

Thinking For Yourself

Short Stories For the Young Reader

by
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BASEBALL BILLY

(Special thanks to my little nephew Paul for his help with this story.)



Once there was a boy that everyone called Baseball Billy. He was called that because he loved baseball so much and because his name was Billy.

Billy thought about baseball all year round. Even in winter he would practice by throwing lots of snowballs. He wanted to keep his arm in good shape to play centerfield during the baseball season.

One season Billy decided that he wanted to play more baseball than ever before. He started to think about how could he do this.

Then he had an idea. Why not join two teams? That way he could play twice as much baseball and have twice as much fun. He liked the idea, but nobody he knew ever joined two teams. He figured there might be a reason for that. So, Billy gave it some more thought.

What would he do if his two teams had to play against each other? Billy knew that would be a problem. He thought some more and had an idea.

He could join teams that were on two different leagues. That way they would never have to play against each other. Believing he had solved the problem, Billy decided to give it a try.

He joined the Town Tigers that played against other towns and the Pole Cats Club that played against other clubs.

Billy played lots of baseball that season. Once there were two games on the same day, but that didn't bother Baseball Billy. He played one game then changed his team hat and was ready to play the next.

Billy was having lots of fun, and both his teams were doing very well. In fact they did so well that by the end of the season they were both going to play in a championship game. The Tigers were playing to find out

which town team was the best, and the Pole Cats were playing to decide which club team was the best.

At first Billy was very excited about playing in two championship games, but then he heard some troubling news. Both games were on the same day, at the same time, and in the same park, but on different baseball fields.

What was he going to do? Billy wanted to play in both games, and his teams needed him. He was a great centerfielder and a pretty good batter too. What could he do? Billy thought and thought.

Then Billy had an idea. The two baseball fields faced each other from opposite sides of the park. They shared the same outfields. Billy figured that since he played centerfield he could possibly play for both teams. All he had to do was turn around and he could cover both centerfields at the same time.

Billy thought it might work. So, he decided to give it a try.

When the big day came Billy was ready. He went into centerfield wearing his Tigers team hat with his Pole Cats hat in his back pocket. He faced one way to cover the Tiger's game. Then he turned around, changed his hat, and covered the Pole Cat's game.

It seemed to be working. At times he'd catch a ball hit to centerfield facing one way and then later he'd catch a ball facing the other way.

The games continued and both his teams were doing well. Once when it was his turn to bat for the Tigers, Billy noticed the Pole Cats were taking to the field. He had to get into centerfield right away to play for the Pole Cats.

There was only one thing to do. On the first pitch, Billy swung with all his might. He hit the ball far into the outfield and he ran as fast as he could around the bases. Billy made a home run. The Tigers cheered, but Billy couldn't stop to be congratulated. He grabbed his glove and raced right out into centerfield while putting on his Pole Cats hat.

When the final inning came, both of Billy's teams were winning. The Tigers and the Pole Cats would each win their championship game if they could keep the other teams from scoring. Billy was in centerfield again carefully watching both games.

The first batter against the Tigers got on base. The same thing happened against the Pole Cats. Then there was one 'out', then two 'outs' on the Tigers side. The same thing happened on the Pole Cats side. Just one more 'out' on each side and Billy would be a two-time winner.

As Billy was taking out his Tigers hat from his pocket and was about to turn around again, something happened. It was something that he had not thought of before. The next batters on each side both hit high fly balls to centerfield at the same time.

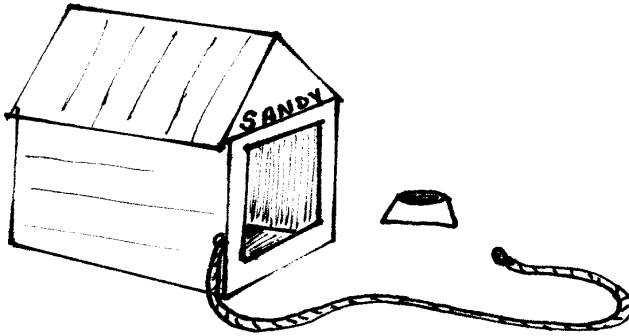
Billy quickly looked one way then the other. Both balls were flying towards him. What should he do? Which one should he catch? He knew that the ball he missed would cause that team to lose the game and lose the championship. What could he do?

Billy kept turning his head quickly watching both balls. They were coming right at him. There was a chance. With the hat still in one hand and his glove in the other, Billy quickly stretched out both arms. The balls came down. One ball landed in his glove and the other in his hat. Billy caught them both. Both his teams were winners.

The Tigers and the Pole Cats cheered and raced out to centerfield. Billy was a hero. They picked him up on their shoulders and carried him first toward one side then the other.

Billy never forgot that terrific baseball season and that fantastic catch. After the game, and after some thought, he decided that it was better to play in only one game at a time, even if you are Baseball Billy.

A LUCKY DOG



Sandy barked and pulled on the rope. She didn't like being tied.

"It's your own fault," Mother said. "I told you to stay out of the garden." Now Sandy was tied to the rope by her doghouse and could not run freely around the yard anymore.

Young Sandy did not feel like a lucky dog that day, but she was. She lived with a nice family who took good care of her. She had her own cozy doghouse in the yard with her favorite blanket inside to keep her warm.

The children loved Sandy and played ball with her in the yard. Mother loved Sandy too. She made sure Sandy had a good meal each day and plenty of clean water to drink. She also made sure that Sandy obeyed the rules.

One day Mother let Sandy into the house.

“You have to behave yourself,” she told her, “and stay off the couch.”

Sandy had a great time indoors. She stretched out on the rug next to the children and was petted as they watched TV.

During a commercial everyone went into the kitchen and Sandy was alone. She looked up at the big puffy couch. It looked very soft. So, she jumped up onto it. It *was* soft and Sandy liked it. She was just about to lie down when Mother came into the room.

“Get off the couch!” she yelled. “That’s it, out you go.” Mother took Sandy outside and tied her to the rope.

Once again Sandy did not feel very lucky. She could not understand why she had to follow rules.

Just then a strange dog came walking by the fence. His name was Buddy, and he was all by himself. Nobody was walking him. He was not on a leash, and he was not even wearing a collar. Buddy was free and on his own.

When Sandy saw Buddy, she got excited. She barked and ran toward the fence to meet him, but the rope stopped her and Buddy walked on.

Sandy watched him go. To her Buddy was a very lucky dog. He had no rules to follow and no one telling him what to do. He could do anything he wanted.

A few days later Mother let Sandy into the house again. She fed Sandy her favorite dog food and let her lie on the rug and watch TV with the family.

When it was bedtime, the children gave Sandy a hug and went to their rooms. Mother was about to bring Sandy outside, but it was raining and Mother didn't want to get wet.

"I'll let you sleep inside tonight," she told Sandy, "but remember, stay off the couch!" Mother turned off the lights and went to bed.

It was great being indoors. The rug was nice to lay on, but... Sandy looked up at the couch. She knew it was a lot softer. A moment later Sandy was on the couch. It was so nice that when she lay down she fell right to sleep.

She slept all night and only woke up when she heard Mother screaming.

“GET OFF THE COUCH!!!”

Sandy jumped down, and just missed being hit by the newspaper Mother swung at her.

“Look at this couch! It’s ruined,” she cried. The couch was covered with loose hair from Sandy’s fur, and it didn’t look nice at all.

“Get outside you bad dog!” she ordered and chased Sandy to the back door. Sandy raced outside and into her doghouse and hid under her blanket.

A little while later the children left for school, but Sandy did not come out to say good-bye. Then she heard Mother leaving for work. She heard the gate open, the car start and drive away.

After a long time Sandy crawled out of her doghouse. She felt very unlucky. But something felt different. Then she realized that Mother had forgotten to

tie her to the rope. Sandy could run around the whole yard. This made her feel a little better.

Just then Buddy came walking by again. Sandy ran to the fence and barked. Buddy came over. They sniffed through the fence and wagged their tails. Then Buddy started to walk on.

Sandy followed him along the fence, but then stopped when she came to the gate. To her surprise the gate was wide open. Mother had not closed it. This meant that Sandy could run off with Buddy. She could be free and not have to follow Mother's rules anymore.

Now Sandy felt very lucky. She raced through the gate and caught up to Buddy. She was very excited. This was the first time she was outside the yard by herself. She had no leash, no rope and nobody telling her what to do.

Buddy led her to the park. There they had a great time running in the field, splashing in the pond, and wrestling on the grass.

Sandy was very happy. She could do whatever she wanted for as long as she wanted and nobody was there to say "NO," or "STOP", or "TIME TO GO".

Buddy and Sandy played all day long and when they got tired they took a nap under a tree.

When they woke up it was suppertime and they were hungry. Buddy led the way out of the park and into the city.

Sandy had never been in the city before. The noisy cars that raced by in the street frightened her. Buddy stopped at the curb, looked both ways, and then crossed the street. But Sandy did not follow right away. She was afraid to go into the street with all the cars. She didn't know the rules for safely crossing streets.

Buddy was waiting on the other side. So, Sandy stepped off the curb, but she didn't look both ways.

BEEP, BEEP! A large car honked and zoomed by.

Sandy was more scared than ever, but she needed to join Buddy. So, she closed her eyes and raced into the street without looking.

BEEP, BEEP, BEEEEEP! The cars honked.

SCREEEEEEEECH! They sounded as they put on their brakes to keep from hitting her.

Somehow Sandy made it to the other side without being hit. She was very lucky.

She followed Buddy behind some stores to an alley where there was a row of trash barrels. Buddy jumped up against one of the barrels and it fell over. Then he started sniffing around inside it looking for something to eat.

Buddy pulled out a chunk of something red. It didn't smell very good, but Buddy started eating it anyway.

This was garbage! Sandy didn't want to eat garbage, but she was very hungry. So, she jumped up against a barrel and it fell over with a bang. As she dug around inside, Sandy was making quite a mess of the alley and herself.

Just then a man came out of a back door with a broom in his hand. Buddy quickly grabbed his food and ran away. Sandy sat and looked up at the man hoping he would give her some good food to eat like Mother always did. But the man was angry.

"Get out of here, you mutt!" he yelled. He swung the broom and hit her. The scared Sandy raced out of the alley with her tail between her legs.

When she found Buddy, he had finished eating. There were still a little of his food left, and he let her have it. It smelt bad and tasted worse, but Sandy ate it anyway. A little while later she was hungry again.

It was getting dark now and Sandy was tired. Buddy again led the way. As they walked along it got cold and started to rain, but they still had no place to sleep.

Finally Buddy stopped by an old house and crawled under the porch. Sandy followed. It was dry under the porch, but the loose sand stuck to their wet fur making them very dirty.

They lay down close together trying to stay warm, but Sandy wasn't warm. She was cold, wet, tired, hungry and dirty. She wasn't feeling very lucky anymore.

As she lay there she remembered her nice warm doghouse and her favorite blanket. She thought of the good food Mother gave her and the love she received from the children.

Buddy, however, had no problem falling asleep. Nothing seemed to bother him.

The next day the two dogs walked up and down the streets. Trash barrels were on the curb waiting for the trash men to come. The dogs sniffed each barrel and knocked over any that smelled like there was food inside. They were making quite a mess.

They came to a street that seemed very familiar to Sandy. She looked around, and there it was. Across the street was the house where she lived.

Sandy sat and looked at it. What should she do? She knew that if she went home she would probably be punished and she would have to follow the rules. She knew it also meant she could play with the children, get good food and a warm place to sleep.

If she stayed with Buddy, she would have the freedom to do anything she wanted. But she would also have to learn some different rules: like how to cross the street safely, where to find food, and how to stay warm. Both ways of living had some good things and some not so good things about it.

Buddy continued happily down the street. Sandy watched him go then walked toward the house. The gate was still open, so she walked in, and there she saw Mother working in the garden.

Sandy stopped. She was a little afraid of what might happen. Was Mother going to yell at her, tie her to the rope, or hit her with a newspaper?

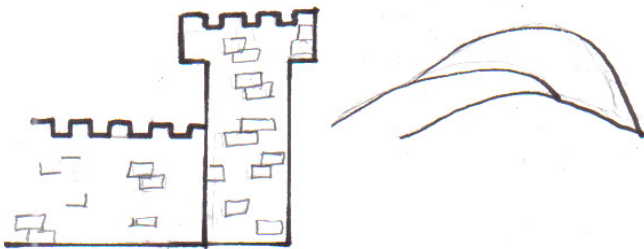
Just then Mother looked over and saw Sandy. A big smile came to her face. She came over, and even though Sandy was dirty, Mother threw her arms around her and gave her a big hug.

“I missed you, Sandy,” she said. “I’m glad you’re home.”

She called to the children and they raced out of the house screaming for joy. They petted and kissed Sandy. They were all so happy that Sandy was home.

From that moment on Sandy knew that she was a very lucky dog.

STRANGERS IN THE KINGDOM



Once upon a time there was a kingdom. In that kingdom there was a king and a queen who lead the people. There were brave knights who protected the people. There were farmers who fed the people, and there were workers of all kinds. Some of the people made things and others sold things. Everyone had something special to do, which made living in the kingdom a nice place to be.

It was a peaceful kingdom. Peaceful until *they* moved in. *They* were strangers who moved into the mountains in the far north. Everyone talked about the strangers. Some said that *they* were green and mean. Others said that *they* were hairy and scary. This talk

frightened the people and nobody liked the strangers even though nobody had ever met them.

Sarah was a young servant girl who worked in the castle. Her special job was to help others. She helped the cook make meals and helped keep the castle clean. She helped the gardener with the flowers and anything else that was needed.

Sarah heard all the talk about the strangers, but she was not afraid. She knew the brave knights would protect them from danger. She especially had faith in Sir Morin, the bravest and most handsome of the knights.

When the king heard the stories about the terrible strangers in the north, he called all the knights to the castle for a meeting.

“What are we to do?” asked the worried king.

“We should attack at once,” the Blue Knight said. “Take them by surprise.”

“It is useless,” the Red Knight said. “I hear that they are too strong. We need to surrender before they kill us all.”

“No,” the Green Knight said. “I hear that they are like monsters. We must escape now while there is still time.”

Nobody could agree on what to do. Sir Morin sat there and listened to what everyone had to say.

It was a long meeting and the king asked for food to be brought in to help the knights think.

Sarah served the food to the knights. She always served Sir Morin first, but he never noticed her. He was always too busy.

As Sarah was cleaning up the plates, Sir Morin spoke. Sarah listened.

“What are they doing here?” he asked. “Has anyone here ever met them?”

“I hear that they are thieves,” someone answered.

“I hear that they are trying to conquer the world,” another said.

“I hear that they are like wild animals,” someone else said.

Sir Morin turned to them all. “This is what you have *heard*, but what do you *know*?” he asked.

No one spoke.

“We need to know the truth about who they are and why they are here,” Sir Morin said. “We should go and talk to them.”

The king liked the idea, but the knights did not.

“It’s too dangerous!” they all said.

Then Sir Morin stood up.

“Your majesty, if you allow me, I will go myself to meet these strangers and find out why they are here.”

“Good,” the king said. “You will leave at dawn.”

Sarah felt very proud of her favorite knight. He was so brave.

She knew that the mountains in the north were far away. It would take Sir Morin many days to get there. Perhaps he could use some help on his journey she thought.

The next morning Sir Morin, with his armor, his sword and shield, rode his horse to the castle gate. Everyone waved good-bye and wished him good luck. As he passed through the gate he saw Sarah on a pony, which was loaded with food and supplies.

“I wish to help,” Sarah said as he rode by. “I will go with you and care for your needs on the journey.”

Sir Morin glanced at her without stopping. “Do as you wish,” he said, and Sarah followed him as they headed north.

They rode for three days together, but spoke very little. Sarah made breakfast and lunch, which Sir Morin ate in silence after saying, “Thank you.”

At night Sarah set up the tents and made supper for him. Again he ate and slept in his tent, but all he ever said to her was, “Thank you”.

On the fourth day of traveling they entered the mountains. They were getting close. The weather turned cold and cloudy. When they stopped for lunch, Sir Morin decided to sharpen his sword to be ready if there was any trouble.

Sarah was getting nervous, but she still believed that her brave knight would keep her safe.

As they rode down a dark trail through a forest, they heard a man shouting. It sounded like he was calling for help. The shouts came from the deep woods off the trail.

They stopped. Sir Morin took out his sword and peered through the trees, but saw nothing. He started to ride on.

“Shouldn’t we go and help him?” Sarah asked.

“My mission is too important,” he told her. “I must continue on. We are very close.”

Sarah could still hear the man calling out and stopped her pony.

“I must go and see if I can help him,” she said.

“Do what you must,” Sir Morin said. “Be careful,” he added, and he continued down the trail.

Sarah didn’t like the idea of being alone right now, but she couldn’t just ride past if someone needed help. She had to find out.

She led her pony off the trail and made her way through the dark forest toward the voice still calling out.

Sir Morin continued slowly down the trail being very careful. He kept looking to the left and right for any signs of monsters or green strangers.

When he reached the top of a hill, he saw a tiny village below. He noticed that the small houses in the village were made differently than any he had seen before.

As he rode close he saw men and women and children. Their clothes were all green, and they all had long hair, but they were people and not monsters like some had said.

When these people saw a knight riding into their village, they became frightened. The men came running out with clubs and sharp sticks and surrounded Sir Morin and his horse.

They all started questioning him.

“What do you want?”

“Why are you here?”

“Where did you come from?”

But Sir Morin could not understand what they were saying. The people of the village spoke in a strange language he had never heard before.

“I come in peace,” Sir Morin said. “I’m here to find out why you have come to our kingdom.”

The people were confused. They could not understand what Sir Morin was saying. They did not know his language either. Only Jason, the leader of the people, knew how to speak Sir Morin’s language. No one else in the village did. But Jason was not there.

“He is a soldier!”

“He is a spy!”

“He is with an army that will attack us!” the people said to each other, which made everyone very much afraid.

Sir Morin could see the fear on their faces and tried to explain.

“I come from the king to know what is it you want.” Again the strangers could not understand his words.

They turned to each other. “What should we do?” they asked.

“If only our leader was here,” someone said.

“Yes,” another agreed, “he would understand what the knight is saying. He can speak that language. He would know what to do.”

“Maybe Jason was captured by their army,” another suggested. “Maybe we can trade the knight for Jason.”

Before Sir Morin knew what they were doing, the strangers grabbed him off his horse, forced him into a hut and barred the door.

Just then someone shouted, “Jason is coming! Jason is coming!”

Riding on Sarah’s pony was a man with long hair, dressed in green with a bandage on his foot. Sarah was walking along side leading the pony into the village.

“It’s Jason! He’s back! He’ll know what to do,” the people said. They all gathered around Jason, and started to tell him what happened.

“We captured a knight.”

“A soldier.”

“A spy.”

“He’s here to kill us.”

“We locked him up.”

“Release him,” Jason said. “He comes in peace.”

The people were shocked to hear this.

“How do you know he is not an enemy?” they asked.

“Sarah here told me,” he answered

They all looked at Sarah whose clothes looked strange to them. Sarah looked back at them with a friendly smile.

“I fell off my horse and hurt my foot,” Jason told them. “I was alone in the wilderness for days. Sarah helped me and I owe her my life. She is honest and kind. She is to be trusted. She told me of the knight’s mission and I believe her.”

Since Sarah had saved their leader, the village people decided to believe her too, and they released Sir Morin.

Sir Morin and Sarah learned that the strangers were not thieves or monsters as some people had said. They were peaceful farmers who needed a place to live.

That night the people of the village gave Sarah a big party to thank her for saving Jason.

The next day Sir Morin and Sarah left the village to return to the castle and tell the king what they had learned about the strangers.

On their journey back, Sir Morin spoke to Sarah. “You are a brave girl,” he said. “And you have a good heart. Thank you for all your help. The king shall hear of your deeds.”

When they reached the castle, they told the king what had happened. He was happy to learn the truth about the strangers in the north.

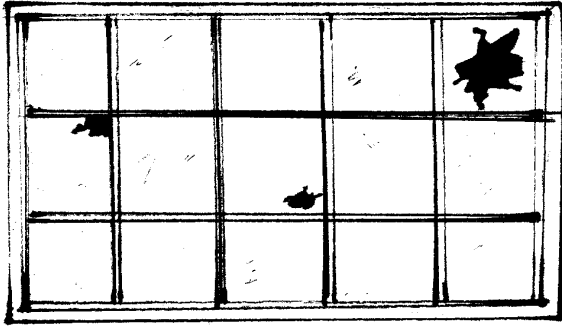
When he heard of the good works Sarah had done, he was very pleased. The king made Sir Morin her knight protector. It was now his job to take care of Sarah.

He then ordered them both to travel all around the kingdom and tell everyone the real story about the strangers in the north.

When the people of the kingdom learned the truth about the strangers, they were no longer afraid and peace came to the kingdom once again.

Sarah and Sir Morin became good friends, and Sarah enjoyed many happy trips around the kingdom with her favorite knight.

Paul's Window



School was over for another day. Now came the part of the day that Paul liked the least – the walk home.

It used to be fun. It used to be just Paul and Barry, his older brother. They would walk together talking about their day and maybe go to the store for sodas. Then John started walking with them. John was in Barry's class and they had more to talk about. Paul was often left out of the conversation, but it got worst when Pete came along.

Pete had transferred from a school in the city. He was also in Barry's class. The kids thought Pete was 'cool' because he came from the big city.

Ever since Pete joined them on their walks home, Paul was totally excluded from the older boys.

It was Pete who first objected to having a 'baby' hanging around.

So now, Paul always stayed a distance behind the older boys. He could see them ahead talking and laughing and horsing around, and he felt left out.

On their way home, the boys always took a shortcut behind an old, deserted factory. There was a "For Sale" sign in front, but the building looked very rundown and useless.

One day, when they were behind the factory and out of sight from the street, Pete turned to Barry.

"Hey, Barry, I bet you're too chicken to break a window,"

"What?" Barry asked surprised.

"Come on. You chicken?" Pete said.

Barry hesitated. "What about you?" he asked.

"Sure, I'll do it. We'll all do it, all three of us. What do you say, John?"

John's eyes lit up. "Yeah!" he agreed. And with that Pete and John started hunting for some throwing rocks.

Barry was uneasy about breaking windows on someone else's property, but he didn't want to be called chicken either. He figured the building was worthless and would probably be torn down anyway. So it didn't matter – much.

Paul walked up to the group hunting for rocks.

"Paul, take my schoolbag home," Barry said. "We're going to the store for sodas. Tell Mom."

"Can I come too?" Paul asked.

"No!" Barry said forcefully.

John raced up to Barry with the perfect size throwing rock.

"Look at this one!" he exclaimed.

"What are you doing?" Paul asked.

"Nothing, and don't tell Mom," Barry said.

Pete, holding a few choice stones, hurried over.

"Hey, the one that doesn't break a window on the first throw buys the sodas," he said.

Paul was shocked to learn what they were doing. He knew it wasn't right.

"Mom won't like this," he said

"You better not tell," Barry said angrily. "I'm warning you."

"Yeah," Pete sneered. "Get out of here. This isn't for babies. Beat it!"

Paul glared at Pete. He didn't like Pete very much. Pete was always getting his brother into trouble, and making him do things that weren't right.

"Yeah, go home, Paul," Barry said.

Paul looked at his brother. He was hurt that Barry sided with Pete. He sadly picked up Barry's schoolbag and walked on.

A moment later him he heard the sound of glass breaking and shouts from the boys. He turned to see them running off from what they had done.

Everyday now after school the boys would have a contest to see who could throw better and break a window. Barry was good at it. He used to play ball with Paul and they both developed good throwing arms.

One day Barry pointed to the highest corner window.

“Hey, Pete, think you can hit that one?”

“Sure. Watch this,” Pete answered and sent a rock flying.

Pete’s throw was way off and he missed the whole building. Barry started to laugh.

“That was lousy,” Barry said. “Even Paul can throw better than that”.

Pete did not like being laughed at. “Oh yeah,” he said angrily. “You want to bet? I’ll bet you five dollars he can’t.”

Barry hesitated. Five dollars was a lot of money.

“Come on, you said he could do it. Put up or shut up,” Pete demanded.

“O.k. it’s a bet,” Barry said, and ran back to where Paul is walking.

“Paul, you got to do something for me. I bet Pete you can break a certain window.”

“It’s not right, Barry. That’s somebody’s property,” Paul said.

“I know, I know, but there’s a bunch of windows broken already. One more won’t matter. And besides they’ll probably tear this old factory down anyway. Nobody wants it. Come on.”

Paul wasn’t sure.

“Come on, I bet five dollars. You got to do it,” Barry pleaded.

Pete came up to them. “If the baby chickens out I win,” he said.

Paul was getting angry at being called a baby. He glared up at Pete.

“He ain’t chickening out,” Barry said then turned to his brother again. “Paul, if you do this, I’ll take you for a soda after – my treat.”

“But you won’t have any money for a treat after he misses,” Pete said laughing. John laughed too.

Barry quickly picked up a rock and placed it in Paul’s hand.

“Come on, Paul, show them,” Barry pleaded. “Please, Paul.”

Paul looked at the rock in his hand then up at Pete who sneered down at him. Without taking his eyes off of him, Paul slowly turned his hand over and the rock fell to the ground.

“Chicken,” Pete laughed. “I win.”

“Paul...” Barry cried out in disappointment.

“I want a better rock,” Paul said still glaring up at Pete.

“All right, Paul!” Barry cheered. He and John started gathering rocks for Paul, which made him feel important.

Pete watched Paul drop his schoolbag and take off his jacket.

Barry and John presented Paul with a choice of rocks. John pointed to one in particular.

“That one’s good,” he said.

Paul picked it up. It was a good rock, but Paul didn’t want to follow anyone’s advice right now. He felt like this was his moment and he wasn’t going to let anyone tell him what to do even if they were right.

He let the rock fall to the ground and chose another one.

“Come on, baby, hurry up,” Pete said.

“Don’t rush him,” Barry said defending his brother. He pointed up at the building. “It’s the upper corner window. You can do it right?”

Paul looked up at the far off window. It wasn't an easy shot. Paul started to worry. He wasn't sure he could do it, but he couldn't let it show. Without any expression on his face, he just nodded and kept looking up at the window.

Can I do it, Paul thought? Then he decided. I have to - I just have to, he told himself.

"You only get one shot, baby. You miss - you loose," Pete reminded.

Paul ignored Pete. He unbuttoned his shirt's sleeves and shook out his arms in preparation. The other boys moved out of the way.

All eyes were on Paul. He felt very important. He looked hard at the upper corner window. A flashing thought came to him that he shouldn't be doing this, but it was too late to think about that now.

He wet his lips, cocked his arm back and let off with a mighty throw. The rock flew straight to its target. It smashed the glass with a shattering sound.

John and Barry cheered his success.

"Lucky shot," Pete said flatly and walked off.

Barry patted Paul on the back.

"Nice throw," John said.

“I knew you could do it,” Barry said. “We play ball together,” he told John. “He’s got a good arm.”

Paul never felt more proud. He loved it that Barry was proud too. Maybe now they would let me walk home with them Paul thought. Paul was feeling very good just then.

Barry looked around and noticed Pete had walked away.

“Hey, Pete, you owe me,” he yelled. He and John race off to catch up with him.

Paul looked up at the broken window with pride. “I did it. I showed them,” he said.

After that day, Pete stopped throwing rocks at the windows. He was the worse thrower of the boys, and he didn’t like it when others were better than him especially if it was Paul. Without the encouragement from Pete, Barry and John stopped breaking windows too.

Nothing else changed though. Paul wasn’t asked to join the older boys, and he continued to walk behind as usual. Each day, though, as he passed the old factory, Paul looked up at his great achievement - his broken window - and again he felt proud. But that was about to change.

One day the “For Sale” sign by the factory was gone. Trucks with equipment and materials came, and

there were construction workers putting up a fence around the building. The old factory was being repaired.

Barry was stunned when he first saw this on his way home from school. The boy stopped and looked at the work being done.

Barry was feeling badly. “Gee, I never thought they would sell this place,” he said.

“Ah, lets go,” Pete said. “We should have broken all the windows when we had the chance.”

When Paul saw what was going on he was surprised too. He looked up at his window. It was still broken. He didn’t feel the pride he usually felt when he looked at it. Instead he started to feel something else – guilt. He broke somebody’s window.

That night as Paul was doing his homework, a cold wind blew into the room and Paul got up to closed the window. When he did he was aware of the clean, unbroken glass. He touched it and remembered his factory window and had that guilty feeling again.

That weekend he went with his father to the hardware store. While he was there he saw a sign that read: “Windows Repaired \$18.00”. Again Paul remembered his window and the guilt returned. He knew then what he had to do.

When they got home, Paul asked his father if he could borrow the rake. With it he went knocking on the door of old lady Cohen's house.

Mrs. Cohen always had chores that needed doing, but none of the kids in the neighborhood wanted to do work for her. She made you work really hard and wouldn't pay you very much afterwards, but Paul went to see her anyway.

"Do you have any work I can do for you?" he asked her when she came to the door.

The old woman smiled with delight and invited Paul inside.

Paul worked all afternoon for Mrs. Cohen. He raked leaves and put them in bags. He washed windows and cleaned out the basement.

He was tired when he was done. In payment Mrs. Cohen gave him eight dollars. It seemed a lot of work for eight dollars, but Paul was happy to have it.

At home Paul went to his piggy bank and emptied it. There was five dollars inside. Thirteen dollars wasn't enough. Where can I get some more money he thought? He then went to see his brother.

"Barry, remember that soda you promised to buy me for breaking that window?"

A look of guilt crossed Barry's face.

“Quiet, you want Mom to hear?” he said.

Paul lowered his voice. “Could you give me the money instead? I need money for... for something.”

“What are you going to buy?” Barry asked.

Paul hesitated a second. He wasn’t sure what his brother would say if he told him.

“Well, spit it out,” Barry demanded, “or I’m not giving you anything.”

Paul lowered his eyes and spoke softly. “I’m going to buy a window.”

“What?” Barry was puzzled at first, but then he figured out what Paul was up to.

“Don’t be stupid. Just forget about it. You’ll get yourself into trouble,” he said.

“I can’t forget about it,” Paul said. “So, can you give me the money for the soda, and... can I borrow the rest?”

Barry thought a moment. “How much do you need?”

“Five dollars,” Paul answered.

Barry then took out his wallet. “You better not get me into trouble,” he said as he handed Paul five dollars.

“I’ll pay you back,” Paul said.

“No, you don’t have to. It’s Pete’s money - from the bet. It’s only right.” Then Barry smiled at his brother. “That was an awesome throw.”

Paul almost smiled back, but he wasn’t feeling very proud right now. As Paul took the money, Barry grew serious. “You’re a good kid, Paul.”

Paul wrote a short note: “This is for a window I broke. I’m sorry.” He put the note and eighteen dollars in an envelope and put it in his schoolbag.

The next day after school, Paul stopped outside the fence that now surrounded the old factory.

A big sign just inside the gate read: “Hard Hat Area Do Not Enter”. Workers and machines busily moved about. Paul saw a trailer close to the fence. There were workers going in and out. This must be where the boss works he thought.

Paul was scared. He took the envelope from his schoolbag. He had to force his legs to move and he slowly passed through the gate and started for the trailer. He didn’t get very far before a big workman saw him.

“Hey, kid, get out of here. Nobody allowed,” he yelled.

Paul froze. “Ah, ah... I got to...”

“You hear me? Get out of here,” he yelled again.

Paul quickly turned and ran out the gate and headed home.

After going a little ways he calmed down and stopped, the envelope still in his hand. He knew he had to go back and somehow deliver the envelope.

When he reached the factory again he had an idea. He decided to stick the envelope in the fence where the trailer was. He hoped somebody would find it there.

So, when no one was watching, Paul folded the envelope and stuck it in the fence and ran off.

The next day he noticed the envelope was gone. He figured they must have found it. His task was done and he started to feel better.

A few weeks later Paul was enjoying his walks home from school again. Pete and John were given detention for a week for fooling around in school. This meant Paul and Barry walked home together.

It was just like old times. They talked and laughed and played around. It was a great week.

As they passed the factory one day during that week, Paul glanced up at the windows.

“Look!” he said with surprise.

All the windows had been repaired including Paul's window.

"My window's fixed," he said with a big smile.

The new piece of glass in his window seemed to sparkle brighter than all the other windows. Barry saw it and he also saw the joy in Paul's face and was proud of his younger brother.

"Hey, come on I'll buy you a soda," Barry said.

"Really?" Paul said. "Race yah," and with that the two of them ran off toward the store.