1

When Fifteen Meets Fifty

Everything began from the movie "You've Got Mail." After I saw that movie, I thought I could also find my true love on the Internet. It would be so romantic to find my Mr. Right online!

My dream seemed to come true when I "met" Jack, a seventeen-year-old boy, in a chat room. We had the same interests: movies, flowers, and music.

Besides, he was very thoughtful. Gradually, I fell in love with him. When I thought of him, I dreamed of myself as Meg Ryan and him as Tom Hanks.

One day, Jack told me that we should meet in person. I said yes right away, though he lived a little far away. I was so excited to see my Mr. Right!

It was a Saturday morning. I got up very early, then tried on different clothes, did my hair, and worked hard to look just right for Jack. My mom felt something was strange, but I just told her that I was going to the movies with my classmates. "But you don't need to get up so early and…" "Come on, Mom!" I said. "I just want to look pretty OK?" Mom didn't say anything else.

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Parents are just like that. They just can't trust their teenage kids. So, I didn't want to tell her the truth.

Jack was waiting for me in the café. Oh! I really couldn't wait to meet my Mr. Right! I wanted to recognize him easily, so I asked him to bring a rose, and I brought one, too.

I slipped into the café and hoped to see a handsome boy with a rose. But…oh my goodness…a baldheaded, beer-bellied man in his fifties with a rose! There was no one else in the café with a rose!

I ran out of the café with a shriek.

Text from:高雄市107年度國民中學英語文競賽

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2

Are you getting enough sleep?

What happens if you don't get enough sleep? Randy Gardner, a high school student in the United States, wanted to find out. He designed an experiment on the effects of sleeplessness for a school science project. With doctors watching him carefully, Gardner stayed awake for 264 hours and 12 minutes. That's eleven days and nights without sleeping!

What effect did sleeplessness have on Gardner? After 24 hours without sleep, Gardner started having trouble reading and watching television. The words and pictures were too blurry. By the third day, he was having trouble doing things with his hands. By the fourth day, Gardner was hallucinating. For example, when he saw a street sign, he thought it was a person. He also imagined he was a famous football player.

Over the next few days, Gardner's speech became so slurred that people couldn't understand him. He also had trouble remembering things. By the eleventh day, Gardner couldn't pass a counting test. In the middle of the test he simply stopped counting. He couldn't remember what he was doing.

When Gardner finally went to bed, he slept for 14 hours and 45 minutes. The second night he slept for twelve hours, the third night he slept for ten and one-half hours, and by the fourth night, he had returned to his normal sleep schedule.

Even though Gardner recovered quickly, scientists believe that going

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without sleep can be dangerous. They say that people should not repeat Randy's experiment. Tests on white rats have shown how serious sleeplessness can be. After a few weeks without sleep, the rats started losing their fur. And even though the rats ate more food than usual, they lost weight. Eventually the rats died.

During your lifetime, you will probably spend 25 years or more sleeping. But why? What is the purpose of sleep? Surprisingly, scientists don't know for sure. Some scientists think we sleep in order to replenish brain cells. Other scientists think that sleep helps the body to grow and to relieve stress. Whatever the reason, we know that it is important to get enough sleep.

Text from: *Enjoy English No.118, Oxford University Press(2002), New York.*

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3

Tortoise Tricks Leopard

Tortoise and his friend Gray Squirrel were sitting under a tree and talking. Gray Squirrel bragged about how fast he could run. Tortoise said, "I may walk slow, but I always ride in style! That's because Leopard is my horse!"

As soon as Tortoise went home, Gray Squirrel ran to leopard and said, "I hear you are Tortoise's horse! Ho, ho! What is sight that must be! A powerful animal like you being tamed by Tortoise!"

Leopard was very angry. "I will eat that liar up," he growled to himself as he ran to Tortoise's burrow. Tortoise was frightened when Leopard burst into his home, his teeth all shiny and sharp.

"You miserable lump!" snarled Leopard. "How dare you tell Squirrel that I am your horse? What a ridiculous notion! I'm going to chew you up and gobble you down for spreading a tale like that!"

"Squirrel said that?" exclaimed Tortoise. "Why, I never told any such lie! Squirrel is telling tales, just so that he can break up our friendship. We must go to him right away and punish him."

Leopard looked puzzled. Then he said, "Well, all right. Let's go right away and have it out with Gray Squirrel."

"The only thing is," said Tortoise, "that I can't move as fast as you. It would take me all day to get to quirrel's house. Of course, if you carried me

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on your back we would get there fast."

"All right," said Leopard. "Climb up on my back."

They went along that way for a while, until Tortoise fell off Leopard's back with a loud PLOP.

"Whatever is the matter?" asked Leopard.

"Your back is very sleek and glossy," explained tortoise. "I just seem to slide right off. But perhaps if we put a seat on your back I can stay put."

"Oh, all right," agreed Leopard. Tortoise found a blanket at the side of the road. He folded it to make a seat, then climbed up again on Leopard's back. And off they went again.

But in a very little while again, PLOP… Tortoise fell off!

"Now what's wrong?" asked Leopard.

"Sorry about that," sighed Tortoise. "But I've got nothing to hold onto up here, and I keep losing my balance. But perhaps if we put a long piece of rope through your mouth, I could hold on to that."

"Oh, all right," grumbled Leopard. Tortoise found some rope hanging from a tree and fastened it through Leopard's mouth. And off they went again. But it wasn't long before Tortoise began to yell.

"OW, OW, OW!" he hollered. "Flies are biting me! Thousands of little flies! I need a switch to shoo them away! Please, stop by this tree so that I can get a little branch to use as a flyswatter."

"Oh, all right," grumbled Leopard. Tortoise picked himself a branch, and began to wave it about.

Now they came to Gray Squirrel's house, Tortoise sitting on a

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saddle-blanket and waving a switch, and Leopard with reins through his mouth.

"Look, look!" cried Gray Squirrel and all his family. "Leopard really is Tortoise's horse!" And the squirrels laughed and laughed. Tortoise jumped off Leopard's back and began to laugh, too. As for Leopard, he ran away into the forest and stayed alone for a long time, pouting.

Text from: *Multicultural Fables and Fairy Tales: Stories and Activities to Promote Literacy and Cultural Awareness" by Tara McCarthy*

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4

The Lucky Octopus

Ollie the octopus only had seven legs. "The last one will grow," the ocean doctor said, the day Ollie was born. "But when?" asked Ollie's mother. She was very sad. "When Ollie turns eight years old," the doctor said.

For seven years, Ollie's brothers and sisters teased her about her missing leg. She was the youngest octopus in the family. Her sister Olivia was the oldest. "Ollie only has seven legs because she isn't part of our real family," Olivia told the other sea creatures one day. It was a lie, but everyone believed Olivia because she was the oldest.

When the other sea creatures played games like tag and hide and go seek, Ollie's brother Oscar wouldn't let Ollie play. "You can't catch a fish with only seven legs," Oscar said. "Go and find a friend that has an extra leg to play with." Ollie searched around the ocean, but there weren't any kind sea creatures to play with. She was very lonely.

One day Ollie's brother Orlando saw Ollie playing by herself in the seaweed. He was very happy. "Guess what I found today, Ollie!" Orlando said, "A treasure chest. It is from a ship and it is full of beautiful jewels." "Can I see it?" Ollie asked. "I have always dreamed of seeing a treasure chest." "I'm not showing it to anyone!" Orlando said, "Especially not a tiny octopus with only seven legs." Ollie went home and told her mother

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that she was sad. "Everyone treats me differently because I only have seven legs," she said. "Don't worry," her mother said. "Tomorrow is your eighth birthday and you will finally grow another leg! Then you will never be lonely."

That night Ollie dreamed that she grew another leg. Everyone celebrated and ate delicious food. She was so happy. But the next day, when Ollie woke up and counted her legs, there were still only seven.

Ollie hid in the seaweed patch and cried. She was so sad. Suddenly a sea fairy appeared. It was the tiniest creature Ollie had ever seen. "You are the lucky octopus I have been waiting for," the sea fairy said. "I am?" Ollie said. "Yes. Only the luckiest octopus gets to make three wishes." Ollie knew exactly what to wish for.

"First I wish that Olivia was honest," Ollie said. "Your wish is granted. Now you have two more wishes," the fairy said. "Second I wish that Oscar was kind." "And now he is," the fairy said. "And what is your last wish?" "Lastly, I wish that Orlando was fair," Ollie said. Before the tiny sea fairy disappeared, she told Ollie that she was the kindest octopus in the whole sea. "I wish that all of your birthday dreams come true," the sea fairy said before she swam away.

When Ollie got home her family was waiting for her. "Surprise!" they said all at once. "I bought you a present," Oscar said. "It's a beautiful pearl necklace!" "Thank you," Ollie said. "You are very kind." "I baked a delicious cake for you," Orlando said. "And I invited all of the sea creatures to share it with us." "You are very fair," Ollie said. "Thank you for sharing."

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