

# CHARLIE BUMPERS vs.

**THE TEACHER  
OF THE YEAR**



**Bill Harley**

Illustrated by Adam Gustavson



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Published by  
 PEACHTREE PUBLISHERS  
 1700 Chattahoochee Avenue  
 Atlanta, Georgia 30318-2112  
 www.peachtree-online.com

Text © 2013 by Bill Harley  
 Illustrations © 2013 by Adam Gustavson

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Design and composition by Nicola Simmonds Carmack

The illustrations were rendered in India ink and watercolor.

Printed in July 2013 by RR Donnelley & Sons in Harrisonburg, VA, in the  
 United States of America  
 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
 First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Harley, Bill, 1954-

Charlie Bumpers vs. the Teacher of the Year / by Bill Harley ; illustrated by Adam Gustavson.

pages cm

Summary: Charlie Bumpers is sure he does not stand a chance of getting along with his fourth grade teacher and despite his best efforts to be neat and well-behaved, he always seems to be in trouble until he discovers her secret.

ISBN: 978-1-56145-732-8 / 1-56145-732-9

[1. Teachers—Fiction. 2. Schools—Fiction. 3. Orderliness—Fiction. 4. Behavior—Fiction. 5. Family life—Fiction. 6. Humorous stories.] I. Gustavson, Adam, illustrator. II. Title. III.

Title: Charlie Bumpers versus the Teacher of the Year.

PZ7.H22655Ch 2013

[Fic]—dc23

2013004850





To my brothers John and Chris Harley,  
from the one in the middle

It's hard to believe the great number of good people who had a hand in bringing this book from idea to the page. It's also hard to know where their suggestions end and my work begins. Thanks to all, but to these in particular: Ann Hoppe, whose idea it was; Kendra Marcus, who nursed it along; faithful readers Connie Rockman, Carol Birch, and Mary Gay Ducey; Nicole Geiger, who embraced it; Margaret Quinlin and everyone at Peachtree; Vicky Holifield, editor with the keen eye and gentle prodding; Michele Eaton; Linda and Irshad Haque, for providing a place to write in beautiful Ojai; and Debbie Block for believing in Charlie all along even when that wasn't his name.







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# Disaster Boy

My dad always says, “Charlie Bumpers, your closet looks like a tornado came through and decided to live there.”

Ha ha ha. My dad is a riot. But he’s right. My closet is usually a mess. And the top drawer of my dresser. And my backpack.

I mean to keep things neat. But then something else happens.

I had a couple of hours to do the impossible. My mom told me that I had put it off long enough. I had to clean out my closet before she got back... or else.

I didn’t ask what she meant when she said “or else.” And I didn’t want to find out.





I'd already pulled out a bunch of clothes (like the sweatshirt with the Martian on it I'd thought was lost), a can of tennis balls, a Nerf football, seven socks (none of them matched), the Christmas card from Uncle Ron from when I was five (with the money taken out), two pairs of smelly old sneakers, and the dorky dress shoes I'd told Mom I couldn't find so I wouldn't have to wear them.

Then I found my old soccer ball. The little one I got when I was five. Playing soccer's my favorite thing to do. It's a lot more fun than cleaning closets.

I decided to give the old soccer ball to my little sister. She'd like it. When she likes something she squeals, and it's pretty funny.





But I still wasn't done with my closet. I held my breath and went back in. I was down to the second layer.

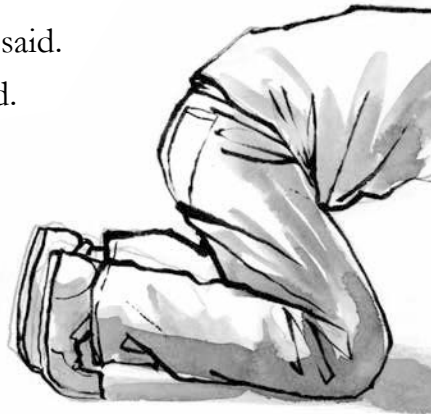
I dragged out my second-grade project on the solar system (now missing the planets Mercury and Neptune), the ancient tennis racket my dad said I could have, a Wiffle ball bat with a crack in the handle, my Dracula costume from last Halloween, a tyrannosaurus (stuffed) and a triceratops (plastic), a bunch of busted handheld games, three trophies from teams I'd been on, a broken kite, and...

Never mind. You get the picture.

I took the Wiffle ball bat and scraped everything else out of the floor of the closet. I had to get this job done before Mom got home.

My brother Matt stuck his head in my room. "You are so dead," he said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.





“Your closet looks better, but now your room is a huge mess. Mom’ll freak out!”

I looked around. Everything that had been in my closet was now scattered all over the floor. “Where am I going to put all this stuff?” I moaned.

“That’s *your* problem,” Matt said. “And it’s a big one.” Then he pulled his head out of the doorway and disappeared down the hall.

“Thanks a lot!” I yelled. “Couldn’t you help me?”

“You’re way beyond help,” he called back. “Good luck, Disaster Boy.”

Matt is two years older than me. “Two years older, two years smarter,” he says.

Matt will always be older than I am, but I have hopes that someday I’ll be bigger than he is and pay him back by giving him the giant noogie he truly deserves.

I had almost finished hanging up my pants and shirts when I heard Ginger’s special bark that meant a car had just pulled into our driveway.

*Mom!* Pretty soon she’d be coming up to inspect





my closet. I panicked and started shoving stuff under my bed.

“It’s me, Mabel!” my little sister yelled up the stairs, as if I wouldn’t recognize her earsplitting voice. “We’re home!” she squealed.

“Hey!” I yelled back. “You want my old soccer ball?”

“Charlie!” my mother called up the stairs. She sounded excited. “Guess what? I found out who your teacher is going to be!”

“What?” I stopped stuffing sweatshirts behind my beanbag chair. I didn’t care if things were a mess anymore. “You know who my teacher is?”

“You have Mrs. Burke!” she shouted. “Isn’t that great? Last year she was Teacher of the Year!”

My heart stopped beating for a minute, then started up again really fast, like it was trying to jump out of my chest.





It couldn't be true. There was no way I could have Mrs. Burke.

Matt was right. I was so dead.

