



The Bus Bunch

Mr. Emerson Comes Undone



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Mr. Emerson Comes Undone
A Brite Star Bus Bunch Book

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Mr. Emerson Jenkins has a bus. It's a school bus. It makes noises like Bonk! Pfft! Tssss! as it bounces down the road.

Every morning, Mr. Emerson drives the Brite Star Bus Bunch from their houses on Honey Hill Avenue to Brite Star School. In the afternoon, he drives them home again.

Bonk! Pfft! Tssss!

“Very good,” says Mr. Emerson.

Mr. Emerson says, “Very good,” because he likes when life goes as planned. When life goes as planned, Mr. Emerson feels calm and peaceful inside, and he likes to feel calm and peaceful inside.



One day, Principal Scroggins said, "Don't be late, Mr. Emerson. Tomorrow the ice-cream truck is coming to school. It's coming early, and we don't want the students to miss out."

Ice-cream for breakfast? Mr. Emerson thought. That's unexpected.

But what he said was, "You can count on me!"



The next morning, Mr. Emerson Jenkins drove his bus to Honey Hill Avenue, the same as every day. But he didn't feel exactly calm. And he didn't feel entirely peaceful. In fact, he felt a funny sort of squiggle in the bottom of his stomach.

"Ice-cream for breakfast," Mr. Emerson sighed. He shook his head and drove toward the school.



The bus made noises like Bonk! Pfft! Tssss! as it bounced down the road.

Until . . .

Bonk! Pfft! THUNK!

“What was that!” Marge jumped.

“Sounds like a boulder in the gas tank,” said Alexander.



A boulder in the gas tank? Mr. Emerson thought. And then he said, "I've got everything under control."

Except he didn't.

Because there wasn't a boulder in the gas tank.

There was a squirrel in the ventilation system.

Egad.



Before anyone knew what had happened, the squirrel bolted from beneath the dash. It scurried up Mr. Emerson's leg. It leaped onto the steering wheel where it waved its arms and waggled its tail.

The squirrel sniffed the air. Then, it flew.

Sort of.

It hurled itself straight at Mr. Emerson's face.

"Watch out!" the kids shouted.

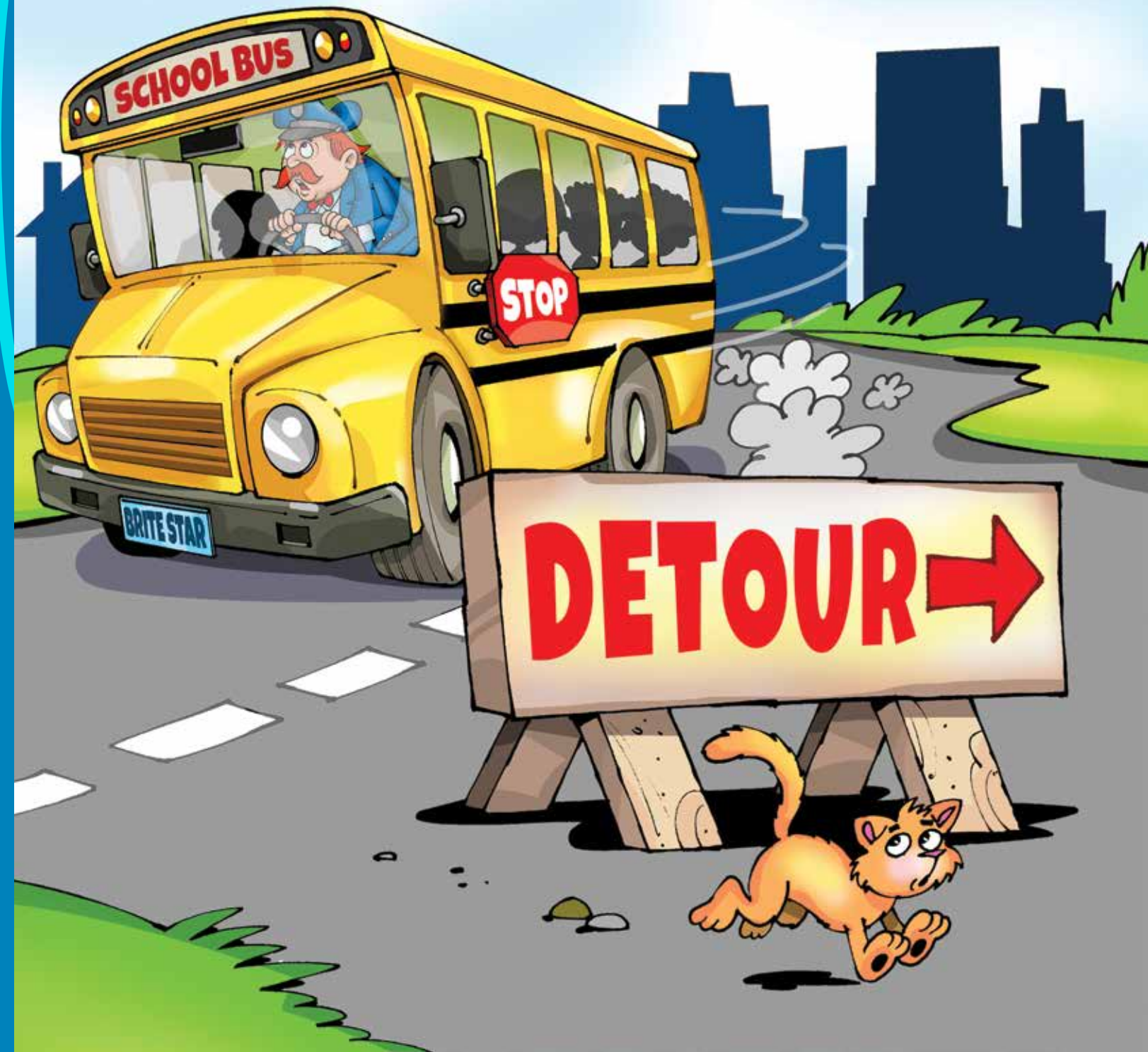
"Duck!"

"He's a maniac!"

Mr. Emerson said, "Squiggle!"



Everyone was so busy jumping over and ducking under the squirrel that no one noticed the roadblock in front of them or the sign that said detour. And no one noticed when Mr. Emerson, who was in a pink-faced fluster, made an unexpected right turn instead of a left one. And no one noticed when they were all, just like that, driving in the opposite direction of Brite Star School.



But everyone noticed the tunnel, because no one could see in the dark.

“This is quite unexpected,” Mr. Emerson called out. “Tunnels are quite unexpected indeed!”

And the squirrel said, “Squeekity squerk!”



The big yellow bus full of Mr. Emerson, the Brite Star Bus Bunch, and a squirrel sat quiet and still on the side of the road.

“Squirrels,” huffed Mr. Emerson, “do not belong on buses. Squirrels belong in trees.”

But the squirrel didn’t care. It was too busy stuffing its fat squirrely cheeks full of mushy banana from somebody’s lunch.



Mr. Emerson likes when life goes as planned. When life goes as planned, Mr. Emerson feels calm and peaceful inside, and he likes to feel calm and peaceful inside. But when there was a squirrel on his bus, and there was a detour, and they were all going to be late for school, Mr. Emerson did not feel calm. Mr. Emerson did not feel peaceful. Mr. Emerson felt undone.

That's unexpected, he thought. And then he sat on the floor and burst into tears.

He just couldn't help it.

Until . . .



“Oh! Mr. Emerson,” said a voice, “I’m so glad you’re here!”

The voice belonged to Ms. Penny, the crossing guard from Brite Star School. She was stepping onto the bus, arms loaded with brown paper bags from The Little Brite Star Super Market. One bag slipped, and a plastic jar full of rainbow sprinkles rolled across the floor. Mr. Emerson felt a squiggle in his stomach.



“You must have known I would need some help,” said Ms. Penny. “How nice.”

Everyone stared at Ms. Penny, and Ms. Penny stared at everyone.

Especially the squirrel . . .

and the banana . . .

and Mr. Emerson, who was still sitting on the floor.



“Hm,” said Ms. Penny.

Ms. Penny had often thought Mr. Emerson a bit unpredictable. “Full of surprises,” she said.

Mr. Emerson stopped crying. He saw the banana-covered squirrel, and himself sitting on the floor, and the Bus Bunch with wide, startled stares. He wiped his sleeve across his eyes and began to smile. And then he laughed a great big laugh and whacked the squirrel across the back.

Ms. Penny was right. Life is full of surprises!

At Brite Star School, the ice-cream truck was parked and full of strawberry ice-cream for everyone to eat.

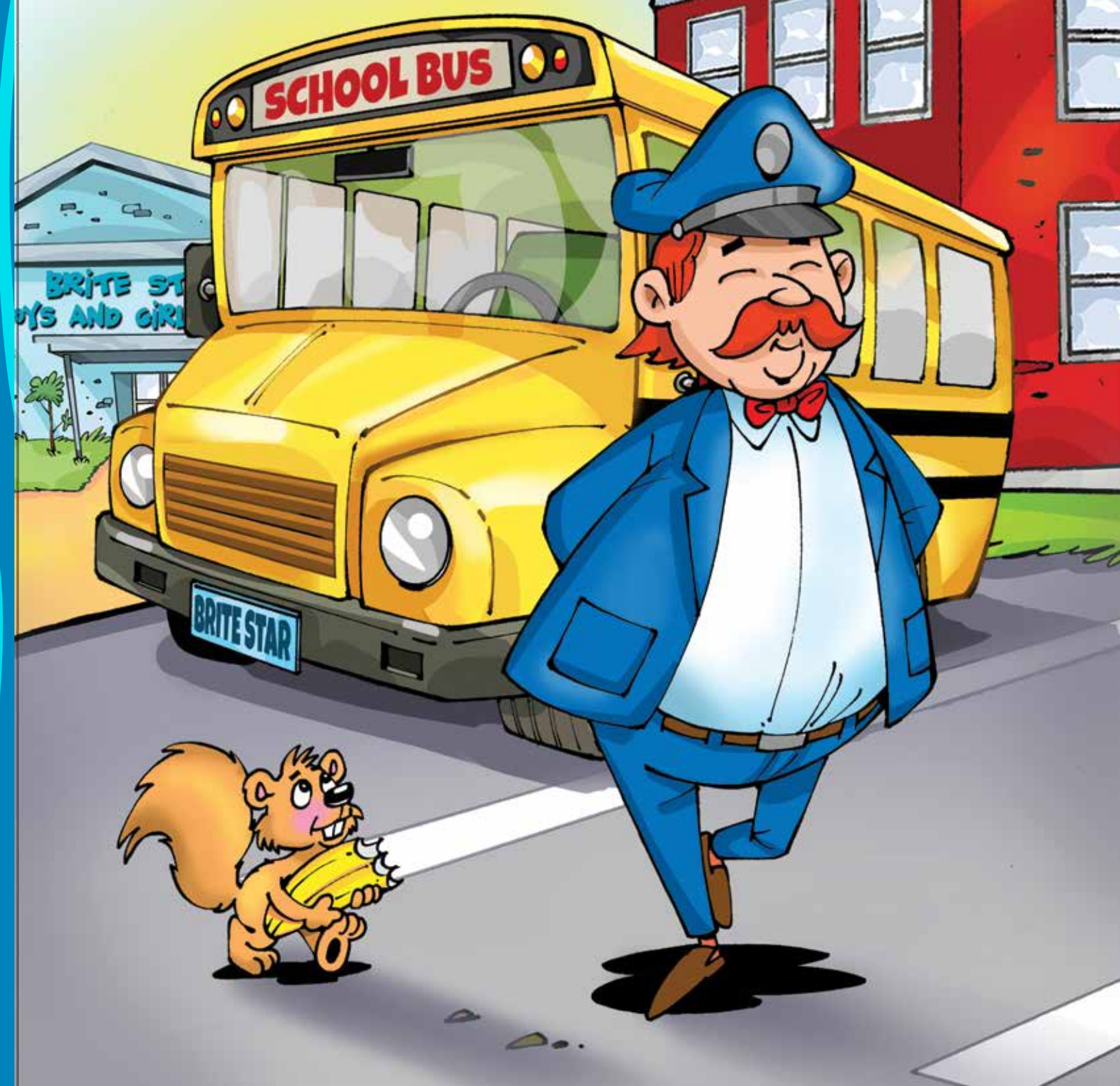
“Yoo-hoo! We have sprinkles,” said Ms. Penny.



Sprinkles for breakfast, Mr. Emerson thought. What he said was, “How unexpectedly wonderful!”

Because detours have a way of changing things, as Mr. Emerson learned. And even though he still liked when life went as planned, he decided to like when it didn’t as well. He decided to like the surprises and the surprises that come with surprises.

Mr. Emerson learned that the unexpected is often the best fun of all.



Think About It

1. Mr. Emerson likes to know what will happen every day. Why do you think he likes the expected? What about you? Do you like the expected or the unexpected?
2. Mr. Emerson's day did not go as planned. Can you remember some of the unexpected things that happened?
3. What did Mr. Emerson do when he felt "undone"? Have you ever felt overwhelmed? What did you do?
4. What did Ms. Penny see when she got onto the bus? What did she say?
5. Do you think Ms. Penny helped Mr. Emerson? Why or why not?

Let's Work Together!

Life is full of surprises! Sometimes surprises are fun, but sometimes they make us feel uneasy inside. We can talk to our guardians or friends when we feel overwhelmed. We can listen when someone needs to talk to us.

I Will . . .

- Stop and take a deep breath when the unexpected happens. My family and friends are with me!
- Be sensitive to others when they feel overwhelmed.

It's okay to like for life to go as planned. But sometimes it doesn't, and that's okay too! We can help each other when the unexpected happens.

Life Doesn't Always Go as Planned

Mr. Emerson decided to like the surprises in life and the surprises that come with surprises. What do you think this means? Do you think it was good for Mr. Emerson to experience a few surprises? Why or why not? What do you think Mr. Emerson learned about himself? Did something unexpected happen to you today? What was it? How did you feel? What did you do?