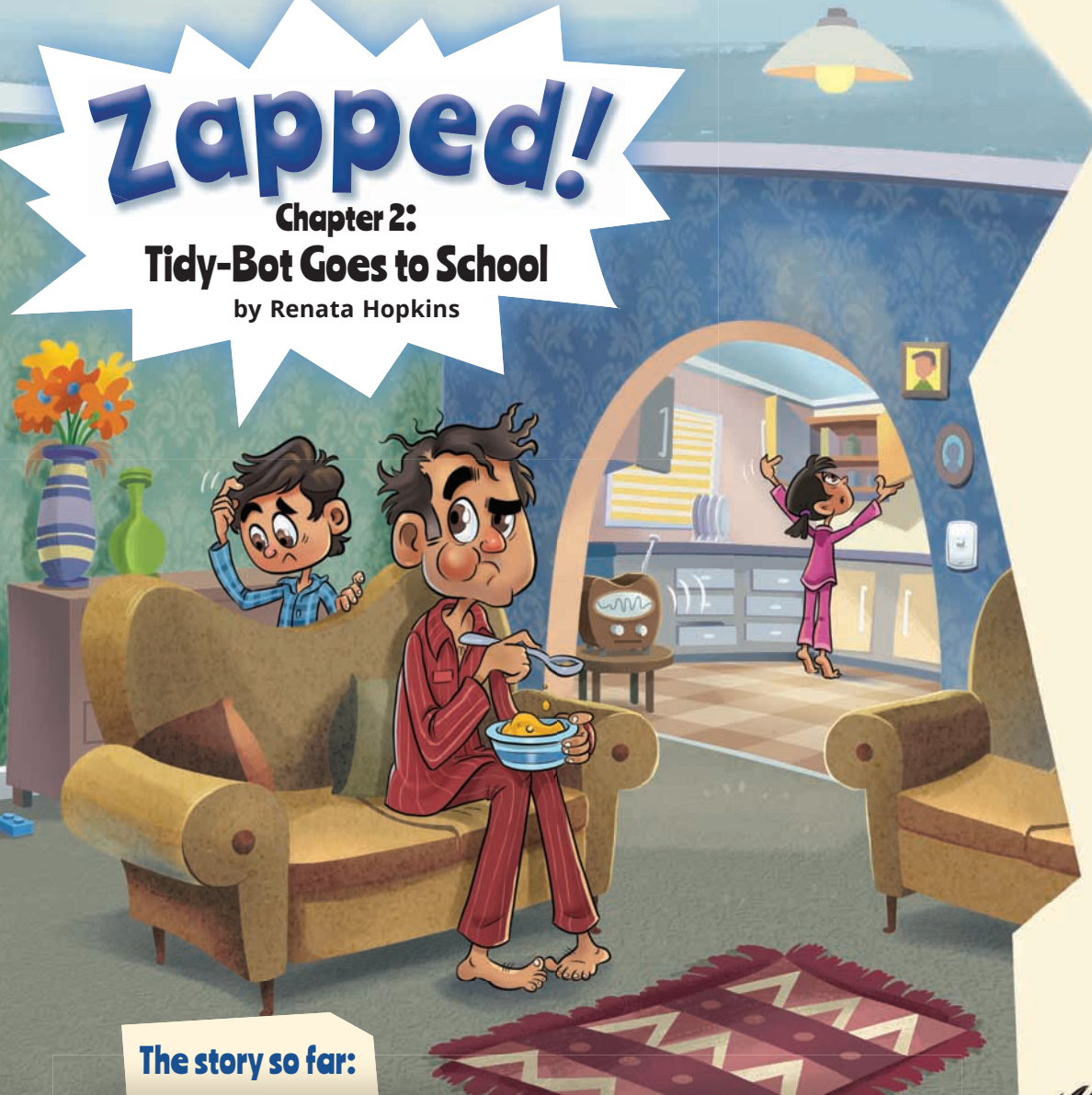


Zapped!

Chapter 2: Tidy-Bot Goes to School

by Renata Hopkins



The story so far:

Twins Tai and Ana made a robot for a school project. They called it "Tidy-Bot". Then the robot was hit by lightning, and it came alive! Unfortunately it wasn't tidy – it was very messy. The twins hid the robot from their parents, but then it disappeared ...

Tai and Ana raced around the house, looking for Tidy-Bot. Dad saw Tai looking behind the sofa. "Lost something?" he asked.

Tai mumbled something about a maths book, but Dad was distracted by the radio.

"That was one BIG storm last night," said the radio host. "There were lightning strikes all over town."

Tai and Ana had exactly the same thought. *Could that have something to do with ...?*

Suddenly, they heard loud squawking.

"Those chooks are noisy this morning," said Dad. "I wonder what's bothering them."

Tai and Ana could guess. They ran outside. Sure enough, they found Tidy-Bot by the chicken coop, holding two eggs.

"Smooth. Nice," said Tidy-Bot. "Bleep, bloop."



"They're called eggs," Tai explained. "You can have them scrambled, poached, fried ..."

"Eggs!" the robot repeated, happily. "Frambled, scroached, pried."

"You're the scrambled one," Tai giggled. "But that's OK. We like scrambled eggs best."



"Coming up," said Tidy-Bot. It squeezed the eggs – hard. Crack!

"No!" cried Tai and Ana, but it was too late. Yolks and whites dribbled and dripped.

"Yum, scrambled," said Tidy-Bot, proudly.

Suddenly, the twins heard footsteps. They quickly hid the robot behind the shed.

"Shhh," warned Ana. "No talking."

"Bleep, bloop," whispered Tidy-Bot.

Dad came round the corner and saw the gloopy mess. He sighed. "Let me guess. You tried to juggle the eggs again?"

While Tai and Ana cleaned up, they made a plan. They would have to train the robot properly if they wanted it to do their jobs.

"It gets muddled up," Tai said.

"True," Ana agreed. "We need to explain things carefully."

"And we also need to find a safe place to leave it while we're at school," said Tai. "What if Mum and Dad find it?"

Ana thought for a second. "Hey, let's take it to school with us!"

"But we don't want everyone at school to see our robot until next week. They might pinch our idea."

"Good point," Ana said. The class had until next Friday to hand in their projects for the school science fair.

"Plus it's kind of risky," Tai added. "What if Tidy-Bot does something crazy?"

"We'll tell it to be quiet," said Ana. "That seems to work."

Ten minutes later, the twins were on their way to school, with their "Bot in a box". They got there just before the bell and hid Tidy-Bot in the art cupboard.

"Remember, no talking," Ana whispered into the box.

"Or we'll get in trouble," added Tai.

"Quiet," Tidy-Bot whispered back. "Bleep, bloop."

Tai and Ana grinned. So far, so good.

The robot kept quiet during reading – and spelling. But during maths, something went "bleep". Miss Simpson frowned.

"What was that?" she asked.

“Nothing,” said Tai and Ana, at exactly the same time. But then ...

“Bleep, bloop.”

“There it goes again,” said Miss Simpson. She walked towards the art cupboard. Tai and Ana had to stop her!

“Bleep!” said Ana, loudly. Miss Simpson turned round.

“Bloop!” said Tai.

Some of the kids started to giggle.

“Tai and Ana,” said Miss Simpson. “Stop that, please.”

“Bleep!” went Tidy-Bot. Miss Simpson spun round again.

Much louder, Ana said “BLEEP!”

“Bloop, bloop,” added Tai. “Blip, bang, boing!”

That did it. All the kids joined in. There were bleeps and bloops and boings. There were pings and clacks and blips and zaps. Some kids started doing a robot dance. It got very, very noisy.

Miss Simpson did her superloud farmer’s whistle. When the hubbub finally died down, she said, “Tai and Ana – for starting that ruckus, you can pick up all the rubbish in the school garden at lunchtime. I noticed lots of plastic bags and bits of paper there this morning. They must have blown in during the storm last night. And while you’re doing that, you can pull out any weeds you see as well. ”

The twins groaned, at exactly the same time.

After they’d eaten their sandwiches, Tai and Ana followed Miss Simpson to the garden. She showed them what to weed and said she’d check on them soon.

After she’d gone, Tai pulled up a dandelion. Ana picked up a wet plastic bag. They looked glumly through the garden fence. There were no other kids in sight.

Suddenly, Tai had a brainwave. “Why don’t we get Tidy-Bot to do this?”

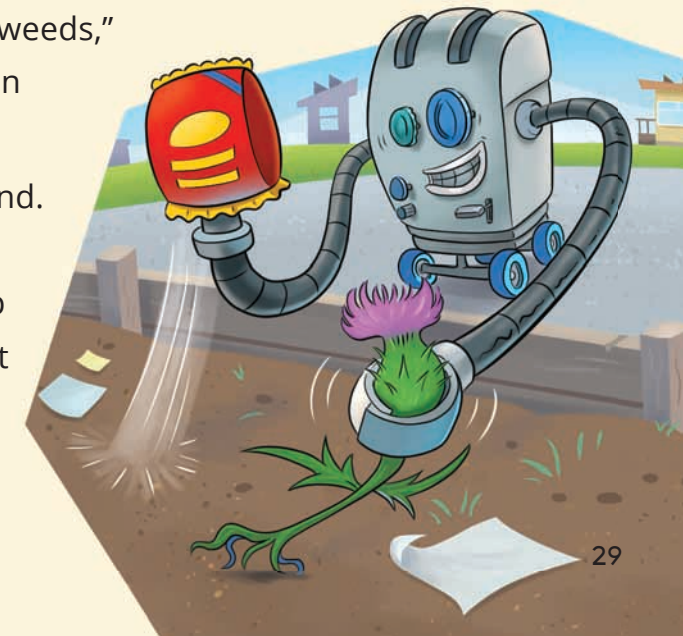
“How?” Ana asked. “Tidy is in the art cupboard, and Miss Simpson’s in the classroom.”

Just then, the twins saw their teacher heading for the staffroom. They grinned. Two minutes later, they were giving Tidy-Bot a careful tidying lesson.

“Pick up anything you see on the ground,” said Ana.

“Like rubbish and weeds,” added Tai. “They go in the bin.”

“Anything on ground. Put in bin,” repeated Tidy-Bot. It picked up a chip packet. Then it pulled up a thistle.



Tai and Ana high-fived. Tidy-Bot was on the job! The twins wandered off to look for bugs. They loved bugs. They were so busy looking, they forgot all about Tidy-Bot, until Ana saw Miss Simpson coming.

“Yikes!” said Ana. “Where’s Tidy?”

Tai went one way, and Ana went the other. They met in the middle of the garden – just in time to see Tidy-Bot pull up the last lettuce! A trail of dirt led to the bin.



“WHAT ARE YOU DOING?” shrieked the twins.

“Pick anything off ground,” replied the robot. “Bleep, bloop!”

Miss Simpson came round the corner. Tai quickly pushed Tidy-Bot behind a huge rhubarb plant. A second later, Miss Simpson saw the holes where the lettuces had been. Her mouth opened and shut like a giant goldfish.

At home that night, Mum and Dad said there would be no dessert for a week. Tai and Ana didn’t complain. They were just glad they had managed to get Tidy-Bot home without getting caught.

“They weren’t the only ones playing up today,” Dad told Mum. “The photocopier at work kept printing pages out, all on its own.”

“That’s odd,” said Mum. “My computer was making funny noises – ‘bleeps’ and ‘bloops.’”

Tai and Ana looked at each other. Things were getting weird – but in a way, they were also starting to make sense. Machines were acting strangely ... the strange behaviour started after the lightning storm ... lightning is made of electricity ... and electricity makes machines go!

“Cool,” said the twins, at exactly the same time.



To be continued ...

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NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM
LEVEL
2

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