

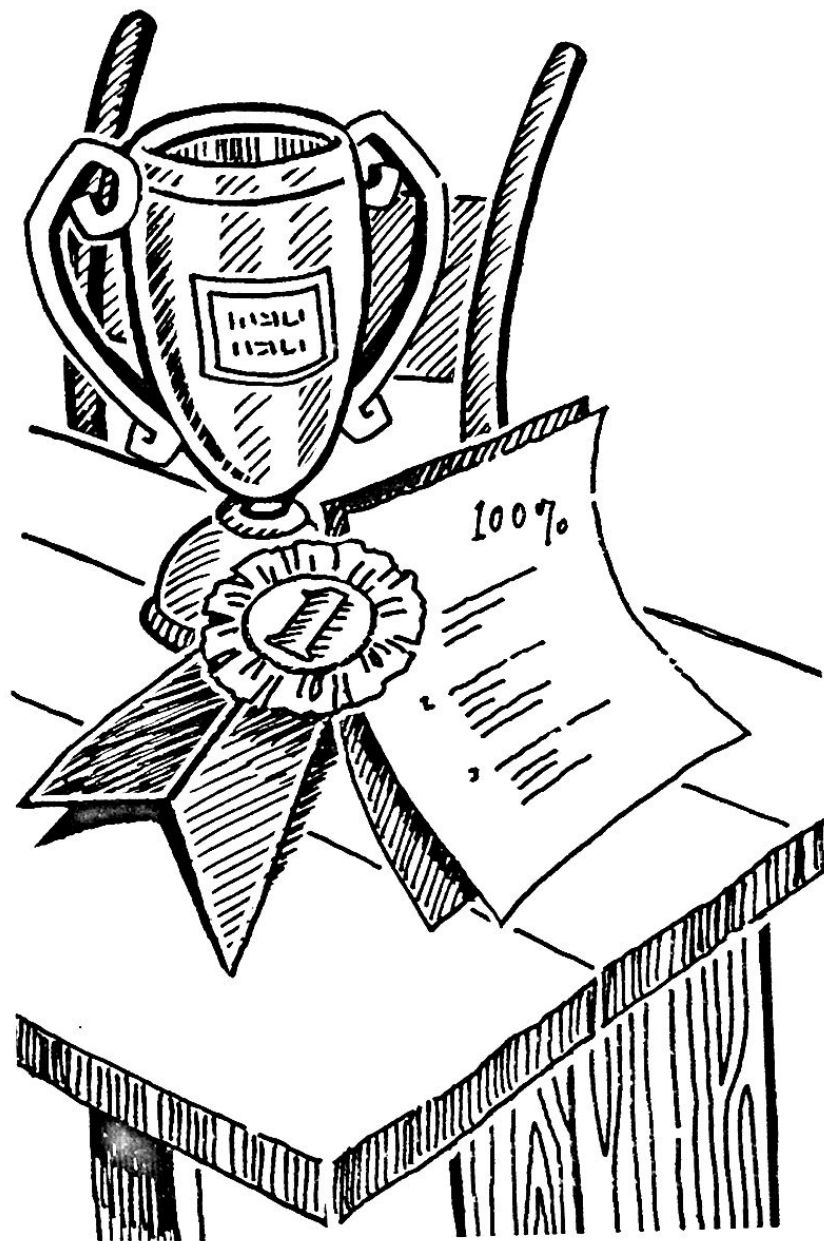
Smart Ice Cream

BY PAUL JENNINGS

Well, I came top of the class again. One hundred out of one hundred for Maths. And one hundred out of one hundred for English. I'm just a natural brain, the best there is. There isn't one kid in the class who can come near me. Next to me they are all dumb.

Even when I was a baby I was smart. The day that I was born my mother started tickling me. "Bub, bub, bub," she said.

"Cut it out, Mum," I told her. "That tickles." She nearly fell out of bed when I said that. I was very advanced for my age.



Every year I win a lot of prizes: top of the class, top of the school, stuff like that. I won a prize for spelling when I was only three years old. I am a terrific speller. If you can say it, I can spell it. Nobody can trick me on spelling. I can spell every word there is.

Some kids don't like me; I know that for a fact. They say I'm a show-off. I don't care. They are just jealous because they are not as clever as me. I'm good-looking too. That's another reason why they are jealous.

Last week something bad happened. Another kid got one hundred out of one hundred for Maths too. That never happened before—no one has ever done as well as me. I am always first on my own. A kid called Jerome Dadian beat me. He must have cheated. I was sure he cheated. It had something to do with that ice cream. I was sure of it. I decided to find out what was going on; I wasn't going to let anyone pull a fast one on me.

It all started with the ice cream man. Mr. Peppi. The old fool had a van which he parked outside the school. He sold ice cream, all different types. He had every flavor there is, and some that I had never heard of before.

He didn't like me very much. He told me off once. "Go to the back of the queue," he said. "You pushed in."

"Mind your own business, Pop," I told him. "Just hand over the ice cream."

"No," he said. "I won't serve you unless you go to the back."

I went round to the back of the van, but I didn't get in the queue. I took out a nail and made a long scratch on his rotten old van. He had just had it painted. Peppi came and had a look. Tears came into his eyes. "You are a bad boy," he said. "One day you will get into trouble. You think you are smart. One day you will be too smart."

I just laughed and walked off. I knew he wouldn't do anything. He was too soft-hearted. He was always giving free ice creams to kids that had no money. He felt sorry for poor people. The silly fool.

There were a lot of stories going round about that ice cream. People said that it was good for you. Some kids said it made you better when you were sick. One of the teachers called it "Happy Ice Cream." I didn't believe it, it never made me happy.

All the same, there was something strange about it. Take Pimples Peterson for example. That wasn't his real name—I just called him that because he had

a lot of pimples. Anyway, Peppi heard me call Peterson "Pimples." "You are a real mean boy," he said. "You are always picking on someone else, just because they are not like you."

"Get lost, Peppi," I said. "Go and flog your ice cream somewhere else."

Peppi didn't answer me. Instead he spoke to Pimples. "Here, eat this," he told him. He handed Peterson an ice cream. It was the biggest ice cream I had ever seen. It was colored purple. Peterson wasn't too sure about it. He didn't think he had enough money for such a big ice cream.

"Go on," said Mr. Peppi. "Eat it. I am giving it to you for nothing. It will get rid of your pimples."

I laughed and laughed. Ice cream doesn't get rid of pimples, it gives you pimples. Anyway, the next day when Peterson came to school he had no pimples. Not one. I couldn't believe it. The ice cream had cured his pimples.

There were some other strange things that happened too. There was a kid at the school who had a long nose. Boy, was it long. He looked like Pinocchio. When he blew it you could hear it a mile way. I called him "Snuzzle." He didn't like being called Snuzzle. He used to go red in the face when I

said it, and that was every time that I saw him. He didn't say anything back—he was scared that I would punch him up.

Peppi felt sorry for Snuzzle too. He gave him a small green ice cream every morning, for nothing. What a jerk. He never gave me a free ice cream.

You won't believe what happened but I swear it's true. Snuzzle's nose began to grow smaller. Every day it grew a bit smaller. In the end it was just a normal nose. When it was the right size Peppi stopped giving him the green ice creams.

I made up my mind to put a stop to this ice cream business. Jerome Dadian had been eating ice cream the day he got one hundred for Maths. It must have been the ice cream making him smart. I wasn't going to have anyone doing as well as me. I was the smartest kid in the school, and that's the way I wanted it to stay. I wanted to get a look inside that ice cream van to find out what was going on.

I knew where Peppi kept his van at night—he left it in a small lane behind his house. I waited until about eleven o'clock at night. Then I crept out of the house and down to Peppi's van. I took a crowbar, a bucket of sand, a flashlight, and some bolt cutters with me.

There was no one around when I reached the van.



I sprang the door open with the crowbar and shone my torch around inside. I had never seen so many tubs of ice cream before. There was every flavor you could think of: there was apple and banana, cherry and mango, blackberry and watermelon, and about fifty other flavors. Right at the end of the van were four bins with locks on them. I went over and had a look. It was just as I thought—these were his special flavors. Each one had writing on the top. This is what they said:

HAPPY ICE CREAM for cheering people up
NOSE ICE CREAM for long noses
PIMPLE ICE CREAM for removing pimples
SMART ICE CREAM for smart alecs

Now I knew his secret. That rat Dadian had been eating Smart Ice Cream; that's how he got one hundred for Maths. I knew there couldn't be anyone

as clever as me. I decided to fix Peppi up once and for all. I took out the bolt cutters and cut the locks off the four bins; then I put sand into every bin in the van. Except for the Smart Ice Cream. I didn't put any sand in that.

I laughed to myself. Peppi wouldn't sell much ice cream now. Not unless he started a new flavor—Sand Ice Cream. I looked at the Smart Ice Cream. I decided to eat some; it couldn't do any harm. Not that I needed it—I was already about as smart as you could get. Anyway, I gave it a try. I ate the lot. Once I started I couldn't stop. It tasted good. It was delicious.

I left the van and went home to bed, but I couldn't sleep. To tell the truth, I didn't feel too good. So I decide to write this. Then if any funny business has been going on you people will know what happened. I think I have made a mistake. I don't think Dadian did get any Smart Ice Cream.

It iz the nekst day now. Somefing iz happening to me. I don't feal quite az smart. I have bean trying to do a reel hard sum. It iz wun and wun. Wot duz wun and wun make? Iz it free or iz I for?