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For Beckon and Rebecca Simpson – M.B.



1

Brandon Wright is the best footballer. He'd show you if it wasn't for that toe injury that's kept him out of action for the past few months.

And he's the strongest in his class. When he bends his arm, his muscles stick up in the air like rocks underneath that baggy jumper he always wears. You could feel them for yourself, but he won't let you because he's so tickly. Brandon is so tickly, all you have to do is look at him and he starts to squirm.

And he's the best at maths and at singing and at drawing, and he has the best bike and the fastest skates and the best mum . . .

In fact, if you listen to Brandon, he's the best at everything.

No one believes any of it of course, but Brandon doesn't mind. He's not good at much really – not good at football or maths or drawing or singing. There's just one thing everyone knows he's the best at.

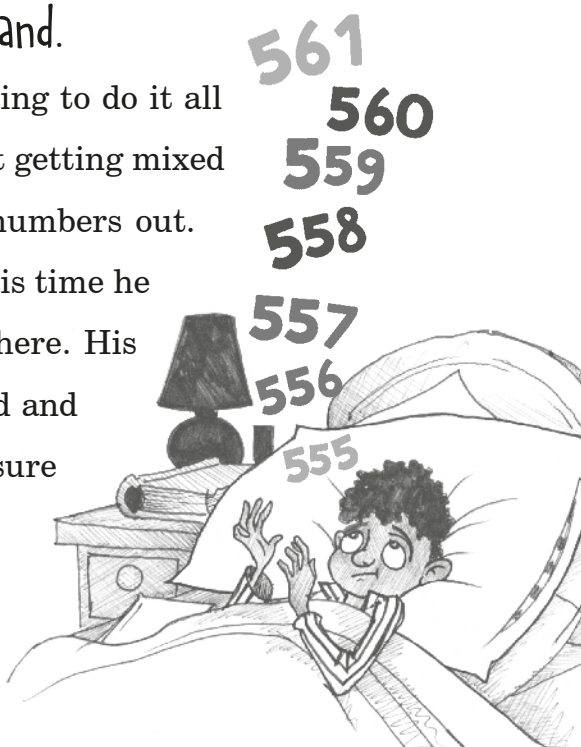
Boasting. Brandon is the best boaster in the school. 'What an imagination!' said his teacher Mr Wyke once. 'But you know, Brandon, you can't pretend *all* the time. No one will believe a word you say!'

It wasn't true that no one believed him. His little sister Elle believed every single word that came out of his mouth. She was the only one in the whole wide world who did.

2

Someone was boasting in the playground but for once, it wasn't Brandon. It was Brandon's best friend, Waris. Last night in bed, before he went to sleep, Waris had counted all the way up to one thousand.

He'd been trying to do it all week, but he kept getting mixed up and missing numbers out. Not this time. This time he got all the way there. His dad lay on his bed and checked to make sure he got it right.



‘It took me half an hour,’ said Waris. ‘I had to be very careful not to fall asleep. My dad did, twice. I had to wake him up by shouting the numbers at him.’

‘I counted up to six hundred once,’ said Sophie, ‘but then my mum said it was time to stop.’

‘I tried too, but I got bored,’ said Mu.

‘I bet you could count higher than that, Brandon, couldn’t you?’ said Elle.

‘Easy,’ said Brandon. But he said it quietly, because Waris was his friend and he’d lost a lot of friends lately because of boasting too much.

‘How high could you go, Brandon?’

‘TEN MILLION,’ said Brandon, without even thinking.

‘Do it now,’ said Elle. ‘Go on. Please, Brandon.’

‘Now’s not a good time.’

'Please?'

Brandon knew the bell would go any time soon, and he thought he'd have to stop then. So he took Elle quietly away to a corner and began to count in a low voice, so that no one else could hear.

'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,' he said.

'Go, Brandon,' said Elle.

'Eight, nine, ten, eleven,' said Brandon – still very quietly.

'HEY, EVERYONE!' shouted Elle suddenly, at the top of her very loud voice. 'Look at Brandon. He's counting all the way up to TEN MILLION!'

Brandon blushed bright red, but he didn't stop counting. He scowled at Elle, dug his hands deep in his pockets and marched away.

'Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four!' he said angrily.

'Sorry, Brandon,' said Elle. But it was too late. Everyone had left Waris and they were following Brandon to listen to him count up to TEN MILLION.

Waris was furious.

'No one can count up to TEN MILLION,' he said. 'It's another stupid Brandon boast.'

'Thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-four, thirty-five,' muttered Brandon in a sorry kind of voice. He waved his hands at everyone to make them go back to Waris. But he didn't stop counting.



'You *always* do this,' said Waris. 'Every time someone does something, you ruin it by boasting how much better you could do it – and then you *never* do. Well, this time, I'm going to make sure. I'm going to stay right next to you and listen to you count all the way up to TEN MILLION.'

Brandon shook his head, but Waris took no notice.



‘Hey, everyone!’ he shouted. ‘Come and listen to Brandon count up to TEN MILLION!’

All around the playground, people gathered to listen to the great event.

‘fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two,’ groaned Brandon. There was no way he could back down now. And he wasn’t even up to one hundred yet. This could take for ever!

Then the bell went.



In the classroom, Mr Wyke was drawing a picture of a Viking longship on the board. The class were writing in their books about Vikings.

'Who's talking?' asked Mr Wyke suddenly.

He paused in his drawing. 'No talking, please,' he said. He carried on for a moment, but he could still hear talking. He turned round.

'Someone is *still* talking,' he said. He looked around the class. Everyone had their heads down writing, but someone was talking, all right.

'Whoever it is, you can stop it right now,' said Mr Wyke, angrily. Who could it be?

Waris jumped up.

'It's Brandon, sir,' he said.

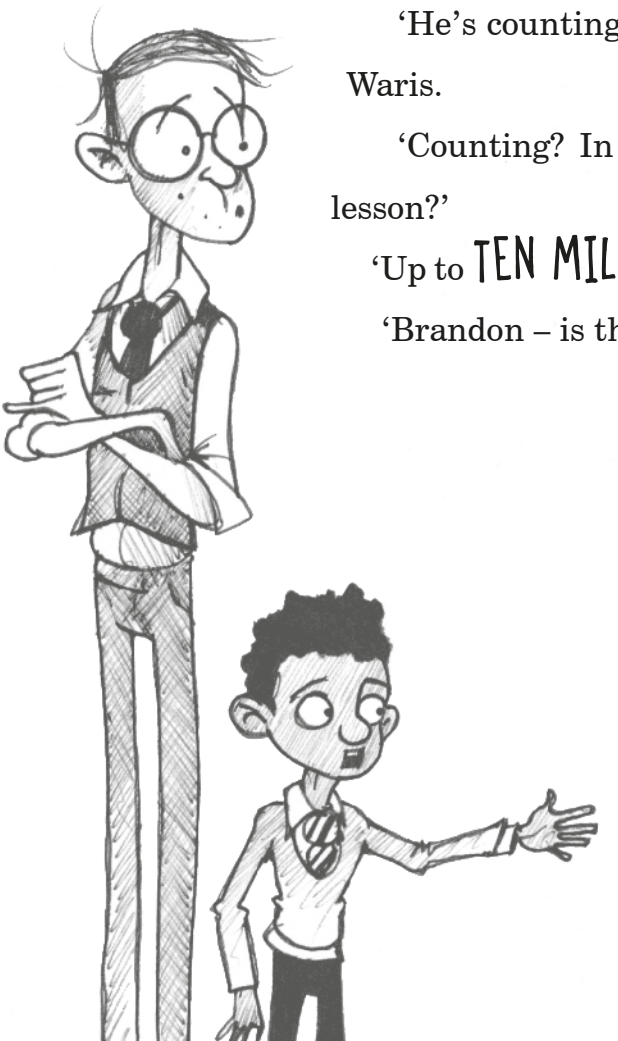
'Brandon?' said Mr Wyke. Brandon kept his face down. Mr Wyke walked closer to listen. Yes – it *was* Brandon. He was muttering to himself.

'He's counting, sir,' said Waris.

'Counting? In a history lesson?'

'Up to TEN MILLION, sir.'

'Brandon – is this true?'



'859, 860, 861, 862, 863,' said Brandon.

He sat up and glared angrily at Waris, who folded his arms and put his nose in the air.

Mr Wyke listened to Brandon for a moment. It was very good counting. Beautiful, even. But this was a history lesson. You can't have counting in a history lesson!

'I'd like you to stop it now, Brandon,' he said firmly. 'We'll be doing some maths this afternoon. You can count then.'

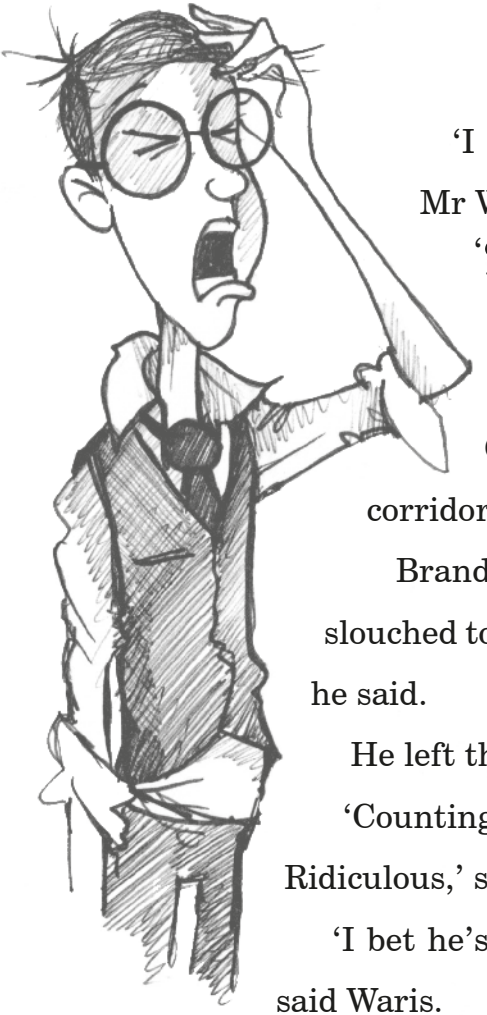
'919, 920, 921,' said Brandon stubbornly.

'Stop him before he gets to a thousand,' said Waris excitedly.

'923, 924, 925,' sneered Brandon.

'Stop it, Brandon – right now, if you please,' said Mr Wyke.

'927, 928, 929,' said Brandon, looking sideways at Waris.



'I said, stop!' snapped Mr Wyke.

'930,' said Brandon.

'Right! Out of my classroom right now. Go and stand in the corridor,' roared Mr Wyke.

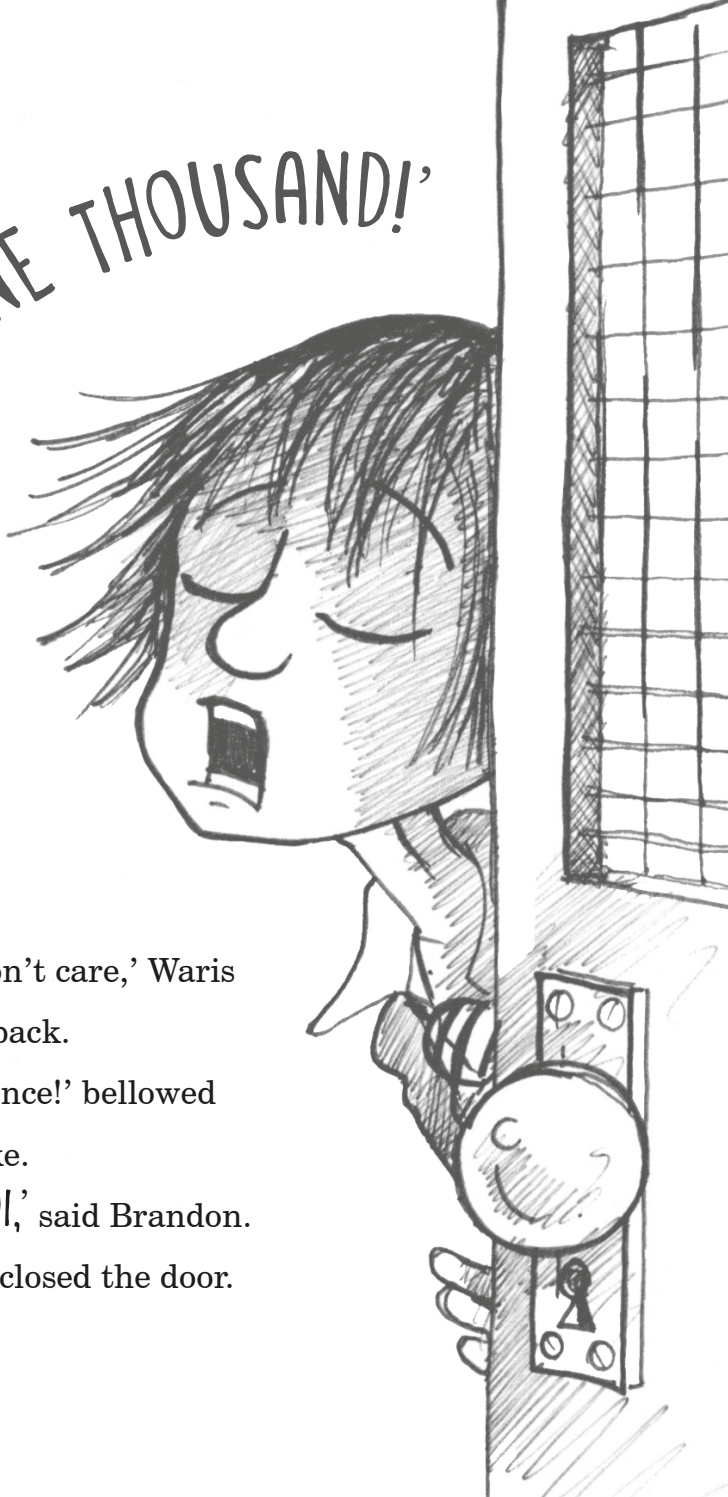
Brandon got to his feet and slouched towards the door. '941,' he said.

He left the room.

'Counting in a history lesson! Ridiculous,' said Mr Wyke.

'I bet he's still at it out there,' said Waris.

'You can be quiet too, Waris,' said Mr Wyke. He got back to drawing his Viking ship, but a couple of minutes later, the class door opened and Brandon popped his head inside.



'I don't care,' Waris roared back.

'Silence!' bellowed Mr Wyke.

'1,001,' said Brandon. And he closed the door.

Spangles McNasty and the Fish of Gold

Steve Webb

Illustrated by Chris Mould

Spangles McNasty is convinced that he can get rich quick by stealing goldfish – after all, aren't they made of solid gold? Together with his friend Sausage-face Pete, he decides to find the great Fish of Gold. Only young Freddie Taylor can stop Spangles' dastardly plan, in a tale full of time-travelling jet skis, madcap chases and haunted custard.

'Unadulterated fun!'
Lovereading

'Ludicrous and funny'
BookTrust





by **Ruth Quayle**

illustrated by **Marta Kissi**

It is the summer holiday and Joe Robinson and his cousins are staying with their granny in Muddlemoor village. The problem is . . . Muddlemoor is a hotspot for crime. When Granny's precious cake recipe goes missing days before the Great Village Bake Off, Joe, Tom and Pip are FLABBERGASTED. They KNOW that one of the neighbours has stolen it but the question is, WHO?

