The Boy in the Sandwich (novel excerpt - children's)

by Vincent Eaton

Chapter 1.

Once upon a time I lived happily ever after.

Chapter 2.

But maybe you want to hear some of the details.

I was just getting ready to eat a thick, gooey peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich when a blue spider pushed up a corner of the bread from the inside and said, "Don't chomp, don't chew! We're in here, we're having a good time, and we don't feel like being eaten."

So I didn't chomp, didn't chew. I was just thinking, *What's a spider doing in my peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich and why is it blue?* All spiders I knew were black. They were black and wanted to crawl up my nostril, make themselves at home hoping I wouldn't sneeze. I always did sneeze when the spiders moved about in my nostril, getting more comfy when settling down to sleep at night, their fuzzy little hairs on their backs tickling me something fierce and I let out a world-class sneeze shooting that black spider into the air. Right out my nostril, across the room, and sometimes through the open window of my bedroom and onto a tree outside where the black spider met another spider just like himself and fell in love and made other little spiders and lived happily ever after until they tried to nest in my nose again and I would sneeze and

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everything would happen again, except there would be a lot more spiders flying across the room than just one. And my mother would yell from the living room, "Stop making all those noises with your nose! And I don't want to hear the story about the spiders again. Just go to sleep and have sweet dreams."

But now here was a blue spider in my peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich talking to me. Black spiders had never talked to me. Maybe blue spiders had voice boxes in them I didn't know about. But then I didn't know a much about blue spiders since I didn't know they even existed. But the main problem was, I was hungry, and this blue spider didn't want me to eat my peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich.

So I told him so. "But I'm hungry, and I want to eat my peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It's *my* peanut butter and jelly sandwich, not yours."

"It *was* your sandwich. It's *ours* now. So don't chomp, don't chew!"

"What do you mean, *ours?* Is there more than one of you in there, in my peanut butter and jelly sandwich?"

"Sure. I have my whole family here. Cousins, aunts, not the kind you step on ants, my granny, and lots and lots of relatives I haven't even had time to be introduced to."

"Are they all blue like you?"

The spider looked at me as though I was one serious silly little ninny. "*Of course* we're all blue. We're grape jelly spiders! Geez. What do you expect, orange spiders in grape jelly?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't know." I was still hungry.

"There's lots you don't know."

"I know some things."

"Sure. You know things you think you know because someone told you those were the things you should know now that you're five years old."

"I'm six years old," I corrected him, proudly.

"*Ooooooooooooooooooh, six* years old," he said in a funny, exaggerated voice. "Oh, please excuse me! You're as old as the hills

and twice as dusty. *Wisdom* is your middle name. Your mom and dad must look up to you." Then he stopped making a fun of me. "Just don't chomp, don't chew."

"But I'm hungry."

"Listen, kid. This crust of bread I'm holding up is getting heavy. Just leave us alone and we'll be happy. Don't chomp, no chew. Got that? We're having a party."

"What kind of party?"

"Birthday party, if it's any business of yours."

"You're in my peanut butter and jelly sandwich, so I think it's is my business."

"How many times do I have to tell you, this sandwich *was* yours until it became ours."

"When did it become yours?"

"When the birthday party started."

"Whose birthday is it and when did it start?"

He rolled his eyes like my mom did when I told her one of my stories. He said, "It started five minutes ago and it's *everybody's* birthday. Don't you know anything about grape jelly spiders? You may be six years old, but you're about a smart as a four year old."

"I've never been to a spider's birthday party, let alone a grape jelly spider's birthday party, so how could I know?" He was getting on my nerves. I had the urge to chomp and chew, just to show him who was the boss. "And I'm six years old and three weeks."

"Listen," the blue spider said, pointing in back of him, into the depths of the sandwich, "I've got to go back in and pour the kids some sweet drinks."

"Can I come?"

"Can you what?"

"Can I come to the birthday party?"

"Are you serious? You'd be out of place. You're six years old, for one thing. Nobody's older than three weeks in here. What would we have to say to each other? And you're a human type little boy, we're not. We don't have anything in common."

"We both like grape jelly," I pointed out.

"That's true." He seemed to think it over, in a grape jelly spider sort of way. "Okay. Come on. But just try to act natural." With that, he grabbed me by my T-shirt and dragged me right into my sandwich. Slipping me right between the top slice of bread and the bottom slice. I went *shloosh*. Suddenly I was in my sandwich with sticky, gooey peanut butter on my hands and elbows and knees.

Inside my sandwich it was like I was in a huge tent three football fields long, and there were at least a million or more blue spiders in there with me. They all had party hats on, and there were a million or more birthday cakes with all sorts of different colored candles everywhere. When they saw me they all, I mean *all* one million and more of them, stopped doing what they were doing, stopped having a good blue spider time, I guess, and just stared at me. I mean, really stared. And you've never been really stared at until a million or more grape jelly spiders stare at you in the middle of your own sandwich as though they were attending a very exclusive birthday party and you didn't have a personal invitation.

I was thinking, Gee, maybe this wasn't such a real wonderful idea, coming to this party, when I licked some peanut butter from my hands and the hungry hole in my tummy said, *Thanks, finally!*, and I licked again, and thought, I don't care if the grape jelly blue spiders don't like me here crashing into their party, I was hungry and getting less hungry by the lick.

It was strange and weird and all that good stuff, eating my peanut butter and jelly sandwich from the inside out. I'd never done that before. I liked to do things I'd never done before. In fact, it was the time I liked best in my life. Doing things I'd never done before. I didn't much like doing the same things twice. Three times and I was bored. Four times and forget it. Four times of anything the same and I wanted to cry and scream and do all sorts of loud things to make my life change and be different again. My mother said I had a short attention span. My father said I'd grow out of it. My brother hit me in the arm and told me to shut up. My dog just played with her bone. And I kept screaming and crying and yelling until life changed and

became different, until something that had never happened to me before happened to me.

So here I was in the middle of my grape jelly and peanut butter sandwich licking my arms that were full of sticky peanut butter, thinking, Well, this is different. Just having a good time.

Chapter 3.

My friend the blue spider who had dragged me by my T-shirt into my sandwich introduced me to his friends and family. "Hello, everybody. This is the kid who was going to chomp and chew us," and here all the million and more spiders let out a collective, horrified gasp of amazement, "--but he isn't going to chomp and chew us because he's our friend now. His name is...." He turned to me, puzzled. "What *is* your name?"

"Freddie-Eddie, sometimes. But my brother calls me Dummy-poo-poo-head. And my friends call me Spot because ... I don't remember why anymore. But I sort of prefer Yum-Yum."

"So we can call you just about anything and it'll be okay with you?"

"Sure. I don't mind."

"Then I'll call you Xavier."

"Oh. Except that."

"Why?"

"I don't like words that begin with the letter X. In fact, I don't like the letter X most of the time. I try to stay away from the letter X. I hardly ever say the word *next* unless I really, really have to, and even then I don't. Unless my brother hits me in the arm and makes me."

"Well, I like Xavier," my blue spider friend said. "I've never known anyone named Xavier, and I've always wanted to know someone named Xavier, so you get to be Xavier."

"Okay, I guess, sort of. But don't expect me to say my name because I don't like it."

"You said the word expect."

"So?"

"Expect has an X in it."

"It does? I didn't know. You know, I'm only six and three weeks old so I know next has the X letter in it, but I'm still too young to know the word expect has *that* letter in it." I mouthed the letter X instead of saying it aloud, because I didn't like the way the letter X tasted in my mouth, even when I said the word six. I preferred the taste of peanut butter. "In fact, I don't even know what letters of the alphabet are needed to make the word expect, and I don't really care because I'm not supposed to learn that word and lots others like it until I'm nine. So I expect I'll be saying a lot of words with that X letter in it." Oh the letter X tasted more and more awful every time the sound of it slipped into my mouth. "But that doesn't mean I'm enjoying it. It just means I'm still only six years old."

"CAN WE GET ON WITH THE PARTY!!??" all the million and more grape jelly spiders suddenly screamed.

So, quietly, in my head where nobody could hear, I thought, Boy, it's going to be strange having a name I never say. Xavier. I'd never done that before. Have a name for me I never said aloud. Something different. I smiled inside my head, where nobody could see it.

Then the blue grape jelly spiders starting having their million and more birthday parties.

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