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Opening extract from

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John Smith is NOT BORING!



My name is John Smith – the most boring name in the world. Dad says with a name like John Smith no one will EVER make fun of me. Mum says I'm "one in a MILLION". My sister says it makes me the most boring person in history. But do not judge a book by its cover. My life is ANYTHING but boring!

To Lottie-Lou, Daisy-Doo ... and Florence too!

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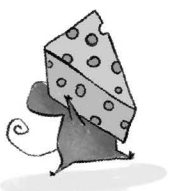
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Chapter One

"Boring! Boring! Boring! Boring! Boring!"

"Why don't you go and play in your bedroom?" says Mum.

"Why don't you go and play in the garden?" says Dad.

"Why don't you go and play on the other side of the world?" says my big sister, Hayley.

The Smith family are all together. Mum's watching her favourite film, *Attack of the Mutant Death Chimps*; Dad's dozing

underneath a newspaper; Hayley and her boyfriend, Rufus, are curled up on the sofa touching toes; and Granddad is picking his dentures out of a block of toffee with a screwdriver.



"But I'm so bored," I repeat.

"Only boring people get bored," says Mum.

"And you should know," Hayley laughs.

Oh no, here we go again. Hayley's favourite subject...

"You're the most boring person in the world – with the most boring name in the world! I'm almost falling asleep just staring at your dreary little face."

"You do indeed have a very boring name," says Rufus. "Did you know there are nearly half a million John Smiths on the planet...?"

"But there's only ever been one Rufus Randall the Third," sighs Hayley.

"I think you'll find there've been at least three," I snort.

"Be quiet, vermin!" snaps Hayley.

Everyone goes back to watching the film. After a bit longer I pipe up: "Why *did* you

call me John Smith, Dad?"

Dad drops his paper, looks at Mum anxiously, searching for an answer. "Because with a name like John Smith, nobody will ever make fun of you," he says.

Hayley begins to giggle.

"Why did you call Hayley Hayley?" I reply.

"We named her after Halley's Comet," says Mum, "because she's our bright little star."

"Aw," says Hayley, "sweet."

"I thought a comet was a long streak of gas," mutters Granddad.

I burst out laughing. "Good one, Granddad!"

Hayley looks at me, her eyes draining to ice.

"Let me tell you something about you, John Smith. You're nothing. You're no one. You're never going to be anybody. Why? Because you're John Smith. I'll say it again – in capitals. JOHN SMITH. I'll underline it

too: JOHN SMITH! Are you getting the message? You are a complete nobody. As for me. . .” Hayley suddenly springs off the sofa and throws her arms in the air. “I was born to be a star!”

Tonight is curtain up on Hayley’s big school show, and she’s playing the lead role. I look at Rufus and pull a funny face. “She loves me really.”

“No I don’t, cross my heart and hope to die,” says Hayley. “Haven’t you got homework or something to fail at, you miserable little cockroach?”

Granddad farts.

Mum pretends there’s a bee in the room.

Hayley moves to the door, dangling Rufus on her little finger. “If anybody needs me,” she smiles, “I’ll be starring in the school play.”

“We’ve got front row tickets,” says Mum.

“Break a leg,” says Dad.

Hayley glides out of the house and down the garden path.

"If anybody needs me ... I'll be in my bedroom," I sigh.