

17 Larry Chinlicker

One morning a new boy arrived in Billy's class at Driptown Primary School.

"I'd like to introduce you to the new member of our class," said Miss Roberts before she called the register. "This is Barry, Barry Beckham."

Everyone looked round at Barry.

"Barry, why don't you come out here and tell us something about yourself?" said Miss Roberts.

Barry came forward and stood at the front of the class. Billy watched him. There was something about Barry that made Billy feel a bit uneasy. Something that made Billy think: "I don't think I'm going to like this boy; he looks too sure of himself by half!"

Barry cleared his throat, "Err, hem," and said: "My name is Barry Beckham. David Beckham is my uncle," and then he went and sat down again.

There was a stunned silence in the class, everyone just stared at Barry and not a word was said.

At break time everyone crowded round Barry. They all fired questions at him about David Beckham.

"Have you been to his house?"

"Has he been to your house?"

"What's he like?"

Everyone crowded around Barry apart from one person, and that was Billy. You see Billy can't stand popular people. He doesn't mind being popular himself, of course, but he can't stand it when other people suddenly become the centre of attention. He thought that Barry just looked smug and conceited.

Billy lurked in the corner of the classroom and gave Barry one of his death stares.

"My uncle is David Beckham," he sarcastically whined to himself. "Huh, my uncle is my uncle is my uncle is...."

Suddenly Billy had an idea. He walked straight up to Barry Beckham and said in a loud voice: "Barry, hi, your uncle must know my uncle then."

"Err.... whose that?" replied Barry.

"Why, Larry Chinlicker," said Billy.

Suddenly everyone in the class went quiet again.

(Now for those of you who don't know, Larry Chinlicker is an England international striker who is famous for his dribbling ... of the football of course.)

Billy thought that this might unnerve Barry a little. He was convinced that he wasn't telling the truth, but to his surprise Barry just said: "Oh yes, David knows Larry; they're quite good mates."

"You never said," said Mickey, as Billy and he walked home together.

"Oh err ... he asked me to keep it a secret," said Billy. "You know the newspapers and all that."

That evening Billy dashed to the library to find out as much about Larry Chinlicker as he possibly could.

For several weeks Billy and Barry were the centre of attention. Billy kept trying to outdo Barry and so his story got bigger and bigger and more and more complicated. Billy knew it was a lie of course, but he had started something and he didn't know how to stop it. In fact, he wasn't even sure he wanted to stop it. He was enjoying all the attention. It was only at home at three o'clock in the morning when he couldn't sleep that he began to realise what a very silly thing he had done. But because he resented Barry so much, he just couldn't stop it, and he certainly couldn't tell everyone the truth now!

Not long after this though something happened that made Billy tingle all over and wish he could just become invisible. He went into the newsagents to buy his comic when, as he stared at the newspapers, his mouth fell open and his heart nearly stopped. The head line on the local paper said:

Driptown Carnival next Saturday Guest star this year - Larry Chinlicker!

A sense of panic started to sweep through Billy. He bought his comic as fast as he could and then started to run home. But to Billy's dismay he found Mickey and Peter and Lisa standing outside his front door.

"Billy, Billy," they all shouted, "Larry's coming to Driptown! Why didn't you tell us? Can we meet him? Can we meet him?!"

Billy stood there in stunned silence.

"Come on Billy," said Lisa, "you can fix it for us. After all Larry is your uncle, isn't he?"

Billy didn't know what to say, and he could hardly believe it when he heard himself say:

"Oh yes, of course you can meet him, he's coming here for tea."

The news spread like wildfire around all of Billy's friends and around everyone who went to Driptown Primary School. Everyone was going to be at Billy's house at 5 o'clock the next Saturday to meet Larry Chinlicker. Billy couldn't sleep a wink. He didn't know what to do. He thought about stowing away on a ship to Australia, or running away to Scotland, but neither seemed very practical.

"When they find out they will hate me," he thought. "They'll never talk to me again. They'll tease me for the rest of my life. They'll call me... call me... Billy Liar!"

Saturday came and Billy still didn't know what to do. The Carnival parade was due to start at 12 o'clock. Billy went down to the park to see what was happening. There were crowds of people lining the route, and try as he did, Billy couldn't find a place where he could see anything. So he ran right round to the other side of the park, where the procession always came back in again after its tour of the town. He started to climb up a tree with branches that hung over the road. He got himself into a really good position to see everything, and where he was well hidden by all the leaves. Then suddenly his plan came to him.

"I'll stay up here and watch the carnival and then I'll stay here till 7 o'clock and say that I was kidnapped and Larry had to pay a ransom for my release. So he didn't have time to come home for tea."

For some mad reason the whole plan seemed very sensible to him at the time. So that was what he decided to do.

He clung on tightly and waited, and waited, and waited. It seemed to take ages and ages for the procession to come back. The longer it took the more tired his arms and legs were getting. The tighter he hung on, the more tired he got! Suddenly the front of the procession came into view. In the distance Billy could see Larry Chinlicker walking along in the front. People were running along beside him shouting things like:

"Hello Larry," And

"Good on yer Larry."

And to Billy's horror he distinctly heard Mickey's voice shouting, "See you later at Billy's, Larry!"

Larry of course just smiled and waved at everyone so Mickey was none the wiser.

Billy was getting very tired now; his arms and legs had gone completely dead. He couldn't feel them at all. The nearer Larry got the harder it was getting to hang on. Larry was nearly there; Billy tried to move a bit to get more comfortable. But, oh no, one leg lost its footing and then the other, then one hand and then the other.

"Aaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!" shrieked Billy, as he came crashing out of the tree and landed on the ground right at Larry's feet with a great thud.

"Keep back, keep back," said Larry in a very commanding voice, "I've done first aid. I know what to do."

Larry knelt down beside Billy and checked him all over to see if anything was broken.

"What's your name, sonny?" he whispered.

"Billy," groaned Billy.

"And where do you live?" asked Larry in another sympathetic whisper.

"Just round the corner in Bridge Street," groaned Billy again.

Suddenly Larry stood up. "There's nothing broken," he announced, "But we ought to get Billy home. He only lives round the corner, I might as well carry him."

"Wow," thought Mickey, "its true, he must be Billy's uncle, he knows his name and where he lives and everything!"

So Larry picked up Billy and, with Mickey's guidance (although Mickey didn't realise at the time that he was guiding) Larry carried Billy home.

Billy's Mum was somewhat amazed to open the front door and find Larry Chinlicker carrying Billy. Larry came in and, of course you guessed it, he was very happy to stay for tea. And, believe it or not, it was just on 5 o'clock when he had to leave. Billy hobbled to the front door with Larry and said thank you again. Billy opened the front door to find a great crowd of people in the street outside.

"Three cheers for Larry," someone shouted, "Hip Hip!"

"Hurray," the crowd replied.

"And three cheers for Billy," shouted Mickey, "Hip Hip!"

"Hurray," the crowd replied again.

Billy and Larry smiled together on the doorstep as reporters took their pictures, and after a while Larry's car came to take him away.

When Billy eventually went back indoors he flopped on the sofa. He knew that this was the closest shave he had ever had. He made up his mind there and then never to get himself into a situation like that again. He probably won't remember though but oh well, that's Billy for you isn't it!

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