

25 Taking the blame

As you know, Billy often gets into trouble. It's not always his fault though. Sometimes things just happen when Billy is around and somehow or other he gets the blame and has to suffer the consequences.

When he was in Class 4, Miss Roberts, his teacher, seemed very understanding and often said things like: "Well Billy, strange things do seem to happen when you are here don't they?"

But now Billy has moved up to Class 5 and his teacher is Mr. Yellit things are very different. He had been dreading going up to Class 5 after his sister Amy had told him lots of stories about Mr. Yellit.

"He's very strict you know," she said, "and if you do anything wrong he never forgets about it!"

So when he went back to school after the summer holiday for his first day in class 5, Billy was very nervous, very nervous indeed. Unfortunately that first day was a bit of a disaster for Billy. At playtime he was walking along the corridor outside the staff room when a group of older boys came running past. They were laughing and joking and pushing each other. They managed to push Billy as well. In the commotion the fire extinguisher got knocked off of the wall and started spraying foam every where. The other boys quickly ran off. So when Mr. Yellit came out of the staff room all he saw was Billy covered in foam beside the spurting fire extinguisher.

No matter what he said, Mr. Yellit blamed Billy. He had to stay in every playtime for two weeks and write out his time's tables over and over again. Mr. Yellit has never forgotten about the 'fire extinguisher incident' as he calls it. Even if he doesn't mention it for a long time, when Billy looks at him he is sure that he is thinking about it!

It's not just at school that Billy gets into trouble though. Once, he was riding his bike along the road at a sensible speed when Pete Pushem came racing past on his bike. Old Mrs. Jenkins was crossing on the zebra crossing. She saw Billy a little way off so started to cross. But quick as a flash Pete Pushem shot up the road and across the crossing nearly knocking her over. She was so shocked and confused by what happened that she was sure it was Billy. So, she marched off to tell his Mum. Poor Billy, he wasn't allowed to ride his bike for three months and he had to go and tidy Mrs. Jenkins garden as well!

Sometimes, of course, Billy got into trouble because he had done something silly or naughty. Like the time he glued his sister's wardrobe doors shut with super glue. Or the time he managed to knock Constable Faircop, the Driptown beat bobby, off of his bicycle and was cautioned for dangerous skateboarding.

Sometimes though it seemed to Billy that people were rather too keen to blame him for things that weren't his fault at all. This was especially true of Mr. Yellit, who always seemed to look at Billy first whenever anything unusual happened at school.

Billy's Mum could get really exasperated with him at times.

"Oh Billy, you're always getting into trouble," she would say. "What's wrong with you?"

"But Mum," Billy would start, "it wasn't my...."

"Oh, I don't want to hear any more about it!" Mum would say, and Billy knew it was time to be quiet.

Sometimes Billy would think: "Mum doesn't really love me. She always thinks the worst of me. She always thinks everything is my fault. She thinks I'm a bad boy!"

One evening Billy and his Mum had to go to Driptown Primary School. It was Parents Evening and Billy, as usual, was dreading it. There was the usual waiting around in corridors to see different teachers. They all said the same things about him. "Well he does day dream a lot." "He likes to do things his own way." "If he could only live in the real world a little more and not so much in his own little Billy world, I'm sure he could do much better!" Billy was bored. He'd heard it all before, and he was certain he would hear it all again.

At 6 o'clock Mum and Billy were standing outside Mr. Yellit's classroom and Billy was feeling very nervous. He looked around for something to take his mind off of things. For some reason that he has never really understood, his eye was caught by the bright red and shiny fire alarm on the wall. It said: 'In case of Fire, Break glass" in bright red letters.

"I wonder how hard it is to break?" he thought, "and what if you cut yourself when you break it?"

He had no intention of finding out, but he put his hand up for a second just to feel the glass. But just at that moment Pete Pushem came pushing by. Just as Billy had his finger on the glass of the fire alarm, Pete gave him a great shove.

Suddenly there was a deafening screeching and wailing sound! Mr. Yellit came running out of his classroom and the first thing he saw was Billy standing rather dazed by the broken fire alarm.

"Everyone outside!" he shouted, "and I'll see you in a minute!" he snorted at Billy. Everyone had to go out onto the school field, while the school was checked.

Soon the fire alarm was switched off and they were all allowed back in again.

"I'll see you and your Mum next," said Mr. Yellit to Billy.

Billy went very pale as they went in and sat down.

"Well Billy," said Mr. Yellit in his sternest voice, "can you tell me how the fire alarm went off?"

Billy opened his mouth, but nothing came out. But then something happened that he didn't expect. Something that he didn't expect at all. Billy's Mum looked at his terrified little face. Then almost like it was in a dream, Billy heard his Mum say, "Oh, I'm sorry Mr. Yellit. It was my fault."

Mr. Yellit looked very surprised.

"I accidentally hit the fire alarm with my umbrella, and it went off. Still, there's no harm done. We're all back in the school now."

Mr. Yellit looked at Billy, and then at Mum and then at Billy again. He opened his mouth to speak, but nothing came out.

That night, when Mum came up to tuck Billy in bed, he said: "Thanks Mum."

"That's alright," said Mum, "I couldn't bear to see you get into trouble again."

"Thanks Mum," said Billy again, and he felt a lovely sort of warm feeling all over.

"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: "At, at least I didn't cut my finger!"

"And I'm glad about that," said Mum. "I'm very glad!"

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