

Ages: 7-9

## *Willie the Whistler*

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If Arch Hill Elementary was filled with tea kettles and steam engines, Willie would feel right at home. But, it wasn't.

It was filled with teachers, students, and practically everyone who thought whistling was downright disturbing. Well, everyone but Willie. Willie couldn't imagine a day without whistling.

"It's time to paint your dinosaur sketches," Mrs. Fay announced. Willie grabbed his paintbrush and dipped it in green. Before he could finish shading the brontosaurus's head, he started to whistle.

"Willie, would you please stop whistling?" Mrs. Fay asked, mixing paint.

"Sorry, Mrs. Fay." Willie set his green brush down and dunked another in blue.

Moments later, a high whistle crept from his lips. "Oops," Willie said.

During recess, Willie sat on a swing and saw his big brother, Damian, competing in a chess match. Willie wandered over to get a closer view.

Willie watched and wondered...then whistled.

"Willie," Damian turned and whispered.

"Checkmate!" Damian's opponent yelled.

"Oops," Willie muttered.

After recess, it was time for yoga class.

Willie concentrated as he sunk into the butterfly pose. Mr. Modori's classroom was silent. Everyone—including the class turtle—was in deep concentration. Until Willie started to whistle.

In mid-whistle, Willie lost his balance and bumped into Sam, the boy next to him. Within seconds, the whole class looked like toppling dominos rather than statue-like butterflies. The turtle flipped on its side and retracted into its shell. The students roared with laughter.

"Focus." Mr. Modori rang his silence bell.

After the fiasco in yoga, Willie tried everything to stop whistling.

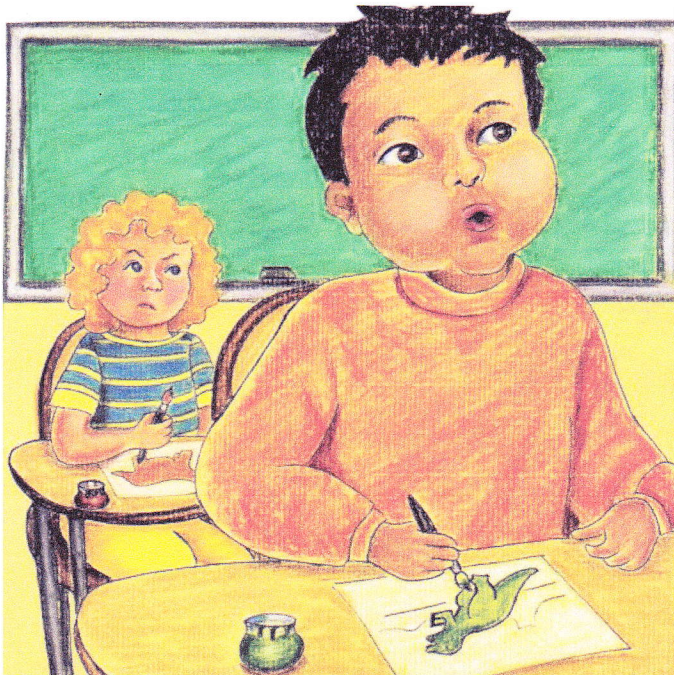
In the library, Willie squeezed his lips tight, squinted his eyes and puffed his cheeks like a blowfish. His adventure novel was extremely exciting. By the time he reached the battle scene, he let out a long, loud whistle.

"Shhh!" Mona and Sam put their fingers over their lips. The librarian scowled at Willie over the top of her small reading glasses.

At lunch, Willie took a sip of water to hold back his whistles. His wet lips were perfectly primed for a whistle about to burst any minute. As it reached the tip of his lips, he widened his eyes only to meet the lunch lady's grouchy gaze.

"No whistling. Finish your sandwich," she warned Willie. "Lunch is over." She pointed to the clock.





Willie couldn't wait until school was over. And when the clock struck three, he ran out the school's front doors to meet his grandpa.

"Grandpa!" Willie beamed. Grandpa waved. He sat on a bench outside the school and belted a melodic tune from his harmonica. Willie danced over and moved his sneakers to Grandpa's music.

"How did school treat you today?" Grandpa asked as he rose from the bench. Willie looked into his grandpa's eyes. Grandpa finished his song with an upbeat finale.

"You don't get in trouble for doing that, do you?" Willie asked.

"What do you mean?" Grandpa stopped.

"For playing the harmonica?" Willie whistled, imitating Grandpa's tune.

Grandpa listened. "Excellent rendition!"

"My teachers don't think so," Willie lowered his voice.

"Been whistling in school again?" Grandpa asked as they walked past the park.

"I wish my whistling was welcome at school. But my teachers think it's distracting. They think I'm not paying attention—but I am. My whistles just come out." Willie whistled. A flock of birds swirled toward him. They chirped along.

"If you were a bird you would fit right in." Grandpa patted Willie on the shoulder as they strolled up the driveway to the front of their house.

"I've got a special treasure for you." Grandpa unlocked the front door and walked straight to the living room. He pulled out a wooden box from the end table drawer.

"What's that, Gramps?" Willie asked.

"Your very own harmonica," Grandpa said. He handed it to Willie. Willie's eyes lit up. Grandpa took out his harmonica and pressed it against his lips.

Willie tried. He curved his lips like he was going to whistle then blew into his shiny instrument. Out came a soft tune.

From then on, Willie played music with his grandpa every day after school. Willie's lips found a new hobby. It was more fun than whistling alone. Now, Willie could share music with Grandpa.

So, instead of whistling, Willie...

Painted a picture of a harmonica in Mrs. Fay's class.

Watched Damian call "Checkmate," then celebrated with a victory song on his harmonica.

Meditated on music then mastered the butterfly pose in Mr. Modori's yoga class.

Read *Harmonica Heaven* in the library.

And ate lunch writing songs for his next duet with Grandpa.

But once in awhile, Willie couldn't help but whistle...with the birds.

~The End~

