

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key

by Jack Gantos

Parts (5): Joey, Mrs. Maxy, Narrators 1-3

Joey: At school they say I'm wired bad, or wired mad, or wired sad, or wired glad, depending on my mood and what teacher has ended up with me. But there is no doubt about it, I'm wired.

Narrator 1: This year was no different. When Joey Pigza started out, all the days there looked about the same. In the morning he'd be okay and follow along in class. But after lunch, when his meds had worn down, it was nothing but trouble for Joey.

Joey: One day, we were doing math drills in class and every time Mrs. Maxy asked a question like,

Mrs. Maxy: "What's nine times nine?"

Joey: I'd raise my hand because I'm really quick at math. But each time she called on me, even though I knew the answer, I'd just blurt out, "Can I get back to you on that?"

Narrator 2: Then Joey would nearly fall out of my chair from laughing. And she'd give him that white lipped look which meant, "Settle down."

Joey: But I didn't and kept raising my hand each time she asked a question until finally no other kid would raise their hand because they knew what was coming between me and Mrs. Maxy.

Mrs. Maxy: "Okay, Joey,"

Narrator 3: Mrs. Maxy said, calling on me and staring hard at Joey's face as if her eyes were long fingers that could grip me by the chin. Joey stared right back and hesitated a second as if he were planning to answer the question and then I'd holler out really loud,

Joey: "Can I get back to you on that?"

Narrator 1: Finally, after a bunch of times of me doing that in a row, she jerked her thumb to ward the door.

Mrs. Maxy: "Out in the hall!"

Narrator 2: And the class cracked up.

Joey: So I went and stood in the hall for about a second until I remembered the mini-Superball in my pocket and started to bounce it off the lockers and ceiling and after Mrs. Deeb's in the next class stuck her head out her door and yelled, "Hey, cut the racket," like she was yelling at a stray cat, I remembered something I wanted to try. I had seen the Tasmanian Devil on TV whirling around like a top so I unbuckled my belt and pulled on the end really hard, as if I was trying to start a lawn mower.

Narrator 3: But that didn't get Joey spinning very fast. So he took out his high-top shoelaces and tied them together and then to the belt and wrapped it all around his waist. Then he grabbed one end and yanked on it and sort of got himself spinning.

Joey: I kept doing it until I got better and better and before long I was bouncing off the lockers because I was dizzy too. Then I gave myself one more really good pull on the belt and because I was already dizzy I got going really fast and began to snort and grunt like the Tasmanian Devil until Mrs. Maxy came out and clamped her hands down on my shoulders. She stopped me so fast I spun right out of my shoes and they went shooting up the hall.

Mrs. Maxy: "You glue your feet to the floor for five whole minutes or you can just spin yourself down to the principal's office. Now, what is your choice going to be?"

Joey: "Can I get back to you on that?"

Narrator 1: Her face turned all red.

Mrs. Maxy: "Five minutes! Settle down for five, and you can rejoin the class."

Joey: I nodded, and when she was gone I wrapped the belt and laces around my middle and gave it a good tug and began to spin and spin and slam into the lockers and I got going so good the gum I had under my tongue flew out and my Superball slipped out of my hand and went bouncing down the hall and I kept going and going like when you roll down a steep hill and before long I was bumping on the glass walls around the principal's office like a dizzy fish in a tank.

Narrator 2: Then the principal came out and pinned Joey against the wall and had a little talk about his behavior goals and Joey spent the rest of the day on her office floor sorting out all the used crayons that the kindergartners kept in big plastic tubs until he had separated piles of blue and green and red and yellow and you know the rest.

Narrator 3: Read more about Joey in a humorous novel titled, Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key and learn about the serious challenges that life presents to a kid dealing with hyper-activity and related disorders.