

Headaches

The day started quite normally. But it went downhill from there. What else is new.

At the end of the first period, Bonnie came to me in a panic.

“Bill, we have a problem!”

“Bonnie, you have to let it go! Brooke’s a big girl now ...”

“No, no, not that. About school!”

Bonnie panics easily. But I guess when you care about our school as much as she does, that comes with the territory.

“OK, what’s the problem? And why are you talking to me instead of Darren?”

“Darren isn’t talking to anybody today. He’s a little upset that nobody liked his idea for the school mascot costume he ordered.”

“But it wasn’t a Wildcat ... it looked more like Sylvester!”

“That’s what I thought too. But anyway, we have another problem.”

I think that’s where we’d begun several minutes ago. Things have a way of spiralling out of control when you’re talking to Bonnie.

She kept talking. “The school booked a mime for a presentation to the elementary classes this afternoon.”

“OK ... so?” We’d had the mime last year. He was really good. But he’d spent the entire afternoon here and hadn’t said a word. I guess that’s what mimes are supposed to do ...

Although I remember quite distinctly the problem he’d had when he was trying to ‘ask’ Tracy where the bathroom was. I’d never seen Tracy blush before.

“We also booked Clara the clown for this afternoon. At the same time!”

I wasn’t sure how a mime and a clown would get along together. But we’d had the clown before, too, and the kids loved her. She’d ended her performance by making balloon creations for all the kids. Her giraffes were exceptional. Unfortunately all the kids had wanted swords. Recess that afternoon was a nightmare.

“Well ... can’t we cancel one of them?”

“No, it’s too late. Besides, the mime is already here!”

“What? It’s only ten o’clock! What’s he going to do for two and a half hours?” I thought for a moment. “Have him wander around the halls and do performance art for the Jr. and Sr. High classes. Just tell him to keep out of trouble!” Mimes were sneaky. I knew that. “And we’ll figure something out when the clown gets here.”

Maybe we could send her into Darren’s office to cheer him up.

The morning didn’t get any better. It was threatening to rain, so of course our roof started to leak again. We weren’t sure why, but whenever the roof leaked, it always happened directly over a computer. It didn’t matter which room.

Although it was fun watching Bonnie run from room to room with buckets.

Just before lunch I was wandering the halls, making sure everyone was where they were supposed to be. I passed the mime, crouched in a corner trying to escape from an imaginary box. He looked like he was in pain. Maybe it was just the face paint.

I came across Jason, who is a grade eight student, and someone we keep a close eye on. At breaks we usually follow him around to make sure he doesn’t cause problems. We still haven’t repainted the wall in the washroom.

“Jason, why are you out of class?”

“I was just getting my books.”

“Did the teacher say you could go to your locker to get your books?”

“They weren’t in my locker. They were in the washroom.”

“So why are you at your locker?”

“I was hungry”.

I knew that trying to have a logical conversation with a Jr. High student was akin to beating your head against a brick wall. So I just escorted him back to his classroom, and told the teacher not to let him out of the room until Christmas.

On my way back to the office I passed the mime again. Now he was rolling on the floor pretending to be wrestling with some wild animal. I kept walking.

Lunchtime came and went without anything else disastrous happening. Except that the hot lunch lady decided to serve brown beans and egg sandwiches again. I’m sure it was very nutritious. But I’d need to open the windows in my classroom after lunch. I had the grade tens. I’d probably need to locate the air freshener too.

After lunch, we decided to run both presentations in the gym, one after the other. We'd let the mime go first. That way the clown lady could finish off the day making her balloon swords, and it would be the bus drivers' problem.

But we couldn't locate the mime. We looked everywhere. Eventually we found him in Darren's office. Darren was sitting in his chair with his chin resting on his hands, staring at the mime. The mime was sitting in a chair with his chin resting on his hands, staring at Darren.

I didn't know who'd started it, but I grabbed the mime and hustled him toward the gym. He was pretending to kick and scream the whole way. He was actually a pretty good mime.

I left him to do his thing, and went to class. I could hear the laughter from across the hall, so I knew the kids were enjoying the performance.

At break, the clown went in to take over. I guess the mime stayed in there too, to watch. I didn't go in ... I had a Math 30 class to prepare for.

Half-way through the class, Bonnie showed up at my door, in a panic.

Did I mention that this happens a lot?

"Bill, you have to come to the gym! Something terrible is happening!"

"Can't Darren ..."

"He went to the washroom about twenty minutes ago, and I think he's still in there. He mentioned something about beans at lunch ..."

"OK, Bonnie ... so what's the problem?"

"It's the mime and the clown. They're fighting!"

"What?" I tend to say that a lot too. Mostly just to Bonnie.

We rushed into the gym.

The mime was trying to choke the clown. Very silently. The clown was beating on the mime with a balloon sword.

All of our elementary students were laughing uproariously. Falling down laughing. Which is hard to do when you're already sitting down.

I rushed over to break it up. That was a mistake.

The mime jumped on my back and pretended to strangle me. At least I think he was pretending. He had strong arms. I guess mimes need strong arms to help them break out of those imaginary boxes.

Then the clown started poking me with her balloon sword. Clara was her name. I'd have to remember never to hire Clara again.

The kids were laughing even louder. And then the clown winked at me. "Thanks for playing along", she whispered in my ear.

And then I got it. The two of them had set the whole thing up to entertain the kids.

So I played along. I tossed the mime off my back and feigned a roundhouse punch. He took a pratfall. Very silently. How did he do that?

Then I grabbed a balloon sword off the floor ... there were hundreds of them ... and pretended to run the clown through. She pretended to die. A little too overdramatically, I thought. But she *was* a clown ...

I glanced over at Bonnie. She hadn't figured it out yet. I motioned to the clown and the mime, and pointed.

Both of them took off with a yell towards her. Well, the clown yelled; the mime just pretended to yell. But he did it very convincingly.

Bonnie took one look at the two of them rushing towards her with mayhem in their eyes, and her own eyes grew big. She took off running down the hallway. I was pretty sure I heard a scream.

Looking back on the day, I decided we needed to do some things differently.

We all needed to be nicer to Darren. After all, he was doing a great job. We just needed to be a little more tolerant when he decided to think outside the box. He just had a bigger box than we did.

We also needed to hire the clown and the mime together. On a regular basis. We all needed to laugh more.