

Mr. Peabody's Apples

By Madonna

In the town of Happville (which wasn't a very big town), Mr. Peabody was congratulating his Little League team on a great game. They had not won, but no one really cared, because they'd had such a good time playing.

Mr. Peabody was the history teacher at the local elementary school, and in the summertime, he dedicated every Saturday to organizing baseball games with other schools.

Billy Little (who wasn't a very big boy) was one of Mr. Peabody's students. He loved baseball more than anything, and he thought Mr. Peabody was the greatest. After each game, he would always stay to help pick up the bats and balls. And when they were finished, Mr. Peabody would smile and say, "Thanks, Billy, good job. I'll see you next Saturday."

Then he would start his walk home along the main street of Happville (which wasn't a very big street), waving hello to everyone he knew, and everyone would wave hello back. Along the way, he always passed Mr. Funkadeli's fruit market. Here Mr. Peabody would stop and admire Mr. Funkadeli's fresh apples. He would pick out the shiniest apple, drop it in his bag, and continue on his way.

Across the street, Tommy Tittlebottom watched with curiosity as Mr. Peabody walked away with the apple.

"That's strange," Tommy said to himself. "Mr. Peabody didn't pay anyone for the apple."

Tommy got on his skateboard and rushed to tell his friends.

The following Saturday, Mr. Peabody's team played another game, and they lost (as usual), but no one seemed to care because they'd had such a good time playing. Billy picked up the balls and bats, and Mr. Peabody set off on his walk home. He waved to everyone he knew, and they waved back. Once again, he stopped outside Mr. Funkadeli's fruit market, picked up the shiniest apple, dropped it in his bag, and continued on his way.

Across the street, Tommy Tittlebottom and his friends watched Mr. Peabody, and they were amazed at what they saw. Mr. Peabody had not paid for his apple. They couldn't wait to tell all of their friends, who told their parents, who told their neighbors, who told their friends, in the town of Happville (which wasn't a very big town).

The Saturday after that, Mr. Peabody was standing all alone on the baseball field, wondering where everybody was. Then he saw Billy walking toward him with a sad look on his face.

"Hello, Billy. I am glad you're here, but where is the rest of the team?" asked Mr. Peabody.

Billy remained silent.

"What is it, Billy?" he asked again.

Billy didn't look up.

"Everybody thinks you're a thief," he said to the ground.

Mr. Peabody looked confused. He took off his hat and scratched his head. "Who says I am a thief, Billy? And what did I steal?" he asked.

"Tommy Tittlebottom and his friends said they saw you take an apple from Mr. Funkadeli's fruit market, twice, and they said you didn't pay for them," answered Billy.

"Ahh," said Mr. Peabody, putting his hat back on his head. "Let's go and talk to Mr. Funkadeli about it, shall we?"

They walked down the main street (which wasn't a very big street), and Mr. Peabody waved to all the people he knew, but now some of them did not wave back, and some pretended they did not even see him. They finally arrived at Mr. Funkadeli's fruit market.

Out popped Mr. Funkadeli, who said, "Hey, what are you doing here, Mr. Peabody? Why aren't you at the game?"

"There wasn't a game today," said Mr. Peabody, "and I was wondering if I could take my apple earlier than usual?"

"Sure, why not?" replied Mr. Funkadeli. "You pay for them every Saturday morning when you pick up your milk. You can take them when you like. You want the big shiny one, Mr. Peabody?"

Mr. Peabody took his apple, smiled, and offered it to Billy.

"I would like to take the apple, Mr. Peabody, but I have to go and find Tommy and explain everything," said Billy.

"When you find him, ask him to come over to my house. I would like to speak to him, too," replied Mr. Peabody.

A little while later, Billy found Tommy and told him what had happened with the apples. He told Tommy that Mr. Peabody wanted to speak to him right away. So off Tommy ran, and when he arrived, he rang the doorbell, and Mr. Peabody came to the door. They looked at each other for a while.

"Oh dear, Mr. Peabody," said Tommy, on the doorstep. "I didn't understand. I should not have said what I said, but it looked like you hadn't paid for the apples."

Mr. Peabody's eyebrows went up a little, and he felt a warm breeze blow across his face. "It doesn't matter what it looked like. What matters is the truth."

Tommy looked down at his shoes, and said, "I am so sorry. What can I do to make things better, now?"

Mr. Peabody took a deep breath, looked up at a small cloud that was in the sky, and said, "I'll tell you what, Tommy. Meet me at the baseball diamond in one hour, and bring a pillow stuffed with feathers."

"Okay," said Tommy, who then ran off to his house to get a pillow.

An hour later, Tommy met Mr. Peabody on the pitcher's mound.

"Hello, Tommy," said Mr. Peabody. "Follow me and bring your pillow."

Tommy followed Mr. Peabody to the top of the bleachers, wondering what this was all about.

"It's a windy day, isn't it?" asked Mr. Peabody when they reached the top. Tommy nodded his head in agreement.

"Here is a pair of scissors. Now cut the pillow in half and shake the feathers out."

Tommy looked confused but did it anyway. He thought it was a small price to pay to gain Mr. Peabody's forgiveness. The wind carried the thousands of feathers far and wide.

Tommy looked relieved, and said, "Is that all I have to do to make things better?"

"There is one more thing," said Mr. Peabody. "Now you must go and pick up all the feathers."

Tommy frowned.

"I don't think it's possible to pick up all the feathers," Tommy replied.

"It would be just as impossible to undo the damage that you have done by spreading the rumor that I am a thief," said Mr. Peabody. "Each feather represents a person in Happville."

There was a long pause as Tommy began to understand what Mr. Peabody was saying.

Finally, he said, "I guess I have a lot of work ahead of me."

Mr. Peabody smiled and said, "Indeed, you do. Next time, don't be so quick to judge a person. And remember the power of your words."

Then he handed Tommy the shiny red apple and made his way home.

The End.