

Goosebumps
SLAPPY WORLD

**SLAPPY BIRTHDAY
TO YOU**

R.L. STINE

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On Ian Barker's twelfth birthday, he received a gift that brought pain and terror to him and his entire family.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Let's try to enjoy Ian's birthday for as long as we can. Just keep in mind that it was not the birthday Ian had hoped for. In fact, it quickly became a day he would have given anything to forget.

Ian came down to breakfast on that sunny spring morning, eager for his special day to begin. Almost at once, he had trouble with his nine-year-old sister, Molly. But that was nothing new. If you ask Ian, "How do you spell *Molly*?" He'll answer, "T-R-O-U-B-L-E."

Since blueberry pancakes were Ian's favorite, Mrs. Barker had a tall stack of them on the table. Ian and Molly ate peacefully for a while. Molly liked her pancakes drowned in maple syrup, and she used up most of the syrup before Ian had a

chance. But Ian didn't complain. He was determined to be cheerful on his birthday.

But then they came down to the last pancake on the platter. When they both stabbed a fork into it, that's when the t-r-o-u-b-l-e began.

"Mine," Ian said. "You've already had six."

"But I saw it first," Molly insisted. She kept her fork poking into her side of the pancake.

"It's my birthday," Ian reminded her. "I should get what I want today."

"You *always* think you should get what you want," Molly declared. Molly has wavy red hair and blue eyes, and when she gets into an argument about pancakes—or anything else—her pale, lightly freckled cheeks turn bright pink.

Their mom turned from the kitchen counter. She had been arranging cupcakes on a tray for Ian's birthday party. "Fighting again?"

"We're not fighting," Molly said. "We're *disputing*."

"Oooh, big word," Ian said, rolling his eyes. "I'm so totally impressed."

They both kept their forks in the last remaining pancake.

"You're a jerk," Molly said. "I know you know that word."

"Don't call Ian names on his birthday," Mrs. Barker said. "Wait till tomorrow." She had a good sense of humor. Sometimes the kids appreciated

it. Sometimes they didn't. "Why don't you split the pancake in two?" she suggested.

"Good idea," Ian said. He used his fork to divide the pancake into two pieces.

"No fair!" Molly cried. "Your half is twice as big as mine."

Ian laughed and gobbled up his half before Molly could do anything about it.

Molly frowned at her brother. "Don't you know how to eat, slob? You have syrup on your chin."

Ian raised the syrup bottle. "How would you like it in your hair?"

Mrs. Barker turned away from the cupcakes and stepped up to the table. "Stop," she said. "Breakfast is over." She took the syrup bottle from Ian's hand. "You're twelve now. You really have to stop all the fighting."

"But—" Ian started.

She squeezed Ian's shoulder. "Your cousins are coming for your party. I want you to be extra nice to them and don't pick fights the way you always do."

Ian groaned. "Vinny and Jonny? They always start it."

"Ian always starts it," Molly chimed in.

"Shut up!" Ian cried.

"Just listen to me," Mrs. Barker pleaded. "I want you to be nice to your cousins. You know their parents have been going through a tough

time. Uncle Donny is still out of work. And Aunt Marie is getting over that operation.”

“Could I have a cupcake now?” Molly asked.

Ian slapped the table. “If she has one, I want one, too.”

“Have you heard a word I said?” their mom demanded.

“I swear I won’t start any fights with Jonny and Vinny,” Ian said. He raised his right hand, as if swearing an oath. Then he stood up from his seat and started toward the cupcake tray.

“Hands off,” Mrs. Barker said. “Go get your dad, Ian. Tell him the guests will be arriving soon.”

“Where is he?” Ian asked.

“In his workshop,” his mom answered. “Where else?”

“Where else?” Molly mimicked.

Ian walked down the back hall to the door to the basement. He thought about Jonny and Vinny.

Jonny and Vinny lived just a few blocks away. Jonny was twelve and Vinny was eleven, but they looked like twins. They were both big bruisers. Tough guys, big for their age, loud and grabby, with pudgy, round heads, short-cropped blond hair, and upturned pig noses.

At least, that’s how Ian described them. The kind of guys who were always bumping up against

people and each other, always giggling, always grinning about something mean. Mean guys.

“They’re just jealous of you.” That’s what Mrs. Barker always told Ian. “They’re your only cousins, so you have to be nice to them.”

Ian opened the basement door and went down the stairs two at a time. The air grew warmer as he reached the basement, and it smelled of glue.

Under bright white ceiling lights, his father stood hunched over his long worktable. He turned as Ian approached. “Oh, hi, Ian.”

“Hey, Dad,” Ian started. “Mom says—”

“Here’s a birthday surprise for you,” Mr. Barker said. He reached both hands to his face, plucked out his eyes, and held them up to Ian.