

The CHRISTMAS Genie

interior illustrations by Dan Santat

"Laugh-out-loud funny
from page one."

—School Library Journal

DAN
GUTMAN
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THE HOMEWORK
MACHINE

That Thing That Happened



You're probably not going to believe this story. Fine. That's okay. It's a free country. You can believe what you want to believe. Or not. But I know what happened. Because I was *there*.

Where is "there"? Lincoln School in Oak Park, Illinois. Fifth grade. This is what my class looks like.

Well, that's what my class would look like if you were hanging from the ceiling like Michelangelo and drawing a picture of it. But I have no idea why you would want to do a crazy thing like that.

That's me, in the second row on the left side, by the window. My name is Chase. My best friend is Alex. He's on my basketball team, but we're not allowed to sit next to each other because he's always cracking jokes and distracting me. So we had to be "separated."

family because they have to hear this stuff *all* the time.

Meteorites are kind of cool. You may not realize this, but there's a whole lot of stuff flying around in outer space, and it all has different names. Like, meteorites are rocks from space that hit the Earth, but meteors are still in space. Comets, meteoroids, and asteroids all orbit the sun. But meteoroids are small, asteroids are bigger, and comets have a tail. I know all this stuff because Mrs. Walters talks about it all the time.

"One day in 1998," Mrs. Walters told us, almost in a whisper, "some boys were playing basketball in a driveway in Monahans, Texas. And suddenly, they looked up and saw a meteorite come flying out of the sky! It crashed into the vacant lot next door to them. Can you imagine that? It was all over the papers and the TV news."

"That must have been cool," said David, who thinks everything is cool, even stuff that is totally uncool.

"You mean I might be outside minding my own business and a giant rock could come flying out of the sky?" asked Ashley. "That would be terrifying!"

year. It has something to do with the distance and angle of the sun. I'm kind of into science stuff. Anyway, everybody was excited about Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or whatever holiday it is that they celebrate. Nobody was really focusing too much on what Mrs. Walters was saying. We were all thinking about the presents we were going to get, the ski trips we were going to go on, and the family reunions we were going to have as soon as school let out. You know, all the holiday stuff. It's a nice time of year. Mrs. Walters put cheery decorations all over the walls of the class. Everybody was feeling good.

I do remember this much—when it happened, Mrs. Walters was talking about meteorites. She's an astronomy nut, and at night she's taking graduate classes because she's working on her Ph.D. in astrophysics. She tries to bring astronomy into everything she teaches us. Like, we'll be doing math and she'll have us adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing stars or planets instead of apples and oranges. Or we'll be doing health and she'll start talking about whether or not germs can survive in outer space without oxygen. I feel sorry for Mrs. Walters's

Do you have a Christmas wish?

On the last day of school before Christmas vacation, the students in Mrs. Walters's fifth-grade class are in for a surprise. A mysterious meteorite crashes into their classroom and a GENIE comes out. When he offers to grant the class one collective wish, Alex, Chase, and the rest of the kids all present why their wishes are the best. But before they can reach a consensus, they get an even bigger shock. You better be careful what you wish for!

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