



It's Never Too Late to Be Nice A Parable from the Kingdom of Yabbit

by Kerry Patterson

If you've never been to the Kingdom of Yabbit,
Or sat in the shade of a Billbaba tree,
Then you've missed the story of their terrible habit,
And a boy named Indy and his magical key.

We'll start with the Prince, G. Mortimer Oracle.
He'll tell us what happened,
And why it's historical.

"Our creatures were pleasant—no troublesome rats,
Our hedgehogs high-fiber, our groundhogs low-fat.
Life would have been good; life would have been nifty,
If it weren't for the in-Yabbit-ants—
All four hundred and fifty.

"Our citizens, you see, were completely predictable.
It hurts me to say it,
But they were often despict-able.
Now don't get me wrong, they all said their prayers,
They cut their nails weekly, and combed all their hairs.
And every third Thursday—they changed underwears."

So what was the horrible, nasty, bad habit
That constantly tortured the Kingdom of Yabbit,
Even the folks with the foot of a rabbit?

In Yabbit, if someone took a swing at your nose,
You hit them back harder,
You stomped on their toes.
If your neighbor was rude or called you a name,
You screamed something worse.
You said they were lame.
If your brother tricked you then stole your best toy,
You snatched his lunch money,
And grinned with pure joy.

At the heart of all this violence and thievin'
Was the ugly desire to get better than even.
As long as someone bothered you first,
You now had the right, to do them far worse—
Like yank on their pigtails, then shout out a curse,
Or pour lemon yogurt in their shiny new purse.

Now, what was the source of this horrible habit?
Why did everyday folks like Kammi Sue Kravitz
Shout nasty, rude words like blast and dag-nabit?
And make the whole Kingdom quite hard to inhabit?
Because after every bad deed,
Someone always said, "Yeah but . . ."

When you asked your son Tommy,
"Did you punch Harry Hurst?"
He'd answer back sharply,
"*Yeah but*, he hit me first."
"Did you call your twin sister
A really bad name?"
"*Yeah but*, she was rude first,
And I just did the same."
"Did you chase your pet monkey
And then try to shave him?"
"*Yeah but*, he ate my banana,
And deserved what I gave him."

But this kind of thinking can get you in trouble.
Every time you say "Yeah but . . ."
Your problems just double.
And you know what else happens
Every time you say "Yeah but"?
You give up your freedom.
What a terrible habit!

When others do nasty and horrible things,
If you act the same way, then they're pulling your strings.
When someone gets angry and you too get upset,
You jiggle and jerk like a marionette.

But a wonderful change came over the land,
When a small boy named Indy
Acted selfless and grand.
His sister punched him and called him a name.
Then she stepped back and waited,
But no "yeah-buts" came.
So she poked him again and called him a chicken,
Knowing full well
That she'd soon take a lickin'.

But Indy refused to continue the habit.
Yes Indy refused to ever say, "Yeah but . . ."
"I don't want to be mean!" Indy quietly said.
His mom was so stunned, her hair turned bright red.
"When others are bad, why should I be badder?"
His dad was so shocked, he fell off a ladder.
"It's too late to change things!" Indy's sister complained.
"I've fought fire with fire, since I was first potty trained!"

Then Indy offered some helpful advice—
Not just one time, or two times,
He offered it thrice.
"If a bloke fills your pants with a sack full of ice,
Or crushes your bike in the jaws of a vice,
Or buries your hat under six feet of rice . . .
It's never too late,
No it's never too late,
No it's never too late to be nice."

A magical change came over the land.
Indy started a trend,
A trend that was grand.
When Billy Bob Baker yelled at his sister,
She smiled sweetly and asked,
"Could you speak softly, mister?"
When Sally Sue Seesaw refused to share candy,
Her friend simply showed her
How sharing was dandy.

Soon every in-Yabbit-ant refused to fight back.
They chose on their own how they wanted to act.
They chose on their own who they wanted to be.
They chose on their own, and this was the key.
They chose on their own, and soon they were free.

As the sun sets behind the bilbaba tree,
And the Prince rides off on his yak,
Remember that if you want to be free,
You never, no never, fight back.
Remember how Indy discovered the key,
The one that set the in-Yabbit-ants free.
Never say, "Yeah but—he did it first!"
Not ever, not once, never twice.
Don't even think about making things worse,
Because it's never too late to be nice.