

The wind howled, rattling the windowpanes of the house, and raindrops fell in never-ending torrents from the darkened sky. Leah peeked out from under her blanket at the raging storm outside, and she trembled. "Oh, Ruff!" she cried to her Golden Retriever. "Our house will be washed away, and we'll become starving refugees, trying to scrape by with what little food we can find!" She threw her arms around the dog and buried her face in his fur. "We'll be just barely clinging to life, but at least we'll have each other! I promise you, I will *not* let you get washed away when the big flood comes!"

Ruff snorted scornfully and squirmed out of her grasp. He stalked off, probably on his way to go drink out of the toilet bowl.

Leah scowled. "Well, fine then!" she called after him. "You can take your own chances out there, against the cruel forces of nature. But you are definitely not welcome in *my* hurricane shelter anymore!"

Melissa, Leah's sister, stuck her head into the doorway. "Leah, leave the dog alone. It's a thunderstorm, not a hurricane," she said. "Your imagination is running away with you again!"

It turned out that Melissa was right- the house was not washed away by a raging hurricane. And after a few days, the weather was beautiful again. It was perfect conditions for Leah's softball game.

Leah loved her softball gear. Wearing her team uniform always made her feel so cool and confident, and her black-and-pink Jenny Finch bat seemed like just the sort of thing that a professional would use. And her glove- the sound of a ball hitting that leather was just so *awesome!*

She loved playing softball, too. When she caught a fly ball or made a powerful hit, she was on top of the world. In fact, it made her feel like a superhero.

A superhero! Leah jumped to her feet with excitement when this idea occurred to her. Yes, "heroic" was the perfect word to describe how playing this sport made her feel! Whenever she was out on the field, she transformed into...Softball Supergirl!

Leah played a great game that day. Softball Supergirl raced around the bases! Softball Supergirl leapt into the air to catch the ball! Softball Supergirl hit the ball into outer space!

After the game, Leah's coach came up to her. "Awesome playing today, kid," he told her. "Just try to stay a little more focused. You always seem like your head is in the clouds!"

Leah might have been flying high at the softball field, but two days later, she was anything but energetic. She had the flu!

Her face was burning up, her throat was dry and sore, and she had a hacking cough that wracked her whole body. She had to miss school, of course, since she was too tired and miserable to do much more than lie on the couch.

"Water," she croaked. "Mom, I need water, please."

Her mother brought her a glass of water and asked, "How are you feeling?"

"Not so good," Leah whispered. "I feel terrible." She coughed, then straightened up a little bit as an idea occurred to her. "Hey, what do you think is the cause of this? Maybe it's an epidemic! Maybe there'll be another huge outbreak, like in the Influenza Epidemic of 1918!"

"It's not an epidemic," her mother told her.

"How can you be so sure?" Leah asked. "The flu is very contagious. Come to think of it, you shouldn't even be near me! And if you need to make contact with me, you should at least be wearing a face mask!"

"Oh, Leah." Her mom rolled her eyes.

"I'm serious!" she cried. "And you might as well put a black mark on the door so that everyone knows our house is infected. I expect the whole neighborhood will have caught it by next week!"

Her mother started to walk away. "You know, you can be really dramatic sometimes," she called over her shoulder.

A week later, Leah had fully recovered from the flu. But she had missed a lot of school days, and now she had to make up for all the time she had lost. She was instantly flooded with homework, essays, and tests.

The tests! Oh, they were the worst part! Leah had taken so many tests the first day she returned to school, and she was certain that she had failed at least one of them. She hadn't gotten much study time in while lying on the couch, half-conscious from illness!

She was particularly worried about her science test. Mrs. Cohen's tests were never easy, but this one had been particularly nasty. She couldn't have gotten a very good grade.

Sixth period came, and it was time for science class. Leah's hands sweated as Mrs. Cohen handed out the graded tests. Many of the students groaned or sank down in their seats when they saw their grades, which didn't give Leah high hopes for her own score.

When Mrs. Cohen gave Leah her test paper, Leah said a silent prayer before peeking at her grade. She had gotten the awful, horrendous grade of... one hundred percent?

Leah stared at the number at the top of her page, uncomprehending. No one ever got a hundred on one of Mrs. Cohen's tests, especially not someone who had missed several days of class. How was this possible?

I must be a child prodigy, she thought, in awe. That's the only reasonable explanation!

It had to be true. How else could she have gotten a hundred on that test? She was a genius!

And if she was a genius, what was she doing wasting her time in middle school? She should be in college, and she deserved a spot at only the best school. Harvard, at least! She could see herself in an honors class, rubbing elbows with the future great architects and amazing inventors of the world. And she herself would certainly make an incredible contribution to the world, too - what with her newfound genius.

But when Leah explained her plans to her friend Beth, Beth frowned at her and said, "Don't you think you're getting a little carried away?"

At the end of the school trimester, Leah received her first report card for the year. She had gotten relatively good grades in all of her classes. In the comments section, her teacher had written, "Leah is a smart student, one of the top in the class. She has good study skills and a lot to offer. However, she does tend to drift off at times- she has a very active imagination."