

# *Zapped!*

*Book One of Buckley School Books*

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*Cover Illustrations by Rebecca Caffall*

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For Francis Joseph Buckley, my fifth grade teacher.

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Very special thanks to you, the reader.

Best wishes for happy adventuring!

*Corey Green*

## Chapter One

# A Shocking Start

Kyle Boylston was shocked on his first day at Buckley Elementary School. Really. Not just surprised, not quite electrocuted. Shocked!

It happened as soon as he stepped into the school multipurpose room for the Welcome Back Assembly. “Hey, you!” a boy yelled. “Catch!”

Kyle looked up to see a silver tube flying toward him. He reached out and grabbed it. ZAP!

“Ow!” Kyle dropped the tube and leaned over for a closer look. He expected something high-tech, but it was only a paper towel roll filled with wires and covered with aluminum foil.

The boy pushed through the crowd and grabbed the tube. “Who are you? I’m Zack.”

Kyle nodded hello, surprised the tube did not zap Zack.

“Check this out, Chris,” Zack said to a tall boy with a

mop of dark curly hair. “I learned about it on the Internet. It’s a shocker tube.”

Kyle guessed the boys were about his age, eleven. Zack had so many freckles they barely left room for his eyebrows, and his red hair spiked like flames. Chris, with his bright eyes and easy grin, looked like he had a goofy sense of humor.

“Chris, your turn.” Zack held out the shocker tube.

“I’m not that stupid.” Chris winked at Kyle. “No offense.” He turned back to Zack. “How do I hold this without being shocked?”

“Hold it by one end. Here, try.”

Chris flinched as he took the tube by one end, but as Zack promised, nothing happened. He tossed the shocker tube high in the air. “Heads up!”

ZAP! “Eeek!” a girl squealed as she caught the tube. She flipped it into the air for someone else to catch.

BUZZ! ZAP! Kids shouted, pushed and fell as they tried to catch the tube.

Kyle stood on a chair for a better view, wishing he had the guts to join in.

Chris and Zack dove into the pile-up. Chris emerged two seconds later, clutching the tube in his right hand.

“Shocker tube football! Set, hike!” Chris drew his arm back to throw a long pass. His mouth fell open. “Uh-oh.” Chris dropped the tube, kicked it under a chair and put his hands behind his back.

A tall, thin man with a huge nose stood in the doorway, arms crossed and one eyebrow raised. No doubt, he was the principal.

“WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?”

The crowd parted as the man stomped over to Chris and Zack. “What is that? Hand it over.”

“If you say so, Mr. Walsh.” Zack crouched beside the chair and retrieved the tube.

Mr. Walsh yanked the tube out of Zack’s hands. BUZZ! He howled in surprise and flung it high in the air. He instinctively reached out to catch it as it fell in front of him.

Kyle beat him to it and snagged the shocker tube, this time without being zapped. “Hold it by one end,” he explained.

Mr. Walsh grabbed the tube by one end, straightened his tie and marched to the stage.

“Now we’re the ones getting zapped,” Chris muttered as the boys sat down.

“What do you mean?” Kyle asked.

“Zapped. In trouble,” Zack explained. “Thanks to your big mouth, Mr. Walsh knows I shocked him on purpose.”

Mr. Walsh stepped to the podium and tapped the microphone to see if it was working. SCREECH! He frowned and adjusted it. “And so we begin another year at Buckley Elementary School. This is not a great start.” Mr. Walsh glared again at Chris and Zack. “I don’t know what you two were thinking, bringing this CONTRAPTION to school.”

“It’s a science project,” Zack called out.

Mr. Walsh stared down the kids who started to laugh. He placed the shocker tube on the podium beside the microphone.

“Starting tomorrow, I will become the Assistant Director of Educational Services, bringing the entire district to a new standard of learning and achievement.”

“At least he won’t be here,” Chris muttered.

“Which means you will have a new principal,” Mr. Walsh announced. He glared at the kids who dared to cheer. “I now introduce you to Mr. Hession.” Mr. Walsh pronounced it “Hess-ee-yon” with three syllables as he pointed to a man standing at the right side of the stage.

Mr. Hession walked slowly to the microphone. He wore a brown tweed suit that didn’t completely button over his belly. He had horn-rimmed glasses and a jolly smile. “Good morning, students. Thank you, Mr. Walsh. Before I begin, I’d like to pronounce my name correctly. ‘Hession’ rhymes with ‘session.’”

Mr. Walsh looked embarrassed as he walked away from the podium, carrying the shocker tube by one end.

Mr. Hession smiled at his audience. “It is a pleasure to be here. Great school! Terrific students! Imaginative science project!”

Zack smirked. “He fell for it.”

Mr. Hession ignored the few kids who laughed. “I know we will work well together,” he continued. “When I was

young, I wanted to be a giraffe. Being a principal is even better. At least it is humanly possible.”

“Oh, for goodness sake.” Mr. Walsh glared at the new principal.

“Now for a thought of the day.” Mr. Hession reached into his pocket and took out a gold pocket watch. He looked down at it, turning it over in his hand. Then he cleared his throat. “A new year is like a crisp new sheet of notebook paper. Write new adventures for yourself.” Mr. Hession scratched his head. “Try to stay inside the margins.” He rapped his knuckles on the podium. “There you go! Cheerio!”

Chris and Zack began talking as soon as they stood. They laughed as they waited for their turn to leave the multipurpose room.

Kyle wanted to join in, but he didn’t know how. He took a deep breath and tried anyway. “It’s great that our new principal fell for your science project joke.”

“Yeah.” Zack turned away to speak to a boy in the next row. Kyle knew it was an insult, but Chris seemed not to notice.

“Mr. Hession has to be better than Walsh,” Chris said to Kyle.

Kyle smiled. At least Chris was talking to him. “I have to find Mr. Hoker’s room. Where are you going?”

“Same place.” Chris slammed Kyle on the back. “Same class as Zack and me.”

“Lucky us,” Zack muttered.

Maybe a compliment would help, Kyle thought. “The shocker tube was awesome,” he offered.

Zack grunted.

“Cool jacket,” Kyle added. “Better than my dumb shirt.” Zack glared at Kyle.

“What?” Kyle shrugged.

Zack reached for his zipper. Slowly, he unzipped his jacket, revealing a shirt that was just like Kyle’s.

“Sorry,” Kyle said in dismay. “I didn’t mean your shirt is dumb. My dad bought mine. My mom would have explained that this flame pattern is better for someone like you, since you’re into electronics. Really, I didn’t mean to insult you.”

Zack raised one eyebrow. “I’m not into electronics.”

“What?”

“Just electricity. You know. Shock. Zap. Fire.”

“Zack, sometimes I wonder about you,” Chris teased. He turned to Kyle. “What are you into?”

“I don’t know. Guitar, I guess. Can we start over? I’m Kyle Boylston.”

Zack was silent, so Chris jumped in again. “I’m Chris Griffith. This is Zack McAllister.”

“Why doesn’t the tube shock you if you hold it by one end?” Kyle asked Zack as they left the auditorium and walked down the hall.

“The tube has different charges on each end,” Zack explained. “Too bad Walsh took it, or I could show you. I have another one at home. I could—”

“No more shocker tubes at school,” Chris said firmly. “I’m saying that as your friend.”

“Okay.” Zack turned back to Kyle. “Did you notice the space in the middle with no foil on it?”

Kyle nodded.

“That’s to separate the electrical charges. If you catch it across the middle or with one hand at each end, you complete the circuit. Then you get shocked.”

“I get it,” Kyle replied, even though he didn’t.

Chris opened the door labeled “Mr. Hoker” and the three boys walked into the classroom. Kids who stood chatting in groups or were already seated at desks stared as Kyle, Chris and Zack moved to the back of the room. Kyle felt nervous again, but he told himself his classmates were probably just interested in him since he was the new kid. He sat at a desk in the last row beside Chris and Zack, who never stopped talking to each other.

Kyle sat quietly, worrying. He had said something stupid every time he opened his mouth to try to make friends. The first day of school had barely begun, and Kyle feared that he had already become Zack’s enemy.