

Cleo Edison Oliver

in Persuasion Power

SUNDEE T. FRAZIER

Illustrations by
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\$\$\$CEO\$\$\$

Cleopatra Edison Oliver, CEO

CLEOPATRA ENTERPRISES, INC.

818 Camphor Street

Altadena Heights, CA 91120

Fortune A. Davies, CEO
Fortune Enterprises, Inc.
150 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Ms. Fortune A. Davies:

It has been almost a month since I last wrote, so I thought you might like an update. A lot has happened with Cleopatra Enterprises, Inc.—things that might sound not so good at first but that I am **CONFIDENT** will all work out for the best.

My last business, Cleo's Quick and Painless Tooth Removal Service, had several satisfied customers (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iQjyOZuMs for an example of

one, my brother Josh). Some unfortunate decisions on my part forced us to have to close down (for now). However, I learned some very valuable lessons from this experience, which I passed on to my fifth-grade class as a part of my recent and most highly successful Passion Project presentation. One thing I learned is that I need to be more careful about how I use my POWERS of PERSUASION. I've got a lot of these powers, but according to my mom, there's a fine line between persuasion and being pushy. Sometimes I don't know my own strength.

The really good thing to come out of all this is that I have formed a board of directors: my parents, Charlie and Nicki Oliver, and my business partner's mom, Helyn Ortega. I am the CHAIRGIRL of the board, of course 😊. All future ideas will be run past the board before we start telling the whole world (something I failed to do last time).

My partner, Caylee, and I already have another business planned—CAYLEE'S CUTIES™. These aren't just any barrettes. They're personalized, and they're going to sell like snow cones on an Altadena Heights summer day (another one of my businesses).

Speaking of business, I need to get back to work. I've got a corporation to run. I just want you to know—YOU ARE MY INSPIRATION!!! And if you ever do a show on business kids, I hope you will think of me!!!

Your best admirer, who wants to be just like you.

Cleopatra Edison Oliver

Cleopatra Edison Oliver, CEO

P.S. I already have a poster of you on my wall, but I would LOVE, LOVE, LOVE to have a signed photograph. Thank you for

sending me one if you can. Here is my last year's school photo from fourth grade. I have a dorky overbite and my bottom teeth are as crowded as the line outside your studio, but I will be getting braces soon so that I can have a perfect smile like you!





◆ CHAPTER 1 ◆

The Next Fortune

Cleo aimed the remote at the TV and punched in channel 24—the Good Life Network. *Fortune's* network. *Fortune's* show would be on in less than ten minutes.

Cleo had just settled into the cushy, faux-leather recliner when the doorbell rang.

"I'll get it!" Julian yelled. Her littlest brother tore through the house.

"I want to get it!" Josh shouted. The foot stomping doubled. There was a crash, the sound of piano keys being mashed, and Julian crying.

“What’s going on down there?” Mom yelled from upstairs.

Cleo glanced at the large family photo hanging on the wall—her and her brothers’ beaming brown faces, Mom’s smiling white one, and Dad’s sort-of tannish one. Why couldn’t her brothers always be as still and quiet as they were in that picture?

Cleo headed for the front room when the doorbell rang again. She passed Josh and Jay wrestling on the wood floor. Barkley stood over them, barking. He trailed Cleo to the door, slowly. Their black lab still had a lot of pounds to shed.

“Hey, Jelly!” Cleo said, pushing Barkley back so she could open the door all the way.

Caylee carried her craft tote—a large, polka-dotted bag—over her shoulder. “Hi, Peanut Butter.” Cleo and Caylee were like PB&J. They just went together.

“Ooo, a new Caylee’s Cutie!” Cleo reached for the rainbow clip holding back one side of Caylee’s chin-length, straight black hair. The word *Hope* was written in silver across the colorful arc.

“Our priest said rainbows are a promise that no matter how bad things seem, the world’s not coming to an end.”

Caylee peered around Cleo's shoulder at the boys. Josh was sitting on Jay's face. Jay flailed his fists but wasn't having much luck making contact. "Should we . . . do something?" she asked.

Josh rose up a little and farted. JayJay shrieked.

Brothers. Cleo shut the front door and motioned with her head for Caylee to follow. They slipped past Mom, who was putting the boys in separate corners—one in the living room and the other in the hallway near the bathroom. "Hi, Caylee!" Mom said from the hall.

"Hi, Miss Nicki!"

Cleo grabbed a box of Cheez-Its as they passed through the kitchen. They had just reached the family room when Mom called out, "You finished your homework, right, Cleo?"

Doughnuts and Disney!

She'd hoped Mom would be so distracted with Josh and Jay that she'd forget.

"Pretty much!" She and Caylee plopped onto the love seat. A lady on TV was dancing with a mop as if she were Cinderella with Prince Charming. A trail of sparkles followed her as the mop magically cleaned the kitchen floor.

Mom appeared in the doorway. Her short brown hair was disheveled. Her blue eyes locked with Cleo's brown ones. "Pretty much?"

"It'll be done before dinner." Cleo clasped her hands and looked at Mom with pleading eyes. "*Promise.*"

"That's not our agreement, Cleo. It gets done before *Fortune*. Period."

Fortune's bouncy theme music came on. Cleo's pulse started to race. "But, Mom, it's starting!"

Mom held out her hand. Cleo resisted, watching out of the corner of her eye as Fortune entered the studio, hugging audience members and blowing kisses to the camera. "The remote, Cleo."

"It's not fair!" Cleo wailed. "Josh *never* has to do homework!"

Mom crossed her arms. "Really? You're going to compare yourself with a first-grader? You're in fifth grade, Cleo!"

Cleo's cheeks burned. Caylee's mom never stood over Caylee, demanding that she finish her homework. On the other hand, Caylee didn't need her mom to. Caylee kept all her assignments in a calendar on her iPad, with alarms to remind her when they were due.

Cleo handed over the remote with a huff and trudged out. They climbed the stairs to her room with its sign on the door: **Cleopatra Edison Oliver, CEO**. At the beginning of the school year, a few weeks before, Cleo had made the executive decision to change her middle name from Lenore to Edison (her grandparents' last name) in order to have the initials CEO, which also stood for chief executive officer, the person in charge of a company. She'd made the sign herself.

Cleo pushed on the door, feeling as flat as the soda she'd left sitting on her desk overnight.

"I can help you with your homework . . ." Caylee scanned the disaster zone. "If we can find it."

Even to Cleo's eyes, the room looked like a troll's cave. She'd really let it go since school had started. It was even worse than Josh and Jay's room, which was a verifiable rat's nest. Or more accurately, a mouse's. They'd found mouse poop in the closet not that long ago. The mouse was still at large.

"Seriously, where is it?" Caylee asked.

"Ummm . . ." Cleo put her finger to her mouth. "My room ate it?" They both laughed at that, and Cleo felt her enthusiasm returning. The carpeted floor was littered

with clothes, magazines, and leftover flyers from her tooth-pulling business. Food scraps on a few dirty dishes. Beanie Babies, Barbies, and bubblegum wrappers. Dirty socks and underwear.

Cleo tossed things this way and that, until finally she found her backpack under the sweater she'd worn to school that day. She clambered onto her unmade bed and gave Beary—the floppy purple bear from her birth mom that she never slept without—a big squeeze. Caylee joined her and they got to work.

A few minutes later, Mom knocked on the door. She had to force her way in because of all the stuff on the floor. “Cleo.” She sounded exasperated. “Your room!”

Uh-oh. Would Mom also make her clean her room before she could return to *Fortune*?

“How did it get so out of control?”

Cleo raised her shoulders and eyebrows at the same time. “Evil fairies?”

Mom took a deep breath. “You definitely need to clean this up before bedtime.”

“But why? I’m the one who lives here.” *Fortune and me*, she thought, glancing at the poster over her bed. Fortune stood with her arms outstretched. The gleam in

her eye made it clear: She possessed the secret to living the best, most successful life ever. “It’s where Fortune and I do all our best business brainstorming! And creative geniuses are always messy. Except Jelly.” She mugged at her friend.

“That’s great, but you can’t let it get like this. Remember? We’ve got mice on the loose.”

“I *know*, Mom.”

“They’re probably breeding a colony in here!”

Cleo shuddered. That image would help keep her on task—later. “Okay,” she droned, admitting defeat.

“And don’t forget, you’re on bathrooms this week.”

Ugh. Cleo *hated* cleaning bathrooms. Especially wiping the toilet seat. Her brothers had terrible aim. “Okay, *okay*.” Every second Mom stood there nagging was another second Cleo wasn’t watching *Fortune*.

At long last, she left them alone. They had Cleo’s homework done in eighteen minutes and bounded back downstairs.

“Done already?” Mom asked.

“Done already! Caylee helped. But she didn’t do it for me,” she added quickly. She hoped her mom wouldn’t want to check it. Who knew what great business knowledge she was missing every second she wasn’t watching *Fortune*?

Mom gave them the go-ahead to watch TV and rushed into the living room where Josh and Jay ran and slid on the floor, yelling and making explosion sounds. For once, Cleo was glad her brothers were acting crazy. Barkley's barking filled the house.

"Outside, boys!" Mom called. "We can't afford another trip to the ER."

Cleo pulled on Caylee's arm. "Come on!" She hurried into the family room and clicked on the television. Three women sat in salon-style chairs in Fortune's studio. Cleo figured out quickly that they were "fempreneurs" (what Fortune called women business owners) who'd been invited onto the show for "power makeovers." Two women and a man—professional hairstylists—clipped and combed and flat-ironed the fempreneurs' hair into brand-new looks.

"I'm getting a hair makeover next week," Cleo said, flipping her braids over her shoulders. "In time for school pictures."

"Fun!" Caylee's brown eyes sparkled.

It *would* be fun, Cleo thought. She hadn't known if Mom would go for the idea, because of the expense. But Cleo had asked, Mom had said yes, and that's all Cleo

needed. She imagined herself in a chair on Fortune's stage, getting her naturally coily-curlly hair done in a sophisticated twist-n-curl just like Fortune's. Fabulous!

Only moments after they turned on the show, it was time for a commercial break. Cleo groaned and muted the sound. "I'm going to be on *Fortune* one day."

Caylee's face scrunched. "You think her show will still be on when we're that old?"

"Who said anything about being old?"

Caylee stared at her. "While you're still a kid?"

"Of course."

"Why would she have a kid on her show?"

"Kidpreneurs are the *future* of our country! And I've seen kids on her show already."

"Okay, but why would she have *you* on her show?"

"Why *wouldn't* she? I'll persuade her to have me on. Persuasion is my superpower, you know."

Caylee nodded emphatically. "I know."

"Plus, I'm the next Fortune A. Davies!"

Caylee sputtered and covered her mouth.

Cleo raised her chin, feeling a little hurt. "I could be!"

Caylee bumped into her playfully. "Hey, I brought you something." She pulled a large plastic container out of her

tote bag. Inside was a sampling of her funky, handcrafted hair clips, each in its own compartment.

She plucked one out and handed it to Cleo—an old-fashioned lightbulb made of felt. The curvy metal part inside the bulb was done in glittery silver paint. It spelled Cleo's name!

“My own Caylee's Cutie!”

“Yep. Because you're always coming up with bright ideas. And now that your middle name is Edison, I especially thought a lightbulb would be perfect for you.”

“Yes! As in Thomas—who is probably one of my great-great-great-great uncles or something.”

“Exactly.”

“Thanks, Jelly. I love it!” She gave Caylee a Bug-a-Hug (a hug so huge it made a person's eyes bug). “I'll show it off when we pitch our new business to our parents—I mean, our board of directors—tonight.” Caylee's mom and older brother were coming for dinner so the girls could present their latest enterprise and hopefully get a thumbs-up to start promoting right away.

Fortune reappeared and Cleo scrambled for the remote.

“To all my sister-friends out there,” Fortune was

saying, “we are so *over* the whole good hair–bad hair thing. Am I right?” The studio audience clapped and the camera did a close-up on two ladies nodding to each other. “And we all know we are so much more than our hair.” More applause. “However . . . *however!* Your hair *is* an impression maker. So go ahead, girlfriends. Make an impression. Let your hair tell the world who you are!”

Something went *zing!* in Cleo’s brain. *Tell the world who you are.* She grabbed Caylee’s arm. “Fortune just gave us the perfect slogan for our barrette business.”

“She did?”

“Yes. ‘Tell the world who you are!’ Because with our personalized hair clips, girls can let others know their hobbies and passions and what they’re good at too. Like your artist palette clip and my lightbulb!”

“Hey, could we *call* them Passion Clips?” Caylee bit her bottom lip. “I’ve been feeling kind of weird about having a business with my name in it.”

“Really?” Cleo couldn’t imagine not wanting her name in the name of a business. In fact, her mom was in the process of test-marketing a new product Cleo had given her the idea *and* name for: Cleo’s Canine Cookies™.

“Well . . . if you’re sure . . .” Cleo tapped her finger on her lip. “It’s perfect!” She held up her hand and Caylee slapped her a high five.

“Fortune will definitely have you on her show one day.”

Cleo beamed. With Caylee’s creative crafting and Cleo’s Persuasion Power™, they’d be selling Passion Clips™ like crazy!