

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

"Huh! You aint my girl!" shrieked a boy's voice over the back fence. Ditty knew the voice was speaking to her—but she continued her bewailing song, a love song that she had heard Mary Jane, her older sister, sing.

"I know you hear me, and so does you," came over the fence. Silence—then:

"I ain't goin' to have no girl what all time thinks she's gotta be boss! Me—I'm a man what wears 'knee pants!' You all time gotta brag to me 'bout it little Robert Garland McNealy Junior A boy—what's still wearin' sailor suits in socks!'" The voice stopped abruptly.

"I beg your pardon," said a sweet little voice, "but were you speakin' to me, Mister? she emphasized the 'Mister.'"

Silence again—then a golden crop of curly hair appeared over the fence and finally a jolly face of a small boy about ten years old (Altho it didn't look very jolly at the moment). It was Billy she knew, but she pretended not to even see him. He climbed to the top of the fence, seated himself and waited.

The stillness was broken and suddenly by a voice that sounded as if it were in the front yard, but kept coming nearer singing:

"I'll give to you a paper of pins,
If that's the way that love begins,
If you will marry me, me,
If you, will marry me!!!"

Ditty turned around looking, how well she knew who sang that song—but oh what fun to pretend! Suddenly around the house strutted a little boy, dressed in a clean dark blue sailor suit, with hat and socks to match.

"Why you nice Bobby McNealy, were you singing that to me?" asked Ditty, bashfully digging her toes in the soft earth.

"How—do—you—do Miss Moore?" asked this gentleman making a courtly bow to her.

She at once caught his mood, "Ah—not so well Mr. Bobby, I'm sorry to say."

"Ahem!" exclaimed the boy on the fence—jumping down, "Who is it that dares talk to the lady Ditty without my permission?"

Then answering his own question, and putting another, "Ah how dare you—you kitchen Knave Bobby McNealy!!!"

Bobby straightened up, saying: "Now you hark to my words! Not even my mother calls me 'Bobby'—and you certainly aren't a privileged character around here! Get thee hence! Come Lady Ditty let us leave." (He spoke as if he owned the world) and so they started for the front yard.

"Well I'll be hanged!!" exclaimed Billy beginning to scratch his head—Then finally he let out a yell and darted out the back gate.

About fifteen minutes later around the corner started Mr. Billy Hobbs and Miss Marjorie Jones, both eating Eskimo Pies. Just as they got to Ditty's house Billy said:

"Come on Marjorie let's 'Boolevard' on the other side of the 'Prominard.'"

As they crossed over Ditty called, "Oh hey there Billy and Marjorie!"

Billy bowed as stately as he could (his breeches being a little tight)

and Marjorie said "How-do-yo-do" and they marched on.

"Oh that hateful Marjorie Jones—she's 'vamped' poor Billy—and he's my beau!"

"Oh, is he?" inquired Bobby, casually, "Well I don't mind—I'm your sweetheart so why should I worry?"

"Crazy!" shrieked Ditty, "Crazy—Go home!!" she stamped her foot and pointed to the gate.

The next day Billy walked to school with Marjorie, carried her books to school and gave her two jaw breakers. So he went on for one solid week; he was awfully tired of Marjorie, she was so silly; and he was afraid his "trick" wasn't working.

On Sunday after he had taken Marjorie home from Sunday School he went home and sat on the front steps. He had given up all hope of his "trick" working when suddenly Ditty passed—she spoke, she spoke to him; what was it she said?

"Why I only said 'hey!'" She smiled as she turned in her front gate.

"Oh Billy," came from behind the vines on her porch, "I wish you'd come over here—come quick!'"

He got up and ran.

"Kill it—kill it—oh Billy I'm scared!!" yelled Ditty.

Billy braced himself for the blow.

"Kill what?" he demanded.

"There—there, "she clutched his arm with one hand and pointed with the other.

"Aw—w!!" exclaimed Billy disgustedly, "That aint nothin' but a caterpillar! He aint gonin' to hurt you, what you scared 'bout???"

"Oh," sighed Ditty, flopping down on the steps, "My, but you're brave! Would you sit here—beside me? just a minute—I'd feel so grand to have you sit by me."

Billy smiled—it was working!

He seated himself on the other side of the steps; gradually she moved up close to him.

"Billy," she asked softly, "are you mad at me? I don't like that Bobby McNealy a bit—any more."

She waited—no answer.

"Billy," she drawled, touching his arm, "are you mad at me?"

"Oh hang it No!!"

They both giggled.

Suddenly Billy broke out laughing. "What you laughing at?" demanded Ditty.

"Oh, nothin'—nothin' 'tall!"

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