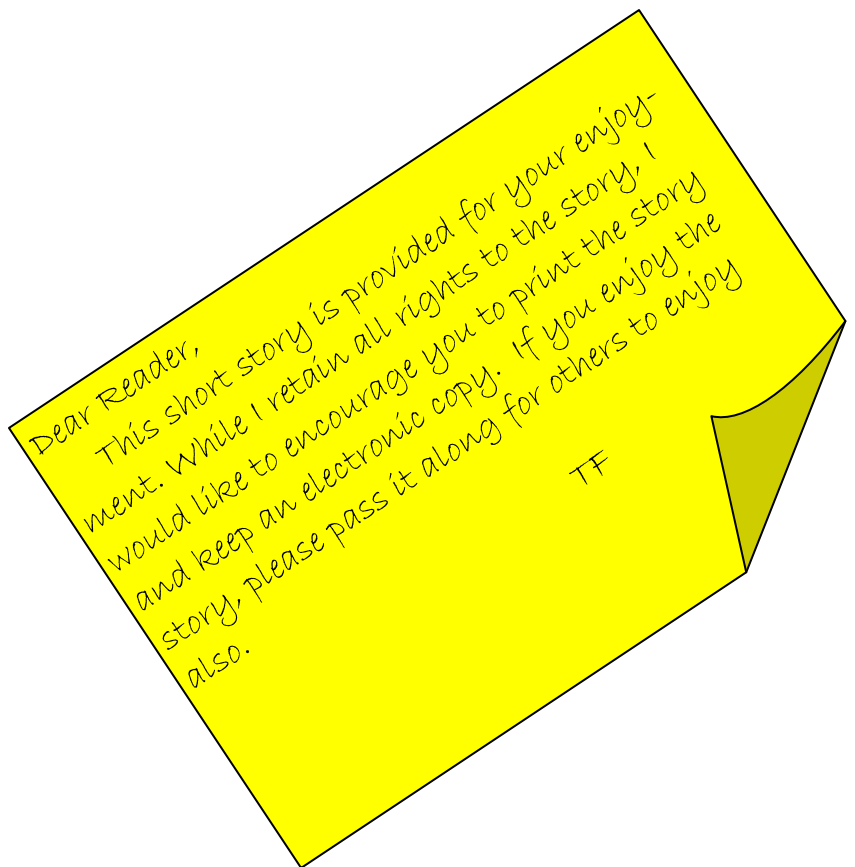


Bump on a Log

By

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It was getting to be a real pain in the rear. Toby was not sure how long he had sat there, but he could feel what was left of a broken branch jabbing him. It hurt, but he knew that he could not move. *Just a little longer*, he thought. It would only last a little longer.

It all started when Toby went to his mother and asked for a candy bar. Toby threw the door to his room open and it struck his dresser with a bang before he ran down the hall, through the living room and into the kitchen at top speed. As soon as he reached the linoleum in the kitchen, he stopped running and slid to a stop in his sock feet. Before he stopped, he collided with the kitchen table, moving it two feet.

"Mom," he said, "Can Brian and I have a candy bar?"

"No," she said.

"Please?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You are already hyper; the last thing you need is more sugar and caffeine."

"I am not hyper!" he said.

"You have been bouncing off the walls all day and you haven't been able to sit still for a minute."

"If I can sit still for a minute, will you let me have a candy bar?"

"No," she said.

"Five minutes?"

"No."

"Ten minutes?"

"No."

"Fifteen minutes?"

"Okay, if you can sit there fifteen minutes."

"Will you give me two if I sit there thirty minutes?"

"I don't think you can sit there for fifteen minutes."

"What about an hour?" he asked. "Will you let me have two if I can sit there for an hour?"

"Okay," she said, "if you can sit still for one hour then I'll let you have two candy bars."

"What about fifty-nine minutes," he said. "What if I only sit still for fifty-nine minutes?"

"No, one hour."

"What about fifty-nine minutes and fifty-nine seconds?" he asked.

"One hour or no deal."

"Do I have to stay inside?" he asked?

“No, you can do it outside,” she said.

“What if I go sit on the log?” he asked. The log was a tree that had been in the front yard. A windstorm had knocked it over. It made a wonderful place for Toby, Brian and the other kids in the neighborhood to play.

“You can sit on the log,” she said, “but you if you move, it will not count.”

“What if I move an inch?” he asked.

“You had better sit there like a bump on the log or you aren’t getting anything.”

“How will you know?”

“O, I will know,” she said.

“When does my time start?” he asked.

“In fifteen seconds,” she said. “If you aren’t sitting still in fifteen seconds then it is off.”

Toby did not wait to be told a second time. He grabbed his shoes and took off running, through the front door and across the grass to the fallen tree. He was not sure how much time he had taken to get there, but his mother did not tell him that he had taken too long, so he was sure that he had gotten there within the fifteen seconds. He put his shoes on while he was sitting there with his arm wrapped around a limb. Something was poking him, but he thought he could handle the pain until the time was up.

At first, he counted the seconds, “one...two...three...four...five....” He kept going until he had counted to two hundred fifty-three, but he grew tired of counting, but he was still determined to prove that he could sit there for a whole hour. He only wished that he had been more careful about his selection of where to sit. It was very uncomfortable.

While Toby was sitting there, he saw a ball rolling down the street. The ball gained speed as it rolled down the hill. The boy chasing it could not keep up.

“Hey, Toby,” the boy yelled, “Stop that ball!”

He was tempted to leave his place on the log so that he could chase down the ball. He could easily stop it if he would leave his spot, but he thought about the candy bar that his mother had promised him. He would not be happy with just one of the little snack size candy bars. He wanted two and he could only get that if he stayed right where he was. So, he watched as the ball rolled past his house, went even farther down the hill and eventually lodged itself under one of the cars that were parked along the streets. The kid who had yelled at him ran past and ended up crawling under the car to retrieve the ball.

“Why didn’t you stop the ball?” the boy asked Toby when he came walking up the hill.

“I have to sit here,” Toby said.

“Did you get in trouble?” the kid asked.

“No, Mom said she would let me have some candy if I could sit here for an hour.”

“How much longer do you have to go?”

“I don’t know,” Toby said.

“Don’t take all day,” some other kids up the hill, yelled down to the boy who had gone after the ball.

“I’m coming,” the boy yelled back. He went running up the hill to rejoin his friends, leaving Toby to continue sitting on the log.

Toby watched them from a distance. They looked like they were having fun. Five kids were kicking the soccer ball around at the top of the hill. They needed a sixth player and Toby wanted to go join them, but he could not join them if he hoped to prove that he could sit on the log for an hour. They looked like they were having so much more fun than what he was having. He shifted his weight, just a little. It made the pain a little more bearable, but he had to be careful not to move from his spot, even an inch.

The kids on the hill played for a few minutes more and then they started going back to their homes. One of them, Scott, picked up his stuff, got on his bike and rode it down the hill. He saw Toby as he passed. Rather than going on down the hill to his house, Scott turned his bike around and rode up to where Toby sat.

“What are you doing?” Scott asked.

“I’m just sitting here,” Toby said.

“Do you want to play Frisbee?”

“I can’t,” Toby said. “I have to sit here.”

Toby did not tell Scott the reason he was sitting there and Scott did not ask.

“You can play from there,” Scott said. “I’ll throw it you and you can throw it back.”

Scott backed away from the tree and threw his Frisbee to Toby. Toby caught the Frisbee easily and threw it back. Scott backed away and threw it again. Toby caught it again. They threw it back and forth for a while, but with each throw, it got harder and harder for Toby to catch it without moving. Sometimes it was to his right; sometimes it was over his head; but the ones that were the hardest to catch were on his left side.

The Frisbee sailed a little too high over his head. Toby reached up for it and was only able to touch it with his fingertips. The disc fell to the ground behind him.

“Throw it back,” Scott said.

Toby almost got off the log to get it, but he remembered his goal. Using a small limb that was under the log to keep from falling off, Toby leaned back until his head touched the ground. He reached out with one arm and pulled the Frisbee toward him. The broken limb, that was poking him, hurt even more than it had before, but he was able to grasp the Frisbee, sit back up and then throw it back to Scott.

“I’ve got to go home,” Scott said after he caught the Frisbee again. He got back on his bike and rode away while Toby continued to sit on the log.

“Mom!” Toby yelled in the direction of the house. “How long have I been out here?”

There was no response from his mother, so Toby kept sitting there, trying to shift his weight so that he could make it through the remaining time. It was proving more difficult than he had imagined.

The stray dog that had been wandering around the neighborhood came walking along the street.

“Get out of here!” Toby yelled at the dog.

The dog came into the yard and squatted.

“Hey!, Don’t do that,” Toby yelled at the dog and began throwing anything he could find at the little mutt. He tried throwing an aluminum can at the dog, but it did not good. He threw bark and broken limbs at it, but the dog went on about its business. It left a little pile of a brown mess in the grass near the flowerbed. From where he sat, Toby could see the white worms that were in it. *Cool!*

The dog did more than that. It sniffed around the yard. Every once in a while it lifted its hind leg to mark its territory. The dog marked the mailbox, then walked over to the light poll and marked it. The dog marked the little gnome yard ornament and then walked over to where Toby sat.

“Scram,” Toby said. He tried to push the dog away with his foot, but dog would not take the hint.

Toby gave up and let his foot hang free. The dog saw this as his opportunity, raised his leg and marked Toby’s foot as if it was part of his territory. It was all Toby could do to stay on the log rather than getting up and chasing after the dog.

Shortly after that, Toby watched as his dad’s car came down the street. The garage door opened and his dad drove into the garage.

“What ya doing son?” his dad asked him after he got out of the car. “Don’t I get a hug?”

“I have to sit here,” Toby said.

“I’m sure you probably disserved it,” his dad said and then went into the house.

Toby kept sitting there, doing his best to deal with the pain that was in his underside and wondering how much longer he would have to sit there. *Maybe it won’t be much longer.*

The pain was getting worse and he really needed to use the bathroom. He was not sure which was worse. They were both very uncomfortable. If he shifted his weight one way then it was one, but if he shifted it another then it was the other. He was sure that his time was almost up, but he did not want to risk going inside to see.

Toby waited a while longer and then he heard the front door open.

“Toby, come wash up for supper,” Toby heard his mother’s say from behind him.

“Did I sit here long enough?” Toby asked.

“Did you what?” she asked. She walked out closer to him.

Toby stayed seated, but twisted around to where he could see her.

“Did I sit still long enough?” Toby asked. “You said that you would let me have two candy bars if I could sit still for an hour.”

“O, Toby, I didn’t think you would sit out here for that long.”

“But I did, I’ve been sitting here since you told me to. I haven’t moved. Not one inch. I wanted to, but I haven’t moved.”

“I can see that,” she said.
“Did I sit here long enough? Can I have my candy bars?”
“Yes,” she said, “you can have your candy bars, but wait until after supper.”
“How long have I been sitting here?”
“I’m sorry, Toby. I was on the phone and I didn’t tell you when the hour was up.”

“So it was more than an hour?”

“Yes, it was more than an hour.”

“How much more?”

“Toby, you have been out here for more than two hours.”

“Two hours?”

“Yes,” she said, “I really am sorry.”

Toby did not respond. He jumped off the log with is little spike of a limb that had poked him in the seat. He forgot about that as he ran toward the house. He even forgot about the candy bar for a while as he made his way through the front door and made a beeline for the bathroom. He had been sitting for long enough and now he had to do things that were more important.



About the Story: This story was written as more of an experiment than anything else. So often, we writers confuse exciting activities with action. If you need action, make the main character a mountain climber or a race car driver some writers think, but what if the character cannot do those things? What if the character can do nothing but sit like a bump on a log? Does that make the story boring and uninteresting?

About the Author: Timothy Fish is the author of both fiction and non-fiction books. Titles include *Church Website Design: A Step by Step Approach* and *Searching For Mom*. More information about the author and the books that he has available can be found on his website, <http://www.timothyfish.net>.