

Mary Jane Auch

Illustrations by Herm Auch

## CHAPTER ONE

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Having a genius for a friend can be real trouble. I know, because my best friend is Brian Lewis. All the other kids in third grade call him Brain. I don't, because he doesn't like it. He calls me Josh, even though some kids call me Birdbrain. It's not that I'm stupid, but when you hang around with a genius, you don't look like the smartest person in the world.

I could see trouble coming when Mrs. Metz made the big announcement. "Boys and girls,

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now that you're third graders, you'll get to enter a project in the Ontario Elementary Science Fair. I know you've all been looking forward to it."

There was a moan in the back of the room from Dougie Hanks, who thought the only thing to look forward to in school was the last bell.

Mrs. Metz shot him a look and kept going. "I'm going to let you pick your own partners. You need to plan an experiment and work with it at home for the next three weeks. You'll keep journals of your observations, and they will be judged for originality."

Emily Venable waved her hand frantically. "Will this count toward our grade, Mrs. Metz?"

"Yes, Emily, it will be part of your science grade, but there's even more at stake here. The three winning teams from each classroom will present their projects on Parents' Night. A grand prize team will be picked from each grade level and they'll get free passes for their families to use at Wonderland Lake this summer."

## I Was a Third Grade Science Project

Even I was interested in this. Wonderland Lake just happened to be the best amusement park in the whole state. We hardly ever got to go, because Dad said it was too expensive.

Emily's hand was waving again. "Who are the judges, Mrs. Metz?"

"This class will be judged by the other third grade teachers and the principal. None of us will be judging our own classes until Parents' Night, when all of the judges will vote on the grand prize winners."

Emily slumped back into her chair. Being teacher's pet wasn't going to get her any points this time.

Mrs. Metz passed out instruction sheets and went on to explain what an experiment was. I heard her say things like "observation" and "recording results," but I wasn't paying much attention. I was remembering my first and only ride on Screaming Mimi, Wonderland's roller coaster. I threw up three times. It was the best ride I've ever been on.

I didn't bother to listen to the instructions, because Brian would find out what we needed t sure is handy having Brian the Brain for a best friend—how else would Josh have a shot at first prize in the science fair and winning tickets to Wonderland Lake? But when Brian plans to hypnotize his dog, Arful, into thinking he's a cat, Josh knows he can say goodbye to Wonderland Lake—this scheme will never work. The next thing he knows, Josh is climbing trees and craving raw fish sandwiches. What's going on? Will the real science project please meow?





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