Learn English with pleasure!

Listening: 'When my sibling was unbearable'

1. You're going to listen to 2 people talking about the time, when they or one of their siblings was behaving badly. Look at the words and think what their stories might be about.

2. Listen and check your ideas.

Marilyn's story

sister parrot cage let out fly bedroom looked everywhere cried window hidden cupboard frightened horrible

James's story

brother teenagers fighting stabbed finger penknife accident horrified blood mum angry hospital

Listen again and answer the questions for James and Marilyn. Who do you think behaved worse, James or Marilyn's sister?



1 How old were they?
2 Where were they?
3 What bad thing did they or their sibling do?
4 What happened in the end?
5 How do James's brother and Marilyn show that they've never forgotten what happened?

Marilyn Well, my sister was four years older than me. She still is, actually. Um, I remember once when I was about ten years old, I had a pet, a bird. Um, it was a small green parrot called Charlie, and I really loved him. He lived in a cage but I sometimes let him out to fly around the house, you know so, so he could have some freedom. And one day, I was in my bedroom and I let him out, but then something happened – I can't remember what and I forgot about him for a, for a while, and then suddenly I couldn't see him anymore. And, well, I looked everywhere for him, I looked all over the house and I couldn't find him anywhere, oh I cried and I cried because I was sure that he had flown out of the window. And my parents started to help me because they felt awful about it as well. And just when I was completely hysterical my sister admitted that, in reality, she had hidden him, she had shut him inside a cupboard, can you believe. Well, she opened the cupboard and poor Charlie was there, he was so frightened, but we were all really relieved to find him. My sister was so horrible that day. Of course now we get on really well, but I still remember what she did to poor Charlie and sometimes when she comes to see me I hide her car keys or her purse or something just to remind her of it. Is that bad?

James Well, I can remember one terrible thing I did to my brother when we were teenagers – I have a twin brother. Um, so we used to fight and argue a lot, as, as kids and teenagers. And one time, when we were about 15, we were fighting, arguing, we shared a bedroom, so we were in our room, um, fighting each other, and I accidentally stabbed him in the finger with a penknife that I was holding in my hand. And it was, it was a total accident, and I was holding it and I was kind of threatening him, but I didn't really mean to, to stab him, obviously, um, but I did, and I was absolutely horrified at what I'd done. And of course he, my brother, he looked down at his finger, with this blood coming out from where I'd stabbed him, and he looked up at me, and he said 'I'm going to tell Mum!' Which sort of made me laugh because you know we were both 15 at the time, and it was a very childish thing to say. And he ran downstairs to tell our mum, and I was absolutely terrified that she was going to be really angry with me. Which she was, of course. But, um, he was fine, by the way, it was a very small cut. He didn't have to go to hospital or anything, it was absolutely fine, but, um, he still, now and this is, you know, we're in our late forties now, so this is 30 years ago, but he still sometimes tells people, when we meet them, about when I stabbed him. But yeah, it wasn't a very nice thing to do to him!

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