teddy bear to turn it into a robot. But in spite of her best efforts, the bear wouldn’t talk. That night, she tried making and tasting one-of-a-kind candies, but none of them had the desired effect. Instead of sharpening her attention, they made her far too sweetly sleepy. And after midnight, Mona dug up all the regular reading glasses and sunglasses she could find and made them different colours. But not even that attempt produced the results she’d expected. The lenses were all totally opaque and when she tried on a pair, she just ended up walking headfirst into a cupboard. To top it all off, she now had a giant bump on her forehead.

“I can’t do it!” Mona sobbed to herself and fell asleep long after midnight. The girl slept so soundly that she ended up sleeping through the entire school day. Not even the sunlight streaming through the curtains woke her up.

“Mona, are you home from school already?” Mom asked in surprise when Mona drowsily emerged from her bedroom.

“Mona, honey – Mom and I are going to be out a little late today. Heat up some dinner for yourself, okay?” Dad announced, and the two of them rushed off who-knows-where.

Mona was flabbergasted. She’d only just woken up but according to her mom, she’d already come home from school, and her dad was talking about dinner for some reason.

“Impossible!!!” Mona squeaked when she glanced at the clock on the wall. “They had the invention competition without me, and I didn’t even get a chance to win...”

Pulling up the e-School site, Mona immediately saw pictures of Jakob, who was the clear winner. He’d created a pencil that anyone could use to write with neat handwriting. The principal proposed that they make the pencil into a school memento to give to guests. Anna won second place with a novel telephone pouch that wouldn’t

open during class. That way, teachers would have an easier time giving their lessons and students wouldn't be tempted to check their devices. Third place went to Taavi, who invented a kind of reusable glue. Mona couldn't make heads or tails of its list of ingredients and directions at first.

"I don't intend to ever use Jakob's pencil and if I do, then only to prove that my handwriting is illegible... and I certainly won't give up my phone to some weird pouch or use glue that seems so weirdly dubious," Mona growled stubbornly to herself, flinging her unfinished inventions into the corner. Then, she warmed up a bowl of macaroni with ground beef and spent the evening watching old children's movies until sleep finally took over. Mona's parents only saw her the next morning when they gave her a hug while hurrying out the door.

"Where were you yesterday?" Anna asked, handing Mona the telephone pouch she'd made her as a gift. Mona eyed the invention and made it clear that she didn't want to speak a word about it.

"Were you afraid to lose or something?" Jakob teased playfully and offered to sell her his wonder-pencil for a small fortune. She glared at the pencil and busied herself elsewhere.

"We'll invent again next year," their teacher promised during class, adding, "Thank you to everyone who took part in the competition!"

Although Mona was annoyed by the contest flop at first, she soon forgot it entirely. Her eyes lit up when their teacher started talking about the autumn fair and the class play. She was already imagining baking fortune waffles for the fair with Anna and writing the play all by herself. Anna liked the fortune waffle idea, and their teacher was surprised that Mona was interested in penning the play.

"Mona, honey, should we go swimming at the pool today?" Mom temptingly proposed when she got home from school.

"Mona, what do you think about a late-night tour of the zoo?" Dad proposed while she ate dinner.

Mona was baffled by what had happened to her parents since she last saw them. The family hadn't eaten together in days! Not to mention swimming or a late-night zoo tour.

"But Mom..." Mona tried to ask as Mom rummaged around for their swimsuits and warmed up the car.

"But Dad..." she began the next day as he tucked a hefty animal guide under his arm and the two set off for the zoo.

There was no need for any questions after that. Mona had an amazing time swimming with her mom and at the late-night zoo with her dad.

"Goodnight, Mom! Goodnight, Dad!" Mona said in her parents' bedroom doorway. That's when she noticed the pair of colourful glasses on Mom's nightstand and the homemade candy wrappers next to Dad's pillow.

"It actually worked!" Mona exclaimed with a grin and crept softly to her room. "Mom wore my glasses and Dad snacked on the candy."

In that moment, Mona felt like she was the real winner of the invention competition. She'd managed to come up with two whole inventions that brought a little bit of attention to her days and made life easier for a while.

Heads or Tails

First place in the kids' park race, second place in the drawing competition, and third place in the singing contest – those were all just a warmup for the feat awaiting Mona's family ahead. Mom and Dad could never have imagined that so many contests existed or that they could all take place in such a short amount of time. Mona usually

limited herself to just a handful of such events, but taking part in competitions was a good opportunity for spending just a little more time with her parents. So, she joined all kinds of extracurricular clubs that her school offered and signed up for every single competition scheduled to take place in the near future.

“I’ve got a judo competition on Saturday. Who’s coming with me?” Mona announced, giving her busy parents a questioning look and practicing her judo techniques on a big couch cushion. The girl’s skills made her feel more self-confident but terrified their cat Roosi.

“There are two competitions on Sunday: kids’ singing in the morning and bird drawing in the afternoon,” Monica reminded them and started doing vocal exercises so loudly that Mom grabbed her headphones and Dad disappeared into his study. Mona’s high notes were long and resonant.

“And next week is our class trivia competition, a recitation competition at the library, and a competitive relay around the city,” Mona said cheerily while observing her pale-faced parents’ reactions. Mom’s deadline for drafting next year’s calendar was coming up. Dad needed to do the layout for a new newspaper about exciting hobbies that he wanted to publish.

Despite their hectic schedules, Mom did her best to support Mona in the park race by jogging alongside her while simultaneously jotting down calendar notes. In the process, she accidentally ran into a ditch, took a wrong turn, and stepped on an elderly gentleman’s toe. Ow!

Despite their intense agendas, Dad spent hours in the library watching and listening to the recitation competition, the winners’ awards ceremony, and the losers’ cascade of tears. All the while, he sat with his computer in his lap, designing away. The tapping of keys on his keyboard could be heard all the way to the back row. Dad was given a warning by the organizer and scolded by the other focused parents.

“Well, that was quite a weekend,” Mom sighed and collapsed, exhausted, onto the armchair to enjoy a cup of carefully brewed coffee.

“Luckily I can keep working on the newspaper now...” Dad said with a sigh of relief, dragging an extension cord across the room to charge his laptop.

But that was only the beginning. The very next day, Mona came home from school with news that her class was taking part in a school theatre festival, and each child needed at least one parent to come along. The day after that, Mona excitedly shared that she’d been selected as a stand-in for a dance competition that was going to take place in Finland, and it was mandatory for each attendee to have a parent travel with them. After that, it turned out that a guitar competition was to be held in five days’ time and Mona refused to go alone.

Her parents convened a crisis meeting that didn’t end as they’d hoped. Mom listed off all her unfinished projects and Dad answered with the same. Mom determined when her free time was and Dad searched his schedule high and low for unoccupied hours. And then, Mona loaded on yet another competition that she’d forgotten to tell them about before.

“Let’s flip a coin!” Dad proposed, pulling a shiny coin from his wallet. “Whoever gets tails will attend Mona’s next competitions with her.”

Mom agreed but unfortunately ended up being the one tasked with taking of their daughter.

“That’s not fair!” Mom argued. “Let’s do best two out of three.”

Although Dad wasn’t a fan of the idea, he agreed. Mom still came out as the loser and their quarrel started again from square one.

“Fine, then I’m not going anywhere!” Mona shouted to end the lengthy argument and shut herself into her bedroom. For days. She only emerged from her room to eat and ask for permission to be absent from school.

This suited her parents just fine at first. Mom was nearly finished with her calendar and Dad was just about to send his newspaper file to the printers when their phones were flooded with calls and texts from Mona’s homeroom teacher, her coach,

her music instructor, and the heads of her extracurricular clubs. On top of that, the girl's grandparents called in concern because they hadn't seen her heading to school in several days. They lived nearby and waving to each other was a fun tradition.

"We need to give Mona more support!" Mom said after ending yet another phone call. Proudly, she added, "We have such a good kid, but we just..."

Mom wrapped up her calendar and went to have a chat with Mona. Dad quickly sent his newspaper to the printer and joined his loved ones. The three discussed things for several hours. Luckily, school break was just around the corner and there was time aplenty to spend as a family. After their conversation, Mona gave a home performance of her part in the school play, played a new song on the guitar, tested her parents' trivia knowledge, taught them judo techniques, and sang songs from the upcoming song festival for hours on end.

That handful of days before the important competitions had a wonderful effect on Mona. She brought home a trophy from the guitar competition, won Best Actor at the school theatre festival, and took an impressive third place in the trivia competition. Mom and Dad followed all her accomplishments enthusiastically. Mom soaked all the tissues she could find in her purse with tears of joy while Dad lost his voice from cheering a little too emotionally.

After all the contests and competitions were over, Mona's family was able to relax a little. They went on long walks together and spent wonderful times at the café and indulged in shopping sprees and simply lounged around at home. In the end, they finally started to get a little tired of one another's company.

"I think I'll go to the library with Grandma today," Mona said thoughtfully, dialling Grandma's number. "And to the movies with Grandpa," she added as she set off for her grandparents' house.

