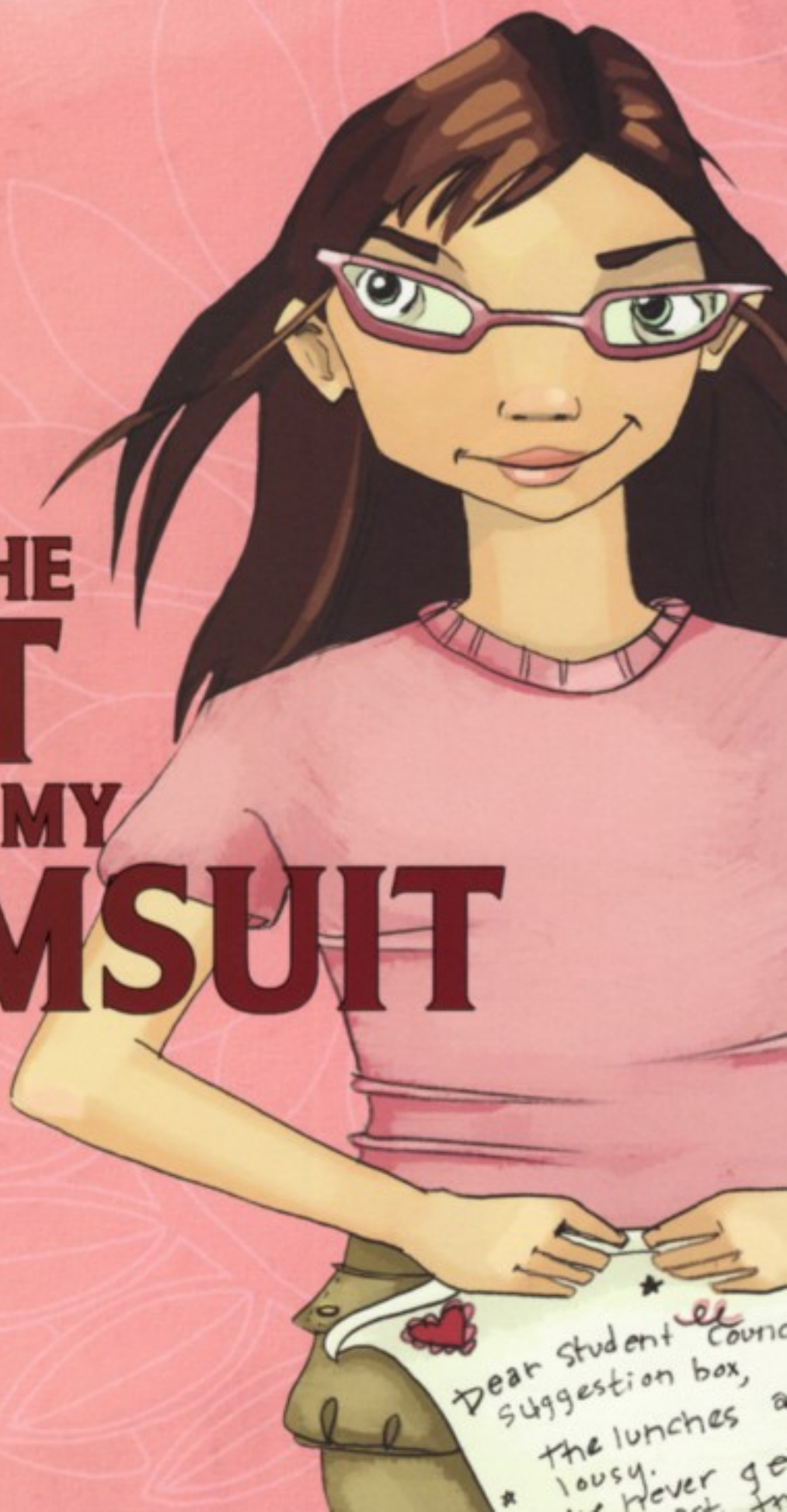


paula danziger

author of THERE'S A BAT IN BUNK FIVE



THE
CAT
ATE MY
GYMSUIT



Chapter

I

I hate my father. I hate school. I hate being fat. I hate the principal because he wanted to fire Ms. Finney, my English teacher.

My name is Marcy Lewis. I'm thirteen years old and in the ninth grade at Dwight D. Eisenhower Junior High.

All my life I've thought that I looked like a baby blimp with wire-frame glasses and mousy brown hair. Everyone always said that I'd grow out of it, but I was

PAULA DANZIGER

convinced that I'd become an adolescent blimp with wire-frame glasses, mousy brown hair, and acne.

My life is not easy. I know I'm not poor. Nobody beats me. I have clothes to wear, my own room, a stereo, a TV, and a push-button phone. Sometimes I feel guilty being so miserable, but middle-class kids have problems too.

Mom always made me go to tap and ballet lessons. She said that they'd make me more graceful. When it came time for the recital, I accidentally sat on the record that I was supposed to dance to, and broke it. I had to hum along with the tap dancing. I sing as badly as I dance. It was a disaster.

Father says that girl children should be born at the age of eighteen and married off immediately.

Stuart, my four-year-old brother, wants to be my best friend so that I can help him put orange pits in a hole in his teddy bear's head.

I'm flat-chested. I used to buy training bras and put tucks in them.

I never had any friends, except Nancy Sheridan. She's very popular, but her mother and mine are PTA officers and old friends, so I always figured that Mrs. Sheridan made her talk to me—Beauty and the Blimp.

THE CAT ATE MY GYMSUIT

School is a bummer. The only creative writing I could do was anonymous letters to the Student Council suggestion box. Lunches are lousy. We never get past the First World War in history class. We never learned anything good, at least not till Ms. Finney came along.

So my life is not easy.

The thing with Ms. Finney is what I want to talk about. She took over for Mr. Edwards, our first English teacher. He left after the first month. One rumor is that he had a nervous breakdown in the faculty lounge while correcting a test on noun clauses. Another is that he had to go to a home for unwed fathers in Secaucus, New Jersey. I personally think that he realized that he was a horrible teacher, so he took a job somewhere as a principal or a guidance counselor.

When Mr. Edwards left, we got a whole bunch of substitutes. None of them lasted more than two days. That'll teach the school to group all the smart kids in one class. We were indestructible.

The entire class dropped books, pencils, and pens at an assigned time. Someone put bubble gum in the pencil sharpener. Nancy pulled her fainting act. We made

**I HATE
MY FATHER.**
I HATE SCHOOL.
**I HATE
BEING FAT.**



Marcy Lewis is bored by school, she knows she's never going to be thin, and she is dead sure she'll never have a date. Life at home isn't great either, since her father bosses her and her mother around. Then along comes Ms. Finney, an English teacher who'll try anything in the classroom and actually treats kids like human beings. Now that she's found a teacher who sees Marcy as more than a name on an attendance sheet, Marcy realizes her life could mean something. When Ms. Finney is suspended, Marcy knows she's got to take a stand. But is this new independence worth the price she'll pay at school and at home?

"Told with zest and good humor, this is a good read."

—*The Children's Book Review Service*



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