



'Sweet, relatable, and engaging.'

TERRI LIBENSON, author of the Emmie & Friends series

# PENNY DRAWS A BEST FRIEND



#1 bestselling author **SARA SHEPARD**

# HOW TO DRAW A BEST FRIEND

Dear Cosmo,

Look at me, writing to my dog! How does it feel to be my pen pal? Is it better than getting your butt scratched? I'm guessing not, but you seemed interested enough when I read you my first entry yesterday.



Anyway, Cosmo, today was the first day of school. This year, I'm in fifth grade. We're at the top of the elementary heap.

There are three options for homeroom teachers you can get in fifth grade. Together, they're like Goldilocks's three bears. Mrs. Dunphy is Too Strict. Ms. Letts is Too Annoyed All the Time. And Mr. Glenn is Just Right because his classroom is filled with inflatable animals, a life-size Frankenstein, constantly blinking Christmas lights, and a rotating disco ball. Every day at 3:00 p.m., kids come out of Mr. Glenn's class looking like they've spent too much time at Dave & Buster's. Everyone loves him.

Our parents got our homeroom assignments two days ago. I wanted Mr. Glenn, but I got Mrs. Dunphy, the strict one. I had my mom call Violet's mom,

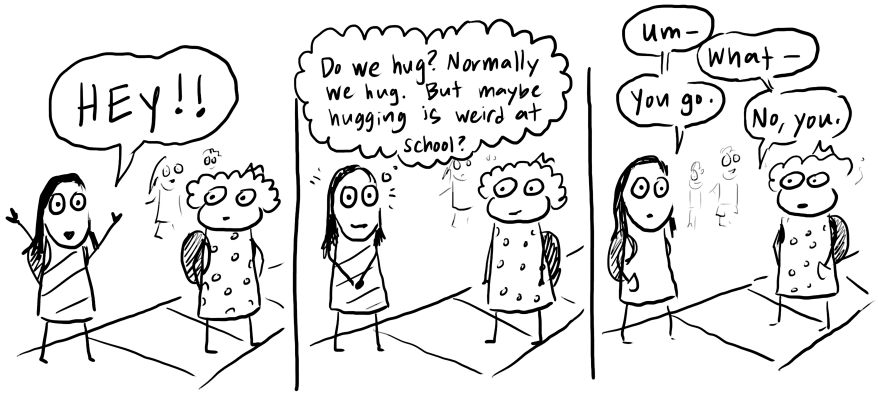


as neither Violet nor I have phones of our own. Violet was at her last day of camp, but Mrs. Vance told me that Violet got Mrs. Dunphy for home-room, too. I was so relieved.

I've really missed Violet. She was away at camp all summer. It was this special gymnastics camp upstate, and during the weekends off, she stayed with cousins who live nearby. Usually, we spend our summers making an epic mural out of all the extra cardboard in our garages, or making newscast videos, complete with weather alerts, neighborhood news, and commercials. I tried to do both those things on my own this summer, but I only managed to finish half a painting of a beluga whale on a medium piece of cardboard. I emailed Violet my newscast videos, though, and the few times we talked on the phone, she told me they were great. I was pretty proud of my special report on neighborhood lemonade stands.

But I hadn't even gotten to see Violet before school started because her family just picked her up from camp yesterday, and then she needed to get all her school supplies and some new shoes.

So I was very excited to see her on the sidewalk outside of school. Except, things started off a little rocky.



I felt like I had a million important things to tell Violet. I asked her how camp was. Violet seemed really excited.



Riley, as in Riley Miller? Poor Violet. I can't believe she hadn't mentioned that before. That must have been torture.

Violet and I have been best friends since the first day of second grade when we both picked the same pumpkin to paint. We both liked this one pumpkin so much, we decided to paint it together.

Ever since then, art has been our thing. Every year, we join Art Club, which takes place after school. We do a joint project for the school Art Show. And it's a tradition that we draw a portrait of each other and bring it as a gift on the first day of school. I know it's silly, because we usually spend the whole summer together, but it's a great little bonus on the first day. Last year, the drawing Violet made for me totally got me through a very stressful seating chart. I don't know what I would have done without it.

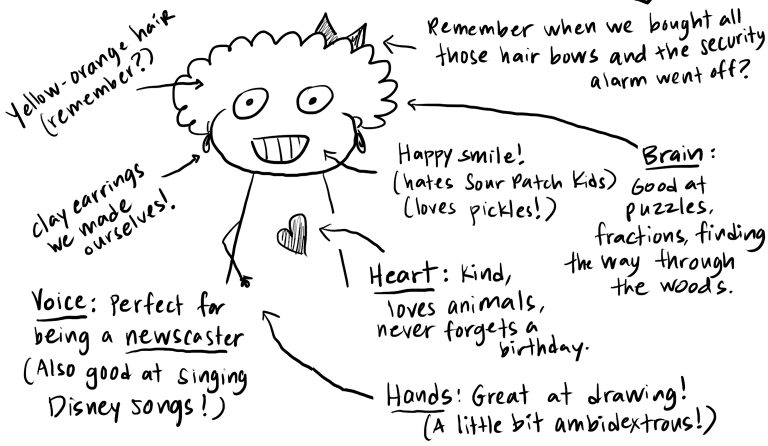
I worked hard on my portrait of Violet over the summer. Instead of drawing a realistic version of her, I thought I'd draw what Violet was all about as a best friend. In fact, I started thinking

she could be a prototype for a YouTube tutorial on “How to Draw a Best Friend.” It could go like:

1. First, draw big happy eyes that crinkle when you tell a funny joke.
2. Then draw her ears—don’t forget to add the earrings you made out of bakeable clay last year. (We almost set the house on fire because we got the oven settings wrong!)
3. Next, draw her curly hair. Make it her normal color, *not* the color we tried to dye it with Kool-Aid. (It was supposed to be light pink, but it came out the color of a traffic cone.)
4. Think about the things you CAN’T see, too: like what she’s good at, how her brain works, and what’s inside her heart!
5. Remember to add inside jokes!

I folded the drawing like a card. I wrote those instructions on the front. On the inside, my How to Draw a Best Friend drawing came out like this:

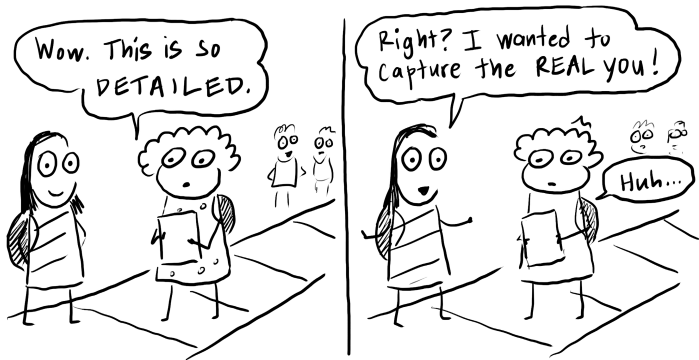
# VIOLET VANCE - my best friend!



**Funniest Inside Jokes:**

- The Froot Loop thing
- "Ouchie- Ouch!"
- "I broke my brain bone!"

I was so excited to give it to Violet. I handed it to her on the sidewalk before we went inside. She looked at my drawing for a long time.





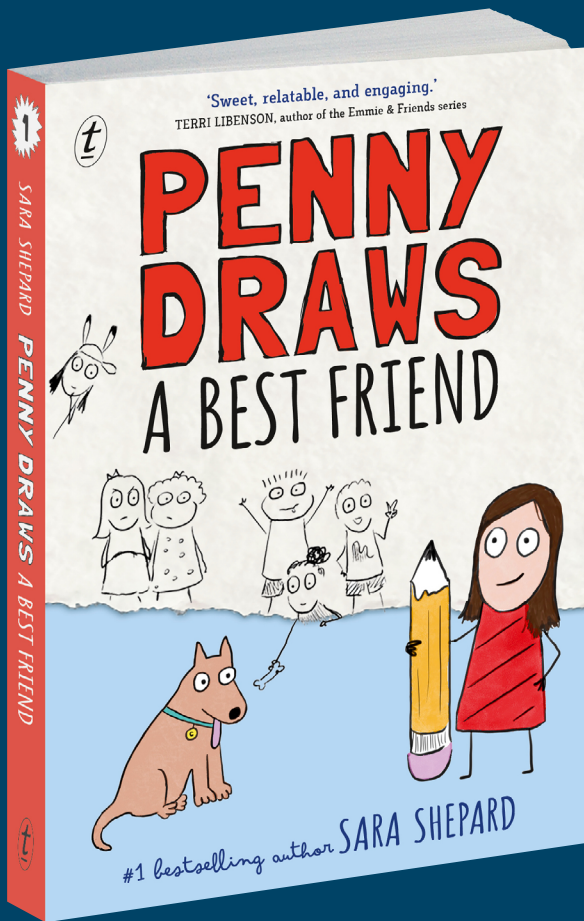
And then she didn't say anything. I started to feel a little weird. Had I done something wrong? Had she forgotten about our tradition? But finally:



I have to say, the drawing of me looked suspiciously like a drawing Violet had done *last* school year before summer vacation. Like maybe she'd never taken it out of her backpack.

But it's okay. Violet probably didn't have time at camp to make a new drawing. And just because we've been separated all summer, it won't take us long to get our vibe back.

Seriously. This year is going to be great.



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