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The Organic Matter Squad

By Gemma Caruso

Good morning! My name is Lima Bean! I know, my name sounds funny, but it really is my name! I guess my parents thought they were being funny and clever. Anyhow, I am a 12 year old girl in the Big Apple. Right now, we're in a bit of a crisis. You see, I live in New York City! New York is the epicenter of the coronavirus, which is an awful virus that is killing many people. I love sewing, and since people need masks, I was going to help my community by making masks. Sounds easy, right?

However, thanks to the Coronavirus, people aren't allowed to go out of their houses, which makes it pretty hard to get supplies, as we can't leave the house to go shopping. So, I sent out emails to my friends and family.

Hi, friends!

I am trying to make 200 masks to aid the people in the community. However, I don't have enough fabric. If you have some fabric or elastics to share, please let me know, so I can arrange a way to pick it up! Please, only clean fabric. Thank you all so much for aiding my efforts! The masks will be donated to the Emergency Room staff, to protect them.

- Lima Bean

Well, my email worked like a charm. Soon fabric donations were pouring in. I live in an apartment building, and a girl from school lives straight down the hall. Annie Trunch. She has always looked down on me, because I tend to stand out in a crowd by being a focused, quiet girl, and because of my name. Really, there are only so many jokes you can make!

She saw Mom carrying in the fabric that people had left in the apartment's basement. They had dated the delivery, and Mom only grabbed the fabric that had been sitting for five days. She did this to quarantine everything so we would be keeping ourselves, and our friends safe.

And what do you know! Nosy Nancy (aka Annie), rings me up and asks, "Yuck Bean, why do you have, like, so much, like, fabric?"

"Well, Annie," I calmly replied, trying to let her comment roll off my back, "I am going to make masks to help out with the coronavirus. My goal is to make 200 masks."

"Oh, 200? Is that, like, all? *I* am making 300, which is, like, more than, like *you*."

Now, you can see how she is. She just *has* to be better than *everybody* else. "Well, Annie, that is great! That will really make a great difference! I am really glad that you are trying to help out, and frankly, a little surprised. I thought you would be more interested in binge-watching TV shows. But that is great!"

"Oh, I'm not doing it to help out," Annie smarmily replied. "I am doing it to win The Golden Child Award. You know, like, the one where the most sweet, helpful, child gets a

1,000 dollar prize! And, like, I could, like, really use the money to buy a new phone. Mine is a YEAR OLD!”

“That’s great, Annie. Well, I had better be off. Got lots to do!” And I hung up so I could call the one person who I could depend on to help, my true friend, Karat Titian.

Now, Titian is a synonym for orange, and if you say Karat’s name, it sounds like the vegetable. People are always calling her Carrot Orange, and calling us the DIRT Club. Get it? So we turned it around, and now are *The Organic Matter Squad*, an elite group for kids who have food names to support and help each other through the ups and downs of school.

I call her, and she is raring to go.

“So, Lima, how do we do this?”

“I was thinking, why don’t we call up all our friends on a video call, and ask them what they think? Then, can we all come to your house, and spend a week there? I know we have shelter in place, but we would all be there for a week, which would be okay. And you have two sewing machines, and a really big house, so we would all fit.”

“Let me check. Yep, Mor, says it’s a-okay! Ten minutes, right?”

“Yes, see you then!” Mor is Swedish for mother, and Karat is Swedish. Ten minutes later, I am IM’ing with Karat, Oni On, Ginger Snapp, Brie Ost (Ost is cheese in Swedish) and the only male of the group, Ägg Benedict. You can see why we were all teased. We are different ages, from 10-12, but we are loyal, and cooperative. Our conversation went like this:

GoldenKarat: See, we should totally do this!

Ginger: yeah! we really should do something to help!

LimaB: We could hang out, and help out!

ÄB: Our moms could coordinate it.

BriBri: Should we invite Annie Trunch?

ÄB: Why?

BriBri: She lives down the hall.

GoldenKarat: NO! All she does is tease us!

Onii: I say.....yes.

Ginger: WHY! She calls me cookie, and lima, she calls you yuck bean, and you bri, she calls stinky cheese, and she calls karat karat orange, and oni onion or oinky!! And Ägg, SHE CALLS YOU COOKED EGGS! how are you okay with this? We don't call her trunchbull for nothing

LimaB: She is doing her own mask project, going for the Golden Child. She wants to make 300 masks.

BriBri: What do you think, Ägg? You've been quiet?

ÄB: Let's vote. All in favor type yes.

LimaB: Yes

ÄB: Yes

GoldenKarat: Yes

BriBri: Yes

Ginger: NO!

Oni: No.

ÄB: Looks like she is in. BriBri, you invite her.

BriBri: Ok. Next weekend?

LimaB: Yep. See you then!

LimaB has signed off

And that is where the conversation was when I left it. Later, Brie called me to say Annie had accepted. On the appointed day, Mom drove me to Karat's house, which was a sprawling mansion. We wore masks, of course. I ran inside with the supplies. Everyone was there. Ginger was frostily ignoring Annie, who was filing her nails. Shy Oni stayed by Karat, who when seeing me, rushed to give me a hug. Ägg and Bri were in a corner, reading. Karat led us into the room she had set up for us.

"L, you're in charge," said Karat.

"Okay. We will do an assembly line. Oni, you and Karat will be cutting out the fabric and elastic. The patterns are in the blue bag. Ginger, you and I will be sewing in the elastic. Ägg, you will iron them, and give them to Bri, who will do the outside. Annie, you will pack them into the boxes Ginger brought, and count how many we have. Got it? GO!"

We worked for two hours, then had a pizza dinner, with lots and lots of laughter. After, we spread our sleeping bags and watched *The Phantom of the Opera*. We ignored Annie's comment about how it was for babies. The next morning, Mor fixed breakfast. She showed us around the kitchen, telling us, "For the next three days, you will all fix your own breakfast, *ja*?" "Ja, Mori," we said in chorus, all except Annie, who was silent. We jumped on the food, and gobbled it all up. Afterward, we made masks until lunchtime, which was sandwiches, prepared by Mor. We worked well into the afternoon, when we flew out of the house into Karat's backyard. We spent our time playing before dinner, ate, and went straight to sleep. In the morning, we repeated. There was, of course, chit-chat, but we were more

careful around Annie, who was ignoring us, until, on the fifth day she said, “300 masks.”

“Wait, what? I thought we were only making 200,” Oni said dubiously.

“Yeah, well, it wasn’t MY fault! I was, like, just counting, when we reached 200, but you all were, like, still going, so I kept on, like, going,” Annie snarled, ever on the defensive.

“Whatever! We did more than we intended to! That’s great!” exclaimed Ägg.

We all danced around in celebration, shouting loud enough to wake the dead, or Karat’s baby sister, Cherry. After that we cleaned up, and watched movies and hung out until bed. Man, we were tired. In the morning, we read, sewed using the scraps, or played board games. That was a quiet, restful day. Our moms picked us up bright and early the next morning. I stored the masks in the basement for a week, while I made a plan to drop them off at the hospital three days after the week had passed. Annie called, and in her vengeful, cutting, voice, said, “I have, like, 300 masks, made all by me! Ha ha ha! My mom spent the week cutting the fabric, and today I, like, sewed them! Ha!” And she hung up.

When I went down to the basement the next day, the boxes were gone. In their place were boxes full of garbage! I called Mr. Hamson, and asked him if he knew anything. He apologized, and said, “I told li’l miss Annie to put her rubbish box there. I guess the rubbish man took yours by mistake.”

“NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! We worked so hard, Oni, and Karat, and Bri, and Ägg, and Ginger

and Annie. Annie! ANNIE! Thanks Mr. H! Gotta go!” And I hung up faster than you can say lollipop. Annie had taken the masks, and put rubbish in its place! How to get our masks back?

I talked to the squad, and we came up with a plan. We entered ourselves in the Golden Child competition. We showed pictures of our team working. And we wrote an amazing, stunning essay, that in part went;

Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

Our project was a team effort. While the Golden Child is a one person award, we would like to apply as a team, because we work best when we work together..... We spent a week on this project..... This project was initiated by a belief in the fact that we are a community, and a team. Each team member is responsible for helping each other up when we fall, and right now many members have fallen to the coronavirus. We made masks to protect those who are working on the front lines to lift people up, and to inspire others to make a difference. Loyalty to the team. And because of loyalty, we will not tell you who took the masks to use for their own benefit in the competition, although the newspapers have already discovered who. We have a responsibility, and we will do our best to support each other as a strong community does. Please consider us for the grant, and no matter what, please stay the strong members of our team that you are.

Sincerely,
The Organic Matter Squad
Oni On, Karat Titian, Brie Ost,
Ginger Snapp, Ägg Benedict, and Lima Bean
(We call ourselves The Organic Matter Squad
because of our food names.)

Well, the paper came out the next day, with the heading,
Tarnished Child.

Tarnished Child Award

A young girl by
the name of
Annie Trunch
was reported by
an anonymous
source, of
cheating to win
the coveted
Golden Child
Award. She has
been
disqualified.....

Well, we won the Golden Child Award, and are using the grant to send DIY mask kits to families who are isolated, and premade masks to people in shelters, or homeless. The mayor was really impressed, and decided that she would use parts of our speech in hers. So, for now, everything's A-Okay. We may

not have the most normal names, but we have something more powerful-a team. Hey, a team, A-Team! You know that show about the A-Team, with MURdock, Hannibal, B.A., and Faceman? Well, we may not be Veterans from Vietnam, but we are a team. We are a unit within a team. The team being our community, and our unit being us, The Organic Matter Squad. As a team, we pull together, and help each other up. As a team, we are responsible for each other. Wow! I just said something really *deep*. Although I still like **D👁️ It F👁️r the D👁️ughnuts** better. I mean, think of it! The perfect motivation, (who doesn't like doughnuts?) the perfect T-Shirt design, the perfect- sorry, I got a *little* off track. But anyway, things worked out. We haven't gotten the coronavirus completely under control, but hey! Nobody's perfect. And we are humans! We *will* get through this as a team. Teamwork makes the dreamwork! A team makes everything possible..... Oops. That was a moral. I dislike it when it is a perfectly good story, and BOOM a moral comes and RUINS it! Oh well. Some things can't be helped. Anyway, best of luck to you all!

The End of *this* Adventure!

Please note: In this story the characters do leave their houses a few times. This is not meant to encourage leaving your home, and should not be taken as such. Please obey the shelter in place, and do not follow the examples of these characters, except, in making masks, which is a noble and worthy endeavor.

Bibliography

Google Translate. 27 April, 2020. <https://translate.google.com/>
Used for the foreign language words.

Thesaurus.com. 27 April, 2020. <https://translate.google.com/>
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