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The Big Money Squeeze

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GRADE MONEY MAKING

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RYMER AND HIS FRIENDS HAVE A GIGANTIC GOAL, BUT CAN THEY FIGURE OUT HOW TO REACH IT BEFORE SUMMER IS OVER?

Rymer Strauss is an entrepreneur, author, and rising fifth-grader. His first book, *The Big Money Squeeze: Adventures in Fourth Grade Money Making*, lays out the fundamentals of entrepreneurship for the next generation of business leaders.

“This book is for all the cool kids in the world who are hopefully inspired to write great books and start fun companies,” Rymer says. Weaving in the best practices for starting a business, *The Big Money Squeeze* tells the story of a tight-knit group of friends trying to make the most of their summer vacation. It is a story about friendship, treehouses, secret passageways, but it is equally a story of market research, business plans, and entrepreneurship. Written in an engaging style that is aimed at today’s youth, Rymer’s book shares the iterative, try-fail-try-again process that entrepreneurs face.

In the following excerpt from *The Big Money Squeeze*, the gang brainstorms a new business with the help of Rymer’s dad.

“First things first,” Rymer says. “We’ve got to make sure people know about our stand. We need some good signs, but let’s not spend any money if we can help it. What can we use?”

“I know!” says Ollie. “There is a bunch of construction stuff by that new house. You know, the one that is getting built on the other side of

our street. Let’s go over there and see what we can find.”

The kids run across the street and find a bunch of wooden pallets by the dumpster. But as they try to lift them up to take them to the treehouse, they quickly discover that the pallets are too heavy to lift.

"I keep a ton of cardboard and posterboards in my playroom so I can draw up new targets to practice sword fighting and battle planning. Why don't we just use those?" says Nia.

"Yes!" the boys all say at once, and they all bike/run/scooter over to her house and settle into her playroom. While they start making the signs, Ollie asks, "Do any of you know how to make lemonade?"

Silence.

"OK," says Rymer. "Maybe we need to do a little research. Nia, do you think we can use your parent's iPad to look up recipes?"

"Sure!" Nia leaves to ask her mom, and when she gets back, she searches "world's greatest lemonade" and finds a recipe with sugar, water, ice, lemons, and mint! The gang agrees that this is the recipe they should use—at least for now. They also notice that the recipe is rather vague, so they decide that they should use fresh-squeezed lemons, tap water, ice from the freezer, and mint picked from Ollie's brother's herb garden. But they don't know what type of sugar to use.



Ash says, "I like the sugar that my mom sprinkles on my waffles. The light, fluffy stuff."

Rymer says, "I like brown sugar in my oatmeal. That would probably be good in lemonade."

Ollie thinks for a minute and then says, "I heard honey is healthier than sugar. Maybe we should use that?"

They decide to figure it out later and finish the signs first.

When they are done, the gang goes back to Rymer's house because Rymer has a lemon tree in his backyard, and they figure they should pick a few. But when they get inside, they hear Molly upstairs.

"Hey, guys," says Rymer. "Molly is actually a sugar expert. She's always making cakes, brownies, cupcakes, cookies, magic potions, and on and on with Kristi, our stepmom. Let's ask her."

Molly is so excited to be the expert. She tells them that white granulated sugar works for baking and mixing drinks, but powdered sugar only works on top of things like pancakes and cupcakes. Then she explains the difference between real sugar and sugar substitutes and even other sweeteners like honey and molasses. "So you have to be careful to use the right stuff," she says as she finishes her lecture. "Or you'll end up with really gross lemonade."

Ash leans over to Rymer and says, "I can't believe she's only six years old. She's so smart!"

They thank Molly for the lesson and decide that they are ready to try a few different mixtures. They need to test out their juicing skills and see if they can actually make lemonade. Kristi has all the ingredients they need in the kitchen and agrees to let them have everything for free for

this experiment on the condition that they clean up the kitchen after they are done.

They ask her to call all the parents and have them come over for their “taste-off” surprise, and the adults all come. Each kid mixes up a batch of lemonade, and they serve it to the parents, who are blindfolded, to see which is the best.



Ollie forgets the sugar in his recipe, and Ash's mom nearly spits it out. Rymer uses brown sugar even though Molly told him not to, and it is pretty gross, just as she said. Nia doesn't take the lemon seeds out, so hers is chunky. And Ollie has way too much water.

To make matters worse, as the cups are sitting on the counter waiting to be tested, Molly says, “You guys better be careful not to leave the drinks too long in those paper cups or it will leak out of the bottom. If you ask me, Styrofoam is much better because the lemonade won't leak out and make a big sticky mess and get you in trouble. Plus it keeps it cool longer.”

“I think I see exactly what she's talking about,” says Nia. “Look, mine has only been sitting here

for a few minutes, and the paper cup is starting to fall apart. Darn paper.”

She is right. The water, mint, lemon juice, and ice are leaking all over the counter and running down the side of the kitchen island. Terrence is licking the floors. Rymer's parents don't look too happy.

They tell the kids to hurry and clean up the mess before Terrence licks it all up. Rymer is worried he will be punished for this.

After they are done cleaning, they don't really know what they want to do for the rest of the day, so they do what they always do: go up to the treehouse. After a few minutes, Rymer's dad comes out to talk to them.

“Guys, that was a good idea, but your execution wasn't very good. Would you agree?” he asks.

The kids nod their heads bashfully. Rymer asks, “Are we in trouble?”

“No,” his dad says. “But it's clear you haven't got a plan.”

Rymer brightens up. “In the game Business Tycoon, there is a part where you can come up with a business plan. Let's come up with one for our lemonade business.”

The other three stand there still looking at him confused, so Rymer's dad says, “OK. It's not that complicated. Think about it like a soccer game. You all play soccer. You know how you come up with plays sometimes? There is a field, two goals, and two teams with lots of players who play goalie, defense, midfield, and striker. You know there are boundaries and referees. And you know that whichever team scores the most goals wins. Following me so far?”

They nod.

He finds a blank spot on the Game Plan board and draws out an actual game plan to show the kids how moving a ball down a field as a team and scoring a goal works. “But instead of a ball, you will need to move the supplies starting with the source, which means wherever you get them, to the goal—which is the customers.”



He pauses for them to nod their heads. “Business is like this. But for our lemonade game, the cul-de-sac is our field. Each cup of lemonade we sell is like a point for our team. Instead of offense and defense, the roles on our team are things like suppliers to help us get what we need, workers to help make the lemonade, marketers to bring crowds to buy the lemonade, and our goalie is someone who is good with numbers to keep count of our money.”

“That’s me!” Ollie says. “And I can keep track of how much everything costs when we buy our supplies.”

Rymer’s dad smiles and says, “That’s right! If you wanted to do things in a very official way, you could do some research on the laws of the city for selling things. Maybe we could even do a field trip to city hall. That way you can avoid having any trouble with the law.”

Rymer wrinkles his forehead. “Nah. Research is soooooo boring. We are kids! Who’s going to be mad at us? Dad, I know you’re a lawyer, but I don’t actually know what that means, you know.”

His dad laughs, ruffles Rymer’s hair, and leaves.

Nia says, “But you know what? It might not hurt to see what the weather is going to be like so we can plan our sale on the hottest day.”

Ash laughs. “Nia! We live on an island where it’s always hot and sunny. Hot and sunny! I think we can just take our chances.”

It’s clear the kids are all in on winging it, so that’s the end of that conversation. After a few minutes of silence, Ollies says, “But I am a little worried that other kids might get the same idea. We don’t anyone to steal our business. Can we all agree to be super secret about it until it’s time to sell?”

They all agree.

“How could we lose?” says Ash.

Ollie nods his head. “Yeah. What could possibly go wrong?”

To Learn more about Rymer and *The Big Money Squeeze*, visit RymerStrauss.com. 

