

# ONE

## Eat Your Green Beans



I, Wilbur Riot, was playing Snarf Attack when I discovered the Secret of Life.

What is the Secret of Life, you ask?

Good question. I'll tell you in a minute.

But first, let me tell you about Snarf Attack. This is just one of the many games I've invented. I am very good at inventing games. Some day I plan to write a book about all my games. When I do, you should buy it because then you'll be able to play them, and I'll make a lot of money.

I especially like inventing games for the dinner table because it is boring to sit and

do nothing but eat. Snarf Attack is a perfect dinner table game. Here's how you play. Before dinner starts, agree to play Snarf Attack with an opponent, such as your brother. Do not tell any grown-ups. During dinner, try to get your opponent to laugh while he is drinking his milk. In fact, you want him to laugh so hard that milk actually comes out his nose. This is called snarfing. Meanwhile, your opponent will be trying to make you snarf, so keep your eyes open, your mouth shut, and your nostrils on alert.

Just last night, my brother Orville and I were playing Snarf Attack. During the first few minutes, we didn't look at each other. We didn't touch our milk. We just ate our macaroni and stared at our mom like she was the most interesting thing in the world.

But I had a plan. Out of the corner of my eye, I was watching to see when Orville would drop his guard.

“There’s chocolate cake for dessert tonight,” Mom announced.

“Sweet!” Orville said, and reached for his milk. “Can I have two pieces?”

This was my chance. I pretended to blow my nose, but really I stuck a green bean in my right nostril. “Orville,” I said in an ordinary voice. “Please pass the salt.”

Orville took a big gulp of his milk and passed me the salt shaker.



I grinned like a mutant Mr. Potato Head. Orville saw that green bean hanging off my

face, and he gurgled. A little milk dribbled down his chin, but he didn't laugh. Before Mom could see, I closed my left nostril and blew. The bean flew out and landed on Orville's plate. That did it. He laughed, and milk sprayed out his nose.

*SCORE!*

"Orville Riot, that was disgusting," Mom said.

"Truly disgusting," I agreed. "You should be ashamed of yourself, Orville. Now, eat your green beans. They're good for you."

My mom looked at me suspiciously. "Since when are you a fan of vegetables?"

I held up a bean and smiled. "Green beans are my friends."

Orville snorted and kicked me under the table. He was giving me his famous I'm-Going-To-Get-You look. For a third grader, he is very good at making faces. He reminded me of the way the third little pig must have looked when he was putting the kettle full of

boiling water under the chimney for the wolf. He was determined to make me snarf all over the table.

I needed a plan. I looked at my milk with despair. A full glass to go! Then, a brilliant idea came to me. If I thought of something sad and drank all my milk in one gulp, I wouldn't have anything to snarf. It would be over.

What was sad? I stared at my plate. I imagined what it would be like to be a poor little string bean. What a miserable life. To lie on a plate in a puddle of butter. Only to end up chomped between giant teeth. O cruel fate! How could it get any worse?

Quickly I started to swallow my milk, which was hard because every muscle in my body was tense. Why was Orville staring at me? This was his opportunity. Why wasn't he cracking a joke?

I kept swallowing. I was almost done! One more gulp, and I could see the bottom of my—

A hairy black spider was in the bottom of my glass! “BLECH!” I screamed, spraying milk all over my macaroni.



“Got you!” Orville laughed and tipped the plastic spider out of my cup.

“Doesn’t count as a snarf! The milk came out my mouth, not my nose.”

Mom shook her head, looking almost as miserable as a green bean. “Why can’t we have a nice, ordinary dinner?”

I looked at Orville. Orville looked at me.

“Who wants to have a nice, ordinary dinner?” I asked, wiping my mouth on my

T-shirt. “We want suspense. We want excitement. Right, Orville?”

“Bingo bongo, Wilbur. And there’s one more thing.”

“What’s that?”

“We want dessert.”

That made Mom laugh. She and Orville started clearing the table, but I was deep in thought. The green beans on my plate were trying to tell me something.

“Orville,” I whispered, pulling him back into the dining room. “I think I’ve discovered the Secret of Life.”

His big brown eyes got bigger. “What is it?”

I held up a green bean. “If you wait around like a green bean for something to happen, you’ll be bored.” I tossed the bean back on my plate.

“That’s the Secret of Life?”

“No. The Secret of Life is NOT to be a green bean. The Secret of Life is NOT to

wait around. The Secret of Life is to *make* adventure.”

“How?”

“How did we make dinner interesting?”

“We played Snarf Attack.”

“Right! How do you make life interesting? You need a mission. You have to decide to do something and then do it. We’ll make it a rule. Riot Brother Rule Number One: Make something exciting happen every day. We’ll start tomorrow.”

“What’ll we do? Stick *two* green beans up our noses?”

“No.”

“How about carrots?”

“No, Orville. We need a thrilling, adventurous mission.” An idea popped into my brain. “I’ve got it. We’ll capture a criminal!”