

2 Billy builds a boat

Every year there is a great gathering at Driptown Town Hall. On the first Sunday in July people gather from miles around for the annual Driptown model maker's competition. There are models of almost everything you could imagine. Models that move. Models that talk. Model trains, model cars. You name it; it's there.

Every year Billy went along with his Mum. But he was as fascinated by the people as he was by the models.

"Model makers," he thought, "are all such interesting people."

They were usually there with their tool kits and screw drivers, all making last minute adjustments to their models before the judges came along.

"I wish I had a tool kit," he thought. But all that he had were a few old rusty tools that he had found buried deep at the back of the shed.

One day Billy was flicking through the local free paper when he saw a notice that caught his eye. It said:

The Fiftieth Annual Driptown Model Maker's Fair. Special prizes for this special occasion.

There were different prizes for different age groups. He looked down the list. He came to his group, the under twelves. The prize was a luxury tool kit.

"Cor," he said, "I wish I could win that!"

Billy thought for a long time about what model he could possibly make for the competition. But he couldn't think of anything at all. He was still thinking as he went to bed, when he looked up at the old picture on his bedroom wall. It had been there for as long as he could remember. In fact, it had been there so long that he didn't really notice it any more. It was a picture of a beautiful sailing ship, a sailing ship with lots of sails blowing in the wind and foaming water all around.

"That's it!" he shouted. "That's it! I'll make a sailing ship! I'll make a sailing ship just like that one!"

He went to sleep and dreamed all about winning his class at the competition.

"And now first prize, with the highest commendation, Billy's boat!"

He woke up with the words echoing around his head.

The next morning Billy went to visit his friend Mr. Green who lived across the road. He explained all about his boat and Mr Green seemed very interested indeed.

"I entered the competition once," he said. "I got second prize for my model tractor. I've still got it."

He pointed to a tiny model on a high shelf; Billy stared up at it.

"Second Prize," he whispered to himself, "Cor. Second prize!"

Mr. Green said that Billy could use his shed and any of his tools he needed. So he rushed back home and began to draw his plans. He drew a side view and a back view and a top view. He measured and drew and drew and measured all day until by tea time the plans were finished.

Over the next few weeks Billy worked very hard. Every day after school and every weekend he could be found in Mr. Green's shed, chiselling and sanding and polishing and painting and drilling and gluing. He was very careful. More careful than he had ever been with anything ever before. Eventually, on the day before the competition most of the boat was finished. Billy carried it carefully and proudly across the road to his house.

"All I've got to do," he told his Mum, "is the sails and the rigging. Then it will be finished and ready for the competition tomorrow."

Billy had found some white material. Mum found him a needle and cotton, and he set to work. But it didn't seem to be quite as easy as he thought. His sewing always seemed to end up being crooked; his stitches were always too big or too loose. When he fixed the sails on, his beautiful boat started to look rather tatty. He had a go at the rigging, but this didn't seem to be as easy as it should have been either. The string kept getting tangled and the knots kept coming undone. Eventually when he had finished, the boat looked dreadful. The sails were shabby and tatty and the rigging was messy and tangled.

Billy looked at his boat and tears started to roll down his cheeks.

"It's ruined!" he said. "It's rubbish! It's useless!"

Mum came to see.

"What's wrong Billy?" she asked.

"It's rubbish!" he said. "It won't win any prizes at all. I might as well just throw it away!"

"But you've worked so hard," said Mum, "maybe I can help."

"No!" he shouted. "No! I want to do it all myself. It's for the competition."

Billy tried again and again. He got more and more tired and more and more fed up. Each time he stood back and looked at his boat he felt like he wanted to throw it across the room.

"It's rubbish!" he shouted as he stamped his feet.

The only thing that stopped him throwing his boat in the rubbish bin outside was the fact that it was raining and he hadn't got his shoes on. Poor Billy went to bed feeling very sad indeed.

Mum looked at the boat. She waited until Billy was asleep and then crept into his bedroom and took down the picture, then she set to work. She carefully sewed the sails and carefully tied the rigging so that it looked exactly like the picture. Mum worked hard until very late at night. When she'd finished it looked splendid. It really did look like a real sailing ship out on the ocean.

The next morning Mum woke Billy up early.

"Come on Billy, " She said, "We've got to go!"

"I can't," he wailed, "my boat is rubbish!"

"Just get up," said Mum, "you'll see!"

Billy stomped down stairs, but when he went into the living room he just stopped and stared. He could hardly believe his eyes. The boat was beautiful. The sails and the rigging were perfect. The hull was beautifully shiny and perfectly smooth. It really did look like the real thing. He smiled for a moment, and then looked sad again.

"But Mum," he said, "I can't enter the competition now, because you helped me. I should have done it all on my own."

"Just get ready," said Mum, "You'll see."

When they arrived at the Town hall, there were already lots of people there. Mum led Billy through the hall. He looked around very nervously.

"I wonder if anyone will know that I got some help," he was thinking, when, to his surprise Mum walked straight past the under twelves class and on to another table that said, 'Family class.' Billy's Mum had a word with the man. She then placed the boat on the table with a card by it saying, 'Sailing ship. Billy and his Mum.'

They both waited nervously, hardly saying anything to each other. Suddenly the judges arrived. They looked carefully at all the entries in the family class and then went away again. Billy slipped his hand into his Mum's and Mum squeezed it tightly.

A little while later the results were announced. It came to the family class. Billy was so excited he could hardly listen.

"And now the result of the family class. The class for models made by more than one member of the same family. Third prize, the Johnson brothers with their model space rocket. Second prize, Lisa Nailer and her Dad for their model helicopter. And first prize goes to....

Billy wanted to stick his fingers in his ears. It was just too exciting.

"The first prize, that is one of the luxury tool kits, goes to"

Billy's heart was pounding, he thought he was going to explode!

"The first prize goes to"

Mum squeezed Billy's hand so tightly that he couldn't feel his fingers any more.

"The Luxury Tool kit has been won by Billy and his mum for their model sailing ship."

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" shouted Billy, as he jumped three feet in the air.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!! Thank you Mum! Thank you Mum!" Billy threw his arms round his Mum.

"I, I, I, I, I....."

You know what he wanted to say don't you. "I love you Mum." But Billy, being Billy, he said: "I, I....like winning Mum!"

"So do I" said Mum," as she gave Billy a big hug. "So do I!"

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