

double fudge



JUDY

B

NEW
YORK
TIMES
BEST-SELLING
AUTHOR

L

U

M
E

JUDY

B

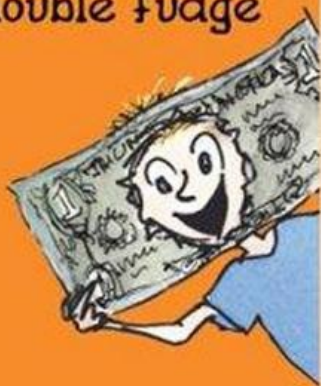
L

NEW
YORK
TIMES
BEST-SELLING
AUTHOR

U

M

double fudge





E

Double Fudge

Judy Blume

1 The Miser

When my brother Fudge was five, he discovered money in a big way. "Hey, Pete," he said one night as I was getting out of the shower. "How much would it cost to buy New York?"

"The city or the state?" I asked, as if it were a serious question.

"Which is bigger?"

"The state, but all the good stuff is in the city." People who don't live in the city might disagree, but I'm a city kind of guy.

"We live in the city, right?" Fudge said. He was sitting on the open toilet seat in his pajamas.

"You're not *doing* anything, are you?" I asked as I toweled myself dry.

4

"What do you mean, Pete?"

"I *mean* you're sitting on the toilet, and you haven't pulled

down your pj's."

He swung his feet and started laughing. "Don't worry, Pete. Only Tootsie still poops in her pants." Tootsie is our little sister. She'll be two in February.

Fudge watched as I combed my wet hair. "Are you going someplace?" he asked.

"Yeah, to bed." I got into clean boxers and pulled a T-shirt over my head.

"Then how come you're getting dressed?"

"I'm not getting dressed. Starting tonight, this is what I wear instead of pajamas. And how come you're still up?"

"I can't go to sleep until you tell me, Pete."

"Tell you what?"

"How much it would cost to buy New York City."

"Well, the Dutch paid about twenty-four dollars for it back in the sixteen hundreds."

"Twenty-four dollars?" His eyes opened wide "That's all?"

"Yeah, it was a real bargain. But don't get your hopes up. That's not what it would cost today, even if it were for sale,

which it's not."

"How do you know, Pete?"

"Believe me, I know!"

"But how?"

5

"Listen, Fudge ... by the time you're twelve there's a lot of stuff you know, and you don't even know how you know it."

He repeated my line. "There's a lot of stuff you know and you don't even know how you know it!" Then he laughed like crazy. "That's a tongue twister, Pete."

"No, that's just the truth, Fudge."

The next day he was at it again. In the elevator he asked Sheila Tubman, "How much money do you have, Sheila?"

"That's not a polite question, Fudgie," she told him. "Nice people don't talk about their money, especially in these times." Sheila gave me a look like it was my fault my brother has no manners. I hope she's not in my class this year. I hope that *every* year, and every year she's there, like some kind of itch you can't get rid of, no matter how hard you scratch.

"I'm nice," Fudge said, "and I like to talk about money. You

want to know how much I have?"

"No," Sheila told him. "It's nobody's business but yours."

He told her anyway. I knew he would. "I have fourteen dollars and seventy-four cents. I *mise* my money every night before I go to sleep."

"You *mise* your money?" Sheila asked. Then she

6

shook her head at me like it's my fault he thinks *mise* is a word.

Henry, who runs the elevator in our building, laughed. "Nothing like having a miser in the family."

"You don't have to be a miser, Fudge," Sheila said. "If you like counting money so much, you can work at a bank when you grow up."

"Yeah," Fudge said. "I can work at a bank and *mise* my money all day long."

Sheila sighed. "He doesn't get it," she said to me.

"He's only five," I reminded her.

"Almost six," he reminded me. Then he tugged Sheila's

arm. "Hey, Sheila... you know how much the Dude paid for New York City?"

"The Dude?" Sheila asked. "Is this some kind of joke?"

"Not the *Dude*," I told Fudge. "The *Dutch*."

"His name was Peter Minuit," Sheila said, like the know-it-all she is. "And he paid the Wappinger Indian tribe in trinkets, not cash. Besides, the Indians thought they were going to share the land, not sell it."

"Sharing is good," Fudge said. "Except for money. I'll never share my money. My money is all mine. I love my money!"

"That's a disgusting thing to say," Sheila told him. "You're not going to have any friends if you talk that way."

7

By then the elevator reached the lobby. "Your brother has no values," Sheila said as we walked to the door of our building. Outside, she turned and headed toward Broadway.

"How much do *values* cost?" Fudge asked me.

"Not everything's for sale," I told him.

"It should be." Then he skipped down to the corner singing, "*Money, money, money... I love money, money, money ...*"

That's when I knew we were in big trouble.

"It's just a stage," Mom told me later when I pointed out that Fudge is obsessed by money.

"Maybe, but it's still embarrassing," I said. "You better do something before school starts."

But Mom didn't take me seriously until that night at dinner when Dad said, "Please pass the salt, Fudge."

"How much will you give me for it?" Fudge asked. The saltshaker was sitting right in front of him.

"Excuse me," Dad said. "I'm asking for a favor, not hiring someone to do a job."

"If you hire me I'll pass the salt," Fudge said. "How about a dollar?"

"How about nothing?" I said, reaching for the salt and passing it to Dad.

"No fair, Pete!" Fudge shouted. "He asked me, not you."

8

"Thank you, Peter," Dad said and he and Mom shared a look.

"I told you, didn't I?" I said to them. "I told you we have a big problem."

"What problem?" Fudge asked.

"You!" I said.

"Foo!" Tootsie said from her baby seat, as she threw a handful of rice across the table.

"What's the difference between dollars and bucks?" Fudge asked the next morning at breakfast. He was drawing dollar signs all over the Cheerios box with a red marker.

"Bucks is just another word for dollars," Mom told him, moving the cereal box out of his reach.

"Nobody says *bucks* anymore," I said. "Where'd you hear about *bucks*?"

"Grandma was reading me a story and the guy called his money *bucks*," Fudge said. "He had five *bucks* and he thought that was a lot. Is that funny or what?" He shoveled a handful of dry Cheerios into his mouth, then washed them down with a swig of milk. He refuses to mix his cereal and milk in a bowl like everyone else.

"Five dollars is nothing to sneeze at," Dad said, carrying Tootsie into the kitchen. "I remember saving for a model

airplane that cost four dollars and ninety-nine cents,

9

and in those days that *was* a lot." Dad sat Tootsie in her baby seat and doled out some Cheerios for her. "Somebody's been decorating the cereal box," he said.

"Yeah... the miser's learned to draw dollar signs," I said.

It wasn't long before the miser started making his own money. "Fudge Bucks," he told us. "I'm going to make a hundred million trillion of them." And just like that, with one box of markers and a pack of colored paper, he was on his way. "Soon I'll have enough Fudge Bucks to buy the whole world."

"Why don't you start with something smaller," I suggested. "You don't want to buy the whole world right off because then you won't have anything to look forward to."

"Good idea, Pete. I'll start with Toys 'R' Us."

"The kid has no values," I told my parents after Fudge went to bed. They looked at me like I was some kind of crazy. "Well, he doesn't," I said. "He worships money."

"I wouldn't go that far," Dad said. "It's not unusual for young children to want things."

"I want things, too," I reminded Dad. "But I don't go around obsessing about money."

"It's just a phase," Mom said this time.

We could hear Fudge as he started to sing,

10

"*Oh*, money, money, money... I love money, money, money ..."

As soon as he stopped, Uncle Feather, his myna bird, started. "*Ooooo, money, money, money ...*"

Turtle, my dog, lifted his head and howled. He thinks he can sing.

Dad called, "Fudge... cover Uncle Feather's cage and get to sleep."

"Uncle Feather's *missing* his money," Fudge called back. "He's not ready to go to sleep."

"How did this happen to us?" Mom asked. "We've always worked hard. We spend carefully. And we never talk about money in front of the children."

"Maybe that's the problem," I told them.

2 Shoes and News

A couple of days before school started we went to Harry's, the shoe store on Broadway. When he was three, Fudge only wanted to wear the same shoes as me. Now he has his own ideas. But this time he couldn't decide between black with silver trim or white with blue; between lace-ups, Velcro closings, or pull-ons; between hi-tops or low. "I'll just get two pairs," he told Mom. "Maybe three." He licked his yellow lollipop, which he'd begged for before the salesman had even measured his feet.

"You need one pair of shoes and one pair of winter boots," Mom said, checking her list, "and unless you get going we won't have time to get your winter boots today."

12

There were at least a dozen open shoeboxes in front of Fudge, and the salesman—his name badge said *Mitch* McCall—kept checking his watch, like he was already late for some important appointment. Tootsie sat in her stroller kicking her feet, or maybe she was admiring her new shoes. Finally, I said to Fudge, "Why don't you just get the same shoes as me?"

"No thanks, Pete," Fudge said. "Your new shoes aren't that

cool."

"What do you mean?" I asked, looking down at my feet.

"I mean cool, Pete."

"What's not cool about them?"

"Nothing's cool about them."

Could he be right? I wondered. Did I choose too fast just to be done with it? I do that sometimes. I can't help myself. I hate to shop. But are these shoes really that bad? Bad enough so the kids at school will laugh and say, "Nice shoes, Hatcher. Where'd you find them... in the trash?" Should I try on another pair? Should I wait to see what Fudge chooses and then... Wait a minute, I told myself. I can't believe I'm thinking this way, as if my five-year-old brother knows more about cool than me. Since when is he the expert on cool? Since when is he the expert on anything?

"Make up your mind," Mom told Fudge.

"I can't," Fudge said. He was wearing one style on

13

his right foot and another on his left. "I have to have them

both."

"I'll count to twenty," Mom said, "while you decide."

"I'm not deciding," Fudge told her.

"You want me to decide for you?" Mom asked.

"No!"

Tootsie mimicked him. "No!" Then she grabbed the yellow lollipop out of Fudge's hand and threw it. It hit Mitch McCall in the head, stuck to his hair, and hung there like an ornament on a Christmas tree.

"Tootsie!" Mom cried. "That wasn't polite." But Tootsie laughed and clapped her sticky little hands anyway.

Mitch McCall grimaced as he pulled the lollipop off his head. It took some hairs with it, which really seemed to upset him, probably because he was already kind of bald on top.

"I'm so sorry," Mom said, handing him a Wetwipe from her bag.

"Maybe you would prefer another salesperson," Mitch McCall said, through teeth so tightly clenched his mouth hardly opened at all.

"No," Mom said, "you've been very helpful."

"All right then," Mitch McCall said, kneeling in front of Fudge. "Let's get this over with. Make up your mind, son. There are other customers waiting."

14

"I'm *not* your son," Fudge told him.

"That's just a figure of speech," Mom explained, quietly.

"A what?" Fudge asked.

"Never mind." I could tell Mom was losing patience, too. "Just choose your shoes, Fudge."

Fudge pulled a couple of Fudge Bucks out of his pocket. He handed them to Mitch McCall. "What's this?" Mitch asked.

"Money," Fudge said. "Enough for two pairs of shoes."

"We don't take play money."

"It's not play money," Fudge told him. "It's from the bank."

"Bank?" Mitch McCall said. "What bank?"

"The Farley Drexel Hatcher Bank." I was surprised to hear Fudge use his whole name. Usually he throws a fit when

someone tries to call him *Farley Drexel* instead of Fudge. "It's a big bank," he continued. "It has zillions and trillions of Fudge Bucks."

Mitch McCall turned to Mom. "Harry's only accepts U.S. currency and valid credit cards."

Mom dug her wallet out of her purse. "And I have my credit card right here," she said, handing it to Mitch McCall. "We'll take the black lace-ups with silver trim for Fudge and come back for his winter boots when you're less crowded."

15

"Make it on a Wednesday," Mitch McCall said. Then he muttered under his breath, "That's my day off."

"But, Mom ..." Fudge started.

"That's it, Fudge," Mom said. "We're done shopping for shoes."

"No fair!" Fudge cried.

"No feh!" Tootsie cried, as if she were Uncle Feather, repeating every word Fudge says.

"Let's go," Mom said.

"I'm not going without all my shoes!" Fudge said. He folded

his arms across his chest and burrowed deeper into the chair.

Uh-oh, I thought, slowly backing away and out of the store. *This isn't looking good*. Outside, I pretended to check out the window displays. But I could see Mom trying to pull Fudge off his chair. When that didn't work, she tried to drag him by his feet. When *that* didn't work she gave up, went to the register, picked up her bags, and pushed Tootsie's stroller toward the door. She was probably thinking Fudge would follow. But she was wrong.

Suddenly he was whirling through the store like a tornado, destroying everything in his path. High heels flew off a display table. Baby shoes toppled from the shelves. Men's boots thumped to the floor. Mom chased Fudge and Mitch McCall chased Mom.

16

As the rotating sock display crashed, Tootsie jumped up and down in her stroller, shrieking, as if her nutcase of a brother was putting on the best show to hit Broadway in years.

I prayed no one from my class was at the store. No one who knows me or has ever known me. No one I might meet someday who would say, *Oh yeah... you're that kid with the*

weird brother who threw the fit at Harry's. I backed away from the store windows and headed down the street, pretending I was just another guy strolling down Broadway--a guy from a perfectly normal family. I checked out the menu of the sushi restaurant two doors down from Harry's, browsed at the used-book table, and flipped through magazines at the newsstand on the corner. Then I heard Mom calling my name. "Peter ... I could use some help here." She was carrying Tootsie in one arm, struggling with the shopping bags in the other, and still trying to push the stroller, which now held my screaming brother.

"You're too old for tantrums," I shouted.

"If Mom didn't love *you*, you'd have a tantrum," he cried.

"This has nothing to do with love," Mom said, passing Tootsie to me, then trying to get Fudge out of the stroller.

"Yes, it does," Fudge cried. "If you really loved me you would have bought me both pairs of shoes!"

17

"You don't need two pairs of the same shoes," Mom told him, as if she were talking to a reasonable person.

"They weren't the same."

"They were close enough."

"I wanted them," Fudge whined.

"I know you did. But we can't buy everything you want."

"Why?"

"We don't have the money to buy ..." I could tell Mom was having a hard time explaining this. She thought for a minute before she finished. "...just for the sake of buying. Money doesn't grow on trees."

"I know it doesn't grow on trees," Fudge said. "You get it at the ATM."

"You can't just go to the ATM whenever you want money," Mom told him.

"Yes, you can," Fudge said. "You put in your card and money comes out. It works every time."

"No. You have to *deposit* money into your account first," Mom said. "You work hard and try to save part of your salary every week. The cash machine is just a way to get some of your money out of your account. It doesn't spit out money because you want it. It's not that easy."

"I know, Mom," Fudge said. "Sometimes you have to stand on line."

Mom sighed and looked at me. "Got any ideas, Peter?"

"Just tell him *no!* Stop trying to explain everything."

Mom looked surprised. "I never thought of that," she said. "I've always tried to explain things to my children."

"Maybe that worked with me," I said. "But Fudge is another story."

"Story?" Tootsie said.

"Not now," Mom told her.

Tootsie started to cry. "Story...now!"

When we got back to our building my best friend, Jimmy Fargo, was coming in with his father. They were loaded down with empty boxes.

"Have you told Peter the good news yet, Jimmy?" Mr. Fargo asked.

"What good news?" I said.

"Oops," Mr. Fargo said. "Guess I let the cat out of the bag."

"You got a cat?" Fudge asked.

"Meow?" Tootsie said. She has this animal alphabet book and every time she hears the name of an animal she makes an animal sound.

Mr. Fargo closed his eyes and shook his head.

19

He always acts like he doesn't get it when he's around my family.

"I got new shoes," Fudge told him.

"I see," Mr. Fargo said, trying to get a look at Fudge's feet over the boxes in his arms.

"No you don't," Fudge told him, "because my new shoes are in the bag."

"Meow?" Tootsie asked.

"We're not talking about cats," Fudge told her. "We're talking about shoes."

Tootsie held up her foot. "Sue," she said. She hasn't learned to make the *sh* sound yet.

"Very nice," Mr. Fargo told her.

"Well ..." Mom said to Mr. Fargo, "I have to get these kids upstairs for lunch."

"And I have to get started on these boxes," Mr. Fargo told Mom.

"A new project?" Mom asked him.

"Oh yes," Mr. Fargo said. "Very new."

"I'll be right there," Jimmy told his dad. "I just have to talk to Peter." Then he took my arm and led me outside.

"So what's up?" I asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You *know* what I mean. That *cat out of the bag* stuff."

20

"Oh, that," Jimmy said.

"Yeah, that." Whatever it was, I could tell he didn't want to talk about it. So I changed the subject. "You think these shoes are dorky?" I asked.

Jimmy checked them out. "They look okay to me. Why?"

"Because..." I shook my head and stopped. I wasn't about

to say *because Fudge said they were*. "So what's the good news?" I asked again. He'd have to tell me sooner or later.

"You know my father's got a show coming up, right?" he said.

"Yeah ..." Frank Fargo's an artist. And all of a sudden his paintings are starting to sell.

"So he needs a bigger place to paint," Jimmy said.

"Yeah... so?"

"So he got this loft down in SoHo and ..." Jimmy stopped and took a long look at my shoes. "You know... maybe they are dorky. Where'd you get them?"

"Harry's."

"Let's see the bottoms."

I raised one foot to show Jimmy the bottom of my new shoe.

"I guess they're okay," he said. "Anyway, they won't take them back now, 'cause you already wore them in the street."

21

"Could we get back to the *news*?"

"Oh, right... the news." But he kept looking at my shoes. "How much were they?" he asked. "I need new shoes before school starts."

"I'll sell you these at a slight discount."

"I don't think we wear the same size anymore. Besides, if you think they're dorky, why would I want them?"

"They're not dorky."

"Then how come you asked if I thought they were?"

"I'm done talking about these shoes, Jimmy, okay?"

"Okay. Fine. Probably nobody will even notice them."

"What do you mean?"

"Gotcha!" he said, sticking a finger in my gut and laughing. I hate when he does that.

I started back to our building. "I'm going up for lunch."

"Good idea," Jimmy said. "I'm starving. What are you having?"

"I don't know. Peanut butter, probably. So are you going to tell me or not?"