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opening extract from

Marvin Redpost: Why Pick on Me ?

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"What's your favorite vegetable?" asked Casey.

Marvin Redpost looked up. "Potatoes. No, carrots," he said. It was very important he told the truth.

Casey Happleton wrote it down. She sat at the desk next to Marvin. She had a ponytail that stuck out of the side of her head. Instead of the back.

"Casey!" whispered Melanie. "What's your favorite bug?"

Melanie sat in front of Casey.

"A stink bug," said Casey.



Casey Happleton was a weird girl.

"What's yours, Marvin?" asked Melanie.

"Uh, black widow," answered Marvin.

"Oooooh," said Casey.

"Who's jabbering?" asked Mrs. North. "Marvin?"



"I wasn't jabbering," said Marvin. "Melanie asked me her survey question."

"Oh. Well, you can do that later," said Mrs. North. "This is silent reading time."

Marvin returned to his book. He was nine years old. He was in the third grade. Mrs. North was his teacher.

He liked Mrs. North. He liked the third grade. He liked being nine.

"Have you picked your survey question yet?" Stuart Albright asked him on the way out to recess.

"No," said Marvin. "I can't think of a good one."

Everyone in his class had to choose a survey question.

Marvin was supposed to ask everyone a question and write down the answers. Then he would have to do a report on it.

The results would be buried in a time capsule. It would be dug up in fifty years.

That's why Marvin wanted to think of a real good question.

"What was your favorite vegetable?" asked Stuart.

"Carrots."



Stuart nodded. "It's weird when you think about it," he said. "You have red hair."

"So?" said Marvin.

"They call a person with red hair Carrot Top. But really, carrots are green

on top. So they should call a person with green hair Carrot Top."

Stuart was Marvin's best friend. Marvin was the only one who understood him.

They got on line to play wall-ball.

"Hi, Marvin," said Nick, getting in line behind him.

"Hi, Nick," said Marvin.



Nick Tuffle was Marvin's other best friend.

"What's your favorite dinosaur?" asked Nick.

Marvin thought a moment. He didn't have a favorite dinosaur.

Stuart made a noise with his nose. "That's a stupid question," he said.



Marvin looked at his two best friends. He was afraid they'd get into another fight. Nick and Stuart were always fighting.

"What's stupid about it?" Nick demanded.

"Because," said Stuart, "the results are going to be buried in a time capsule. In fifty years people are going to dig up the time capsule. And then they're going to think there were dinosaurs around when we went to school."

"*That's* stupid," said Nick.

"Your turn, Stuart," said Marvin.

"What? Oh," said Stuart.

Marvin watched Stuart play wall-ball. He was up against Clarence, the toughest kid in the third grade.

Stuart lost.



Nick laughed when Stuart lost.

Marvin stepped up. Even though Clarence was bigger and stronger, Marvin felt he could beat him at wall-ball.

Clarence served. He bounced the red ball once on the ground, then hit it hard, with both hands together.

The ball hit the ground, then the wall, then bounced back to Marvin.

Marvin hit it with both hands. The ball hit the ground, the wall, then back toward Clarence.

Clarence smashed it. But too hard. The ball bounced off the wall and over the line.

Marvin caught it.

"I won!" Clarence declared.

"You did not," said Marvin. "The ball was over the line."

"You're crazy," said Clarence.

"I saw it," said Marvin.

"You did not," said Clarence. "You weren't even watching. You were picking your nose!"

Several of the kids on line laughed.

"It was over the line," said Marvin.





"Go pick your nose," said Clarence.

The kids on line laughed again, even Nick.

"C'mon, Marvin. Get off the court," said Ryan. "You're wasting time."

Marvin didn't move. "The ball was over the line," he said. "I saw it."

"You were picking your nose!" Clarence said.

"I was not!" said Marvin.



"You were snot?" asked Clarence. "He just said he was snot."

Everyone, except Stuart, laughed.

"That's not what I said," said Marvin.

"That's *snot* what I said," said Clarence.

"Just go to the end of the line, Marvin," said Travis.

Marvin didn't move.

Clarence grabbed the ball from him.

"Oh, gross!" he exclaimed. "His boogers are on the ball!"

Even Stuart laughed.

"I'm not playing with this ball!" said Clarence. He threw it to Marvin.

Marvin held up the ball. "Look, there's nothing on it," he said.

"Now they're on his hands!" said Clarence.

Everyone backed away from Marvin.

The bell rang.

The other kids hurried back to class, leaving Marvin holding the ball.