

My Town

written by Leigh Anne Florence and illustrated by Chris Ware

Chapter 2

"That's the biggest bowl of banana pudding I've ever seen!" I exclaimed, my taste buds dancing.

"The brochure says it's 1 ton! That's 2,000 pounds!" Mom informed.

"It looks *appealing*," Chloe said, making a pun.

"If it wasn't for you, Chloe, I'd have never answered the question about what Uncle Bill was doing in the song *My Town*— and we wouldn't have won!"

"You're welcome, Woody," Chloe sweetly answered. "You should have seen your face when the D.J. asked how you liked banana pudding!"

"I liked your answer," Mom added.

"When Chester announced I'd answered the daily trivia question correctly, I hoped I'd won a trip to *Magic Playland*. I was surprised when he asked if I liked banana pudding."

"I like bananas a whole bunch," I answered, live on the radio.

"You've won the *My Town* Prize Package," Chester explained, once he stopped laughing at my answer. "If you're from Kentucky, you know there are festivals across the state throughout the year. The *My Town* Prize Package will provide selected treats for you and your family at several upcoming festivals. The first festival is The Banana Festival in Fulton, Kentucky. You and your family will enjoy free banana pudding."

"Kentucky and food are two of my family's favorite things!" I announced.

"Excellent! You can pick up the prize package at the front desk. Enjoy – and let us know which festival you liked best," Chester added before hanging up.

Once I hung up, Chloe was searching for Fulton in our Kentucky map. It was in the bottom left corner of the state.

"I guess it's silly to drive that far for free banana pudding," I said, trying to contain my disappointment.

"Ordinarily I would agree, son," Dad replied, "but we

aren't making a four-hour trip for dessert. We're making it because it'll be a chance for us to take another trip and learn more about Kentucky. Besides, we love cruisin' through the Commonwealth," Dad said, winking. So here we were, at the 56th Annual Banana Festival in Fulton, Kentucky - known as the Banana Capital of the World – staring at the world's largest bowl of banana pudding.

"Would you each like a bowl?" a voice asked. We looked around and saw a lady wearing a bright yellow dress and holding a large spoon. She was standing behind a humongous vat of pudding. Beside the pudding were hundreds of bowls. She carefully served each of us a bowl. We thanked her and handed her the "Free Banana Pudding" vouchers we'd won.

"This is better than I expected," I said, careful not to talk with my mouth full.

"Terrific. I'm Kaylee, by the way. Is this your first time at the *Twin Cities Banana Festival*."

"Twin Cities?" I repeated.

"Fulton, Kentucky is on the Kentucky-Tennessee state line," she explained. "One block over is South Fulton, Tennessee. They're separate states but work together to promote growth, so they're called the Twin Cities. This festival is our biggest event. It includes a parade, live music, and a greased pig contest."

Noticing the pudding line was long, Chloe and I offered to help.

"If you'll hand me the bowls to fill, that'd help," Kaylee replied.

Immediately we began passing bowls to Kaylee.

"Do you live in Fulton County?" Mom asked, as she and Dad helped pass out pudding.

"Yes ma'am," Kaylee replied, proudly. "I'm one of about 18 people who live in Kentucky Bend. The Bend is an exclave – or portion of a peninsula – that's surrounded by Missouri and Tennessee. It was created by the Mississippi River. The Bend is in

Fulton County, but to travel to Fulton, or Hickman – our county seat, I must drive through the state of Tennessee – and do it again to get home! It's another unique thing about our county. I love my town!"

"Do bananas grow in Kentucky Bend?" I asked.

"Though Fulton County is known for bananas, they've never grown here," Kaylee answered. "Around 1880, the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad developed refrigerated cars. This allowed companies to ship tropical fruit. Fulton had a large railroad facility and was centrally located between New Orleans and Canada. The United Fruit Company, now Chiquita, shipped bananas from South America to New Orleans on 162-pound blocks of ice. Fulton had the only ice house between New Orleans and Chicago, so the bananas could be re-iced in Fulton. At one time, over 70% of the nation's bananas passed through Fulton, making us the Banana Capital of the World." As I listened, a fly landed on my nose.

"Shoo, fly," I said, but the pesky thing wouldn't budge. I felt a sneeze developing.

"A...A...A..."

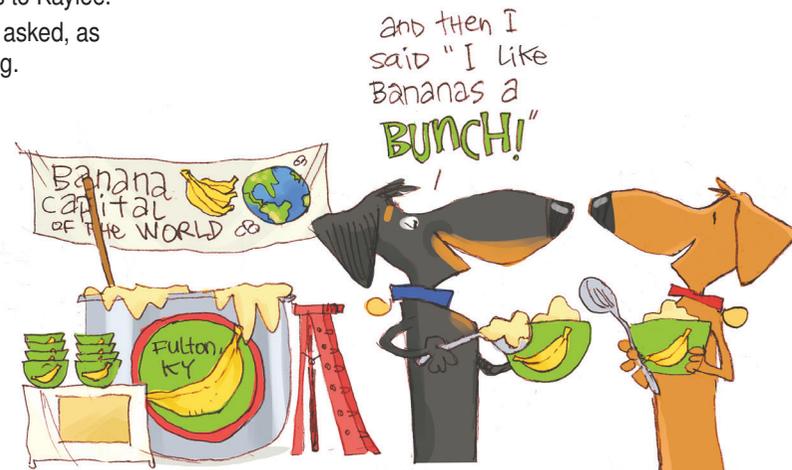
"Sneeze into your arm, Woody," Mom instructed.

I put my nose deep in the crook of my elbow, away from the food.

"A-CHOO!"

A deafening crash occurred seconds after I sneezed!

Be sure to visit www.thewoodybooks.com for information on other festivals.



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