





Chapter 1

There was a space alien on the loose in the Ndlovus' garden. It stomped over the grass, growling and roaring in a mysterious alien language.

“Groooooaan! Floooooop! Smeeeee! Yazuuuuu!”

The alien sounded pretty cross.

It crushed everything in its path: flowers, an empty bird's nest, an old beach ball. *Squeeeeeeaaak!* And a squeaky toy. It was on a total rampage.

Then it spotted the human being coming from inside the house. The space alien waved its yellow arms at the human and roared even more loudly. The squiggly antennas on its head wobbled angrily. It was terrifying.

“Droooooob! Yazuuuuu!”

But the human smiled. She wasn't scared at all! "Time to come inside, Bongji," she said calmly.

The space alien paused mid-growl. Then it sighed and folded its arms. "But my attack on Planet Earth isn't over," it said. "I was about to zap you, Mama!"

"Well, you'll just have to zap me later," the human said.

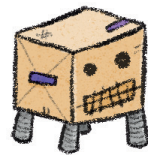
The space alien pulled off her antennas and goggles.

She wasn't an alien from outer space after all — she was a nine-year-old girl named **Bongji**. And she didn't like it when grown-ups interrupted her games. —————> **Not at all**. But that never seemed to stop them.

"Why do I have to come inside now?"

Mom's face broke into a smile. "Don't you want your surprise?"

Bongji's eyes went wide. "Surprise?"





Chapter 2

“I’m not wearing that,” Bongi said. “Uh-uh. Nope. Never.”

→ This was her big surprise? She looked at the clothes laid out on her bed. Only one word jumped into her head at that moment: **PINK. So. Much. Pink. Enough pink to hurt her eyes.**

“But this is what everyone wears to ballet lessons, sweetie.” Bongi’s mom beamed and picked up the skirt, holding it in front of Bongi to see what it would look like.

“Ballet class?” Bongi cried. “I can’t go to ballet class!”

Bongi shuddered. Shuddered the way most people would if they saw a humongous rain spider



or a giant puff adder. Except Bongi wouldn't find those scary. She thought spiders and snakes were pretty cool, actually. She loved anything creepy, spooky, strange, or scary. Spiders, snakes, ghosts, skeletons, vampires? She loved them all. → *The scarier the better, in her opinion.*

But ballerinas? She couldn't imagine anything worse. Ballerinas were just about the least creepy, least spooky things you could find. Except perhaps for unicorns. Bongi didn't like unicorns either. They were so sparkly. *Ugh.* Exactly like ballerinas.

"You'll look adorable," Bongi's mom said with a smile. "My little Bongi ballerina!"

"I don't want to look adorable." Bongi wrinkled her nose. *Adorable* was for puppies, kittens, and babies, like her one-year-old brother, Themba. Themba was adorable. But he still drooled all over his clothes and his breakfast. Even right that second, he was on the ground next to them, chewing one of the legs of Bongi's stuffed tarantula toy, Webster. It would be covered in spit by the time he was done with it.

Mom placed her hands on her hips. She suddenly became very serious, which told Bongi it was probably no use arguing anymore. “I’m sorry, Bongi, but you’ll go. It’s decided. And you will go until the end of the school term. After the art class fiasco ... and the netball incident ... ” Mom sighed. “You have to stick with something for longer this time.”

Bongi wanted to argue. It wasn’t her fault she was kicked out of art class and off the netball team after only a week of attending each.

Mrs Viljoen, the art teacher, was absolutely furious when Bongi turned herself into a papier-mâché mummy sculpture, but she and the other children simply didn’t appreciate Bongi’s artistic genius. And it was hilarious when she glued googly eyes onto all the netball balls right before a game. Bongi couldn’t help that Miss Simpson, the netball coach, had no sense of humour. Well, her teammates had laughed, but not because they thought it was funny – because they thought **she** was funny. **Weird-funny. Odd-funny. Bad funny.**