

Chapter 1

Here is some more about Dani, the girl who lives in the yellow house on Home Street with her father, and with Cat and her two hamsters.

“Happy Dani,” as her teacher calls her.

One of her happiest things every day is going to school.

The best thing about school is her teacher. Dani loves her. She also loves science. And art and silent reading. And her friends.

The best part of school is practically all of it. At school she is like a fish in water. She is in the place she feels happy.



That spring term in year two, everyone in Dani's class was like a fish in water. Especially Cushion, but he feels happy wherever he is, whatever happens.

When their teacher asked them to talk about something they'd done during the break that was fun, he put his hand up straight away and said:

“When I was bitten by a dog.”

Everyone fell silent. What did he say?

The teacher came and looked at him carefully.

“Did I hear right?” she asked. “When you were bitten by a dog? Was that really *fun*?”



“Not the actual bite,” Cushion admitted, “and not the tetanus injection either, of course.”

“Did you get stitches?” Vicky interrupted.

“You don’t get stitches for dog bites,” explained Cushion. “You get something to cover the wound.”

“How many holes were there?” Jonathan wondered.

They had so many questions that Cushion lost track.

“What’s the fun part?” Benny complained.

“Will you be quiet so Cushion can go on!” said Dani.

Cushion gave her a grateful look and paused.

Everyone waited.

“Then my father said I could have my own dog!”

A shiver went through the class.

“We’ve already been to look at her,” Cushion went on. “Her name’s Dina and she’s never bitten anyone!”

“Well, I can understand that was fun,” the teacher admitted.

And then it was time for art. Everyone drew dogs biting people, except for Dani, who drew a squirrel. And Cushion, who wandered around the class admiring everyone's drawings.

When he came to Dani's desk, he just stood and watched.



"Nice!" he said at last.

"Ugh," Dani mumbled.

Cushion looked longingly at the empty place beside her, the one where Dani's best friend Ella sat before she had to move to Northbrook.

The desk had been empty for a whole year. No one's allowed to sit there, because Dani still believes that Ella will come back to the class.

Cushion no longer asks to sit there even though he wants to. He loves Dani so much.

For Cushion, Dani is the best thing about school.

What about Dani though? Does she love Cushion?

Maybe, maybe not. She hasn't had much to compare with.



She's only been in love once before. That was when she was little and went to day care.

There was a boy called Max...

They played together every day, behind a big rock. But one day he called Dani Poo-head.

When Grandma heard that she was angry.

"Maybe he forgot my name," Dani defended him.

"Max can be a bit forgetful."

"If he says it again, you must tell him that your name is Daniela," said Grandma.

But she didn't need to. They didn't play together again after that.

That happened when Dani was living with her grandma and grandpa, because her mother had died. Her father was so sad that he couldn't look after her.

It was only when Dani started school that he felt well enough for her to move back home to live with him and Cat.