Billy was looking for his Christmas presents. He had waited until everyone was out of the house and then he had started to search. He started in Mum's bedroom; in the wardrobe and in the drawers, but there was nothing. He pulled the old suitcase down from on top of the wardrobe in the spare room, but that only had a few old newspaper cuttings and old photos in it. Billy looked into the cupboard under the stairs. But that was so messy that it seemed obvious that Mum hadn't been trying to hide anything there!

Billy went into the dining room where there was a big sideboard with lots of cupboards and drawers in it. He rummaged and searched, but couldn't find anything that was remotely to do with Christmas. He did so, he could hear his Mum's voice in his head, saying what she always said whenever he went anywhere near the sideboard: "Keep away from there Billy. You'll only break one of my best vases." Mum had three vases, a green one, a yellow one, and a blue and white one, which Mum had often told Billy, was particularly nice, and particularly valuable!

Mum had obviously thought that all these warnings would have frightened Billy so much that he wouldn't look in the sideboard for his Christmas presents, because, lying there, not really hidden at all, just behind Mum's valuable blue and white vase, was a brightly wrapped present with a label saying: 'To Billy, Happy Christmas, Love Mum.'

He was very excited. "I hope its what I asked for!" he squealed to himself. It was no good; he would just have to give it a poke, just to make sure. He reached inside the cupboard, put his hand gently and carefully past the blue and white vase, and prodded the present. "Yes, yes!" he exclaimed in delight, "its a...
He suddenly stopped. He had a strange churning feeling in his tummy. Somehow, he knew exactly what was going to happen even before it did. It seemed like everything was moving in slow motion. In his excitement, his hand had just touched the blue and white vase; the one Mum always said was so valuable. He watched it wobble. He reached out with his other hand, but it was too late. The vase slid off the shelf and went crashing onto the floor with a dreadful smashing sound.

He shut his eyes; he dare'nt look! He reached out with his hand and his tummy churned like it had never churned before. The vase had smashed into four pieces! He could hear Mum's voice in his head again: "Don't go near the sideboard Billy. You'll only break one of my best vases."
"Wha ... Wha... What shall I do?" he wailed. "Mum is going to be really mad!"

Billy thought very hard for a few minutes. Then he suddenly realised something. He had never ever known his Mum use that vase. She never put flowers in it. It just sat in the cupboard. Maybe she'd forgotten about it. Maybe he could just secretly throw it away and Mum wouldn't notice! But that didn't seem like a good idea. She was bound to remember it sooner or later.
"But," he thought, "if I stick it back together Mum might not notice anything wrong in this dark cupboard."
He dashed upstairs and fetched some glue. He was very careful, more careful than he had ever been before with anything. By the time he had finished you really did have to look quite hard before you could see the little lines where the cracks were. He put the vase back in the cupboard and just then Mum came home. He quickly put the glue into his pocket.

"Hello, Billy," she said, "what have you been doing?"

"Oh err, nothing Mum, nothing..." he said.

But every time he walked past the sideboard that churning feeling in his tummy started to come back!

It came to Christmas Eve. Mum and Billy and his big sister were all at home when there was a knock at the door. It was Mr. Green from across the road.

"I was just buying my Christmas Tree when I saw this lovely bunch of flowers," he said, "so I got them for you all to wish you a Happy Christmas."

"Oh, thank you Mr. Green," said Billy's Mum. "Billy go and get me a vase out of the cupboard while I make Mr. Green a cup of tea. But be very careful that you don't drop it. I think the blue and white one might be the right colour."

Billy's tummy churned. He went into the dining room and opened the cupboard. He carefully took out the green vase and took it to his Mum in the kitchen.

"I thought this one would go better," he said.

"Oh, alright," said Mum, who was deep in conversation with Mr. Green.

An hour or so later there was another knock at the door. It was Mum's friend Pam from her keep fit class.

"Can't stop," she said, "You know what its like. But I picked up a few flowers to wish you a Happy Christmas, bye!" and she disappeared quickly along the road.

"Oh, aren't they pretty!" said Mum. "They'll go just nicely in the blue and white vase. Don't you think so Billy?"

Billy was thinking as fast as he could.

"Err no, Mum," he said, "I err, I think that they will go just right with those other flowers in the green vase."

Mum thought for a moment. "You know Billy I think you're right. You really ought to take up flower arranging; you're pretty good at it."

Billy cringed.

A little while later there was another knock at the door. To everyone's surprise it was Uncle Ted. (For those of you who don't know, Billy's Uncle Ted is an explorer who fights lions and tigers with his bare hands!)

"Can't stop, adventure calls, but here's a few flowers to wish you a Happy Christmas!" And before they could say anything in reply, Uncle Ted was gone.

"Oh, aren't they lovely!" said Mum. "Which vase do you think would suit these ones Billy?"

"I'll go and look," he said.

Billy went into the dining room and opened the cupboard. Suddenly he was faced with a dreadful sight. There was only one vase left. He hadn't noticed before, but the yellow one was in the dining room with a big bunch of lilies in it. The only one left in the cupboard was the blue and white one. Billy swallowed hard and that strange churning feeling came back into his tummy!
He went back into the living room.
"I don't think they will suit any of our vases," he said. "Err, why don't I take them over to Mr. and Mrs. Green to wish them a Happy Christmas?"
"Oh Billy, how could you!" said his Mum. "Whatever made you think such a thing? These are a present from Uncle Ted."
Billy's tummy churned. He knew exactly what had made him think of such a thing.
"Get me the blue and white Vase," said Mum. "But be very careful with it; it's quite valuable you know."

Billy got the vase, and then he had another brain wave.
"Can I arrange the flowers Mum?" he said.
"Well, if you're careful, of course you can," replied Mum, rather surprised.
Billy filled the vase with water and arranged the flowers in the kitchen. Then he brought them carefully into the living room and put them on a shelf in the darkest corner of the room.
"That's lovely," said Mum, and to Billy's amazement she didn't notice the cracks in the vase.
Billy breathed the biggest sigh of relief that he ever had and settled down to watch television.
"Phew," he thought, "I've got away with it!"

Everything was peaceful, that is until there was a strange sound. A sort of scraping sound, and then a sort of dripping sound. Then it happened again, scrape, and drip, drip, drip. Mum had just opened her mouth to say: "What's that Billy?" When to her total astonishment the blue and white vase suddenly fell into four pieces and the water poured out all over the shelf and down onto the carpet. Billy went bright red, bright bright red. The glue wasn't waterproof!

"Billy," asked Mum, "What's happened to my vase?"
"Billy swallowed hard, he was thinking as fast as he could.
"Err... I told you those flowers didn't suit it, didn't I?" he said.