



Jehoshaphat and the Singing Soldiers

“Life is sweet!” Winston snuggled down to watch the final episode of the mystery show he’d been following. “Finally,” he murmured. “I’ll find out who’s been stealing the hubcaps off all the cars in town.”

Then he heard the worst thing he could possibly hear . . . “Win—ston?” His mom was calling him from the kitchen.

No-o-o, he groaned silently. Not now!

“Winston,” she called again. “Did you hear me?”

“Coming, Mom.” Getting up off the sofa, he shuffled to the kitchen, pulled out a chair, and slumped down into it as if his backbone had just turned to jelly.

Don’t parents realize that a kid has a life, too? I mean . . . Really!

“Sit up, Winston. I have something important to tell you.”

Mom totally missed the body clues. No sympathy here! Winston sat up and took notice that Mom was fidgeting with the edge of her coffee cup. Suddenly, he was all ears. Something was up, and he was about to be included in the adventure.

Go, Mom. What are you waiting for?

Mom cleared her throat and swallowed so hard Winston could see the lump travel down her neck. “You’re not going to like this, Winston,” she said in a voice barely above a whisper. She wouldn’t look at him, her eyes were glued to her coffee as if it was going to do a trick or something.

“What?” he managed to squeak out. Goose bumps were crawling up and down his arms and legs. “Have I done something wrong?”

Mom looked up and smiled.

Winston breathed a sigh of relief.

“No,” she said, running her finger round and round the rim of her coffee cup. “It’s just that Aunt Frieda is coming for a visit, and . . .”

“Aunt Frieda? The one who carries a dictionary in her pocket to read for fun? The one who thinks I should become an opera singer?”

By now Winston realized he’d totally jumped out of his chair and was practically screaming. Mom’s eyes were huge, her mouth hanging wide open.

Time stood still—at least for a second. Then Winston took a deep breath and fought for control. Mom’s coffee cup rattled against the saucer as she squeezed the handle between her shaking fingers. And it was his fault. He had to do something.

Winston sat back down and put his hand on Mom’s. “Sorry, Mom. Guess I got a little excited.” He took another deep breath. “So Aunt Frieda’s coming for a visit?”

Mom was a trooper. She smiled as if none of that had even happened. “Yes. She’ll be here for the weekend. I’ve talked to your father and . . . and . . . we’ve promised Aunt Frieda that you will wear that lovely bright yellow suit she bought you for Christmas and sing a solo in church on Sunday morning.”

Lovely? I’ll look like a canary! Now Mom was looking straight at him, but somewhere she had recovered her poise. She definitely had that *And I don’t even want to argue about it!* look on her face. You know, where she cocks her head and stares at you from under motionless raised eyelids.

Winston wondered how long she could go without blinking if he stared back, but then he realized this was not the time to experiment. He was busted, and he knew

it. Dad was in on it, too. The three of them had conspired against him. This battle was too big for him to win. Where could he go for help?