

# THE BIG MONEY SQUEEZE

ADVENTURES IN FOURTH GRADE MONEY MAKING

**RYMER STRAUSS**



**Forbes** | Books  
for Kids

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*To all the cool kids in the world  
who are hopefully inspired to write great books  
and start fun companies.*

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# FOREWORD

The call of entrepreneurship is one that can be heard at any age, whether you're eight or eighty! It's only those bold, daring, and creative individuals who take up stakes and follow their dream that become entrepreneurs.

Rymer Strauss is one of these people. At nine years old, he took a risk and wrote a book that would encourage other young, budding entrepreneurs to take up the flag of free enterprise and try their hand at running their very first business.

It's uplifting to see young people seize the opportunity to learn about business—to learn how to run a company no matter what size and make money. Entrepreneurship and free enterprise can be remarkable forces for good in the world. To see the next generation embracing entrepreneurship is a positive thing for all of mankind.

The publication of *The Big Money Squeeze* marks the launch of Forbes Books for Kids. This is the first of many books designed to educate and inspire young people of the merits (and fun) of entrepreneurship and the free enterprise system. My great hope is that Rymer's book and those forthcoming from Forbes Books for Kids will serve as seeds that help catalyze our next generation of entrepreneurs!

Adam Witty  
CEO, Forbes Books

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my dad and stepmom, Becky, who taught me to read. They encouraged me to read anything and everything, and they introduced me to new and great books all the time. I want to thank them for also introducing me to business and entrepreneurship at an early age and for always supporting my wild and crazy business ideas.

I want to thank Adam Witty, who once misspelled my name despite being a close family friend, barely beat me in basketball despite being six foot seven and playing a kid, but, most importantly, gave the ultimate green light for this great project that will hopefully inspire more readers, entrepreneurs, and creative spirits.

I sort of acknowledge my older brothers, Colin and Quinn, for being pretty cool and not beating me up too much. I want to also acknowledge my little sister, Penny, who is really fun to play with and isn't too annoying, and my mom.

I want to thank Mrs. Kristin Hackler for spending so much time with me on this project and helping build out a great storyline. And to Mrs. Heidi Scott and Mrs. Kerrie Robertson for all their support to make this book happen.



I want to thank all my buddies at Sea Pines Montessori Academy in Hilton Head for being such great classmates and friends. And I can't forget all of my cousins, especially Gray, Hill, and Charlie, who are really fun and the best cousin buddies ever!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rymer J. Strauss is a nine-year-old boy born and raised on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. He attends Sea Pines Montessori Academy, where he is currently in fourth grade with some of the coolest kids in the world.

Rymer is an avid reader, sports enthusiast, and creative adventurer. Between reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (a copy of which can be found in every family car) or *Dog Man*, he plays soccer, runs cross-country, is learning judo, and loves swimming. He spends his summers at Camp Mondamin in North Carolina engaged in activities such as mountain climbing, camping, and ziplining. He also loves exploring the world and has sailed with his family in Tortola, skis in Colorado every winter, and has been to Canada, Hawaii, and, of course, to LEGOLAND, where he spends way too much time with the master builders.

After successfully building nearly every LEGO ever created, he recently took on the task of building the Death Star, and amazingly, six months later, neither his little sister nor any of his brothers or friends has managed to damage it at all!

When he's not in school, reading, playing sports, or traveling, he likes to create new business opportunities, tell jokes, and design secret hideouts, lofts, and forts. He's currently working on design plans for a DNA-required access port to his hidden reading nook.



## CHAPTER 1

# EMPTY POCKETS AND BIG DREAMS

It's raining. And on a great July afternoon too. What a bummer.

To make matters worse, it's hot and humid, and there's lightning. The storm is so bad that Rymer, Ollie, Nia, and Ash can't even go swimming to cool off.

Cooped up in their huge, three-story LEGO treehouse complete with trapdoors and a slide, the best friends sit and sulk as the rain pounds on the roof. Rymer and Ollie are both sitting on beanbags. Rymer's dark-brown hair is all that they can see because his head is bent over a book, reading as usual. His tattered book looks like it's been read a hundred times. Knowing Rymer, it probably has.



Ollie is trying to see how many Goldfish crackers he can stuff into his mouth at once. The others aren't looking at him because he always chews with his mouth open. It's disgusting. And the fact that his sandy-brown hair always looks unbrushed doesn't help. Crumbs keep falling into his hoodie and down his neck, which doesn't seem to bother him one bit. Ollie has an adopted brother, Anthony, who is several years older than him, and two younger siblings, John and Millie, who are both much younger than Ollie. She is with him most of the time and part of the group most days when she's not at ballet practice.

Nia and Ash are sitting next to each other on the bunk bed. Nia (whose name rhymes with Maya) is polishing her two samurai swords with the corner of her T-shirt. She wears the swords everywhere in a sling that goes over her shoulders. The boys used to think it was weird until they learned that she is a real-life descendant of actual, true

samurai warriors. She even has a ninja training course in her backyard, but they can't use it in the rain. She is an only child, has an Airedale terrier named Terrence, and lives with her mom, dad, and grandma.

Ash's mom is deaf, so he knows how to use sign language. Everyone in the group wants to learn it because then they could talk without anyone else knowing what they are talking about, except Ash's mom, of course. They have learned a few signs so far for words like "play," "smelly," "hungry," "let's go," "eat," "run," "hide," and "attack."

Ash's blond curls bob up and down as he fiddles with the few LEGO bricks that are left over from when they built this super amazing dream treehouse. They worked for two years gathering enough LEGO bricks for the treehouse, and then they took another year to build it in Rymer's backyard. This means they've been working on this project since they were in first grade.

It's complete with a rope ladder, zipline, and even solar panels from Ash's Technix collection to power the lights. The kids would even love to spend the night there, but they get scared at night. Well, all of them except Nia, who is never afraid of anything. They do have flashlights on both floors, but that's not enough to keep them there after dark for long.

The first floor (which is really the ground) is where they keep anything too big to bring up. Ash and Ollie keep their bikes there. Rymer prefers a scooter. And Nia refuses to ride a bike or a scooter because samurai run all the time to train. The kids can either climb the twisty stairs and go in through a trapdoor in the floor or climb a ladder that hangs off the balcony. To get down, they can go the same way, or they can do something more fun. The second floor has a zipline that goes to the middle of the yard, and the third floor has a huge water slide that lands in the pool behind the house. The third floor also has a fireman pole to the second floor.

Inside, they have a minifridge with snacks, soda, juice boxes, and sometimes chocolate milk. They have a stash of Goldfish crackers, gummy snacks, cookies, and apples. There is also a candy dispenser hanging from the ceiling, but it always seems to be empty. There are big pillows and beanbags everywhere to lie on. There is a punching bag so they can train. There are also a ton of books, maps, games, and—in case they need to blow off steam—Nerf guns and water balloons.

You'd think that would be enough to keep anyone happy. But rainy days are rainy days no matter what.

They all live on the barrier island called George Island, so it's very common to have tropical storms in the late summer and early fall. They would go inside, but none of them want to be around the adults all day. Adults just talk about adult stuff, play weird music, make the kids clean up messes, and eat snacks at a table with a placemat. They would rather lounge around wherever they want and eat the snacks they snuck into the treehouse.

Ash drops the LEGO bricks on the bed and says, "Ahh! It's so boring! Boring!" He would go home, but he's secretly afraid of lightning, and he won't leave the treehouse until it stops. His house is the farthest away from Rymer's, and he wishes he lived next door like Ollie. Ollie and Rymer have a not-so-secret passageway that they dug through the ground between their houses. Both sides are hidden with trapdoors under the bushes.

"I know. I hate rainy days," adds Ollie. "There's nothing to do."

After sitting for another moment in silence, Nia finishes polishing her sword and slides it behind her back into the sling. Knowing that Rymer always has good ideas, she waves her hand in front of his face. "Earth to Rymer," she says.

Nobody is surprised when he blinks and jolts up from the pages of his book and says, "Oh, hey! Is it still raining?"

Ollie face-palms. “Of course it’s still raining. My dad said it’s going to be raining all weekend.”

Ash snaps his fingers. “I know! Let’s build something!”

“I’m done building things for a while.” Ollie sighs. “I just want to be lazy today. I wish there was a way we could just sit here and play video games. Too bad we don’t have a TV in here or anything.”



Rymer drops his book on the floor. “Why not?” He stands up from his beanbag chair. “We could put it right there in the corner on top of the minifridge!”

Nia pulls a sword out of the sling and spears an apple from the dish next to the fridge. As she takes a big, juicy bite, she says, “How on earth are we supposed to do that?” Juice drips down her chin in little drops, which she ignores.

Ollie looks up at the solar-powered lights and wonders to himself if they could power anything else.



Ash notices and asks, “Do you think the solar panels could power a TV?”

Rymer says, “Yeah, and what about a gaming console? If we had one, we would have something to do here in the treehouse when it rains. Then we wouldn’t have to go inside and get kicked off by Steve and Branson.” These are Rymer’s two older brothers, and they get kind of mean sometimes.



“Yeah,” says Nia. “They never let us play. I wish I was a hundred feet tall. Then I could take it away from them for a change.”

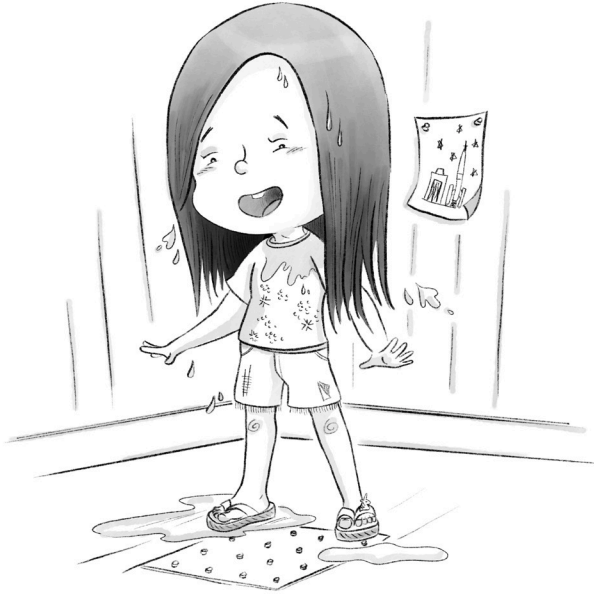
The boys laugh at this. She is already several inches taller than the rest of them and stronger too. She is always wishing she was taller or heavier or faster so that she could fight people who are bigger than the others. If she had her way, she would be a giant.

“But seriously, why not? How much money do you all have? Maybe we can go buy one!” Rymer says, getting excited.

They realize pretty quickly that they don’t have more than a few dollars between them. They just spent everything they’d saved on the

LEGO bricks to finish their treehouse. Their pockets have nothing but moths in them—as a matter of fact, Ollie quite literally has a dead moth in his. He captured it that morning, accidentally killed it, and wants to have a funeral for it when it stops raining. (Most likely, though, he'll forget about it, and his mom will find it in the dryer after she washes his pants. She's always finding worms, crickets, and other bugs in there, all shriveled and dried up.)

They certainly can't ask their parents for money. Their allowances are already spent through their early teenage years. They need a plan, a way to make money quickly.



Just then, Rymer's little sister, Molly, comes running up the back stairs into the treehouse. She's soaking wet and her makeup is especially messy today from the rain. She's short, cute, and a perfect mix of tomboy and girly girl. She reminds everyone of Jessie from *Toy Story*. She's smiling from ear to ear despite being soaking wet. She just turned six, and Rymer generally likes playing with her but finds her

annoying when his friends want to hang. She's got jean shorts with cool rips on one side and a sparkly pink T-shirt. Her flip-flops have unicorns on them, and they drip water onto the LEGO floor.

Rymer starts to tease her by saying, "Hey, no girls allowed!"

Ollie and Ash join in, but Nia quickly stands up. "Hey, guys. Did you forget I'm a girl? Come on in, Molly. Girl power!" They fist-bump.

"No babies allowed," Rymer teases Molly.

The other boys join in and say, "No babies allowed! No babies allowed! No babies allowed!" And they all laugh.

Molly gets mad and punches Rymer in the stomach, but because she's so little, it doesn't hurt. They all just laugh some more.

"Hey, guys," says Nia. "I'm curious why Molly is so excited." She turns to Molly and asks, "Why did you run through the pouring rain? What were you going to tell us?"

Molly takes a minute to catch her breath, and then she says, "My Barbie Dream House is here! Remember the one Kristi gave me for my birthday present, but she had to order it because it was out at the store? You remember, don't you?"

Kristi is Rymer and Molly's stepmom. She always wears really cool cowgirl boots and promises she will share them with Molly when she gets older.

Molly continues, her voice getting louder. "It's the newest one! This means it's the biggest one too. It has an elevator, a pool, like five floors ... you have to see the box. It's huge! I need help opening it. Come on!"

Nia stands up and says, "Sure, Molly. I'll use my swords to open it. Come on, guys."

The boys don't want to leave the treehouse, but they are bored, and the four always stick together. If Nia is going, they are all going. Rymer realizes as they all start to climb down that if the Barbie Dream

House is as big as Molly describes it, they could probably use the cardboard box for something ... something big! As they run toward the house, he calls out, "Hey, Nia, don't destroy the cardboard."

He knows they can use it for something when it stops raining. He smiles, thinking of a new idea.