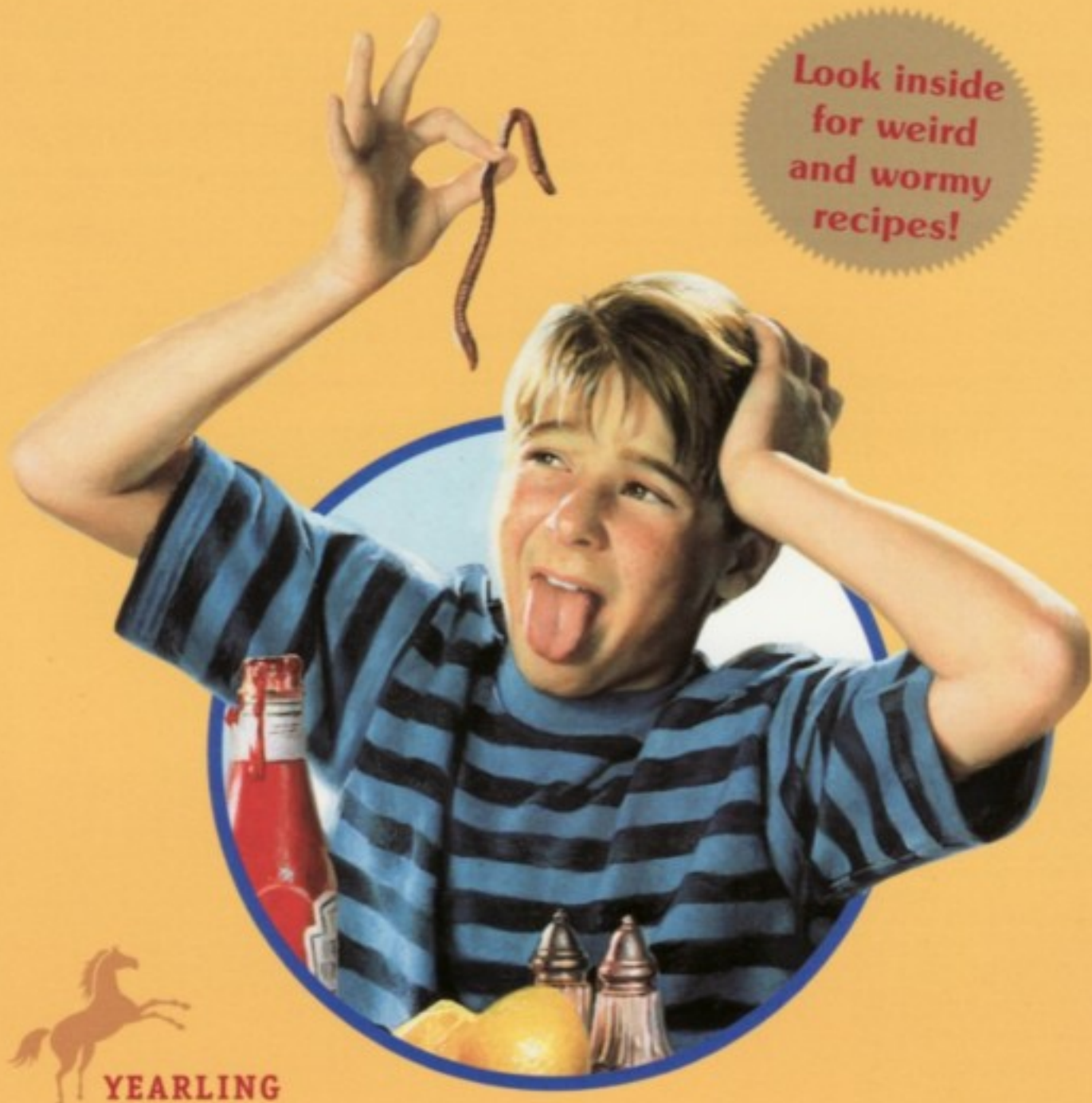


# HOW TO EAT FRIED WORMS

*Look inside  
for weird  
and wormy  
recipes!*



THOMAS ROCKWELL

# The Bet

**H**HEY, Tom! Where were you last night?"

"Yeah, you missed it."

Alan and Billy came up the front walk. Tom was sitting on his porch steps, bouncing a tennis ball.

"Old Man Tator caught Joe as we were climbing through the fence, so we all had to go back, and he made us pile the peaches on his kitchen table, and then he called our mothers."

"Joe's mother hasn't let him out yet."

"Where were you?"

Tom stopped bouncing the tennis ball. He was a tall, skinny boy who took his troubles very seriously.

"My mother kept me in."

"What for?"

"I wouldn't eat my dinner."

Alan sat down on the step below Tom and began to chew his thumbnail.

"What was it?"

"Salmon casserole."

Billy flopped down on the grass, chunky, snub-nosed, freckled.

"Salmon casserole's not so bad."

"Wouldn't she let you just eat two bites?" asked Alan. "Sometimes my mother says, well, all right, if I'll just eat two bites."

"I wouldn't eat even one."

"That's stupid," said Billy. "One bite can't hurt you. I'd eat one bite of anything before I'd let them send me up to my room right after supper."

Tom shrugged.

"How about mud?" Alan asked Billy. "You wouldn't eat a bite of mud."

Alan argued a lot, small, knobby-kneed, nervous, gnawing at his thumbnail, his face smudged, his red hair mussed, shirttail hanging out, shoelaces untied.

"Sure, I would," Billy said. "Mud. What's mud? Just dirt with a little water in it. My father says everyone eats a pound of dirt every year anyway."

"How about poison?"

"That's different." Billy rolled over on his back.

"Is your mother going to make you eat the leftovers today at lunch?" he asked Tom.

"She never has before."

"How about worms?" Alan asked Billy.

Tom's sister's cat squirmed out from under the porch and rubbed against Billy's knee.

"Sure," said Billy. "Why not? Worms are just dirt."

"Yeah, but they bleed."

"So you'd have to cook them. Cows bleed."

"I bet a hundred dollars you wouldn't really eat a worm. You talk big now, but you wouldn't if you were sitting at the dinner table with a worm on your plate."

"I bet I would. I'd eat *fifteen* worms if somebody'd bet me a hundred dollars."

"You really want to bet? *I'll* bet you fifty dollars you can't eat fifteen worms. I really will."

"Where're you going to get fifty dollars?"

"In my savings account. I've got one hundred and thirty dollars and seventy-nine cents in my savings account. I know, because last week I put in the five dollars my grandmother gave me for my birthday."

"Your mother wouldn't let you take it out."

"She would if I lost the bet. She'd have to. I'd tell her I was going to sell my stamp collection otherwise. And I bought that with all my own money that I earned mowing lawns, so I can do whatever I want with it. I'll bet you fifty dollars you can't eat fifteen worms. Come on. You're chicken. You know you can't do it."

"*I* wouldn't do it," said Tom. "If salmon casserole makes me sick, think what fifteen worms would do."

Joe came scuffing up the walk and flopped down

# Catch fried worm fever!

People are always daring Billy to do zany things. But Billy may have bitten off more than he can chew when he takes his friend Alan's bet that Billy can't eat fifteen worms in fifteen days. If Billy wins, Alan has to fork over fifty dollars. Billy wants the money to buy a used minibike, so he's ready to dig in. He sets up mustard and ketchup, salt and pepper, and sugar and lemon to disguise the disgusting taste.

Good news for Billy—once he gets going, he finds himself actually getting hooked on those juicy worms.

Bad news for Billy—Alan is busy cooking up schemes to make Billy worm out of the bet. Will Billy keep up his wormy work for fifteen days?

No cheating! Keep eating! Worm by worm by worm . . .

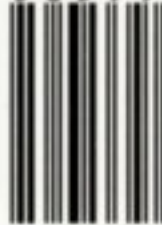
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