

A New Baseball Best Friend



By Kathy Warnes

Nobody at school knows it, and you have to promise you won't tell. You won't? Then I'll tell you. My best friend Eddy is a robot. I spend most of my time when I'm not in school with him and my hamster Rob.

The kids in my class don't talk to me much, but I'm so busy training Rob I don't care. One girl, Jenny, keeps smiling at me and asking me to play catch after school. I don't want to play catch with her. Girls are pests.

"I gotta study my spelling words," I tell her.

"I finished mine already. Do you want some help?"

"No, I gotta get home," I tell her.

My best friend Eddy is waiting for me at the door, but tonight I don't want to play catch. I want to do something different, something more fun.

"Eddy, I'm gonna spray paint you," I told him that night at the supper table.

"Why are you going to spray paint me?" he asked.

"I think you would look good colored purple. Gray is a boring color."

Mom and Dad ignored my talking to Eddy like they always did.

After supper I ran to the garage and snatched a can of Mom's purple spray paint. "Watch out, Eddy!" I yelled as I ran back into the house and into my bedroom.

Eddy grabbed the can of purple spray paint from me. He painted his arm purple.

"I can do that, too," I grabbed the can of paint and painted his nose.

Eddy grabbed the can of paint back and painted my shirt sleeve.

I laughed so hard that I woke Rob up. He ran on his wheel until Eddy and I stopped spray painting each other. Then he went back to bed in his nest of paper in the corner while Eddy and I watched television.

Mom came into the room and snapped off the television. "Josh, did you study your spelling words? And why did you spray paint your shirt?"

"I studied my spelling words, Mom. That school's too easy. Why can't we go back home?"

Mom frowned. "This is your home now and you need to go out and make some new friends," she said. "Take off that shirt so I can wash it."

Josh took off his shirt and handed it to his mother.

Dad came into my room and talked to me then. "You spend too much time in the house," Dad said. "You need to go out and play with the other kids more."

I did what Dad told me and went out Saturday morning to practice my pitching. I must have bounced my baseball against the garage at least 50 times when Jenny showed up and she threw more pitches than I did. Before I could escape by going back into the house for lunch, Jenny had thrown more balls and even battled some balls across the lawn and into the street.

"I saw you practicing with your friend in the gray coat the other day," she said. "He's pretty good and you can be too if you keep trying."

My heart pounded. Jenny had seen me and Eddie throwing pitches. “See ya,” I muttered and ran into the house.

“Why didn’t you invite Jenny in for lunch?” Mom asked me.

“Eddy doesn’t like girls,” I said.

Eddy kicked me under the table. “You said that, not me!”

“You don’t like girls, Eddy. What’s the matter with you? Why are you changing your mind?”

I pushed back my chair so hard that it tipped over. “Girls are stupid!” I yelled.

“Joshua Riley, you came back to the table this instant!” Dad said.

“Thanks for getting me in trouble, Eddy. Now get me out of it.”

“Let’s go out and throw some pitches,” Eddy said.

“Big help you are,” I said.

Dad made me to go into the family room and sit down. He wouldn’t let me turn on the television, so I knew I was in serious trouble.

“I’m sorry I yelled, Dad. I take it back.”

“Joshua, your mother and I think it’s time for Eddy to go home.”

“Eddy can’t go home until we go home. When are we going to go home, Dad?”

“We are home, Josh.”

“Then Eddy stays, too.”

Dad opened his mouth and then he closed it.

“You look like a fish, Dad.”

“Lydia!” Dad yelled to Mom.

“Come on Eddy, it’s time to watch the game,” I said.

It got away with that for about two weeks until Mom decided to give me surprise party for my birthday. She invited the boys in my class and the girls too, including Jenny. She didn’t tell me anything about it. I should have got suspicious when Dad pulled up in front of the video arcade and we played video games all morning.

Instead, I had fun. “This is cool, Dad. Can we do it next Saturday, too?”

Dad didn’t say anything. He just stared at me, wrinkling his eyebrows like he does when he’s thinking. He said something strange. “You didn’t even bring Eddy with us,” he said.

I said something even more strange. “I forgot to ask him.”

Eddy was waiting for us when we got home and so was Rob. Eddy met me at my bedroom door. “Rob’s going to set a world record with his wheel. He did one lap a minute for the last hour.”

I ran over to Rob’s cage. Rob was chewing on some sunflower seeds, but he wiggled his whiskers at me to let me know he was okay.

“Want to go out front and play catch, Eddy?” I asked him.

“I’m tired,” Eddy said. “Let’s stay in and watch some television.”

I stared at Eddy. “You’re tired? Robots don’t get tired!”

“I think I’ll go on vacation soon,” Eddy said.

“That’s a good idea. Where should we go, Eddy? Maybe we could go to Disneyworld or to the beach.”

“I want to go camping in the north woods,” Eddy told me.

“I’ll get out my tent and sleeping bag. But we’ll have to ask Dad to go along so we have a ride to the woods and a grownup with us.”

“I might go alone,” Eddy said.

“How can you go camping alone, Eddy? And why do you want to go alone?”

“It’s time for me to go,” Eddy said.

“Quit talking about going,” I said. “

“It’s time for me to move ahead,” Eddy said.

“Eddy, what’s wrong with you? Why are you talking so much about leaving. Where are you going? And I’m coming with you, no matter where you go.”

“Then let’s go to the family room and watch some television,” Eddy said. “ We can watch the baseball game.”

I followed Eddy into the family room. “It’s dark in here. Why didn’t Mom open the curtains this morning?”

I walked over and opened the curtains. I turned around and a bunch of kids jumped out from behind the couch. “Surprise!” they yelled. Jenny threw a baseball glove at me. Mom smiled and brought three pizzas and some soft drinks.

We played video games and had such a good time that I forgot about Eddy. When I finally remembered him and looked for him, he was gone. I knew he wasn’t coming back and I couldn’t let the other kids see how bad I felt. We went outside and played baseball and Jenny pitched better than I did.

“I’ll catch up to you,” I told Jenny. “I still have 25 pitches to go, same as last time.”

She winked at me. “I’ll throw you pitches like Eddy used to do,” she whispered.

“We’ll throw them at each other,” I told her.