



If there's one piece of advice I can give you for your first day at a new school, it's this: avoid sliming your entire classroom. Even if it's only an accident, you'll probably end up in trouble with your new teacher . . . or your classmates . . . or your principal. Or with all three, like I did.

The day started out innocently enough. I'd decided to experiment with toast toppings, and was creating an interesting swirling pattern on my multigrain when Dad bounded down the stairs with Max on his back.

‘Would you like a sample?’ I offered them my plate.

Dad raised his eyebrows. ‘Vegemite and honey? No thanks, Edie.’

‘No, Dee-Dee,’ Max said, with a toothy grin.

‘Suit yourself,’ I said, shrugging. Thirty-six-year-olds and two-year-olds tended to be a bit fussy when it came to experimenting with food. One time last year I made breakfast pizzas, and they refused to try even a small slice. Just because the fruit, cereal and milk went a little gluggy in the oven didn’t mean the pizzas wouldn’t taste good. (Although, on that occasion, they *bad* tasted pretty terrible.)

I bit into my deliciously tangy toast, and beamed at them. ‘Tastes great!’

‘If you say so,’ Dad said, as he fixed himself and Max some boring, non-experimental wheat flakes.

‘Have you seen my keys?’ Mum bustled in, smelling of flowery perfume. ‘I can’t find them anywhere.’ I was used to seeing Mum’s frizzy

hair poking out all over the place (a lot like mine), but today it was pinned back neatly in a high bun. I wondered how long it had taken her to get it so smooth. When I used to do ballet, Mum had to plaster my hair with five cans of hairspray just to get it to stay (reasonably) in place.

‘Are they on the key hook?’ Dad said, grinning. He pointed to where the keys were hanging on the pegboard by the fridge.

Mum exhaled. ‘Thank goodness for that.’ She dumped them in her handbag, then started checking off her fingers.

‘So . . . Max naps around 2 pm. If you go out this morning, the nappy bag needs a new packet of wipes. Oh, and could you please pick up some milk?’

‘Sure,’ Dad said. ‘I *have* looked after Max before, you know.’ He let out an exaggerated sigh, and rolled his eyes.

‘Yah, ya know?’ said Max, copying Dad’s exaggerated sigh.

I giggled. With the same shaggy blond hair, cheeky grin and bright eyes, Max and Dad could've been twins, if they weren't thirty-four years apart in age.

Mum laughed. 'Okay, point taken.'

'So . . .' Dad clipped on Max's bib. 'Are you ready for your first day, Edie?'

'Hmm.' I licked remnants of vegemite and honey off my fingers. 'I think so.' There had been a pair of overactive butterflies hovering around my stomach since the night before, but other than that I was feeling okay. 'It'll be nice to have some new lab partners . . . But I'll definitely miss Winnie.' Winnie was my best friend at my old school, and she loved science too. We used to live next door to each other, but now we lived on opposite sides of the city.

'Of course.' Dad squeezed my shoulder. 'But I'm sure you'll be making bubble towers with some new buddies in no time.' He winked.

Mum groaned. 'No more bubble towers this decade, please!'

Dad and I shared a smile. He once helped Winnie and me with a Never-Ending Bubble Experiment, which didn't exactly go to plan. Long story short, we spent an entire day cleaning foamy bubbles off every single surface of our house.

Mum kissed me on the forehead. 'Just be yourself, sweetie, that's all that matters.'

'That's right,' agreed Dad. 'Everything else will fall into place.'

'Yeah, I hope so.'

Max, having been left out of the conversation for a good twenty seconds, took that opportunity to upend his cereal bowl all over the table.

'Uh-oh!' He covered his mouth with his hands. (Even though I'm 99 per cent sure it was on purpose.)

'Oh no, Max!' Dad hopped up to grab a dishcloth, and I ducked upstairs to get ready.

As I packed my shiny new stationery and mountain of books into my backpack, my eyes

fell upon my science kit in the corner of the room. A light bulb turned on in my head.

Mum and Dad were right – I just needed to be myself. And what better way to introduce myself to my new classmates than by showing them how much I love science?

I grabbed my science kit and slipped it on top of my books, then zipped up my overfilled bag. I couldn't *wait* to meet my new class. It was going to be a great day.

