

Excerpt from DANGER! BOYS DANCING! from the Scholastic series, *Boys Will be Boys*

NARRATOR ONE

A lot of stories start off with somebody walking down the street, minding their own business when out of the blue - BAM! -something unexpected happens to them and suddenly everything changes.

NARRATOR TWO

It's true, a lot of stories start that way, but this doesn't happen to be one of them.

NAT

This story starts out in my backyard, with Fink and me sitting up in our favorite tree eating cheese crackers and dill pickles one afternoon after school. We were talking, which shouldn't come as a surprise to anybody who knows us, because when we're together it seems like we never run out of things to talk about.

FINK

What do you think the surprise is?

NAT

She didn't say surprise. She said *special treat*.

FINK

So what do you think the special treat is?

NAT

Hard to tell. It sort of depends on whether she means special to *her* or special to *us*.

FINK

What do you mean?

NAT

Well, do you think cutting your toenails is special?

FINK

Hello? What kind of question is that? Of course I don't think cutting my toenails is special.

NAT

Does your mom?

FINK

How should I know? She gets it done down at the beauty parlor.

NAT

Yep. Mine too. It's called a pedicure. Does your mom get dressed up when she goes to have it done?

FINK

I never really thought about it, but I guess she does. What's your point?

NAT

My point is, the reason they get dressed up is because they think going to get their toenails cut is *special*.

NARRATOR ONE

Fink's eyes got really wide.

FINK

You don't think Mrs. West is planning to get us all pedicures for our special treat, do you?

NAT

Don't be dumb.

FINK

Suck your thumb.

NAT

Not now.

FINK

Milk a cow.

NAT

No, for real, Fink, *not now*. I don't feel like playing the rhyming game.

NARRATOR TWO

Fink and I have invented a lot of games over the years. There's A or B? Jinx on Frooties (that's for when we both say the same thing at the same time) and the rhyming game, which is what he was trying to get me to play right then.

FINK

You used to love that game. How come you don't like to play anymore, Nat-man?

NAT

I don't know. I guess maybe I've outgrown it.

FINK

Oh, well, *excuse* me for being so *immature*.

NAT

Ugh, you sound like Marla. She loves that word, *immature*.

NARRATOR ONE

Marla Dundee and her evil twin, Jessie Kornblume are the two most annoying girls in our class. Actually, make that the two most annoying girls *in the world*.

FINK

What if the special treat is something girly?

NARRATOR TWO

Fink, wrinkled his nose with disgust.

NAT

Like what?

FINK

Like making valentines out of doilies.

NAT

Valentine’s Day is ages away, why would we be making valentines now?

FINK

I was just using that as an example of a girly thing. You know, glitter and frills and mushy love junk.

NAT

Speaking of mushy love junk, how’s Leslie Zebak?

NARRATOR ONE

Fink groaned.

FINK

Why are girls so dense? Haven’t I made it totally clear that I’m not interested in her?

NAT

Totally.

NAT

Then why does she keep writing me love notes?

NAT

I guess she’s stuck on you.

FINK

I wish she’d get stuck on a big wad of gum instead.

NARRATOR ONE

I popped a cheese cracker in my mouth, leaned back against a thick branch and munched quietly for a minute.

NAT

So, I’ve been thinking about a hairless rat.

FINK

Can we please get off the topic of Leslie Zebak?

NAT

No, seriously. I’ve been thinking about buying myself a hairless rat. Wouldn’t that be cool?

FINK

Uh, well, I guess a rat would be sort of cool to have as a pet, but does it have to be a bald one?

NAT

Yeah, because of my mom, remember?

FINK

Oh, right. I forgot.

NARRATOR TWO

I have a pet. Hercules, my goldfish. He’s a nice fish, and I like him just fine, but basically all he does is eat, blow bubbles, swim around and mess up his fishbowl. It’s not all that exciting to watch after a while. A dog would be the perfect pet. I could teach him all kinds of tricks, and he could sleep on my bed at night. A dog would be great, except that my mom’s allergic to anything with fur. That’s how I came up with the idea of the hairless rat.

NAT

They’ve got them down at *Purr-fect Pets*. And they’re only ten bucks.

FINK

Ten bucks? You can get a newt for \$2.50. And they’re *supposed* to be bald,

NAT

Newts are cool, but they can’t do tricks, You can teach rats all kinds of things. They’re really smart.

FINK

Do you think you could teach your bald rat how to get rid of Leslie Zebak for me? That would certainly be worth ten bucks.

NARRATOR TWO

Later, we went inside to work on our homework together. Fink and I are both pretty smart, but not at the same things. Fink is better at math and history and I’m better at science and writing. If you could just put us together we’d be downright brilliant. Anyway, we were

working on our American History homework assignment when the subject of Mrs. West’s special treat came up again.

FINK

What if it’s something great like a field trip to Splash-o Mania?

NAT

That would be so cool! Have you seen the new ad for it on TV?”

NAT & FINK (Simultaneously)

“Slide of Death, takes your breath away and never gives it back!”

FINK

Jinx on Frootles!

NARRATOR ONE

Fink punched me in the arm.

NAT

Ow !

NARRATOR ONE

I rubbed my arm.

NAT

Fine. You win. How many does that make?

FINK

You owe me twenty-seven Frootles.

NARRATOR TWO

Fink always wins the Jinx on Froozles game, but so far he hasn't made me pay up. It's a good thing, since I only get three bucks a week for my allowance, and Froozles- which are these giant milkshakes with frozen cookies mixed in - cost three-fifty down at the Bee Hive snack bar. I can't afford to go into debt buying milkshakes right now. Not when I'm saving up for my hairless rat.

FINK

Maybe the special treat is a pizza party.

NAT

Why would Mrs. West give us a pizza party *now*? Teachers only give pizza parties when it's the end of the year or somebody in the class wins the city-wide spelling bee, or something big like that.

FINK

Wait! I know what it is!

NARRATOR ONE

Fink threw his arms up in the air so enthusiastically that he lost his balance and almost fell off his chair.

NAT

What?

NARRATOR TWO

I grabbed him by the elbow and pulled him back onto his seat.

FINK

We're going to Washington!

NAT

Washington, D.C.?

FINK

Yeah, don't you remember? Mrs. West said we were going to be studying the Whitehouse this month. How can we study something we haven't ever seen?

NAT

What are you talking about, Fink? We study all kinds of things we haven't ever seen. Remember Vasco da Gama? We studied him and we never saw him.

FINK

How could we? He's dead. But the Whitehouse is alive and well in Washington, D.C. I'm telling you, we're going to Washington. That's the special treat, Nat-o. I'm positive.

NAT

I'm not so sure.

NARRATOR ONE

One thing I did know for sure was that pickles and cheese crackers made me really thirsty.

NAT

You want some juice?

NARRATOR ONE

I stood up and headed out to the kitchen. Fink followed me.

FINK

They make money in Washington.

NAT

Yeah, I guess politician’s get paid pretty well.

FINK

No. I mean they *make* money there. At the mint. You know, dollar bills and pennies and dimes. I read somewhere that you can take a tour of the place and actually see them making cash.

NAT

That would be awesome.

FINK

And the FBI is in Washington too, Wouldn’t it be amazing to see them working on some top secret plan?

NAT

Uh, it wouldn’t be very top secret if they let a bunch of fifth graders from Jeffersonville Elementary School in on it, would it, genius?

FINK

I guess not.

NARRATOR TWO

Fink took the glass of juice I’d poured for him.

FINK

Hey Nat-o, do you think there’s any chance we’ll get to meet the president when we go to the Whitehouse?

NAT

I don't know. I hope so.

FINK

Not me,. My parents didn't vote for him. That could be very embarrassing if it came up.

NAT

Do you really think it's possible the special treat is a trip to Washington, D.C.?

FINK

Absolutely. What else could it be?

NAT

I don't know.

NARRATOR ONE

I reached down and absent-mindedly started scratching my right knee. Fink was about to take a gulp of juice, but when he noticed me scratching, he put down his glass and pointed nervously at my leg.

FINK

Uh oh. What's that all about, Nat-o?

NAT

In case you don't already know, my knee has this habit of itching whenever something bad is about to happen to me.

FINK

Maybe it has something to do with going to Washington, Maybe something bad is going to happen on the trip.

NAT

Maybe it's just an itch. Maybe it doesn't mean anything.

NARRATOR ONE

But it meant something all right. Something really bad. Something nobody could possibly have predicted.