

34 In a spin

One Saturday afternoon Billy had gone to visit his Gran and Grandpa. Gran was having a mega clear out of old junk. There were dusty old boxes and piles of paper all over the place.

"Just look at all this old stuff that your Grandpa has kept for years and years," she said. "It's high time we threw most of it out!"

"I'll help if you like," said Billy.

"Alright," said Gran, "you can start by looking through that box over there."

Billy opened a very dusty box and found that it was full of old papers. He lifted up a few of them and his eye was caught by a large thick piece of paper with some very grand looking writing on it. He slid it out to look at it and, as he began to read, his eyes opened wider and wider and wider.

It said: 'This is to certify that Josiah Dandleberry Turner is a world record holder, having kept seventy two plates spinning on five foot canes for ten minutes, signed by Sir Rodney Guinness, 12th August, 1951.'

"Wow!" exclaimed Billy, as he read it.

Gran came over to look, "Oh, that old thing," she said. "Throw it away. It's only rubbish."

"But, but, but who's Josiah Dandleberry Turner?" asked Billy.

"Why, don't you know?" laughed Gran. "That's Grandpa. We all call him Joe but his real name is Josiah."

Grandpa came into the room and saw Billy holding the certificate.

"Is this true, Grandpa?" Billy asked. "Are you really a world record holder?"

"Oh, I was," said Grandpa. "I'm not any more though. Someone else has spun many more plates than I did back then."

"Can you still do it?" asked Billy.

"Oh yes, I should think so," replied Grandpa. "I've still got all the stuff somewhere in the shed."

Gran sighed her most exasperated sigh. She knew exactly what was going to happen next!

Without saying a word to each other Billy and Grandpa both headed off to Grandpa's garden shed. After much rummaging and rather a lot of groaning, Grandpa emerged triumphantly, holding a large bundle of plate spinning canes. "I could only find fifty two," he said. "But they'll do for now."

Grandpa walked around the lawn carefully pushing the end of each cane into the grass, making sure that they stood up absolutely straight and were the same distance apart. Then it was back into the shed for more rummaging and a lot more groaning. Until he emerged dragging a large box full of special spinning plates.

"Here goes!" he said, and Billy watched in amazement as Grandpa started spinning. One plate, two plates, three plates, four, five, six, seven, eight, Billy had never seen his Grandpa move so fast. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve, the garden was filled with a louder and louder whirring sound as the plates spun round and round. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and on and on until eventually all fifty-two canes had a plate spinning on the top. Grandpa ran round and round keeping each one going. It was very spectacular.

"That's brilliant Grandpa!" shouted Billy as he clapped his hands. "Can.. can... can I have a go?"

"Yes of course you can," said Grandpa rather out of breath. "They're all yours!"

Billy watched in horror as Grandpa walked away from the spinning plates and disappeared into the kitchen. For a moment he didn't know what to do. One of the plates started to wobble so he rushed toward it to try and get it spinning again. But the harder he tried, the more it wobbled. And then another started to wobble, and then another and another. Billy rushed around shaking the canes like he had seen Grandpa do but it didn't seem to be working. He was surrounded by wobbling plates. Then, crash, crash, crash, plates started falling to the ground all around him. Billy ran round and round. He tripped over several canes and bent them and plates fell off everywhere. Eventually, he fell in an exhausted heap on the grass. All went quiet, very quiet indeed.

Suddenly Grandpa came out of the house with a cup of tea in his hand. His mouth fell open and his eyes went as wide as saucers.

"Billy!" he exclaimed, "Billy! Billy! What have you done? Why... why.... Why didn't you keep them spinning, like I told you to?"

Billy surveyed the scene of devastation. There were bent canes and broken plates all over the garden.

"I tried," he said in a rather cracked little voice, "I tried Grandpa!"

"But.... but... But what about my plates?" said Grandpa, "I've had them for fifty years, and now, and now, and now they're broken!"

Poor Billy, he went very red and decided it was probably time to go home. On his way he made up his mind that he never, ever, ever wanted to see another spinning plate ever again!

Billy didn't sleep very well that night. He kept having nightmares about spinning plates crashing down all around him. But when he got up and shuffled his way downstairs for breakfast, he was surprised to find a parcel waiting for him. It was sort of long and thin with a bulgy bit at the end. He tore it open and inside were two plates and two plate spinning canes. There was also a note from Grandpa. It said:

Dear Billy,

Sorry about yesterday. I'd forgotten one thing about plate spinning. It takes a long time to learn how to do it. So here are two plates for you to practice with. By the way, they are unbreakable. I'll buy you one more each month for as long as you like.

Love, Grandpa.

And do you know that is exactly what has happened. Billy can now spin fourteen plates easily and he can't wait to get number fifteen next month. He has worked out that in nearly six years time he'll be able to beat Grandpa's record!

Billy, of course, has a new dream now. He wants to go on to be a world record plate spinner just like his Grandpa was. Well, who knows? If he takes it slowly and sticks at it, it might be a dream that comes true!

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