



THE

GOLLYWHOPPER GAMES.

Do you have what it takes to win?

JODY FELDMAN



CHAPTER 1

If Gil Goodson was to have a chance, any chance at all, he would have to run faster than he was running right now.

Run. Away from University Stadium, packed with throngs of contestants who'd suddenly appeared from nowhere to get in line. Run, blinking back the sweat, pushing the lawn mower he wished he could abandon on the street. Run, past the lawn he'd just taken valuable time to cut because Mrs. Hempstead really believed the national TV networks might show her boring street. What were the chances of that happening? About as much as, as . . . as what?

As Gil had of winning the Gollywhopper Games?

One chance in 25,000—if he could still get a ticket. He'd been planning this day since last summer, ever since Golly Toy and Game Company announced the Gollywhopper Games.

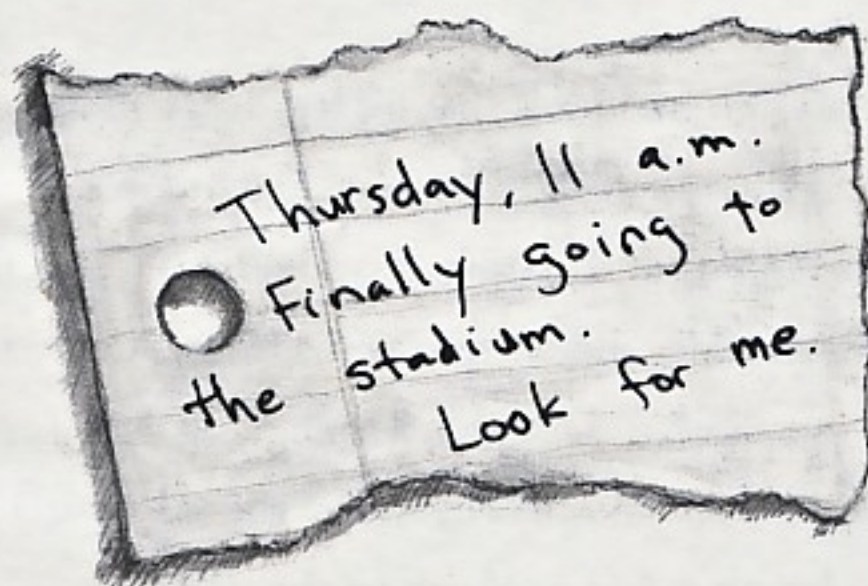
With Gil's foolproof plan, he wouldn't have to buy zillions of toys and games to find one of 500 instant winner tickets. He wouldn't need to send in tons of entries, hoping his name might be drawn from millions and millions of others to win one of 20,000 tickets in that sweepstakes.

He lived eight blocks from University Stadium. He only needed to be one of the first 4,500 kids when the line opened at eleven A.M. today. The plan was to stand with his duffel and sleeping bag just outside the "no-enter" zone and storm the stadium at the front of the crowd.

He'd planned it all, except for yesterday's monsoon that had kept him from mowing Mrs. Hempstead's lawn. Why didn't he realize the mushy ground would keep him working for an extra hour? Why didn't he have weather ESP? Then he never would have let Mrs. Hempstead prepay him—double—to make her lawn perfect by this morning.

With the money already in the bank, Gil was stuck finishing the job. Only a thief would raise a son who took money then didn't do the work. Not true, but people might say that. Wasn't that one reason he needed to get into the Games? To erase it all?

Gil rammed the lawn mower into the splintered shed behind their pea-sized house, then jammed his key into the back-door lock. Inside, he grabbed a scrap of paper from the kitchen drawer and pulled out a pen. It slipped from his long, sweaty fingers and rolled under the stove. He grabbed another.



He raced to the front door, reached for the duffel, the sleeping bag and . . .

What was that smell?

It was him: a rising stench of grass and sweat and

ARE YOU READY?

Gil Goodson's future happiness depends on winning the Golly Toy & Game Company's ultimate competition. If Gil wins, his dad has promised that the family can move away from all the gossip, false friends, and bad press that have plagued them ever since The Incident. Inside the toy company's fantastic headquarters, Gil will have to master trivia, solve puzzles, and complete physical stunts—and he'll have to do it better than all of the other kids competing.

Oh, and did we mention that Gil's every step—and every mistake—will be broadcast on national television? Hold on tight, because the ride of his life is about to begin!

Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List
A 2008 Midwest Booksellers' Choice Honor Book

"Good fun for puzzle addicts, with plenty of action
and the suspense only a ticking timer can offer."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"So much fun!"

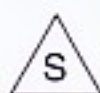
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