

The Ultimate Excuse
October 15th

As I cooked breakfast for myself, my dad sipped coffee and occasionally read interesting news headlines aloud from his seat at the table. I could hear my mom blow-drying her hair upstairs and the twins running around, trying to “get ready.”

Fudge lay in his usual sun-soaked spot on the carpet, directly beneath the window in the living room. I looked at him; he was like a great big brown mound of fur, slowly shrinking and expanding as he breathed.

He’s certainly getting older.
And lazier.
And fatter.
I thought to myself.

Upstairs there was more chaos, my mom was yelling something at the twins, but I couldn’t hear. My curiosity was interrupted when I heard Amy Kirkpatrick’s car honking outside. I grabbed my backpack and went out for the day.

When I came home from school, the twins were “doing their homework” at the kitchen table. Their socks, shoes, and sweaters were strewn on the floor, and they had their books and folders splayed on the table.

Ruby sat with her feet on the chair, vigorously stirring a cup of chocolate milk. She didn’t notice or care that it splashed onto her spelling book. Ty sat on his chair backward and sloppily ate a jar of peanut butter by the spoonful.

A glob of it fell onto his notebook. He scooped it up with his finger and ate it, leaving a colossal tan smudge on the page of math problems.

It was mostly quiet until my mom came thundering down the stairs. (Now, she’s usually quite patient but hates when we break the rules. So, I guessed that was what this was about.)

She stood in front of the twins to confront them, “I’ve just got a message from your teacher, Mrs. Book! She says you two haven’t turned in your homework all week!”

Ty and Ruby looked at each other. Both covered their faces and began to giggle. This did not make my mom any happier. In fact, she told them they were grounded and ‘Were to remain at this table and not get up until all their homework was finished!’

‘Tough luck,’ I thought as I went upstairs. I was studying when my mom called Grant and me down for dinner. The twins looked miserable, and they had a week’s worth of homework piled on the table when my mom asked them to clear it for dinner.

Ty scooped up the messy paper stacks and shoved them into his backpack, not bothering to zip it up. He also threw his (now empty) peanut butter jar in the trash. After dinner, the twins went right to bed—they were exhausted, having never used their brains so productively in all their eight years.

The next morning, Fudge threw up on the carpet, so we had to clean it, which made us run late. I heard the ‘honk-honk’ outside, my mom grabbed her car keys, and Ty, Ruby, and I quickly grabbed our backpacks, threw on our shoes and sweaters, and ran out the door.

Well, when we got home, my mom was quite angry. Her voice bellowed when we walked through the door, “Ty and Ruby!!! Your principal called this afternoon!”

The twins’ eyes widened, and their mouths shrank.

“Why did you tell your teacher the dog ate your homework? I thought you two did it all last night!” My mom looked disappointed, “It really upsets your teacher and me when you make up excuses.”

“But, but, but, it’s true.” Ruby stammered, trying not to cry.

Ty reached into his backpack, pulled out the crumpled papers, and handed them to Mom. I could see all the ink was blurred...like the pages had gotten wet, and the edges were ripped up on some sheets. None of their work or answers were visible.

It did look like a dog had gotten to it! And Ty had left his backpack open last night. But why would Fudge do such a thing?

Then my mother did something unexpected. She sniffed the pages. “Well, I believe your story now,” she said, exchanging her anger for empathy.

I was still confused, but as it turns out, Fudge had gone snooping in Ty’s backpack to find the source of that delicious-smelling peanut butter.

So the twins avoided trouble...for now!

Your Friend,
Joanie