

## 38 Billy's wardrobe

In his bedroom Billy has a wardrobe. Its quite an old wardrobe and has a nice shiny brass key to lock it with. There is lots of room inside and sometimes Billy likes to climb in and gently shut the door behind him, just to see what it's like for his clothes when they are hanging up. It's also a very good hide and seek hiding place. Billy can curl up in the bottom of the wardrobe and spread an old blanket over himself and no one could ever find him.

One day, Billy was playing hide and seek with his sister. Mum was out, so the game was great fun. Amy had hidden in the dirty washing basket and Billy had hidden in the drawer under Mum's bed. Then Amy had tried to hide in the airing cupboard. Billy found her quite easily though because she left part of her skirt hanging out of the door.

Amy was counting, when Billy suddenly remembered his wardrobe. He dashed upstairs and climbed inside. He pulled the door closed and it shut with a 'click.'

"Great," he thought, "I'm well hidden now!"

"Coming, ready or not!" called Amy. She stomped around the house looking for Billy. After a while though everything went quiet. Then there was a shout from down stairs, "It's 11 o'clock Billy! I give up! And I'm going out, bye!"

With that the front door slammed shut and Amy was gone.

"Great!" said Billy very triumphantly, "I won!" He stretched out his hand and pushed the wardrobe door, but to his surprise it didn't open. He pushed a bit harder, but it still didn't open. He pushed as hard as he could, but still it didn't open. Billy swallowed hard, It was no good, somehow the door had locked and now he was trapped inside.

All of a sudden, it started to seem very dark inside the wardrobe; much darker than it had been a few moments before. He moved a little and suddenly it began to feel very small as well. He could hardly see for the dark and could hardly move either. And there was no one in the house to rescue him.

Billy swallowed hard. "Help!" he cried, because it was all he could think of to do.

"Help! I'm stuck in the wardrobe! Help!"

But there was no reply. No one came to help.

He tried to stand up, but he banged his head. He tried to stretch his arms, but he grazed his knuckles. He began to get very hot.

"Oh no!" he thought, "I'll run out of air!"

So he tried to take as smaller breaths as possible to make the air last longer.

"I'm going to be stuck in here for ever!" he thought. "I'll never get out. I'll have to eat my track suit to stay alive!" He was getting very worried.

He tried to imagine where his Mum was.

"She's probably just coming down the road," he thought. "She'll be home any minute."

He imagined the sound of the front door and Mum calling: "Billy! Where are you?" But, even though he listened as carefully as he could, he didn't hear a sound.

He didn't know what to do. Luckily his watch was luminous and in the feint glow he could see the time. It was 11.30.

"I could have a long time to wait," he told himself, "so I must stay calm and be patient."

He waited for a while.

"That must have been at least an hour," he said to himself. But when he looked at his watch it was only 11.40, only ten minutes had gone by.

"Oh no!" he wailed to himself. "I really am going to be stuck in here forever!"

So he decided to make himself comfortable. He knocked one of his tracksuit tops off of the rail and made a pillow, then he pulled the blanket that was always in the bottom of the wardrobe over himself, and in no time at all he was fast asleep, very fast asleep indeed.

Meanwhile, Mum came struggling in the back door with all her shopping.

"Billy!" she called, "Billy!" there was no reply. "That's strange," thought Mum.

"He didn't say he was going out, and the back door wasn't locked.' "Billy! Where are you?" she called again. Mum had a quick look around the house, but Billy was no where to be found.

At 2 o'clock Amy came home.

"Do you know where Billy is?" asked Mum.

"No," said Amy. "He was here when I left at 11 o'clock."

Mum and Amy waited. By 4 o'clock they were beginning to get worried. At 5 o'clock Mum rang all of Billy's friends, but no one had seen him all day.

Meanwhile of course, Billy was still fast asleep in the bottom of his wardrobe.

At 6 o'clock Mum went out to look for him. She went to the park and down to the football ground. She looked in all the shops, and she asked all the shopkeepers, "Have you seen Billy today?" but no one had seen him all day.

At 7 o'clock Mum phoned the police. At 7.30 Constable Faircop, the local beat bobby, arrived.

"'Ello, 'ello, 'ello," he said, "what's been happening here then?"

Mum explained everything.

"Billy, you say?" said Constable Faircop. "Isn't he the lad who knocked me off of my bicycle with his skateboard?"

Mum told Constable Faircop all about Billy and she gave him his last school photo. He radioed the police station with a description of Billy.

"Don't worry," he said. "We'll all be looking for him. We'll find him in no time."

Meanwhile, Billy was beginning to wake up. Just as Constable Faircop was in the hall, Billy gave a great big yawn and stretched out his arms. He hit his wardrobe door with a great crash. In fact, he hit the door so hard that it flew open and the key fell out on the floor.

Mum and Amy and Constable Faircop all swung round in the hall with a start as they heard the noise. They stared along the hall and up the stairs. "Stand back!" said Constable Faircop in his most dramatic policeman's voice. "I'll go and investigate!" He crept along the hall without making a sound, just like he was creeping up on a dangerous burglar! He pulled out his truncheon and crept up the stairs on his hands and knees.

Billy had tumbled out of his wardrobe in his usual just woken up, rather confused and dozy state. Then, just as Constable Faircop got to the top of the stairs, he came crashing out of his bedroom door and staggered across the landing. He collided with Constable Faircop, who went juddering back down the stairs on his tummy and landed in a very confused and dazed heap at the bottom.

Billy stood at the top of the stairs struggling to take in all that was happening. He looked so disheveled and dazed. In fact, he looked like he had just managed to escape from being cuddled to death by a giant panda! For a moment Mum and Amy couldn't believe it. But then Mum shouted, "Billy!" And she and Amy clambered over Constable Faircop, only treading on him four times, and rushed up the stairs. They both gave Billy a great big hug. Yes, even Amy did, she was so glad to see Billy again.

"Where have you been?" asked Mum.

"Er, I... I..... was..." spluttered Billy.

"Oh well, it doesn't matter," said Mum. "What's important is that you are back now and It's really, really, really good to have you back again."

Mum made Constable Faircop a cup of tea and he let Billy wear his helmet and play with his truncheon. Billy's wardrobe is still in his bedroom, but I have to say that Billy doesn't get inside it any more. In fact, he always thinks twice about anywhere that he hides!