

MARK'S magical VIOLIN

By

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One day, Mark got for his birthday...

"It's a violin," said Grandad. "It's a very magical thing."

"How is it magical?" Mark wanted to know.

"Well," said Grandad, "If you practice enough, this violin will become the best friend you ever had. If you practice hard enough, when you play you will be able to make babies laugh and grown men cry. If you practice hard enough, wherever you are in the world - even if you are in the middle of a desert - whenever you finish playing a tune you will be able to hear the sound of the sea."

"Wow," said Mark.

That Tuesday, Mark and his mother went on a train to visit the violin teacher. She was a nice lady who showed Mark how to hold the violin and how to draw the bow on the strings to make a beautiful sound. She taught Mark a tune to play and told him that if he practiced really hard he could learn a tune next week too. Mark went home and practiced furiously. He learnt his tune very quickly. The next week he learnt another tune, and the week after another, and the week after another. He learnt many tunes and he practiced very hard, but when he took his bow off the strings at the end of a tune, no matter how hard he listened, he could never hear the sea.

Mark loved to practice his violin. The more he played it the more he loved it. Grandad was right. It became his best friend. His violin was always there to talk to when he needed it. When he was feeling angry his violin would sound angry too. When he was feeling sad his violin wept with him. Sometimes he got fed-up with his violin and put it away and told it he would never play it again, but his violin always sat and waited patiently for him to come back and take it out of its case. It never sulked. It truly was his best friend.

But as hard as he practiced, Mark could never hear the sea. When he played in his bedroom, as soon as he was finished he would listen out, but all he would hear was the sound of traffic on the road outside, or maybe a cat fight in the dustbins. When he played at a school concert, people clapped after he played, but there weren't very many of them and it just sounded to Mark like a lot of people banging their hands together. Mark began to think that Grandad was wrong and maybe his violin wasn't that magical after all.

One day, after Mark had practiced his violin all his life, he was almost grown up and he was asked to play at a big concert in London. So he chose his favourite tune and he practiced specially hard for the occasion. The concert was taking place in a huge concert hall and Mark got to play with a big orchestra. The conductor was a very famous man. In fact, there were lots of very famous and important people in the audience as well, and thousands of other people came to hear Mark play.

He was very nervous. "This is it," he told his violin. "Today you have to be really magical for me." He held his violin very tightly as he walked out on stage and stood facing those thousands and thousands of people. He thought he might be sick. The conductor raised his baton and the orchestra started playing. Suddenly Mark didn't think he was going to be sick at all. He put his violin on his shoulder and he began to play. He played as he had never played before. He felt like he was running through clouds as pink as candy floss. He felt like he was dancing on the air.

When he finished playing, he let the last note ring out, and then he took his bow off the strings. There was a moment of silence. And then the applause started, a big roaring sound that washed over Mark like waves.

It was just like the sound of the ocean.

The end