



## Story of the Everything, the Nothing, and Other Strange Stories

**Gyula Gábor Tóth**

**Norbert Nagy, Illustrator**

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*Story of the Everything, the Nothing, and Other Strange Stories* is Gyula Gábor Tóth's unusual and whimsical collection of illustrated fables.

Made up of interactive, silly, and thought-provoking tales, the book includes entries like "Story of the Little Boy Whose Pajamas Wouldn't Let Him Go to Sleep," in which a child objects to pair after pair of pajamas because he fears that the animals, trucks, and airplanes on them will keep him awake. In the end, he falls asleep, exhausted by his own protests. Other stories play with absolutes, like the mind-dazzling entry "Story of the Everything," which reveals, "There was *everything*. ... All at once, you slept, ate, played, rested, and ran," and "You were there as a baby... . As a three-year-old. As a ten-year-old and a hundred-year-old." A prompt accompanying the story inquires, "What else do you think was there?"

The book's humor is playful and effective, like a description in "The World's Longest Story" of just how long the story is, consisting of twenty-nine "longs" in a row. Elsewhere, further contemplation inspired by the text is encouraged through questions like, "If your bedroom had a magic door, where would you want it to lead?" It's a smart technique that builds engagement and ensures excitement.

The illustrations are detailed and captivating; many pages combine realistic depictions of animals with a more exaggerated cartoon style, a juxtaposition that suits the off-center narratives. "The Magic Door" is accompanied by an illustration of three cats in bathing suits, lounging on pool rafts—a visual non sequitur that expands the book's scope, encouraging audience involvement and rewarding the imagination.

*Story of the Everything, the Nothing, and Other Strange Stories* is a charming and memorable collection of illustrated tales about people and animals in extraordinary situations.

PETER DABBENE (July / August 2024)

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