

# OOPS!

So, you think that twisting the truth a little doesn't really matter?   
Read about four people whose white lies had unexpected consequences.  
Take Alice for example, ...

**A ALICE** I was just married, and desperately wanted my new mother-in-law to like me. So, when she asked for my opinion of her outfit at a family dinner, I was full of admiration. No way was I going to tell the truth! The dress was purple, flowery and completely outdated. Instead I told her how lovely it was. I'd completely forgotten about the incident until she gave me a birthday present a few months later – an identical purple dress. She said it was because I'd clearly admired hers and she was looking forward to seeing me in it at the party. I wore it and hated every minute of my party that year. I'm much more careful these days about the white lies I tell. And the dress? Well, unfortunately, it somehow shrank in the wash and I haven't been able to wear it again ...

**B HOLLY** My young son had been looking forward to his first sports day at primary school for weeks, and I'd promised to be there, cheering him on. Then, the weekend beforehand I checked my work diary and realised I'd agreed to attend a meeting that same afternoon. If I didn't go to sports day, I would be letting down my son, but if I didn't go to the meeting, I'd be letting down my boss. What I should have done was admit my mistake and ask for the afternoon off. Instead I called in sick and I went to the sports day. I was so proud when Danny won his race, although also a little guilty about the meeting. The problem was, I took Danny and his friends for an ice cream in the park later and I'm pretty sure I saw my boss's car go past. He wants to see me later and I think I know why.

**C ELLA** It was only a very small exaggeration really. Well, OK, it was more of a lie – but not a big serious one. I was applying for my present job and listed my hobbies as drama, cross-country running, travelling – and then added gardening because I thought it was a bit different. I even mentioned that I'd won an award. Ha! Truth was I'd won third prize for a miniature garden at school when I was eight and in fact my mum had done most of it. So, when my office wanted ideas about designing a new outside space for our building, guess who they came to for advice? I could have lied again and made something up, but I came clean. Luckily everyone was good about it and we had a laugh sharing stories of other white lies that had had consequences later on. It was Shakespeare who said 'the truth will out', wasn't it? He was right.

**D EMILY** I had no idea what silver service was – but I said I did when I was being interviewed for a job as a waiter recently. I thought it would be something I could pick up as I went along, after all it wasn't as if I was an inexperienced waiter – I had served in restaurants before. However, I totally underestimated the difference between waiting tables in a small Italian restaurant, dealing mainly with pizzas and pasta dishes, and the rather more upmarket hotel I was going for. It turns out that silver service involves using a silver serving spoon and fork in the right hand to serve vegetables or meat from a dish held in the left. I definitely shouldn't have pretended I could do it! Trying to manipulate everything at the same time resulted in my dropping the serving dish and covering a customer with buttered potatoes. I lasted precisely one hour!

## EXAM TASK

**7** You are going to read an article about telling white lies. For questions 1–10, choose from the sections (A–D). The sections may be chosen more than once.

### Which person

- 1 wanted to impress a relative?
- 2 was unable to continue in her work?
- 3 lied when faced with a difficult choice?
- 4 corrects herself when describing the seriousness of her lie?
- 5 endured a difficult social event to maintain a lie?
- 6 is still unaware of the consequences of her lie?
- 7 confessed to having lied before it was discovered?
- 8 assumed something that turned out to be wrong?
- 9 didn't enjoy an event completely as a result of her lie?
- 10 changed her attitude to lying as a result of an experience?