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Opening extract from

The Pain and the Great One: Cool Zone

Written by

Judy Blume

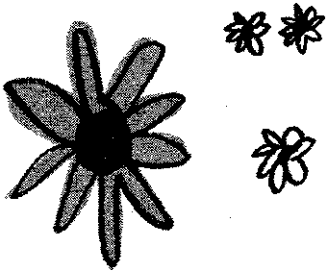
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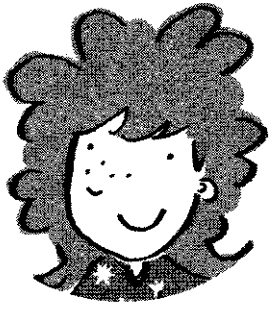
Meet the Great One



My brother's name is Jacob but everyone calls him Jake. Everyone but me. I call him *The Pain* because that's what he is. He's a first-grade pain. And he will always be a pain – even if he lives to be a hundred. Even then, I'll be two years older than him. I'll still know more about everything. And I'll always know exactly what he's thinking. That's just the way it is. I don't get why Mom and Dad act like he's so special. Sometimes I think they love him more than me.



Fifty-Fifty



The Great One

The Pain has a loose tooth. He wiggles it all day long. Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle. You'd think it was the first loose tooth in the history of the world.

Today at the school bus stop he opened his mouth. "Look at this!" he called proudly. The tooth was hanging by a thread. I could have reminded him that by the time I was in first grade I'd already lost three teeth. But I didn't.



Instead, when we got on the school bus, I offered to finish the job for him.

But he shut his mouth and shook his head. "OK . . . fine," I told him. "But don't come crying to me if you swallow it."

Just as the bus pulled up to school the Pain yelled, "Look . . . it fell out!" And he held up his tooth. Everyone cheered.

When we got off the bus he tried to give it to me. "I don't want your yucky tooth," I told him.

"But I'll lose it," he cried.



"Not if you're careful."

"But I lose everything."

"Too bad."

"I'll give you half of whatever the Tooth Fairy brings," he said.

Hmmm . . . half of whatever the Tooth Fairy brings, I thought. *Since it's his first tooth, that could mean more loot than usual.*





"Come on, Abigail . . ." the Pain said, shoving his tooth in my face.

"We split it fifty-fifty?" I asked.

"Is that half?"

"Yes," I told him. "Exactly half."

"OK," he said. "Deal." We shook on it. Then I took his tooth. The Pain gave me a silly smile. He looked like a mini-dragon with that gap between his teeth.

As soon as he walked away I started to worry. *What if I lose his tooth? Think how disappointed he'll be.*

All day at school I worried. During recess I wanted to jump rope with Kaylee. But I was too scared I'd lose the tooth. Kaylee told me to put it in my pocket. "What if it falls out?" I asked.

"Give it to me," she said. "I'll hold it while you jump."

In art class I drew pictures of teeth.

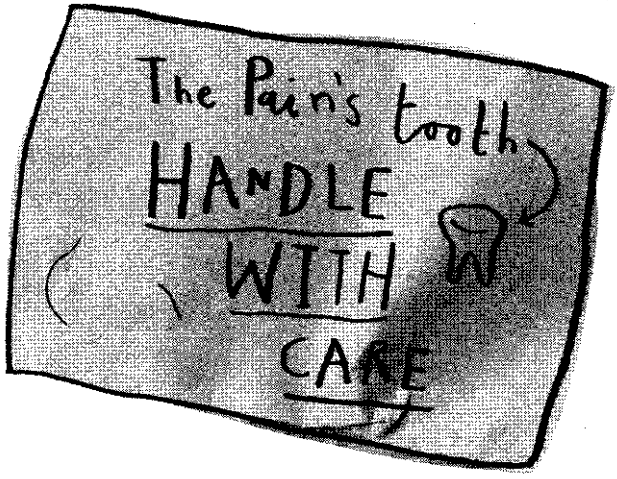
At lunch I kept the tooth next to my sandwich as if it was a piece of candy.

During science I checked it under the microscope. Ms Valdez was impressed. She thought it was *my* tooth. "It's my brother's,"



I explained. "His first. And I'm responsible for it."

Ms Valdez gave me an envelope. "Put it in here," she said. I dropped the tooth inside. Ms Valdez licked the flap and pressed it closed. Then I wrote on the front: "The Pain's Tooth. Handle With Care".



Finally the school day ended. It was the longest school day in the history of the world. On the bus going home the Pain

asked to have his tooth back. I was *so* glad to give him the envelope. Now my worries were over.

That night, after his bath, the Pain couldn't find his tooth. He still had the envelope but it was empty. "I took care of your tooth all day at school!" I shouted. "I didn't let it out of my sight for one minute. And now look – you lose everything!"

"I told you, didn't I?"

So we started looking. We looked everywhere. In his pockets. In his underwear. In his lunch box. Even in his ears, just in case. But there was no tooth. "Why did you open the envelope?" I asked.

"Because Dylan wanted to see my tooth up close."

"Well, maybe Dylan has your tooth," I said.



"No, because he passed it to Justin."

"OK, let's call Justin and see if he has it."

"But after Justin I let Miranda hold it," he told me. "And then Riley wanted to smell it. "And Kamu—"

"Stop!" I shouted, covering my ears.

So he stopped. "What'll I put under my pillow?" he asked in a small voice. Any second now he was going to cry.

"A note to the Tooth Fairy," I told him.

"Will she understand?"

"Maybe. But it will have to be a very good note."

"You write it," he said.

"Write it yourself. It's not my problem."

"Please," he begged. "I'm only in first grade."

Suddenly I remembered that I get half of whatever he gets. "OK, I'll write it."

"Make it good," he said.



So I wrote to the Tooth Fairy. I told her how the Greatest Sister in the History of the World watched over the Pain's tooth all day. I told her if she didn't believe the note she should look inside his mouth.



"Should I sleep with my mouth open so the Tooth Fairy can see?" the Pain asked.

"No," I said. "the Tooth Fairy has X-ray vision."

"How do you know?"

"Because I know everything."

I gave him one of my best *looks*. It's so easy to make him believe me. Then I shoved the note at him. "Sign your name."

"Not until you take out that line about the greatest sister in the history of the world."

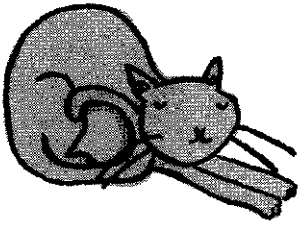
"But I *am* the greatest sister in the history of the world."

"Who says?" he asked.

"Who says I'm not?"

"Abigail . . . Jake . . ." Mom called. "Time for bed."

The Pain printed his name at the bottom of the note. He put it under his pillow. Fluzzy jumped on to his bed and curled up in a ball. "Keep a lookout for the Tooth Fairy," I told Fluzzy.



Fluzzy yawned. What does he care about Tooth Fairies?

In the morning the note to the Tooth Fairy was gone and the Pain found a new dollar bill under his pillow. I was hoping for more, but a deal's a deal. So I reminded him, "Fifty-fifty."

He grabbed a pair of scissors, and before I could stop him he cut the dollar bill down the middle. "Fifty-fifty," he sang, handing me half.



I yelled so loud I scared Fluzzy. "You won't get away with this!"

Fluzzy jumped off the bed and hid in the closet. But the Pain just stood there smiling his dragon smile, holding his half of the loot.

