

In Ned's Head

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ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

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I wonder if you get a ticket or have to go to jail if you run over somebody with your bike.

Nugget isn't interested in Rebecca. He's in love with Geneva. But Rebecca smiled at Nugget on Monday when his team won at volleyball. And in the cafeteria Rebecca brought Nugget a fork. It seems *suspicious*. Maybe it's time for private detective Treb Vladinsky, with a license to spy, to arrive on the scene.

Next week I'm going to ask Rebecca to go steady.

Bye-bye apple pie.

January 28

Howdy diary!

Treb Vladinsky is going to note a few important things.

IMPORTANT THING #1: Rebecca and Nugget aren't going together.

IMPORTANT THING #2: It's seventy-five yards between the lampposts in front of Rebecca's house. That can be good to know.

We have this thing at our school every year. It's called Fresh Air Day. We had it yesterday. It's like a whole day of P.E. out in the woods with free hot dogs. The idea is that we're supposed to learn to like outdoor winter sports. Like we don't already. But it's better than school. These were our choices:

go hiking in the snow

go cross-country skiing

go ice-skating

go home (if you had a cold)

2 cups Coca-Cola
1 cup black pepper
1 spoonful mustard
1/2 glass liquid detergent
1 pinch soil
4 crushed ants

Then we tried the potion on Arnold's little sister.

We decided to lock her in the closet. Werewolves can get pretty wild, you know.

She never got hair on her face. But she did get wild.

Not enough crushed ants in the potion, I guess.



Arnold is a good friend. He's worse at ice hockey, he's pretty weak, and his dad doesn't have a red convertible Corvette.

We've formed a club, Arnold and me. A discussion club. It doesn't work very well. I only want to discuss Rebecca and Arnold only wants to discuss Madelyn. Madelyn is Arnold's secret favorite girl.

Sometimes Arnold comes with me when I ride my bike by Rebecca's house.

Sometimes I go with Arnold when he rides his

bike by Madelyn's house. That's not as fun. It's uphill the whole way.

Arnold and I have invented our own country. It's called Hoppalochinia. Arnold was the president last week and I was the chief of police. In Hoppalochinia there aren't any red convertible Corvettes, any turnips, or any Fresh Air Days. We've drawn maps, made a flag, and written a national anthem. The flag is the best. It's blue with a cow in the middle.

I was supposed to ask Rebecca to go steady this week. But so far I keep messing everything up. So I'll wait.

In Hoppalochinia Arnold and I never mess anything up. We each live in our own condo with a terrace and with Madelyn and Rebecca. We have two choppers and a taxi to ride in. We catch thieves and assassins and throw bad guys in jail. The worstest bad guy of all is named Nougat. Clumpy Nougat. Why that's his name, I have no idea.

Now I'm going to go eat spaghetti. Think if spaghetti came in triangles and not in straight lines. It would look funny.

Bye-bye apple pie.

I wonder why people keep changing the names of food so much. Think if they do it again in fifty years. French fries are called potato fingers. And spaghetti is called worm pudding. I know one kid who won't be eating anything anyway.

Bye-bye strudel pie.



February 17

Hello! Hello!

Treb Vladinsky from the planet Exus calling Earth and his diary. I'm going to come down now and catch a few earthlings. In about twenty seconds. Mostly girls. Over and out and all that.

Last Saturday I did something criminal. If anybody finds out, I'll probably get sent to jail.

Here, I'll tell you a little about it. But I'm going to use a code name for the thing we did. This is what happened: Nugget bought a pack of socks at the gas station. Arnold and I hid in a phone booth. We were squished. Then we went under the tunnel. Nugget took out a sock and lit it.

Nugget can smoke socks through his nose and blow sock rings. But he didn't feel like it right then. The sock made me cough.

"Only baby beginners get sock coughs," Nugget said.

"I got sock smoke in my throat," I said.

Arnold didn't want to sneak a sock. He's so nerdy sometimes.

"You know, you can get sock cancer," he said and left.

I smoked two socks, then I didn't feel too good.

On the way home I figured out that people can tell that you've been socking. You grow about three years older and get a wheezy voice.

When I got home I said to Mom in a wheezy voice:

"Hey Mom!"

"Don't you feel well?" she asked.

"I'm three years older. Can't you tell?"

"No," Mom said. "You look the same."

Then I went to my room and put together a puzzle.



Report on the recently moved-in twenty-five-years-and-a-few-months-old guy:

He drank a beer out on the sidewalk last Saturday.

Suspicious.

He had a black guitar case that could contain some sort of weapon.

Suspicious again.

Girls come to visit him at night.

They whistle all the way up, up, up the stairs.

Highly suspicious.

End of report.



I've made two decisions.

Decision #1: I'm not going to have a birthday party.

I'm going to have a *cocktail* party instead. Perfect, now that I'm more mature. Mom said we could have the apple cider with the bubbles in it. And we can put a cherry in everybody's glass. I've already sent out invitations. So far I've gotten answers from Arnold, Theobald, Raphaela, Little Eric, and unfortunately from my second cousin Beatrice.

Decision #2: Nugget can come if he wants to.

Rebecca hasn't answered yet. If she answers YES it's going to be a cocktail party à la hugging-and-French-kissing. If she answers NO, it's going to be a cocktail party à la punch-and-cake.

I think I'm getting horns. Something red and painful is growing on my forehead.

Mom says I'm just getting plain old acne.

I say I already have enough knees.

Mom says I'm starting to grow up.

It's true. At least my forehead is, anyway.

The ninth graders have cool zits all over their faces. They go around and brag about it.

Last night I had a dream. I dreamed about ears lying in an ocean listening. Then a seagull came and started nibbling on the ears. That's all I know.

I think I'll bring up my dream with Arnold in our discussion club.

the Earth spinning like that? Another thing I'll have to bring up for discussion.

I heard a good joke yesterday. It was something about an old man and a tree that fell down a hill. There was something else, too. I don't really remember what it was. But it was funny.

You make ketchup from tomatoes. I wonder if you make mustard from bananas? Because it *is* yellow, you know. It'd look pretty stupid if you didn't mush up the tomatoes or the bananas. You'd have a banana on your hamburger and a tomato on your french fries.

Today I got a fat lip.

Bye-bye apple pie.

(two days after the catastrophe)

Listen here, diary. This is the last bleeping time I'm ever going to write in you.

Some stuff has happened.

STUFF 1. My cocktail party was a failure.

STUFF 2. Somebody peeked in my diary. In you, that is.

First, Stuff 1. The party on Saturday.

I got ready in good time. I was looking so cool, you wouldn't believe it. No one else did.

My guests: Arnold, Raphaela, Madelyn, Nicole, my second cousin Beatrice, Little Eric, Theobald, Nugget, and REBECCA.

Sharon couldn't come. She forgot to take her dog out. It did a #2 in Sharon's dad's briefcase. The briefcase had some extremely important papers in it. Smart dog.

Arnold arrived first, of course. He brought some firecrackers. Firecrackers aren't very dangerous . . . unless your name is Arnold. Arnold set the tablecloth

The rest of the class got to sing backup. They're supposed to be-bop in the background and clap their hands if the crowd hasn't figured out that the song is over. Nugget said he's going to clap out of synch. He's jealous because he couldn't scream louder than Nigel. Nugget asked if we wanted to ride to the gigs in his dad's red convertible Corvette.

"Yeeaaahh, great idea!" we cheered.

"Too bad you can't. I'm the only one who gets to ride in it!" Nugget roared.



The first thing we needed was a place to practice. Arnold asked his uncle if we could practice in his attic. Sure, his uncle said, as long as we each bought an ice cream every week from his Mini-Mart. Arnold promised. Theobald said that he didn't want to waste his money on ice cream. He doesn't even like ice cream. So I offered to eat his for him.

Our first practice went well. We lost half of our backup singers. They got a headache. Then we started to play. Then we lost the other half. Except for Sharon and Raphaela. They had earplugs. Now they're our choir girls. We have to wave at them so they know when they're supposed to take out their earplugs and choir.

We don't have a name yet, but we don't have any gigs yet either so it doesn't matter.

I think I'm pretty good at the drums already because I was the loudest of everybody.

Arnold doesn't know anything about music. He's only in the band because the whole thing was his idea. He calls himself the Boss. He thinks we should have Madelyn as a producer. I think that's a stupid idea. I told Arnold that you shouldn't mix business with pleasure.

As for me, I don't have any pleasures anymore. I'm alone in life. But if I become a rock star then girls will flock to me. Good.



Dad sold four pairs of glasses today. He's happy. They were all to the same old geezer who kept forgetting that he'd already bought a pair.

Mom said that Dad should be ashamed of himself. Dad said that forgetful people are good for the economy. Then he forgot where he'd put his wallet.

Think if there were purple beans instead of brown ones. I think they'd sell more then because purple is a cooler color.

Bye-bye apple pie.