

41 Billy makes a choice

There are two boys at Driptown Primary School that Billy tries to avoid at all costs. They are Trevor Trippup and Pete Pushem. For some reason, and Billy has never been able to work out why, Trevor and Pete seem to think it's great fun to spoil everybody else's fun and to make life as difficult and as miserable for as many people as possible.

You may remember the time when Billy was queuing for his ticket to see Driptown United play in the F.A. Cup Final. Trevor and Pete came and pushed him over so that he ended up sitting in a puddle. Or the time when they snatched his bike and rode it over to the other side of the park. They pulled off one of the pedals, broke the chain, bent one of the wheels and jammed the brakes. Or the time at the Parents' Evening when Billy was standing by the fire alarm and Pete gave him such a push that he ended up setting the fire alarm off!

No, there's no doubt about it; Trevor Trippup and Pete Pushem are not Billy's favourite people. In fact, they are probably the only two people in the world that Billy does his very, very best to avoid at all costs.

One day, Billy was walking home from school. Mickey had had to stay behind so he was on his own. He had taken his usual detour down Long Street to avoid going past Pete's house. He was wandering along day dreaming in his own little Billy world when, suddenly, Trevor and Pete ran from round the corner and appeared in front of him.

"Hello, Billy Boy!" sneered Trevor.

"That's a nice bag you've got there," added Pete.

Billy tightened his grip on his school bag but, before he could say anything, Trevor grabbed it, and with one big tug pulled it out of Billy's hands.

Billy opened his mouth to shout but he knew that always made the two of them even worse. So poor Billy just watched as Pete and Trevor shook the contents of his school bag all over the ground. Several of his coloured pencils and his best pen rolled down the drain. His reading book landed in a very sticky patch of mud, and some of his other schoolbooks got torn. Pete and Trevor threw the bag on the ground as well and swaggered off along the road, laughing hysterically as they went. Billy picked up his bag and collected what he could. His pencil case was nearly empty and he couldn't find the lid of his lunch box anywhere. Poor Billy wandered slowly home trying to think of a good story to tell his Mum. A story that would stop her rushing off to see Mrs. Trippup and Mrs. Pushem and so get him into even more trouble with Trevor and Pete.

Billy stopped off at the park to think. He sat on one of the swings and looked out across the park. No one else was there but, in the middle of the grass, just where Billy and Mickey usually put their jumpers as goal posts, was what looked like a bag of some sort. He wandered over to have a look. It was a bag. It looked rather like someone's school bag. They'd obviously used it as a goal post

and then forgotten all about it. Billy had a vague feeling that he recognised it so he had a look inside. There was a Dripton Primary School reading book bag inside so Billy pulled it out to look at the name. For a second he froze. He could hardly believe what he was reading. The name on the bag was, was, was Pete Pushem! This was Pete Pushem's school bag and it was here all on its own. It was just sitting here, and no one else knew it was here except Billy.

"I could throw it in the canal!" he thought; he imagined how good he would feel watching the bag floating away out of sight.

"Or I could drop it in the big bin by the football ground!" he thought; he imagined the bag disappearing into the back of the rubbish lorry and being squashed up to nothing.

Billy imagined doing lots of things with the bag and its contents. He even imagined tying it to the rope on the flagpole outside the Town Hall and hoisting it up to the top!

After a while he had definitely decided on the canal as the best and the easiest option. He grabbed the bag and started to run across the park. But, as he got to the gate, something made him stop. Suddenly, as clear as if she was there beside him, Billy could hear his Gran's voice saying something that she always said when he and his sister Amy were fighting. "Now come on you two. Two wrongs don't make a right, you know!"

Billy found that he had a strange, a very strange sort of feeling in his tummy. For a second he imagined himself hurling Pete's bag into the canal and then watching it float away. But to his surprise, instead of feeling good about it, he found himself feeling terrible. He dropped the bag on the ground and started to walk away. But somehow that made him feel terrible as well.

"What shall I do?" he said to himself. But just as he said it he knew that there was only one thing he could do that would stop him feeling so bad.

Billy swallowed hard and plucked up all of his courage. He picked up the bag and headed off up the road. He turned down Market Street and stopped outside number eleven, Pete Pushem's house. With his heart thumping Billy pushed open the gate, walked up the path and rang the door bell. After a minute Mrs. Pushem came to the door.

"I found Pete's bag at the park," said Billy. "He must have used it as a goal post and then left it there."

"Oh, oh, oh.... Isn't he a silly boy!" said Mrs. Pushem.

"Yes very silly," muttered Billy under his breath!

"Thank you very much, dearie. I'll just get Pete, I'm sure he'll want to say thank you as well."

Mrs. Pushem turned and yelled at the top of her voice, "Pete! Come 'ere!"

But while her back was turned, Billy slipped quietly through the gate and sprinted as fast as he could up Market Street and into Long Street.

Pete came stomping downstairs. "This nice boy just found your bag at the park and brought it round," said Mrs. Pushem. But, of course, when she turned round, no one was there. Billy had gone.

"Well I'm blowed," she said, "he's gone!"

When Billy was walking home he found the lid to his lunch box and a couple of his pencils. And with a bit of careful cleaning and a few bits of sellotape, his books were soon as good as new.

When Billy was in bed he thought about his day. Usually after a run in with Trevor and Pete he found it hard to sleep. But Billy slept very soundly that night, very soundly indeed.

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