

The

Missy

STORIES



By Ann Packman

About the Author

Ann Packman is a Professor at the Australian Stuttering Research Centre, University of Technology Sydney, Australia. She trained as a speech pathologist many years ago and has worked with people who stutter for her entire professional life.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Sarah Lam for her original illustrations, and thank you to all the people I have known, including my dad, who have helped me understand to some extent what it is like to stutter.

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I hope this book sends the message to children that it is OK to stutter and that people who stutter should not be defined by it. Importantly, I hope the message is clear that teachers can play a positive role in the lives of children who stutter.

A.P.

Story One: The Apple Thief

Story Two: Where's Woofy?

Story Three: Go Missy!

Author:

Ann Packman

Producer:

Michelle Shepherd

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Sarah Lam

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Story One

The

Apple

Thief





Someone was stealing apples from Farmer MacIntosh's orchard.

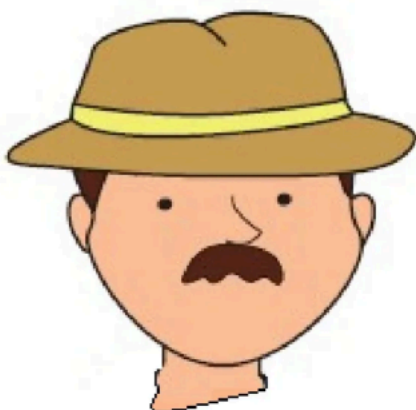
Each morning he would check the trees to see if any apples were missing. If he found some were gone, he would stomp back in to the house, slamming the screen door into the kitchen.



**“Someone is stealing our apples!”
he would say, in an angry voice.**

**His daughter Missy, would hide under her
blanket, pretending to be still asleep.**

**Her heart beat faster when her dad used his
angry voice. She would block her ears with her
fingers and hum softly so she couldn’t hear
him.**



One day Missy decided to tell Seth about the apple thief. Seth was her friend.

They sat together in class and they laughed together at silly things, like when Mr. Picklewit couldn't find his glasses or dropped the chalk.

Seth listened to her when she talked and didn't interrupt her when she stuttered, like Mr Picklewit did.



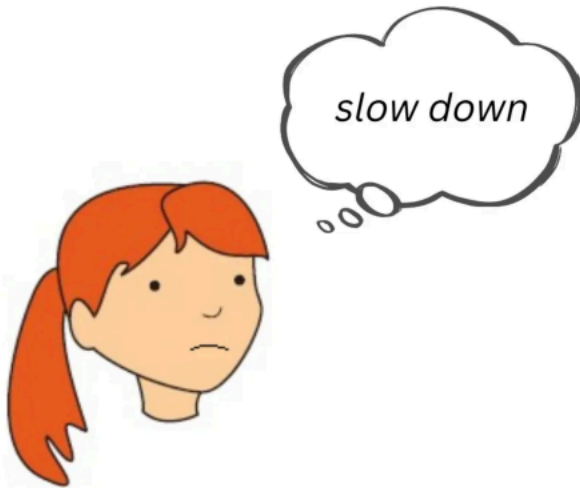
He always looked cross when Missy couldn't answer a question in class because of her stutter.

When Missy stuttered, she usually repeated the first sound of a word at the beginning of a sentence, but sometimes she would just get stuck and couldn't get the word out at all.



She didn't stutter on every word, mostly just those starting with "S" or "D", but she stuttered more when she was feeling nervous or shy.

She would tell herself to slow down, like her speech therapist had taught her, but she would usually freeze up, and the words just wouldn't come out.



Mr. Picklewit wouldn't wait for her to finish. He would just ask someone else. How she hated it when he did that.

Fortunately, Missy's other teachers were not like Mr. Picklewit. Mrs. Scatterhouse was kind and patient with her.



When other children teased her about her stuttering, Missy would tell Mrs. Scatterhouse.

In assembly, Mrs. Scatterhouse would say that bullies are rude and mean and that all children in the school must be treated with respect.



I wish Mrs. Scatterhouse was my mum, Missy thought sometimes. Missy's mum died when she was 4 years old.

Missy could hardly remember what she looked like or how her voice sounded.

Sometimes Missy just wanted to hug Mrs Scatterhouse around her large waist, like a mum, but she never did.



Mr. Swift the sports teacher was her favourite though.

He was funny and his face crinkled into a warm smile when he talked to the children.

Perhaps she liked him the best because she didn't have to say anything during sport.

All she had to do to was run as fast as she could and not miss the soccer ball when someone kicked it to her.



Missy didn't have to talk much when they used the school computers, either.

She and Seth worked together on the computers for a science project about the solar system.

They found lots of interesting stuff about it on the internet.



Seth passed her a mini Mars Bar under the desk.

Mr. Picklewit was writing sums on the board. They were doing arithmetic. Missy was good at arithmetic.

She always got her fractions right. She knew her multiplication tables up to 9 times, and she could even say them in front of the class without stuttering.



Actually, she was good at most subjects. She enjoyed reading stories to herself, becoming the characters in her own mind.

Whispering behind her hand, Missy told Seth that someone had been stealing apples from her dad's orchard. "Who could it be?" she whispered.

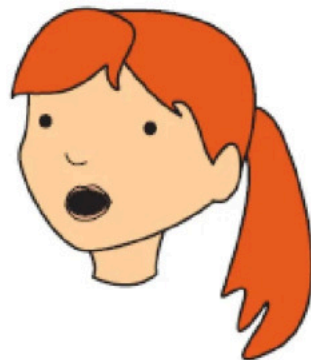
"Probably possums," Seth whispered back, "or flying foxes."



Mr Picklewit turned around with a black look. “Silence!” he thundered to the class.

The whispering stopped, along with the giggles coming from the back of the class.

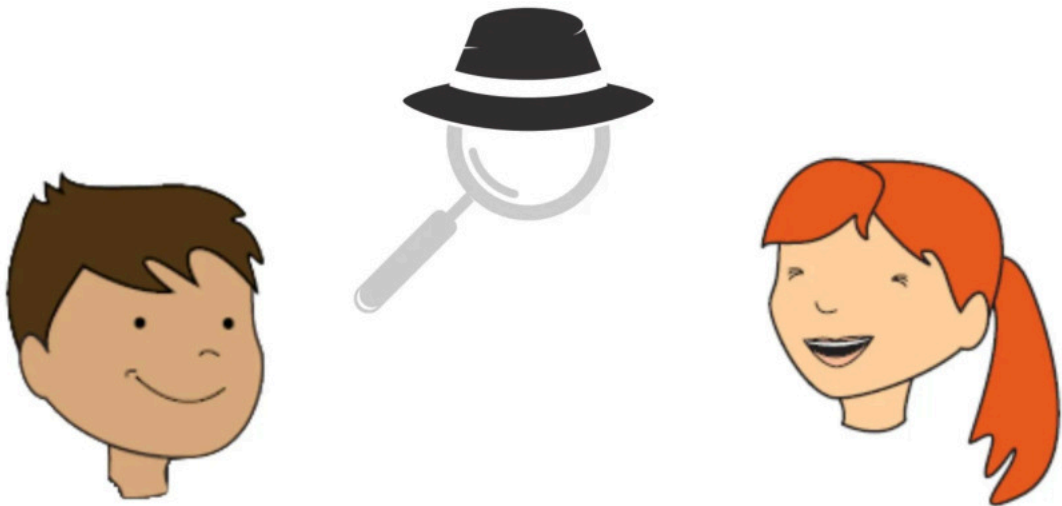
“But it’s only the fruit near the fence that disappears,” whispered Missy.



“I see,” said Seth, “so you are a detective now, Missy!”

Missy looked at him, surprised. Then she smiled.

“OK, let’s solve this mystery together, like in a detective book,” she said, excitedly.



Mr Picklewit turned around and marched down between the rows of desks towards them.

They grabbed their pencils and started to copy down his sums from the blackboard.

Mr. Picklewit scowled at them but he said nothing. He turned and walked back to the front of the class.



Heads down, Missy and Seth looked sideways at each other. Seth pulled a funny face, and Missy tried not to laugh.

They said nothing more until the bell rang.

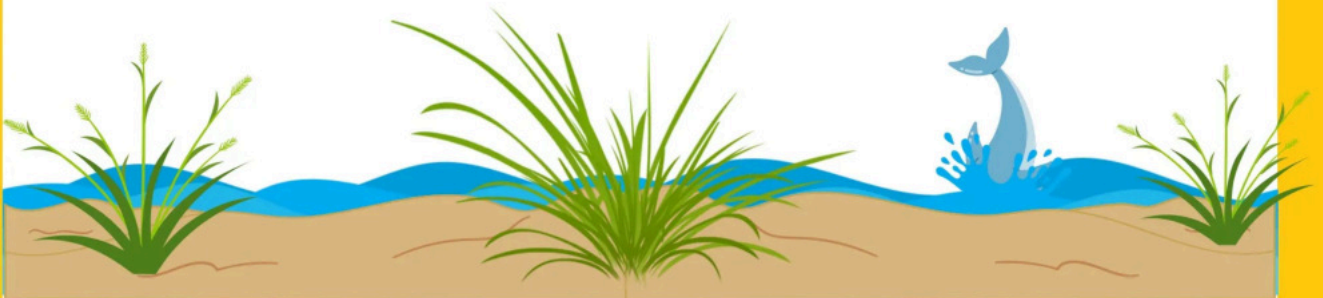
Seth and Missy rode their bikes home together that afternoon, as they did every afternoon. Seth lived with his family on the farm next to Missy's place.



Seth's dad had an orchard too, but he also had cows and grew vegetables.

In summer, they would sometimes go down to the river on the way home. Lots of kids went down to the river when it was hot, splashing each other with water to cool off.

When the weather was cooler they just sat on the sand, watching the fish flopping lazily out of the water.



Missy often went to Seth's place after school. There, they always had cake and a glass of milk. Seth's mum was nice, although she was always busy. Seth had seven brothers and sisters.

Missy had none, and she loved how there were always lots of people in Seth's house, and she loved the mess and the noise.



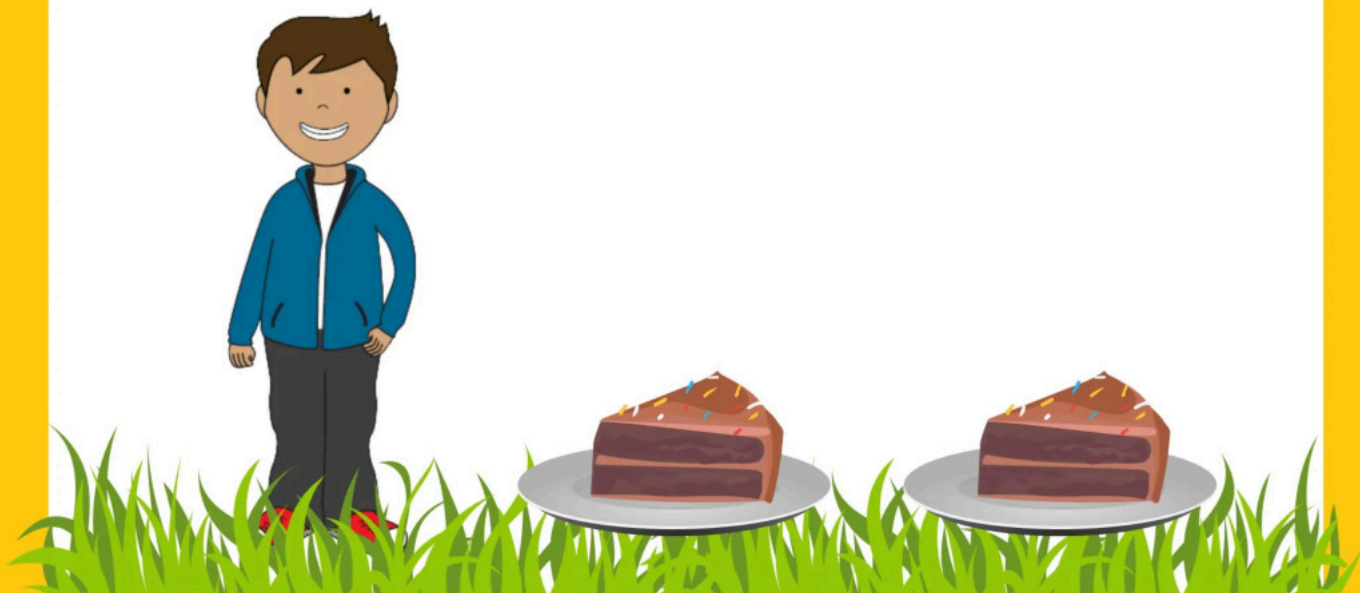
And then there was Woofy the dog, who was big and brown and slobbered on anyone when they patted his head.

Missy didn't stutter when she talked to Woofy. He just looked at her adoringly while she told him her news for the day.



That afternoon, pushing his way through his younger brothers and sisters, Seth grabbed two pieces of chocolate cake and smiled across the room at Missy.

“Out the back,” he called, nodding towards the kitchen door. Missy gave Woofy a hug, burying her nose in his warm fur.



She followed Seth out to the back yard. Seth's back yard was big and messy, with swings for the children and a shed where Seth's dad kept his tools. Beyond the back fence was the orchard.

Past that were soft rolling green hills which merged into blue mountains. Missy never noticed the mountains when she was at home, but she always saw them when she was at Seth's.



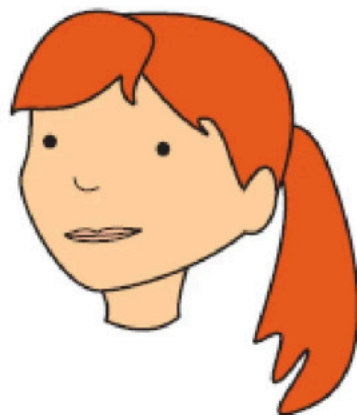
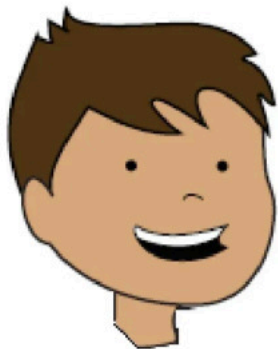
They sat down under the big shady peppercorn tree. The chocolate cake crumbled as they ate it greedily. The icing melted in the afternoon heat and ran all over their fingers.

Chocolate cake was Missy's favourite.



**So tell me about the apple thief,” said Seth.
“Are you saying he comes to your place at
night and steals the fruit over the fence?”**

**“Well,” said Missy, “I’ve never actually seen
him. Why would someone steal fruit?”**



“Beats me,” said Seth, “but we have a mystery on our hands here. Let’s watch out for the thief each night. When we see him stealing the fruit, we’ll catch him and take him to the police station.”

“Gosh!” said Missy, “What if it's a bank robber? Or an escaped prisoner?”

Seth smiled and punched her lightly on the arm.



“Don’t worry, Missy, I’ll protect you!”

Missy looked at him fondly. She was bigger than Seth, and she knew she could run faster than him and kick a ball further than him.

“Seth, if anyone needs protecting it’s you!” she said, licking the chocolate icing off her fingers.



Why, oh why, does my very best friend have a name starting with “S”, Missy thought with a smile, the very hardest sound for me to say!

Missy and Seth arranged to meet at the orchard the next night. They figured that the thief would only come once everyone was asleep, so they decided to meet at 10 o’clock.



Country people go to bed early.

They get up early, too, so Missy figured the thief would not come in the morning.

Missy was so excited; she could hardly sleep that night. This was just like a detective story.



She lay awake planning how she would stop herself going to sleep the next night and how to creep out without her father knowing.

How angry he would be if he caught her going outside at 10 o'clock at night!

But Farmer MacIntosh was always asleep by 10 o'clock. Missy knew when he was asleep because he snored. She could hear him down the hallway.



Should she take a torch?

If the moon was bright she wouldn't need a torch, but she knew that if there were clouds it would be pitch black.

She would put a torch in the pocket of her jacket, just in case.



The next night she heard her dad start to snore.

She waited until the clock beside her bed said 10 o'clock and then she tiptoed out of her bedroom, along the hall, and out the back door. It was bright outside. Missy looked up.

The moon was round and silver, hanging over her in the black velvet sky. She knew there was no man in the moon, but she imagined she could see him looking down at her.



Hundreds of bright stars winked at her. She shivered and pulled the hood of her jacket up over her head.

Missy crept down the back garden to the orchard fence. She opened the gate quietly and went into the orchard.

She followed the fence along to the old rusty plough where she and Seth had arranged to meet. She heard a strange creaking noise above her, and she realised she was scared.



She stood quite still.

When she finally felt brave enough to look up into the dark branches, Missy saw two eyes looking down at her.

They were shining silver in the moonlight.

She knew then that it was a bird, and she knew from her bird book that it was a tawny frogmouth.



“Good evening, Mr. Frogmouth,” she whispered, pleased that she was no longer afraid. “I’m Missy the detective. Tonight we are going to catch the apple thief!”

With his big noisy wings flapping, Mr. Frogmouth flew out of the tree and off into the night.

“Where are you Seth?” Missy said, a little more loudly. “Please come soon.”



A twig cracked behind her. She spun around.

“You scared me Seth!” she said out aloud.

“Shoosh,” whispered Seth, his finger to his mouth, “or you will scare our apple thief away!”

“Hey, look over there,” said Missy. She pointed along the fence to where a dark figure was climbing through the wire.

“It’s the apple thief!”



Missy crept slowly towards the dark figure, with Seth following close behind.

They watched as the figure reached up and picked apples, putting them in the pockets of his long black coat.

“It’s Old Bert,” said Seth. “He’s stealing your dad’s apples!”



Missy sighed with relief. At least it wasn't an escaped prisoner or the big wild black cat that people said lived in the hills.

“Hey, Old Bert,” she said loudly. “Stop where you are!”

The dark figure looked round at them, alarmed. Then he scrambled back through the fence, dropping some apples, and hobbled off into the night.



*stop where
you are!*

“Let him be,” said Seth, “I guess he is just hungry. He lives by himself in that old cottage down by the river.

My mum sometimes leaves one of her cakes on his doorstep for him.

I don’t think he will back again, now that we know he is the apple thief.”



The next day, Missy loaded some apples into a bag and put them in her bike basket. Riding to school with Seth, they stopped at Old Bert's cottage and she emptied the apples just inside his gate.

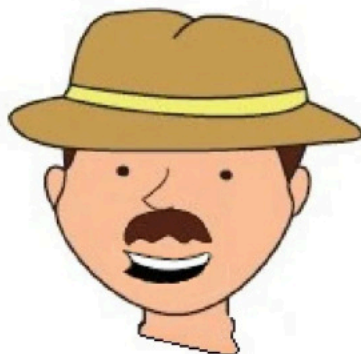
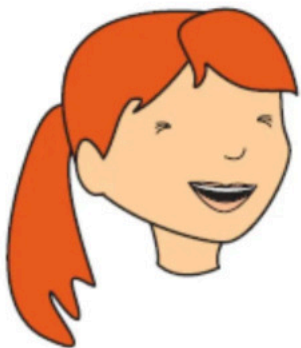
She saw him through the front window and waved. He just looked at her. After that, Missy and Seth often left apples for Old Bert and sometimes some carrots or potatoes when Seth's dad dug them up.



Missy started getting up for breakfast. Her dad wasn't angry any more in the mornings.

“What happened to the apple thief?” she asked him one morning as they sat at the kitchen table eating breakfast.

“I think he must have been caught,” said her dad.



“Ah, there must have been a clever detective on the job,” said Missy, smiling. “So are you happy now, Dad?” She watched him closely.

“Well, yes, I suppose so,” he said. He sat quietly for a moment, staring at the soggy Corn Flakes in his bowl.

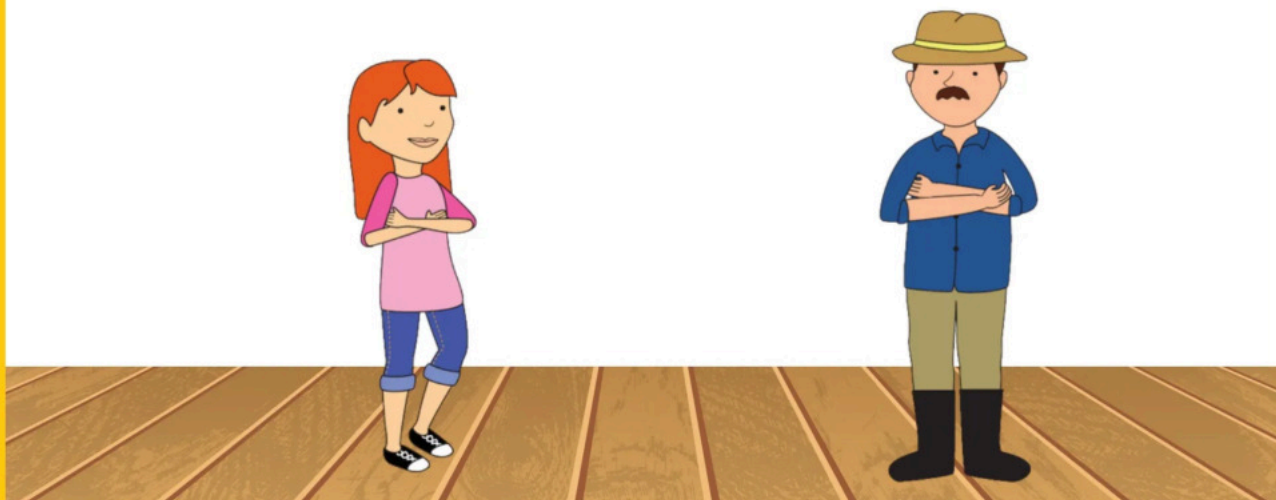
“Missy,” he looked up, “Missy, do you ever think about your mum?”



“Oh yes, dad,” said Missy, “I wish I could remember her better. But I think about her every day.”

“So do I, Missy,” said her dad. “You look like your mum you know. I think of her when I look at you.

Then I remember she is not here any more, and I feel sad.”



Missy stared at him. So, she looked like her mum!

There was only one photo of her mum in the house. It was in a frame on the table in the hallway.

It was taken when her mum and dad got married. She sometimes touched the photo gently, running her finger around her mum's face and her hair.

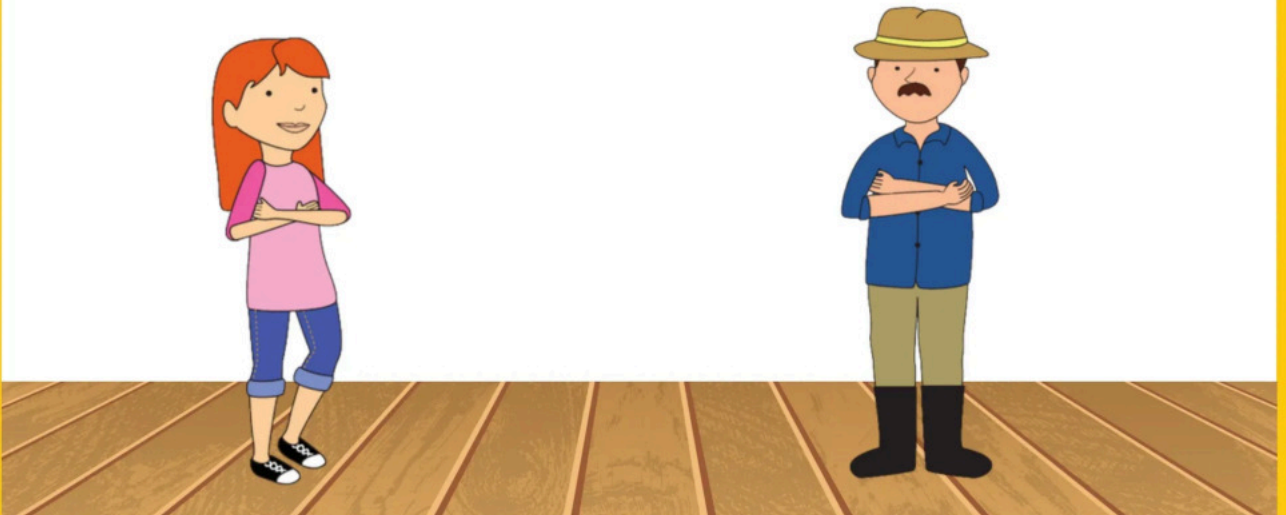


She was beautiful.

“Dad,” she said quietly, “you’ve got it all wrong! You should be happy that I look like mum, not sad.”

She leaned across and gave him a quick hug.

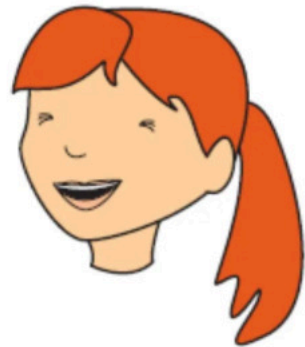
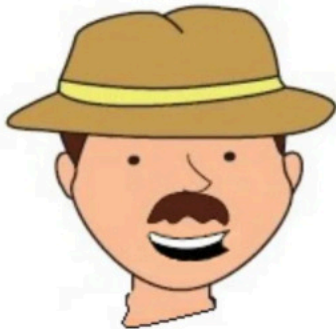
**He looked at her, frowning. Then he smiled.
She hadn’t seen him smile for a long time.**



“You’re right, Missy,” he said, “and you do make me happy. Of course you do.”
Missy drank her milk.

“Are we OK, Dad?” she whispered, “are we OK?”

“Yes, Missy. You and me....we’re OK,” he said.



That day, at school, Missy told Seth what she and her dad talked about at breakfast.

“Cool,” said Seth. Missy waited for him to look up from the bike magazine he was reading, but he didn’t.

“That’s cool,” he said.



"Yes, cool," Missy said to herself.

She thought of her dad and how happy he had looked that morning.

Then she thought of Old Bert in the old cottage, crunching a fresh red apple from the orchard.

**"Everything is OK now," she said to herself,
"everything is cool."**



