

7 Billy is a boaster

Like all boys and girls, and grown ups for that matter, Billy wants people to like him. He wants his friends to think that he is clever and funny and good at everything. The trouble is of course that he isn't always clever or funny, and he definitely isn't good at everything. But, because Billy wants everyone to think he is brilliant so much, he sometimes makes up little stories to help just a little bit.

Take for example the time when a new girl arrived in Billy's class at school. Her name was Lisa.

"I do judo," she said, when Miss Roberts, Billy's teacher, asked her to say a little bit about herself. "I'm a green belt."

"Green belt, ha!" snorted Billy, who had never done any judo in his life. "I'm a black belt!"

That playtime Lisa challenged him to a judo fight. Billy couldn't say no in front of his friends and he couldn't really admit that he didn't know anything about judo, so Lisa thoroughly beat him. Billy had such a bruised bottom that he found it hard to sit down for the rest of the week! But that didn't stop him making up little stories.

Now you may remember that Billy's Mum plays the tuba, she plays in the Driptown Town Band. One day Mum said, "Oh Billy dear," Billy cringed. "Be a dear will you and take my tuba out to Grandpa's car. I've got to go to a band practice and Grandpa has come to give me a lift."

Billy dragged the enormous tuba case out to the car, but just at that moment Miss Roberts came past on her bicycle. She stopped.

"Oh Billy that looks heavy, what is it?" she asked.

"It's a tuba," he replied.

"I didn't know you played the tuba," said Miss Roberts.

"Oh, err... yes," he said, "I'm quite good."

"Oh, that's brilliant!" said Miss Roberts. "You're just what we need for the School concert next week. Lisa was going to play the piano but she hurt her hand at judo. Tell me what you are going to play at school on Monday. Bye!" And with that Miss Roberts disappeared off down the road on her bicycle.

Billy thought for a second.

"Oh, no!" he said to himself. "Oh, no! Oh, no! Why did I say that! I can't play the tuba, I can hardly play the triangle!"

The next day was Saturday and, when Mum had gone shopping, Billy opened her tuba case and got out the tuba. It was enormous; he could almost fit inside it. He tried to pick it up but it was so heavy that it slipped out of his hands and crashed against the chair and got several little dents in it. He put in the mouthpiece like he has seen Mum do and tried to blow. The noise was awful; it sounded like an elephant that had just stubbed its toe! "Oh, no!" he whined to himself. "Why did I ever say that to Miss Roberts! Whatever shall I do!"

On Monday morning Billy didn't feel very well. By the time he got to school he felt even worse. When he got to his classroom he felt terrible.

"I've got some exciting news for you all," said Miss Roberts, "Billy is going to play his tuba in the School Concert this evening."

Everyone looked round at Billy.

"Wow, Billy," said Mickey, "you're brilliant!"

Even Lisa came over to Billy and said, "Thank you for playing Billy. It's really great of you to stand in for me."

Billy went a brighter red than he had ever done before.

Later in the day Miss Roberts called Billy to the front of the class.

"Now Billy," she said, "the concert starts at seven o'clock but you will need to be here by half past six to get ready. Is your Mum coming?"

"Err.... I don't know," he shrugged.

"Well don't worry," said Miss Roberts, "I'll pick you up and your Mum can come down later! I'll see you at a quarter past six, alright?"

As Billy walked home he was desperately hoping that a big hole would suddenly appear in the pavement in front of him so he could fall down it, or that an alien space ship would come whizzing down and kidnap him. But neither of these things happened and he soon found himself at home. When Mum got home she called him down stairs.

"Billy," she said, "Billy, I'm a bit confused."

"What about Mum?" he said.

"You see Billy, I was walking home from work when I saw a poster on the lamp post at the bottom of the road. It's a poster for your school concert tonight."

Billy's heart went Thump Thump Thump!

"Err... yes.... Mum," he said.

"And it says that you are going to play the tuba in the concert. Have you been having secret lessons or something?"

Billy swallowed hard, he was well and truly stuck in this one, and there was just no getting out of it. If he said he had been having lessons at school Mum would want him to play something on her tuba. No, he was done for! He seized all his courage.

"Err... No Mum... But, err Mum.... I have got myself into a bit of a pickle...." and Billy told his Mum everything.

When he had finished, to his surprise, instead of shouting and doing a war dance, Mum just smiled.

"You have been a bit silly haven't you," she said, "and somehow I don't think you will be quite so silly again will you."

"No, Mum," he squeaked.

That evening at the concert Billy and his Mum sat next to each other. After the choir had sung and the orchestra had played, Miss Roberts announced:

"And now we have a special treat, with a duet for Tuba and triangle we have Billy and his Mum."

Billy carried the Tuba onto the stage and Mum carried the triangle. They sat down and looked as if they were getting ready to play. Mum looked at her Music and then she suddenly said, in front of the whole school and all the parents:

"Oh, Billy, this triangle part is much too hard for me. You'll have to play it today!"

So Billy handed Mum the tuba, and Mum handed Billy the triangle, and they played. Mum played beautifully and Billy tinged in all the right places. At the end, the audience went wild! They clapped and cheered and shouted for more. So Mum and Billy played it again.

That night, when Mum came up to say good night to Billy, she said, "That was fun wasn't it Billy, in the end!"

"Yeah, thank you Mum," he said, "I, I, I, I, ler, ler, ler....."

You know what he wanted to say don't you. "I love you Mum."

But Billy, being Billy, he said, "I, I, I, I, ler, ler, ler.... I like playing the triangle!"

"And you're very good at it," said Mum, "very good indeed!"

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