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Freddie Fernortner

FEARLESS FIRST GRADER[®]

Freddie



Darla



Chipper



Mr. Chewy



THE BIG BOX FORT
BY JOHNATHAN RAND



1

Have you ever wanted to build a really big fort? One that you and your friends could play in, all day?

Well, Freddie, Chipper, and Darla thought that it would be a lot of fun . . . and they decided to do it.

Darla's mother and father bought a new refrigerator, and it came in a big box. Darla's father was going to throw the big box away with the trash, but the three first graders had other plans.

First, Darla asked her dad if she could have the box. When her father said ‘yes,’ she was very excited. She ran across the street where Freddie, Chipper, and Mr. Chewy waited on Freddie’s porch. Mr. Chewy was chewing on a wad of gum, blowing a bubble.

“My dad said yes!” Darla said excitedly.

“That’s cool!” Chipper said. He spread his arms wide. “Let’s build a super-giant fort!”

“Yeah!” Freddie agreed. “Big enough for all three of us!”

The three first graders, followed by Mr. Chewy, walked across the street to Darla’s house. The big box was in the garage.

“Gee, it’s bigger than we are,” Chipper said. “How are we going to move

it?”

“Well, it’s bigger than we are, that’s for sure,” Freddie said, “but it’s made out of cardboard. It shouldn’t be too heavy.”

Freddie was right. The box was big, but it wasn’t very heavy. But, because of its size, they couldn’t pick it up.



“Let’s just drag it across the street and into my back yard,” Freddie said.

They tipped the box over. Then, they each grabbed hold of it and pulled, dragging it out of the garage. All the while, Mr. Chewy watched and chewed his bubble gum.

After struggling for a few minutes, they were able to drag the big box across the street and into Freddie’s back yard.

“We’ll leave it on its side and make a door,” Freddie said.

“What about the ends?” Chipper asked. They flopped open and closed.

“My dad has some really sticky tape in the garage,” Freddie said. “We can tape the ends closed so that no light can get in.”

“First, let’s go inside,” Darla said, “and see if the three of us can fit.”

That seemed like a good idea, so

Freddie, Chipper, and Darla scrambled inside, through the open ends. Mr. Chewy was quick to follow.

“There’s just barely enough room for us,” Chipper said. “It’s too bad the box isn’t bigger.”

They climbed out of the box.

Just then, Freddie’s mom opened up the back door.

“Freddie,” she called, “lunchtime.”

“Okay, Mom,” Freddie called back. Then he turned to Darla and Chipper. “Let’s meet back here after lunch. Then, we’ll get to work on our fort.”

Chipper and Darla went home.

After lunch, Freddie and Mr. Chewy went into the garage and found his dad’s tape. It was silver-colored and very sticky. He carried it into the back yard and waited for his friends.

Soon, Chipper showed up. He and Freddie and Mr. Chewy waited for Darla.

But, she didn't show up.

They waited some more.

"Maybe she can't come over," Chipper said.

Just then, the front door of Darla's house opened and Darla appeared. She saw Freddie and Chipper, and she waved frantically.

"You guys!" she shouted. "You're not going to believe it!"

"What?" Freddie asked, but Darla was already on the move, running toward them. She stopped at the street, looked both ways, and then continued running. By the time she arrived in Freddie's back yard, she was out of breath.

"What's going on?" Chipper asked. "Why are you so excited?"

“Wait until I tell you,” Darla gasped.
“You’re not going to believe it!”

2

“When I told my mom what we were doing,” Darla explained, “she told me that our neighbor on the other side of our back yard has a bunch of boxes!”

Freddie’s eyes grew wide.

Chipper’s eyes grew even wider.

“Really?” Freddie asked.

Darla nodded. “I went and looked. He has a whole bunch of big boxes. He said he was going to throw them away!”

“Throw them away?!?” Chipper gasped.

“Not anymore,” Darla said. “I asked him if we could have them for our fort, and he said yes!”

“That’s so cool!” Freddie exclaimed. “Let’s go get them right now!”

And so, Freddie, Chipper, Darla, and Mr. Chewy went across the street and into Darla’s back yard. They went to her neighbor’s yard. Sure enough, there was a bunch of very large boxes next to the house.

“Wow!” Chipper said. “We hit the jackpot!”

“We’re going to be able to build a super-huge fort!” Freddie said.

“It’ll be the biggest fort in the world!” Darla exclaimed.

It took them almost an hour, but the

three finally dragged all of the boxes to
Freddie's back yard.

And they got to work.



They taped boxes together and cut doors on the inside, so each box was a different room.

And the fort got bigger.

And bigger.

And sometimes, when you work really hard, an idea might come to you without warning.

And that's what happened to Freddie Fernortner, Fearless First Grader.

It was a big idea.

A *good* idea.

In fact, his idea was so good, he dropped the tape he was working with.

"That's it!" he said, stepping back and looking at the fort.

"What?" Chipper said loudly, from somewhere inside the fort.

"What, Freddie?" Darla asked, poking her head through a window cut out of the

side of a box.

“I know how we can make our fort even bigger!” Freddie exclaimed.

Darla scrambled out of the fort, and Chipper followed. Mr. Chewy stood in the doorway, chewing bubble gum and blowing a bubble.

What do you think Freddie’s good idea was?

Chipper and Darla were about to find out.

3

“Let’s build a second story!” Freddie said excitedly.

Chipper looked confused. “What do you mean?” he asked.

“I mean, let’s put boxes on top of our fort!” Freddie said. “We can make our fort have two floors!”

“Oh, I know what you mean!” Darla blurted. “Like our house! We have stairs that go up to my bedroom!”

“Exactly!” Freddie said. “Only we won’t need stairs. All we’ll need is a short ladder or something to stand on.”

“We can use a milk crate!” Chipper said. “We have some in our garage!”

“Perfect!” Freddie said.

The three first graders were more excited than ever, and they got to work building a second floor on their fort. Soon the fort was attracting attention. Other kids from the neighborhood stopped to watch for a few minutes. Cars on the street slowed to see the big fort in Freddie’s back yard.

And, just as you can imagine, it looked very, very cool.

But something was about to happen that wasn’t very cool.

In fact, what was about to happen was very, very scary.



4

After they had finished the second story, the three stood in the yard, looking at the fort they had built.

“This is great!” Freddie said.

“But we still have more boxes left, Freddie,” Darla said.

They looked at the boxes that remained in the yard.

Then, they looked at the fort.

Chipper grinned.

Darla smiled.

Freddie smiled, too. He looked at Darla, and then at Chipper. “Are you guys thinking the same thing I’m thinking?” he asked. His smile widened.

“Yeah,” Chipper said. “Let’s build a *third* story!”

“Yeah!” Darla exclaimed.

Once again, the three got to work. All the while, Mr. Chewy looked on, chewing bubble gum and blowing bubbles. Every once in a while the cat would wander into the fort and look around. Then, he would wander back out, sit down, and watch the three first graders busy at work.

More people stopped by Freddie’s back yard to see the huge box fort. Cars stopped on the street, and people got out to look.

Freddie, Chipper, and Darla were

having a lot of fun . . . but it was about to end.

What was about to happen wasn't fun at all.

It happened when Freddie, Chipper, and Darla were on the third story, taping the last box in place.

Suddenly, without warning, a portion of the fort gave way! Darla shrieked, and Chipper screamed. Freddie tried to grab a box, but it was too late.

A part of the fort collapsed, taking the three first graders with it.

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