

NOAH KNOWS NOs!

CHAPTER 1

The Worst Word in the World

You know what stinks? What really, really stinks? Even more than my socks after a long day. More than my sister's sweaty armpits. She's in high school by the way. What really stinks more than anything I've ever known in my eleven years of life boils down to one word. Actually, two simple letters.

It starts with an N and ends with an O.

You guessed it...NO!

That's it. The word NO is probably the worst word ever invented. Who came up with it anyhow? Had to be an adult.

You may even know what I'm talking about. Anyhoo, here's how it works.

Mom, can I have five dollars?

NO!

Hey, can I get a motorcycle for Christmas?

NO!

Can I spend the night with Mitchell?

NO!

It isn't just my parents, either. That's the worst part about it. It's anyone older than me. My sister Piper isn't horrible for a big sister, but she's still a big sister and if you've got one, you know what I'm talking about. She's three years older than me and thinks that just because she gets to go more places than me that she's so special. I call her Pipes, by the way. I did it to bug her, but she doesn't really seem to mind.

When I ask her to let me go to the mall with her, guess what she says. You got it...NO! If I want to go with her to the football game at her school. Always the same...NO!

But it doesn't stop there. At school all day long it never ends.

Ms. Jackson, may I go to the bathroom?

NO!

Coach Barnett, can I play dodge ball today?

NO!

If you're anything like me, you're probably sick and tired of hearing the one little word that causes so much trouble. Two letters that when combined together have the power to destroy dreams and ruin lives.

Oh yeah, I almost forgot about the word MAYBE. That word isn't as bad. MAYBE is better than NO unless it comes from your parents, because MAYBE always means NO to them. It's kind of like the evil twin of NO, because parents use it as a temporary replacement for NO! It's a way for them to buy a little bit of time and keep us quiet. I hate that word, too, because I know what's going to come later.

Mom tells me that when I get older I'll be able to do more things and that I won't be told NO all the time. The problem is that getting older is forever away, and since I just started sixth grade, I don't think I've got time to wait. I want to do things now. I want to hear YES.

So guess what I did. I invented a machine that changes all of those NOs into YES's. That way all of the adults who are keeping me from reaching my potential they're always talking about won't be able to stand in my way as I do what I need to do, go where I need to go, and get what I need to get.

Crazy right? Calm down, and I'll explain everything. Once I got the machine built the world was all mine. I go to the bathroom when I want. Get money when I need it. Go to the mall every day if I want. And I spend the night at my friend's every weekend.

What I'm about to tell you is a secret, and you have to promise not to tell anyone because none of the adults know what I've done.

CHAPTER 2

Bedtime is for the Birds

I guess I should introduce myself. I'm Noah Reed Scroggins. My friends call me Noah, and my parents call me sweetie or NOAH REED SCROGGINS when they're mad. Since you don't look like Mom or Dad you can't call me sweetie or NOAH REED SCROGGINS. I may let you call me Noah once I get to know you a little bit better, though.

Anyhoo, like I said earlier, I'm in the sixth grade. My first year in middle school, and I'm proud to report I'm a solid C plus student.

As you probably guessed, I'm not in a very good mood right now. In fact, I'm downright peeved. It's bedtime on a school night, and when I asked Mom if I could stay up an extra half hour to watch my favorite show on TV she said that word that should never be uttered.

Okay, the truth is that the show isn't my favorite. It really isn't in the top five, but that shouldn't matter. I just wanted to stay up a little while longer. Nine o'clock is too early for a boy my age. I keep telling Mom and Dad that my friends stay up until at least nine-thirty.

Know what they say about that? It's not what you think. They say that just because my friends are doing something doesn't mean that I'm going to get to do it, too. Then Mom throws in the whole, *if your friends were jumping off of a cliff would you jump, too*, thing. Ridiculous, right?

Let me ask you something. Have your parents ever pulled that on you? Have they ever asked you a silly question like that? I bet they have. If not, then you're lucky, because my parents pull crap like that on me all the time. I have to be honest with you. I'm about sick of it. That's why I'm sitting here in the dark telling you all of this. Telling you my story. Because tomorrow things are going to change. I've built my device.

I know what you're thinking. You're probably asking yourself how I did it. Tell the truth. You are, aren't you?

I knew it.

I'll let you know, because I think I can trust you now. You seem like a pretty cool kid. There are two things about me that are crucial to taking over the world. First of all, I like to build things. I built a robot for my third grade science fair. It won first place. And second of all, I'm what I like to call a genius. Yeah, that's right. A genius.

I've never been tested, but I know I am. I can feel it in my bones. I'm way smarter than my dopey older sister. My parents are smart, especially Dad. That's probably where I get it from. He's an engineer. No, not the kind that drives a train. Although, now that you mention it, that'd be really cool, too.

No, Dad's a mechanical engineer. He went to college and everything. Georgia Tech.

Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you where I live. I live in a small town north of Atlanta, but I'm not going to tell you exactly where, because you'll probably want to take my YES MACHINE from me and use it for yourself. I can't let that happen, so all I'll tell you is that I'm in Atlanta.

Now, back to Dad. He's a mechanical engineer, like I said. This means that he builds things. Really big and really cool things like engines for cars. Actually, he designs them and the car company people make them for him.

That's where I got all of the stuff I needed to make my machine. I took it from his workshop before he got home. I don't want anyone to know what I built, and if Dad sees me in his shop, he'll want to help me. He's weird like that.

All my friends say their dads never do anything with them. They're lucky. My dad always wants me to help him. I don't mind, because right now he's working on something

special, but he won't tell me what it is. I've seen his pictures of it, and I think it's the world's very first flying backpack. You know, one of those things you strap on your back and fly around like Superman. Dad wants to skip Atlanta traffic, I think. Why else would he keep it secret? I keep asking him if he's going to let me fly it to school when it's finished, but he looks at me like I'm crazy, and I'm sure I don't have to tell you what he always says.

Got to go. I hear footsteps coming down the hall. That means it's time for me to pretend like I'm asleep. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

CHAPTER 3

You're Still Here

Good morning. You're still here. Awesome. Come with me to the bus stop if you want to know what happened. Speaking of the bus, mine is the slowest one in the world. Super slow. That reminds me of a joke. You'll love it. What did the snail say when he was riding on the turtle's back?

I'll give you a second.

WHEEEEE!!!!

That's what the snail said. Get it? The snail is so slow that it makes the turtle seem really fast. It's my joke, but you can use it. Tell all your friends. They'll love it.

That's another thing I forgot to tell you besides the fact that I'm a genius. I'm probably the funniest guy I know. I'm sure I'll think of more jokes before I'm done.

So back to the whole reason you're here. It all started last year. Back in elementary school. I'd had enough. The last straw as they say. All I wanted was a birthday party. Not just any birthday party, though. A party to end all parties. I wanted a circus party. A clown, a bounce house, jugglers, a ring leader, elephants and at least one lion. You know, standard stuff.

I hinted about it for months. I painted clowns in art class and almost learned how to juggle. Nothing. It didn't even faze Mom. She just told me it was cute. Yuck!

Once the real party ended, (the one with a chocolate cake and my Aunt Sarah pinching my cheeks) I went straight to my room and started drawing my design. I decided that I was going to have the circus birthday on my tenth birthday.

I had the birthday of my dreams by the way, and I'll tell you about it later. Man, that's a wild story.

First, though, I have to tell you about the YES Machine. I call it the Mind Changer, because that's just what it does.

Okay, here it goes. You promised you wouldn't tell anyone, so I'm trusting you to keep your promise. Right?

I found an old remote control. One of those big clunky ones my parents had from an old TV or something, I don't know. I took it apart and checked out the insides. I pulled out a few things and couldn't remember where they went when I tried to put them back. Didn't matter, though, because I had to get some circuits from Dad's shop anyhow.

The very next day, I went straight there after school and plundered through all of his drawers. I found all sorts of wires and computer chips. Lots and lots of tools. There were drawings of really neat cars on his workbench but nothing that seemed to fit the clunky remote I had.

After a few more minutes of searching, I gave up because I knew Dad would be home at six o'clock on the dot. I didn't know what to do, so I went outside and sat on the swing. Do you have a swing in your backyard? I used to really love to swing. I still do, but I don't use it like I did when I was a kid. Back when I was six.

Anyhoo, I'm getting off track. Back to the Mind Changer. I held it in my hand as my feet dragged through the grass. I pushed buttons like a mad scientist and put it back together the best I could. I have to be honest and tell you that one piece didn't go back inside like it was supposed to. I'm not even sure what it's for. Bottom line...it didn't work.

Just about the time I was going to give up on my invention, something crazy happened. Something that I don't think you're going to believe. Something that I wouldn't even believe if it didn't happen to me.