

THE ROOM FOR EVERYBODY SERIES
BOOK 4

THE PRANK NOBODY PULLED

*A Funny Middle School Mystery
of Secrets, Suspects,
and Mixed-Up Alibis*

Dr. Nakeyau Patterson

The Prank Nobody Pulled

Copyright © 2026 Dr. Nakeyau Patterson
All rights reserved.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and events are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual people or events is coincidental.

ISBN: 979-8-951901-24-8
The Room for Everybody Series, Book 4
First edition

CHAPTER 1

The First Suspect Was a Banana

The first suspect was a banana.

It stood upright in a glass display case outside Riverview's middle-school auditorium, wearing a tiny graduation cap.

Beneath it, a cream-colored card read:

**ORIGINAL CAFETERIA BANANA
FOUNDING YEAR
PLEASE DO NOT FEED**

Kai stopped so suddenly that Zoe bumped into her backpack.

"You have brakes now?" Zoe asked.

Kai pointed.

Zoe considered the banana. "Honestly, it looks better than some of the new ones."

"It can't be that old."

"Maybe it moisturizes."

Behind them, Dad shifted a carton of paper cups from one arm to the other. "Ladies. Doorway."



They moved aside. Families and student volunteers streamed through the entrance carrying folding signs, photographs, and enough tissue paper to conceal a small car. The new school year was underway, and it was the first afternoon of Anniversary Week. Saturday's big celebration was already taking over the school.

Kai was in eighth grade at Riverview now. Zoe attended its elementary division, with different classrooms, teachers, and schedules. Anniversary Week brought the two divisions together.

Mom had volunteered to help organize family contributions. Dad had volunteered after Mom looked at

him. Zoe had volunteered after somebody mentioned refreshments.

Kai had chosen display duty.

Displays were stationary. They generally did not argue, wander off, or ask whether historical artifacts came with dipping sauce.

She had hoped for a peaceful afternoon.

Zoe leaned toward the glass. “Do we think that’s his real hair?”

“It’s a tassel.”

“That doesn’t answer my question.”

“Don’t touch anything.”

“I wasn’t going to. He’s clearly important.”

Inside the auditorium, someone struck a piano key six times. On the seventh, a voice called, “That is still the wrong note.”

Dad looked through the doors. “I’ll take these to your mother. Stay with Kai until we’ve checked you in.”

“What if Kai leaves?”

“Then stay with the banana. He seems responsible.”

He went inside before Kai could object to the promotion of fruit.

Ms. Vega, the art teacher coordinating the displays, emerged with a clipboard tucked under one arm and a roll of blue tape hooked over her wrist.

She looked at the case.

She looked at Kai.

“Please tell me that wasn’t in the donations.”

“It was here when we arrived.”

“Of course it was.” Ms. Vega crouched to read the card. “Founding year. Really.”

Zoe raised one finger. “For the record, he hasn’t said anything.”

Ms. Vega’s mouth twitched. She unlocked the front of the case, lifted the banana by its middle, and turned it over.

A rectangular sticker clung to its underside.

**PROPERTY OF THE DRAMA DEPARTMENT
FAKE FRUIT — DO NOT DISCARD**

“Case closed,” Kai said.

“We don’t know that,” Zoe told her. “The banana could have a partner.”

Ms. Vega reached for the little display card. Something white fluttered from behind it and landed beside Kai’s shoe.

Kai picked it up by a corner.

THANK YOU FOR RECOGNIZING OUR OLDEST STUDENT.

Underneath, in smaller letters:

Nobody

Jamal, one of Kai’s friends, arrived in time to read over her shoulder.

“I knew we should’ve let the banana give the welcome speech.”

“Why?” Kai asked.

“He’d keep it short. He’s got to split.”

Nobody laughed.

Jamal nodded thoughtfully. “Still workshopping.”

Amara stepped around him, phone in hand. “Can I photograph the display before you take it down?”

Ms. Vega considered the banana, then the people beginning to gather behind them.

“One of the display, and one of the note. No students in them unless they agree. Then our graduate goes back to props.”

Amara framed the case. Kai moved her backpack out of the shot.

“Wait,” Zoe said. “His hat is crooked.”

“He’s had a long academic career,” Jamal said.

Ms. Vega straightened the hat herself and returned the banana to the case.

Amara took the photograph, then a close-up of the white note before Kai handed it to Ms. Vega.

Kai liked that Ms. Vega could laugh and still get the fruit off its pedestal. It seemed like a useful skill.

“All right,” the teacher said. “Real displays. Kai, there’s a stack of volunteer folders on the front row. Find yours and join Tessa by the stage.”

“Am I in a folder?” Zoe asked.

“Your family has one.”

“So I’m a subfolder.”

“You’re with me,” Kai said.

Zoe sighed. “That’s what a subfolder would be told.”

They followed Jamal into the auditorium. Near the stage, their friends Mateo and Laila were trying to untangle a string of paper pennants without tearing the letters off.

They had reached HAPPY ANNIVER.

Laila held up the remaining knot. “The rest of the anniversary is in here somewhere.”

“Could stop there,” Jamal said. “Make people curious.”

Kai set down her bag and helped Mateo loosen the knot. The paper slid free without ripping. Above them,

the stage curtains breathed inward as someone hurried behind them.

A boy Kai recognized from the drama club came out carrying a cardboard grandfather clock. The hands pointed to twelve, but the numbers went in the wrong direction.

“Felix,” Laila said, “your clock’s backward.”

“Then I’m early.”

He kept walking.

Zoe watched him go. “I like his system.”

An eighth grader stood beside a large illustrated map, smoothing one corner with a clean sleeve. Tessa Park. Kai had seen her name on the anniversary posters. She’d designed the map and nearly everything that went around it.

Riverview’s buildings curved across the paper in blue and gold. Tiny students crowded the sidewalks. One leaned out of a classroom window, apparently escaping an enormous musical note. Someone had drawn a squirrel carrying a hall pass.

Kai moved closer.

“That’s really good.”

Tessa looked up. “Thanks. The squirrel took longer than the gym.”

“As it should,” Zoe said.

“The art showcase committee wants to see it on Saturday,” Tessa added, trying to sound casual and almost managing. “Ms. Vega says I should put it in my portfolio.”

“Can you get the squirrel to sign mine?”

“Zoe.”

“I’m networking.”

Tessa laughed. She stepped aside to show Kai a small diagram attached to a clipboard. It marked where the old photographs, school map, and time capsule would stand.

“The capsule gets the case in the center,” Tessa explained. “The other one is for objects people loan us. Old uniforms, programs, things like that.”

“The banana’s résumé,” Jamal said.

“Formerly,” Kai told him.

There were two display cases. One stood by the auditorium doors, where Ms. Vega was gathering the banana’s graduation supplies. The other was tucked beside the stage, partly hidden behind a stack of folding chairs.

Both had dark wooden bases, glass fronts, and small brass locks.

The second case’s brass handle sat slightly crooked.

“That one looks disappointed,” Zoe said.

Jamal tilted his head. “I could straighten it.”

“Please don’t,” Tessa said. “Ms. Vega borrowed both of them. We’re only allowed to move them.”

“With an adult,” Kai added, reading the instruction on Tessa’s diagram.

“Yes.” Tessa tapped the paper. “This is just the layout. You’ll get the actual jobs in your folders.”

Kai found hers on a chair near the front row. Her name was written across a green tab. Under it sat a setup checklist and a pencil with an eraser that had already given up.

She turned the first page.

A smaller cream-colored card slipped into her lap.

**THANK YOU, KAI,
FOR MOVING THE EMPTY CASE.**

At the bottom:

Nobody.

Kai read it twice.

Then she looked back toward the doorway.

The banana's note was still in Ms. Vega's hand.

"Jamal."

He was trying to balance the end of a pennant on his finger. "If this is about the split joke, I've moved on."

"Did you put this in my folder?"

He glanced at it. "No."

"Felix?"

Across the aisle, the boy stopped adjusting his backward clock. "What?"

She held up the card. "Is this yours?"

He came close enough to read it. The smile left his face for a second, then came back.

"Looks like someone has manners."

"Did you write it?"

"I haven't touched your folder."

That was an answer to a slightly different question.

Kai noticed.

She also noticed that noticing something did not make it proof. The clipped recording of Amara's poem had already taught her what happened when people filled in the missing part themselves.

"Everything okay?" Tessa asked.

Kai showed her the card.

Tessa pushed a loose strand of hair behind her ear. “Maybe whoever did the banana is thanking all the volunteers.”

“For things they haven’t done?”

“Maybe it’s another joke.”

Around them, the auditorium kept preparing for a perfectly ordinary celebration. Mom laughed at something near the refreshments table. Dad argued gently with a folding table whose legs refused to cooperate. Laila called for somebody to hold the last three letters of ANNIVERSARY.

Kai found Ms. Vega near the doors and showed her the note.

“This isn’t an instruction from me,” the teacher said. “Leave both cases where they are until we go over the move together. I’ll keep this.”

“Can Amara photograph it first?”

“Yes.”

Amara took the picture. Then Ms. Vega slid the card into her own folder, away from the volunteer assignments.

Kai felt better about that.

Not entirely better.

“Someone knows your name,” Zoe said as they walked back toward the stage.

“It’s on the folder.”

“And they know your job.”

“We don’t know that.”

Zoe glanced at the two glass cases.

“Then why are they thanking you for it?”

Kai looked down at the checklist she had barely started.

She had been at Riverview for less than fifteen minutes.

She hadn't moved a single thing.

Somebody was already counting on her.

Continue reading

The Prank Nobody Pulled

Dr. Nakeyau Patterson

Includes the complete opening chapter, "The First Suspect Was a Banana."

This is a reading sample, not the full book. Original book page numbers have been preserved.

[View the book & available formats](#)