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Opening extract from

I Even Funnier: A Middle School Story

Written by

James Patterson

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IT'S FUN BEING FUNNY

Hi! I'm Jamie Grimm, and it's really great to be back in front of an audience again.

A little while back, I won a couple of contests and was crowned the Funniest Kid Comic in all of New York. Not just New York City, but the whole state!

Now I have a shot at being the Planet's Funniest Kid Comic.

"The planet Earth?" asks Phineas of—you guessed it—*Phineas and Ferb*. "Or Mars? We built a portal to Mars for the science fair once."

"Fun never falls too far from the tree house," adds Ferb.

Yep! Phineas and Ferb, the two hysterical stars from the Disney Channel, are now my close personal friends. They even go to school with me.

Nice try, kid. Only V.I.P.s and J.G.B.F.F.s allowed.
SECURITY
Who are those dorks with Jeter?
Thanks for the autograph, Jamie!
NY
BOSTON
You okay?
J.G.
J.
Is that Phineas and Ferb, or do I need to stop eating my cereal with fruit punch?
JAMIE RUNNIE

JAMIE FUNNIE
GRIMM MAKES ME GRIN!
HE FUNNY
Sorry, you're not on the list.
I swear I'm like Davey Grimm's best friend!
Me, too!
You can keep your sign or your teeth.
SECURITY
JAMIE FUNNIE
♫ We are never, ever, ever getting back ♫ ♫ together... because I met Jamie! ♫
Make sure you get Jamie in the shot!
JAMIE FUNNIE
JAMIE FUNNIE
JAMIE FUNNIE

Derek Jeter, the shortstop from the New York Yankees, shows up at Long Beach Middle School because he wants *me* to autograph a baseball for *him*.

Taylor Swift comes to town to ask me to be the opening act at her upcoming concerts. "Jamie Grimm, I hear you're the Planet's Funniest Kid Comic!"

"Not exactly," I tell her. "First I have to win a regional competition in Boston. And then there are the semifinals in Las Vegas. And the final finals in Hollywood…"

"He's going to be a very busy boy," says Howie Mandel, one of the judges from *America's Got Talent*. He's come to Long Beach to help me train for the comedy competition. "Jamie needs new material. New jokes. A new hairdo. You like mine?"

Of course my best buds—Jimmy Pierce, Joey Gaynor, and Gilda Gold—are with me, too. We're on our way to school, where the principal has declared that today is Jamie Grimm Day.

"They're gonna give you your very own pep rally, dude," says Gaynor.

So after the cheerleaders do a "Jay-mee Grimm"

cheer, our school principal, Dr. Heinz Doofenshmirtz, or Doof as he likes to call himself, starts to make a little speech.

"Wait a second," says Phineas. "Your principal is *our* evil scientist?"

I shrug. "I guess he likes the cafeteria food."

Dr. Doofenshmirtz goes on with the quick speech. "Today, Jamie, we gather here to wish you luck as you prepare to take the second, third, and fourth steps toward your goal of being the Planet's Funniest Kid Comic! Break a leg, Jamie. Whoopsie!"

When Principal Doof says that, I know this has to be a dream.

Because, you know, all those steps he mentioned? I'd be happy just taking one.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN REALITY...

Sometimes people in my dreams say crazy dumb stuff because they forget I'm in a wheelchair.

Hey, I don't blame 'em. I'd like to forget it, too.

But I can't.

Of course, I keep hoping that one day I'll see a commercial for a new wonder drug called something like Spinulax that will magically make me walk again. Unfortunately, it would probably come with a list of gross side effects like all those other pills they advertise on TV: *"Spinulax may cause constipation and diarrhea. Not to mention projectile vomiting. And sudden death syndrome—as in, oops, sorry, you're dead."*

When I wake up, I'm in my bedroom. In the

garage. Back in the real world. And I need to get my butt ready for school.

About my bedroom in the garage…when I moved to Long Beach to live with my aunt and uncle, the only spare room in the house wasn't actually *in* the house. This is why my clothes often smell like a Home Depot.

I call my aunt and uncle's house Smileyville because when I first got here, nobody ever smiled. Not even the dog, Ol' Smiler. He hadn't wagged his tail in so long his butt was brittle.

Anyway, I think I've finally figured out why the Smileys always look so glum.

It's the oat gruel.

That's what Mrs. Smiley serves for breakfast, *every morning*. You know how they say breakfast will stick with you? Well, her oat gruel sure will. It'll stick to your teeth and the roof of your mouth. *All day long.*

Quick, somebody call one of those cable TV networks! I have an awesome idea for a new reality show: *Breakfast With the Smileys!* It'll be the exact opposite of those shows about the Kardashians or the Real Housecats of Beverly Hills. No glitz. No glamour. No nothing.

"Have a nice day," says my aunt, Mrs. Smiley.

"Don't forget your lunch," my uncle, Mr. Smiley, reminds me.

"Be home by six," Aunt Smiley adds.

Yep. They're even blander than oat gruel.

But they took me into their home when I had no place else to go.

And for that, I will always be grateful.

No joke.