



YEARLING

Judy Blume



Blubber

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*"It's very foolish to laugh
if you don't know what's funny
in the first place."*

My best friend, Tracy Wu, says I'm really tough on people. She says she wonders sometimes how I can like her. But we both know that's a big joke. Tracy's the best friend I'll ever have. I just wish we were in the same fifth-grade class.

My teacher is Mrs. Minish. I'm not crazy about her. She hardly ever opens the windows in our room because she's afraid of getting a stiff neck. I never heard anything so dumb. Somedays our room gets hot and stuffy and it smells—like this afternoon. We'd been listening to individual reports on *The Mammal* for almost an hour. Donna Davidson was standing at the front of the room reading hers. It was on the horse. Donna has this *thing* about horses.

I tried hard not to fall asleep but it wasn't

easy. For a while I watched Michael and Irwin as they passed a *National Geographic* back and forth. It was open to a page full of naked people. Wendy and Caroline played Tic Tac Toe behind Wendy's notebook. Wendy won three games in a row. I wasn't surprised. Wendy is a very clever person. Besides being class president, she is also group science leader, recess captain and head of the goldfish committee.

Did Mrs. Minish notice anything that was going on or was she just concentrating on Donna's boring report? I couldn't tell from looking at her. She had a kind of half-smile on her face and sometimes she kept her eyes closed for longer than a blink.

To make the time go faster I thought about Halloween. It's just two days away. I love to dress up and go Trick-or-Treating, but I'm definitely not going to be a dumb old witch again this year. Donna will probably be a horse. She dresses up like one every Halloween. Last year she said when she grows up she is going to marry a horse. She has him all picked out and everything. His name is San Salvador. Most of the time Donna smells like a horse but I wouldn't tell her that because she might think it's a compliment.

I yawned and wiggled around in my chair.

"In closing," Donna said, "I would like you

to remember that even though some people say horses are stupid that is a big lie! I personally happen to know some very smart horses. And that's the end of my report."

The whole class clapped, not because Donna's report was great, but because it was finally over. Mrs. Minish opened her eyes and said, "Very nice, Donna."

Earlier, when I had finished my report on the lion, Mrs. Minish said the same thing to me. *Very nice, Jill.* Just like that. Now I couldn't be sure if she really meant it. My report wasn't as dull as Donna's but it wasn't as long either. Maybe the longer you talk the better grade you get. That wouldn't be fair though. Either way, I'm glad Mrs. Minish calls on us alphabetically and that my last name is Brenner. I come right after Bruce Bonaventura.

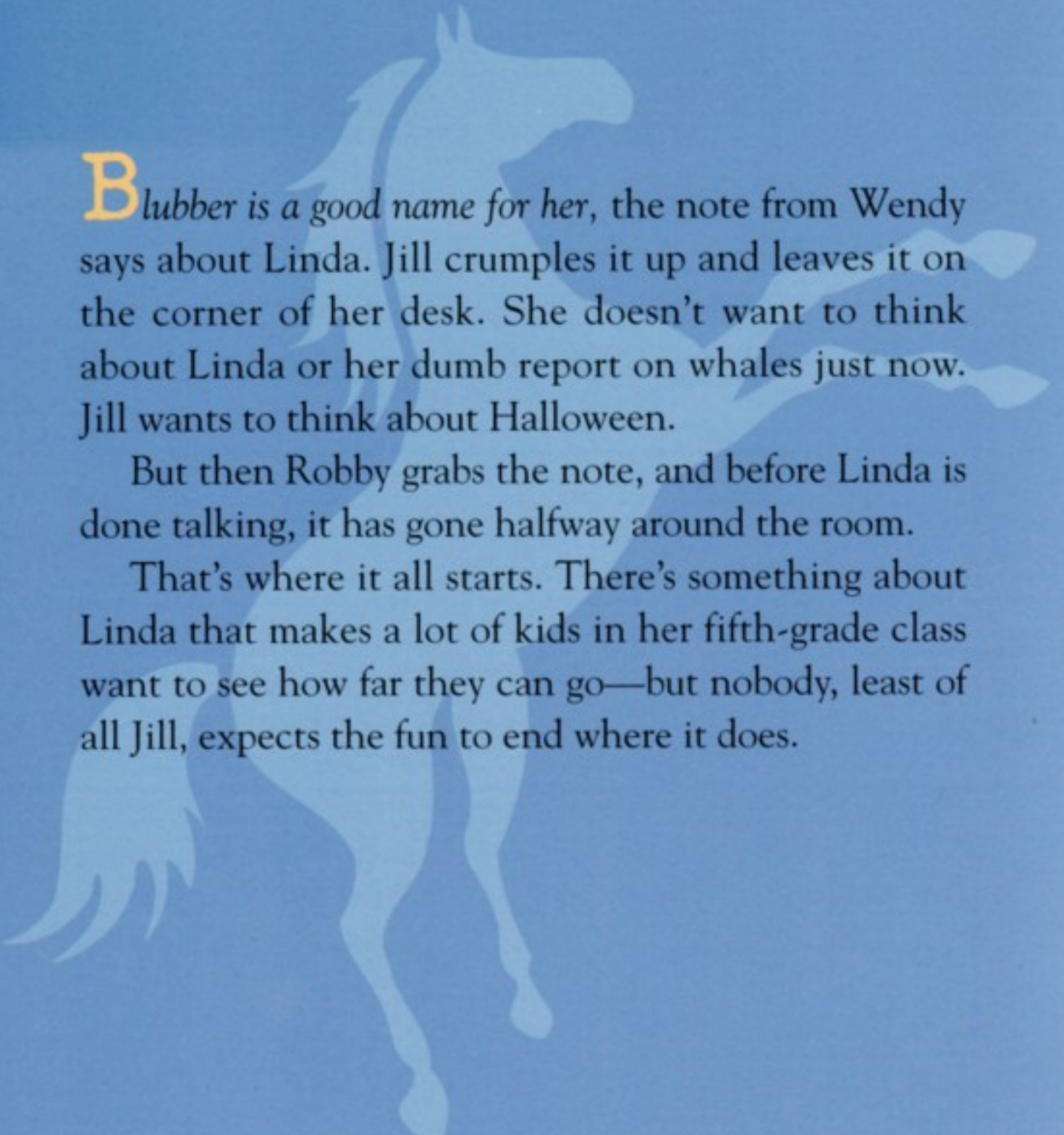
Mrs. Minish cleared her throat. "Linda Fischer will give the last report for today," she said. "We'll hear five more tomorrow and by the middle of next week everyone will have had a turn."

I didn't think I'd be able to live through another report.

"Are you ready, Linda?" Mrs. Minish asked.

"Yes," Linda said, as she walked to the front of the room. "My report is uh . . . on the whale."

Caroline and Wendy started another game of



Blubber is a good name for her, the note from Wendy says about Linda. Jill crumples it up and leaves it on the corner of her desk. She doesn't want to think about Linda or her dumb report on whales just now. Jill wants to think about Halloween.

But then Robby grabs the note, and before Linda is done talking, it has gone halfway around the room.

That's where it all starts. There's something about Linda that makes a lot of kids in her fifth-grade class want to see how far they can go—but nobody, least of all Jill, expects the fun to end where it does.

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