

a breakfast serials story

The Best in the World

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Chapter 1 The Great Idea

"Gross!" Nick made a face. "How many worms did he eat?"

"Sixty-two," answered his best friend Clay. "In thirty seconds. He didn't chew. See?" Nick leaned from where he sat on the porch steps to see better. Clay pulled the book away, not wanting Nick too close. Clay hated sharing anything but trouble.

"Where do they get that stuff!" Nick said, unable to look any longer.

Clay grinned. "If you thought *that* was gross . . ." He flipped carefully through *The Guinness Book of Records*.

Nick eyed the book, feeling perturbed. Clay hadn't let him touch it yet. Clay even showed him the pictures too quickly, as if a look from Nick's eyes would smudge the pages. Nick wanted to look at it on his own, take his time to see if there was anything besides the gross stuff Clay had been showing him. When he'd asked, Clay had said, "No way! I don't want your nose-picking hands on *my* book!"

"Here!" Clay said. "Get a load of these fingernails!"

Pretending he didn't care, Nick stole a glance. The man looked as if he were clutching ribbons he'd ripped off some presents. "That's not gross. That's *weird*. How does he sleep?"

Clay shrugged and set the book on his thigh. "How does he scratch when he itches? Search me. But neat stuff, huh?"

"I don't know." Nick eyed the book. It wouldn't be hard to grab. "Ever want to be in that book?"—as the world's worst best friend? he added to himself. Or the stingiest?

"Sure. Once I did the most humongous burp in the world."

Nick snorted. "And my belly button whistles when I cough." He slid his hand toward Clay's leg, pretending to scratch his own kneecap.

"No, really! And yesterday I sneezed twelve times in a row. I bet that's a record." Clay's look dared Nick to disagree.

Nick couldn't stand it any longer. He grabbed and ran.

"Hey!" Clay screamed. "Give that back!"

"Who's gonna make me?" Nick shouted. "Your grandmother?"

Nick ran around the house, aiming for some lilac bushes where he could hide and take his sweet time looking at the book.

He didn't count on his little sister's red wagon blocking the way. "E-e-e-iii!" he yelled, jumping.

It all happened very fast.

He shoved the wagon's cocked handle away as his right leg shot forward. His smile seemed to lift him higher. "Yeah!" he breathed as he started descending. Then he heard a crash.

"Ow!" Clay yelled.

Nick couldn't help looking behind him. The book flew from his hand. He lunged for it and twisted in the air. The grass reared up like a snapped blanket. Nick landed flat on his back, knocking the wind from him. The book lay beyond his hand. He heard an "O-oof!" on his other side and turned to see Clay's feet thumping the ground near his head.

Nick tried to sit but couldn't. He tried to breathe, but his throat felt like a straw collapsed from sucking too hard.

Desperate now, and gasping for breath, Nick struggled once more to sit. Clay moaned as he pulled himself onto his hands and knees and wobbled toward the book. With a tremendous grunt, Nick reared up and threw himself toward the book, blocking Clay.

Just as Nick was about to snag the book, Clay grabbed one of his feet. He yanked, pulling Nick backwards.

Nick tried kicking, but Clay glommed on to his other foot. Nick felt as helpless as a worm on a wet sidewalk.

Nick went limp and groaned. "All I want to do is look at it." A wave of anger washed over him. "You've been a real creep about this book. And you know what? It's not so great. It's just about lot of losers doing lame

things. And they're mostly adults. A-number-one dolts? Get it?"

"Oh yeah?" Clay said. He tightened his grip on Nick's feet.

"Yeah. How about the man who's tattooed everywhere except between his toes. Gimme a break! Or the woman who paid six million dollars for a wedding dress. Come on! *We* could write a more interesting book than *that!*"

"More interesting than the fattest model in the world?"

Nick winced, picturing her. "Definitely. Let go and I'll give you back your stupid book. Cross my heart . . ."

Clay let go and they both sat up. Nick reached for the book and, holding it as if it were disgusting, handed it to Clay.

Clay checked it for damage. Satisfied, he said, "You know what? You're right. We should write our own book."

Nick nodded. "And make all the records in our book belong to us."

Clay grinned. "Hey! That's a great idea!" He stood on shaky legs. "What record should we try for first?"

Next Week: A Ton of Money

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