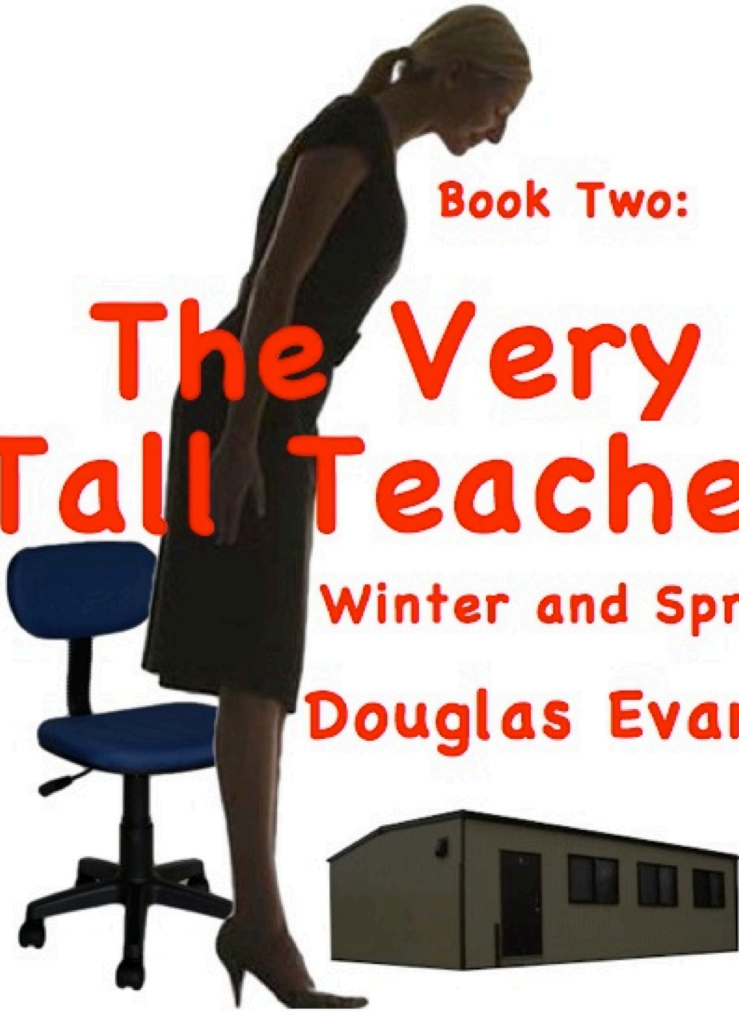


A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a black sleeveless dress and high heels, is bowing deeply towards a small, grey schoolhouse with a black door and windows. A blue office chair is positioned behind her. The entire scene is framed by a thick red border.

**Book Two:**

# **The Very Tall Teacher**

**Winter and Spring**

**Douglas Evans**

He also wrote *The Elevator Family*, *Classroom at the End of the Hall*, and *MVP: Magellan Voyage Project*.





# THE VERY TALL TEACHER

## Winter & Spring

### Book Two

Douglas Evans



WT Melon  
[www.wtmelon.com](http://www.wtmelon.com)

*"good stories; good tunes"*

# **For the Teachers; tall and short**

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## The Very Tall Teacher 2, Winter and Spring





**WT Melon**  
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*"good stories; good tunes"*

## 1. In the Fog

The ceiling of the Portable swung open. Fingers of fog flowed into our shoebox-shaped classroom that stood next to the playground. The dozen of us second-graders who sat inside looked up but saw only swirling gray mist.

“Good morning, class,” said our very tall teacher. Her voice tumbled from the fog.

Out the window I saw Miss Biggypedagog, who everyone calls Miss Biggy, sitting in her giant swivel chair. Only her brown shoes, black skirt, and white blouse were visible. The rest of her one hundred eleven feet—her shoulders, neck and head--vanished into the low cold clouds.

“Since I can’t see a thing in the classroom today,” Miss Biggy said, “you may ask questions without raising your hand.”

"How's the weather up there, Miss Biggy?" I called from my front row desk.

"Wonderful, Jenny," our tall teacher said. "My head is above the fog where it's sunny and warm.

At this point Justin, Bret, and Colin, three boys who sat in the back row, slipped from their seats. They plopped onto the pillows in the reading corner.

"If you can't see us, Miss Biggy, how do you know what we're doing?" Justin asked.

"Don't forget my big ears can hear the smallest sounds, Bret. For instance, I know Nora is absent today, since I haven't heard her desk open. And Drew is drawing right now, for I hear the tap, tap of his pencil. Yes, I can hear *everything*."

Justin, Bret, and Colin darted back to their desks.

"Thank you boys," said Miss Biggy. "Now, class, let's begin the morning with handwriting."

A colossal card held between two enormous fingers dropped from the fog. On it was written a big capital *B*. Using the school flagpole as a pointer, Miss Biggy traced the letter to show how it's formed.

"Now, class, write one line of capital B's," she said.

I went to work. I knew the treat in store for me when I finished.

"Done!" Tim and I said together.

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Down through the mist came Miss Biggy's hand again. With our papers, Tim and I climbed onto her thumb. The hand went up, and we rose through a gray world. In no time, we were squinting in sunshine, sitting face to face with our very tall teacher.

Miss Biggy held a magnifying glass that she hung around her neck on yellow yarn. She aimed the lens at our handwriting.

"Beautiful," she said, and on each of our papers she put a thick red checkmark with her ten-foot long red pen.

During morning recess, I saw that Miss Biggy faced another fog problem. With her head above the clouds, how was she going to watch us?

Miss Biggy dropped to her knees. Still not low enough, she lay on her side.

"That's better," she said. "Now I can watch you all."

I noticed that the soles of Miss Biggy's brown shoes rose up tall and straight. I kicked a red ball against the right shoe bottom and found that it made an excellent kickball wall. Phoebe picked up a strand of our teachers long brown hair that was lying across the basketball court. I made a perfect jump rope. Then Bret and Justin saw that her huge hand was resting on the softball diamond, and started climbing her curled fingers as if they were part of a new jungle gym. It was the best recess of the year.

Afterwards, fog still shrouded the Portable.

“Math time, class,” Miss Biggy said, and she lowered a stack of three by five yard flashcards onto the classroom floor.

“Who knows the times tables?” she asked.

“I do! I can!” I shouted, louder than anyone else.

“OK, Jenny. Begin.”

Miss Biggy began flipping the giant cards.

“Twenty-one! Eighteen! Fifty-four!” I called out.

*Flip! Flip! Flip!*

Like giant fans, the flashing cards stirred up the fog.

“Twelve! Sixteen! Eight!” I said.

*Flip! Flip! Flip!*

The flash card breeze blew stronger.

*Flip! Flip!*

I saw that the cards were sweeping the fog away from the Portable. The blurry outline of Miss Biggy’s face appeared overhead. With each flipping card, she came more in focus.

“Forty-nine! Fifty-Six!”

*Flip!*

“Eighty-one!” I shouted as the last card appeared.

When I looked up, I saw the blue sky. I saw a cloud and a crow fly by. I also saw our very tall teacher smiling down at me.

“That’s was very good, Jenny,” she said, resting her elbows on the classroom wall. “Nice to see you again.”

## 2. Long School Months

**I** think of February and March as the long school months. These months have the fewest vacations and the most indoor recesses due to wet weather. During these months teachers also pack in the most schoolwork before the warm days of spring arrive.

During February, however, Miss Biggy found ways of making learning fun. One morning, she placed a calculator, the size of a mattress, on the floor of the Portable.

“Who can write thirty-four thousand, five hundred and sixty-seven?” she asked

Gabby volunteered. She climbed onto the calculator and jumped upon the **3** button. The springy button sent her over to the **4**...*Bounce! Bounce!*...to the **5** and **6**.... *Bounce!*...and finally to the **7**.

It looked like so much fun I volunteered to

write **17,978** “Yeoweee!” I shouted, as I hopped around the giant calculator.

A week later, Miss Biggy set a shell as large as a car in the Portable.

“For science we’ll be studying the ocean,” she said. “My Uncle Everest sent me this shell from my home in the Highlands. Who wants to go inside and hear what the ocean sounds like?”

We took turns crawling into the shell. When my turn came I got on my hands and knees and the shell’s long opening. At once, I slapped my hands over their ears.

“It sounds more like a typhoon in here!” I shouted. “And I see grains of sand the size of golf balls!”

On Valentine’s Day, before the ceiling opened, I said the others “Portable kids”, “Since Miss Biggy is a hundred times bigger than the other teachers, let’s make her a card a hundred times bigger than a regular one.”

Phoebe and I fetched rolls of red and pink paper from the art cupboard. Tim and Gabby cut out a huge pink heart. They glued it to a bigger red square. On the card I used a large felt pen to write:

*Roses are red;  
Violets are blue.  
This heart’s not as big,  
As the one inside you.*

When the card was finished, I said, “Everyone come sign the biggest valentine in the

history of schools!"

Miss Biggy received the card, with a smile. She stapled it to the bulletin board with her twenty-foot stapler.

"I feel like crying," she said. "But I don't want to flood the classroom."

March was extra gloomy. Even the tall teacher had a hard time smiling during these cold, wet days.

"Perhaps I'm homesick," she told her students.

"You must get lonely being the only giant teacher in California," said Drew.

"Yes, I miss my friends in the Highlands," Miss Biggy replied. "I even miss Uncle Everest."

The class laughed. We had heard many stories about Miss Biggy's grumpy Uncle Everest.

"But I have an idea to cheer us all up," she said.

Our tall teacher kept her supplies in a large canvas bag that hung on the back of her giant swivel chair. From the bag she drew a jar of soapy water and a loop of wire. She dipped the wire into the soap solution and waved it over the playground. Out came a bubble larger than the jungle gym.

My whole class raced outside. We watched the big bubble rise, swirl, and settle on the softball field.

Justin charged toward the tall clear globe.

"I'm going to pop that thing," he shouted.

Miss Biggy spun in her chair. "Justin! Don't touch that!"

Her warning came too late. Justin smacked into the bubble's thin skin and fell right through it. At the same time, a gust of wind swept the bubble off the grass, Justin and all.

Miss Biggy sprang to her feet. The bubble danced in the air out of her reach. It sailed over the swings, and did a loop-the-loop. Inside, Justin tumbled around as if in a clothes drier.

Luckily, a crow flew by. The bird popped the bubble, and Justin dropped. In one swift motion, Miss Biggy pulled a handkerchief from her canvas bag and stretched it between her hands. The boy landed upon the cloth without a bruise.

"What a ride!" Justin shouted. "Can I do that again?"

Miss Biggy made a face. "Not a chance. If it weren't for the bird, you'd be sailing over the ocean by now."

At the end of March, jumbo daffodils bloomed around the Portable. Miss Biggy had planted the bulbs in the fall. Over the winter, the green stems sprouted until they stood taller than the Portable walls. Now the yellow blossoms nodded the dozen of us in the classroom below. The long school months were finally over.

One afternoon Miss Biggy noticed Justin

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eyeing the daffodil stems out the window. She smiled and placed one of her giant cards in the flowerbed.

“Many flower gardens have signs saying *Please Don’t Pick*,” she told the class. “But our flowers have a special sign. Justin will you please read it.”

Justin laughed and read, “*Please Don’t Climb*.”



### 3. Soccer Practice

One day after school, Miss Biggy sat in her swivel chair, grading spelling tests. She had attached a large piece of plywood to the top of the Portable's wall to serve as her desk. As she raised her magnifying lens to check the next paper, a voice startled her.

"Hard at work, Miss Biggypedagog?"

Mr. Mussy, the school principal, stood on the top rung of a ladder that was propped against the Portable wall. "Miss Biggypedagog, each spring our school hosts a soccer tournament," he said. "Each of our classes plays a class from another school. In short, I hope you know how to play soccer, Miss Biggypedagog."

Miss Biggy rolled back her chair. "Soccer is the most popular sport around the world, Mr. Mussy. I was on the Highland High School

soccer team.”

“Outstanding!” said the principal. “Then your class can start practicing for their match right away.”

The next day, Miss Biggy wore a silver whistle the size of a trash can around her neck. “It’s soccer tournament time, class,” she said.

All twelve of us groaned.

“What? No one likes to play soccer?” our teacher said.

“Last year we got creamed seven to zip,” said Drew.

“The other team went home bragging,” I said.

“But it’s a new year,” said Miss Biggy. “So come outside and let’s practice.”

My class trudged out the door.

Our tall teacher knelt on the edge of the soccer field. “The first drill is to dribble a ball down the field with your feet,” she said. “Go around those markers at the far end and come back.

The markers were tall thumbtacks from Miss Biggy’s canvas bag. My practice began poorly. I ran and kicked, but the ball went everywhere but toward the markers.

Miss Biggy placed her hands on her hips. “Let me show you how it’s done, Jenny” she said.

I froze. How could our tall teacher kick a soccer ball with her mammoth feet? Then I laughed when she lowered her right hand onto

the field, and with her middle and index fingers, she swiftly moved the ball down the field.

“See, Jenny,” she said. “To dribble a soccer ball make short kicks with the inside of your shoe. Move it back and forth between your feet.”

For the next drill, Miss Biggy bent two giant paper clips into the shape of soccer goals. She stuck one in the ground at each end of the field.

“Now let’s practice shooting,” she said.

Again, I had trouble. My shots went to the right, left, and over the paper-clip goals, anywhere but through it.

“Kick the ball with the top of your shoes, Jenny, not the toes,” Miss Biggy explained.

As if shooting marbles, her finger flicked two balls straight through the goal.

In the meantime, Drew sat by the Portable. While trying to kick a ball, he had fallen backward.

“Don’t give up, Drew,” said Miss Biggy.

“My feet are too big and clumsy,” the boy sobbed. “No one can kick a ball with big feet like mine.”

Miss Biggy blew her whistle. “We’ll see about that tomorrow,” she said. “Practice is over for today.”

The next morning our tall teacher showed up wearing soccer shorts, socks, and shoes size XXXXXXXXXXXXL. Her shirt had a big H on front.

“Come outside, everyone,” she said.

On the soccer field, I ran up to a forty-foot tall soccer ball.

*"Humongous,"* I said.

"That ball could barely fit into the gym," said Tim.

"Stand back, class," Miss Biggy. "Give my big feet plenty of room."

With a tap of her foot, our tall teacher kicked the ball upward. It landed on her knee. The ball bounced knee-to-knee, foot-to-foot until she booted it high in the air. The class gasped. If that huge sphere landed on the school, it would crush it. But no, it came straight down, and Miss Biggy butted it off her forehead. High into the air it flew again, and this time it landed on the foot where it began.

We all cheered.

I knew Drew was watching closely. "Miss Biggy, I didn't know your big feet could do all that," he said.

We did a few more passing and shooting drills and this time Drew joined us. He wasn't very good, but we were glad he tried.

Afterward Miss Biggy said, "Now let's have a practice game. You dozen 'Portable Kids' against my two hands, Lefty and Righty."

Standing astride the field, our tall teacher bent over, dropped her hands on the grass and ran her fingers from one paper-clip goal to the other. The game was so fun no one remembered to keep score.

The soccer tournament took place the

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following Monday. Throughout our game, the tall teacher cheered and whistled. When Arman scored, she leaped for joy. The whole field to shook when she landed. Still, the “Portable Kids” lost our match five to one.

“But I didn’t trip once during the game, Miss Biggy,” said Drew.

“And the other team didn’t brag,” said Justin.

“They were too busy gawking at our tall teacher,” I said. “They knew we have the best soccer coach in the world.”



## 4. Trip To The Ocean

We had been studying the ocean for two weeks when our tall teacher announced, “We’re taking a field trip to the beach.”

Miss Biggy wore a wide straw hat, a flowery Hawaiian shirt, and blue Bermuda shorts. “Come outside, class,” she said. “The Flying Classroom is waiting.”

We tore out the Portable’s door. We now stood, not on the playground, but inside a long white room. The Flying Classroom, actually one of the tall teacher’s milk cartons, had changed since their last field trip. Miss Biggy’s giant gold stars decorated the walls. A piece of green felt covered the floor, and large pink erasers stood before the cutout windows to serve as stools.

I looked up and saw our tall teacher’s face through a slot in the roof. “Take a seat,

everyone,” she said. “Time for lift-off. Upsy-daisy!”

My stomach heaved and I knew the milk carton was rising. Out the window I saw Miss Biggy wrist and figures she was carrying us like a football. *Flip flop! Flip flop!* went her sandals as she strolled toward the ocean. With her long swift strides, we arrived there in minutes.

“The tide is low, class,” I heard her say. “There are lots of tide pools to explore.”

The teacher had set the carton on the sandy shore. When she opened the spout we poured out and began hopping tide pool to tide pool, searching for starfish, sea urchins, and crabs.

Miss Biggy sat on boulder, wiggling her toes in the sand. I saw her brush away two seagulls circling her head.

After a while she said, “I saw a whale spout not too far from shore. Let’s going whale watching! Our Flying Classroom is about to become a floating one.”

We funneled back into the milk carton. Soon the entire white room was wobbling back and forth

“We’re floating! We’re on the ocean!” I said. “Our Flying Classroom floats as well as any boat.”

I looked out the window and saw waves breaking on the shore. I knew our tall teacher must have been waving in the water and pushing us out to sea for the beach got farther

and farther away. Soon it was only a distant white line.

“Thar she blows!” Colin suddenly shouted.

A gray whale had surfaced right outside my window. From its top came a fountain of steam.

“Thar she blows!” I shouted, when it spouted again.

As I watched the whale, a fishing boat rounded the point.

“We should return to shore, class,” Miss Biggy said. “A teacher my size, wading with a milk carton filled with children might alarm those fishermen.”

Back on the beach, the class combed the sand for treasures. Justin found three sand dollars and claimed he was rich. Phoebe looked for stones in the shape of hearts. Gabby, Phoebe, and I jumped rope with long bullwhip kelp.

Meanwhile, Miss Biggy sculpted a sixty-foot high sand castle. She was digging the castle moat when something on the horizon caught her eye.

“Another ship is coming, children,” she said. “It’s high time we hightailed it back to school.”

I looked seaward. A tall-masted ship, its white sails billowing, was heading toward shore.

“What’s wrong, Miss Biggy?” I asked. “Are you worried that the ship is close, and you’ll scare those sailors, too?”

“That ship isn’t close, Jenny,” my teacher replied. “It appears that way, because it’s very big. I know that tall ship. It has sailed across the High Seas from the Highlands and will arrive here at high tide. I think, Jenny, that we’re about to have a visitor.”

## 5. Our Visitor

"Good morning, class," Miss Biggy called out. "Today I have a surprise for you."

When the ceiling opened the next morning, the Portable went dead quiet. A second giant head appeared beside Miss Biggy's. A man with a long gray beard and wire-rimmed spectacles glared down at us.

*"Fe fi fo fum,"* he grumbled. *"Don't make any noise; sit on your bum."*

"Class, meet Uncle Everest," said Miss Biggy. "He's come to visit our classroom this week."

The man leaned forward. His beard brushed the top of my desk. When he spoke, his breath smelled like tea. *"Fe fi fo fum. I see someone chewing gum."*

"Oh, don't be such an ogre, Uncle," Miss Biggy said. "I want you to meet the twelve

wonderful "Portable Kids".

Uncle Everest fiddled with his eyeglasses. "So *this* is your class, Annapurna?" he said. "They look like little dolls to me. And you're far too old to be playing with dolls.

We didn't know whether to smile or frown.

"Perhaps, Uncle, it's best if you go sit on the softball backstop," said Miss Biggy. "We have lots of school work to do."

Out the window we saw the giant man step to the softball diamond. Scowling, he sat on the backstop.

"Please forgive Uncle Everest, class," Miss Biggy said. "He's never been away from the Highlands before. He's used to the high life. This is all new to him."

At recess time, Tim, Ginger, and I walked up to the visitor. We stood by the toe of his high leather boots.

"How do you like our school, Uncle Everest?" I asked.

"Do you know the San Francisco Giants baseball team?" asked Tim.

"Did you ever smell the blood of an Englishman?" asked Ginger.

The man brushed a Frisbee from his beard that Justin had tossed there by accident. "*Fe fi fo fum*," he said. "*Children don't ask silly questions where I come from.*"

At that moment, Mr. Mussy, the principal, walked up to home plate. "You must be Miss Biggy-pedagog's Uncle Everest," he said.

“Welcome to our school. We’re proud to have your niece teaching here.”

*“Fe fi fo fum,”* Uncle Everest said again. *“Why do your students act so dumb? They can’t do the simplest sum. Their reading skills are minimum.”*

The principal stepped backward. “But our school gets top test scores, sir,” he said.

During lunchtime, Miss Biggy knelt with Uncle Everest on the grass outside the gym. They used the top of the tall room as a picnic table. As we ate inside, we overheard their talk,

“Uncle, please try to be more agreeable during your visit,” said Miss Biggy. “These students and staff are my friends.”

“Annapurna,” he said. “After your parents died, you were left in my charge. I’ve raised you since you were a ten-foot long baby. I’ve always cared for you very much.”

“I know that, Uncle,” said Miss Biggy.

“When you wanted to become a teacher I objected,” Uncle Everest went on. “When you left home to teach in California, I thought that was a bigger mistake. I had high hopes that you had a higher calling in life.”

“But I love my job, Uncle,” said the tall teacher.

“You must know why I’ve come here, Annapurna. I want to take you back to the Highlands with me. You are wasting your time and talent teaching at this school.”

“I’m a big girl now, Uncle,” said Miss Biggy.  
“I can make my own decisions.”

Below in the gym, we ate our lunches in silence.

“So Miss Biggy has no parents,” said Phoebe.

“And Uncle Everest wants her to leave us,” said Justin.

“This isn’t good,” I said.

## 6. Open House

The next evening was Open House. That morning, our tall teacher called the “Portable Kids” outside. A single piece of white paper covered the entire soccer field.

“Remove your shoes and socks, class,” Miss Biggy said. “For an Open House project, we’re going to *foot* paint. Using only your feet, see if you can make a picture of the ocean floor.”

Our teacher pulled giant bottles of paint from her canvas bag. She squirted blue paint onto the paper and smeared it around with her fingers. She added dabs of yellow, red, and green.

“Now shuffle, slide, skate, or skip across the paper,” she said. “What sea creatures can you make with your feet? Only be careful not to slip and fall.”

"Can I make an octopus?" I asked.

"You can make any creature you want that lives in the ocean," said Miss Biggy.

I charged onto the paper. Scuffing my feet, I made a large eight-legged October. The paint oozed between my toes, cool, soft, and squishy. Beside me Madeline made a whale and Ginger made a shark. With a running start, Colin skid through green paint to make seaweed, and Phoebe twirled on a puddle of pink paint to form a jellyfish.

While Drew was painting a seal, he belly flopped on a glob of blue paint. He stepped onto the grass, blue from head to foot.

Miss Biggy pulled a huge squirt gun from her canvas bag. "No problem, Drew," she said, and she quickly hosed him off with a few squirts of water.

When the ocean foot painting was finished, our tall teacher said, "Now we need to go into the Portable and clean out our desks. I'll be inspecting the insides with my magnifying lens," Miss Biggy said.

While we cleaned, our tall teacher pulled the bulletin board off the wall and placed it on her lap. With the tip of her finger, she arranged some of our math work and writing papers on the cork.

"The room is ready," Miss Biggy said after putting the board back on the wall. "I'll see everyone here tonight."

Open House started at seven-thirty. The

sun was just setting and the Portable waited under a pink sky. When I arrived with my mom and dad, I pointed to the top of the Portable.

"See, Mom and Dad," I said. "With the roof off, we have Open House everyday."

Miss Biggy, with her hair up in a bun and wearing her best red dress, sat in her swivel chair.

"Don't forget to take your parents for a walk across our ocean masterpiece on the soccer field, Jenny," she said.

"I made the octopus," I said.

I saw Gabby standing by the bulletin board with her mother. "And here's a story I wrote," she said. "It's about the time Miss Biggy lifted me into the treetops, so I could watch a cowbird build a nest."

Tim stood by the art table with his parents. "I drew this picture of Miss Biggy's baseball mitt," he said. "It's size extra, extra, extra, extra, extra, *extra* large."

As I led my parents out to the soccer field to see our foot painting, I noticed Uncle Everest sitting on the softball backstop. In the twilight, I could only make out the man's tall, slender frame, but I clearly heard his grumbling

"*Fe fi fo fum*," he muttered. "*Seeing Annapurna with all those small people is worrisome.*"



## 7. Reading Problems

Of the dozen “Portable Kids”, I was the worst reader. Each time Miss Biggy called on me to read aloud, I read word by word by word. I slowed down the story, and I heard the other kids groan and sigh impatiently.

One afternoon, the tall teacher said, “Jenny, I want to give you extra tutoring in reading. We’ll start today after school.”

This was great news. Practicing with Miss Biggy was always fun.

After school, my tall teacher lowered her hand into the Portable, and I climbed onto her thumb.

“Let’s go read in the teacher’s room,” she said.

I had never been inside the teachers’ room before. At one end, teachers sat around a table,

chatting and drinking coffee. The other end was a recent addition, in which the ceiling sloped upward ten stories. Miss Biggy entered this end and placed me on a high shelf above a high table. I stood next to a jumbo tea mug and a mountain of giant teacher books towered beside me.

While Miss Biggy got ready to tutor me, I climbed onto a whale of a stapler. It must have been twenty feet long. I hopped on the springy end, and “Yeoweee!” sprang off onto a jumbo eraser.

“Let’s read,” said Miss Biggy.

She handed me a second-grade reader and opened up a reader about a hundred times the size of mine on the table. I began to read in my book in the usual way--word by word by word. After a page, I looked up, and saw Miss Biggy’s chin resting on her elbow. Her eyes were closed.

“Miss Biggy!” I called out. “You’re not listening.”

Her eyes popped open. “Sorry, Jenny. With my Uncle Everest visiting, I haven’t been getting much sleep. My uncle’s snoring kept me up all night..” Her mouth opened into a cave-like yawn.. “Now continue and I’ll make sure to follow along.”

But while I read the next page, Miss Biggy’s eyes shut again. “Jenny, this won’t do,” she said. “Let’s read outside on the grass.”

Miss Biggy carried me out to the soccer

field. She sat cross-legged on the grass with the big book on her lap. I sat on her knee.

"Now begin reading where you left off," she said.

I began reading again, word by word by word. But before I read a paragraph, Miss Biggy's eyes closed once again. Her book lay open a few feet from where I sat.

"Poor, Miss Biggy," I said. "I guess I must practice reading by myself."

I stood and climbed onto my teacher's book. The page was bigger than a basketball court. The words were taller than I was. I walked along the first sentence, reading each word. The reading seemed easy, and I walked faster. Then, still reading, I began to run. I ran until I finished an entire paragraph.

"No problem!" I shouted. "I can read much better!"

I ran and read some more. After catching my breath, I grabbed the edge of the page and pulled it over. Then I ran and read until the bottom of the second page.

Miss Biggy's eyes opened.

"Jenny! Listen to you!" she said. "I've never heard you read so well!"

I stood upon a period, panting. "Reading isn't so hard, Miss Biggy," I said. "With more exercise, I could read this whole book in a day. These big words are easy to see!"

My teacher smiled. "Jenny, I think I know why you were having trouble with reading," she

said. "You haven't been seeing the words clearly!"

I ran along another sentence, and read it smoothly. "Not if I have a big book like yours, Miss Biggy," I said.

Miss Biggy nodded. "Jenny, I'll write a note to your parent," she said. "I think you should see an eye doctor. I think you might need eyeglasses. By next week, I bet you won't be needing any more extra reading practice."

My tall teacher was correct. The following Monday, I wore a pair of red-rimmed glasses to school. All weekend, I had practiced my reading and it seemed much easier with my glasses on. During reading, I waited eagerly for Miss Biggy to call on me.

"Jenny, read please," she said at last.

I cleared my throat. Then I read the next paragraph far too fast, just to show off.

## 8. Uncle Everest Returns

One day in May I looked out the Portable's window and saw Uncle Everest sitting on the softball backstop.

*"Fe fi fo fum,"* I heard him grumble. *"Finally, my final day in California has come."*

"Tomorrow my uncle is sailing back to the Highlands," Miss Biggy told us. "So he came to our school for one last visit."

My entire class groaned.

"Your uncle thinks he's a big shot," Nora said.

"He acts so high and mighty," said Phoebe.

"Yes, Uncle Everest can be highfalutin at times," the tall teacher said. "But his heart is immense."

The morning was hectic. First, while I was reading, Justin called out, "Four-eyes!" and shouted back, "Bubble Boy!"

Miss Biggy lifted us both out of the Portable and dropped us into separate shirt pockets. "Time out for you two," she said. "I will have no more name calling in class."

During math, none of us understood how to add fractions. All hour long, Miss Biggy's hand went down and up, down and up, raising and lowering students onto her wall-top desk, so she could help us.

"It's easier using your giant calculator," said Ginger.

During recess, our tall teacher was extra busy. While she kicked a soccer ball back and forth to Drew with one hand, she twirled a jump rope for Phoebe and Ginger with the other. Later she hosed down Colin with her giant squirt gun after he fell into a mud puddle and helped Nora who skinned her knee on the foursquare court.

"The only Band-Aid I have is from my canvas bag," the teacher told her. "I'm afraid it will cover your entire leg."

Uncle Everest watched all this from his backstop seat. "*Fe fi fo fum. This school is pandemonium.*"

After recess, I lost my spelling book. Pearl got the hiccups. A bee buzzed around the room until Miss Biggy caught it with a giant piece of sticky tape. Colin's glue bottle leaked in his desk, and the tall teacher knocked over the computer with her flagpole pointer.

"What a morning, Uncle," I heard Miss

Biggy say at lunchtime. The two tall people outside the gym and used the roof as a table.

Then I heard Uncle Everest say something surprising, “Annapurna, I never knew how much a teacher does during the school day. *Fe fi fo fum. You’re also a doctor, a coach, and a mum.*”

“That’s why I love teaching, Uncle,” said Miss Biggy. “Everything I do at school seems important.”

After lunch, Uncle Everest knelt by the Portable opposite Miss Biggy.

“The class is writing tall tales this afternoon, Uncle,” Miss Biggy said.

“Tall tales?” said Uncle Everest. “That sounds like fun.”

“I’m writing my story on the computer,” I called out. “Do you want to help?”

The giant man pushed back his spectacles and I pushed back mine.

“I don’t know much about those modern contraptions,” I said.

“I’ll help you with the computer if you’ll help me with tall ideas,” I said. “But you’ll need Miss Biggy’s magnifying glass to see the screen.”

For the next half-hour, Uncle Everest and I worked at the computer. As the paper came from the printer, the giant man clapped his hands.

*“Fe fi fo fum,” he said. “What a computer wiz I’ve become.”*

Later on, the tall teacher said, “It’s

storytime, class. Join us outside.”

We dozen “Portable Kids ran out the door and found Uncle Everest sitting on Miss Biggy’s swivel chair.

“Uncle Everest, why don’t *you* read to the class today,” said the tall teacher.

“Well *fe*, well *fī*,” the man stammered.

“The children enjoy sitting on my knees when I read,” said Miss Biggy. “Would you mind?”

Before Uncle Everest could answer, we had climbed onto his boots and up his pant legs.

“*Fe fī fo fum*,” he said. “*Those tiny hands are tickle- some.*”

Our tall teacher handed her uncle a storybook. He studied the cover, stroking his beard.

“I know this story. It’s about a boy named David who defeats a giant named Goliath.”

“How could he do that?” asked Drew.

“With only a slingshot,” Uncle Everest replied with a chuckle.

I saw Miss Biggy watching her uncle as he read. My class sat on his knee without a word. Uncle Everest waved his arm as if he were mighty Goliath himself. I was glad. I knew Miss Biggy would get no more lectures about being a teacher in California.

## 9. School's Out

The last day of school had arrived. All morning we “Portable Kids” emptied our desks, took artwork off the walls, and retrieved items from the Lost and Found. By the afternoon, the Portable was bare.

“An empty classroom is sad,” Miss Biggy said. “Let’s finish the day outside.”

We charged out the door and climbed onto a giant eraser the teacher had placed by her swivel chair.

Twenty manila envelopes, each larger than the classroom door, lay on Miss Biggy’s lap.

“These are your report cards, class,” she said. “Most teachers hand them to their students on the last day. But since your report cards are so big, a van will deliver them to your houses after school.”

We knew Miss Biggy wouldn’t be returning

to their school next year. She had taken a new teaching job in New York City, the Big Apple.

“What will you do during the summer, Miss Biggy?” I asked.

“I’ll stroll across America and see the high spots,” she said. “I’ve read about redwoods trees that are twice my height and canyon walls that I couldn’t see over even on tip toes. Do you know that on Mount Rushmore someone carved four heads bigger than mine?”

At this point, Justin, Bret, and Colin jumped off the eraser. They ran into the school gym and returned carrying a long golden pole between them.

“Our class made this for you, Miss Biggy,” said Justin.

“It’s a new pointer,” Bret said.

“It’s really a telephone pole my dad got at the phone company where he works,” said Colin. “We all helped paint it.”

Miss Biggy took the pointer and waved it like a band conductor. “Now the flagpole at my new school can be used to fly flags,” she said. “Thank you very much, class. I also have a present for you.”

Our tall teacher reached into her canvas bag. She pulled out a crazy-looking sculpture made of super-size straws, Popsicle sticks, and pipe cleaners glued together at odd angles. She placed the huge thing in the center of the playground. It stood twice as high as the gym.

Mr. Mussy walked out of his office. “Miss

Biggy pedagog, may I ask what is that contraption?" he asked.

My class, however, knew exactly what it was. We were already climbing up the pipe cleaners, squirming through the straws, and sliding down the Popsicle sticks.

"It's the best climbing structure in the world," said Tim.

"*Humongous*," I said.

The principal nodded. "Annapurna, the next second-grade teacher I hire will have some big shoes to fill," he said.

At that moment, the bell rang. Our tall teacher lowered her hand and we raced toward it. We took turns squeezing and hugging each finger.

"You're now officially third-graders, class," Miss Biggy said. "I hope you continue to think big and walk tall."

Half sad, half joyful, I climbed onto a school bus and sat in the back seat. As I rode out of the parking lot, I looked out the back window. There was Miss Biggy waving to me. A few blocks later I still saw her. Even when the bus was across town, I saw my very tall teacher. She rose above the houses, stores, and trees, still smiling and waving good-bye.