

Bounce the Ball

There once was a boy named Bobby who lived on a quiet street in a small town in the Midwest. Bobby was a quiet boy who was very shy, causing him not to have any friends. Poor Bobby was alone, with no one to play with, but this would change on one summer day...



Bobby was walking back home home after school when he came upon a garage sale on his street. At first, Bobby didn't pay too much attention to it. But then, he spotted a bright red ball lying next to a bunch of old action figures and dolls. Bobby had just lost his ball a few weeks ago, but could never find it. So little Bobby went up to the woman behind the table, looking down at the ground as he walked, and managed to force out his question about the price.



"Two dollars," said the woman.

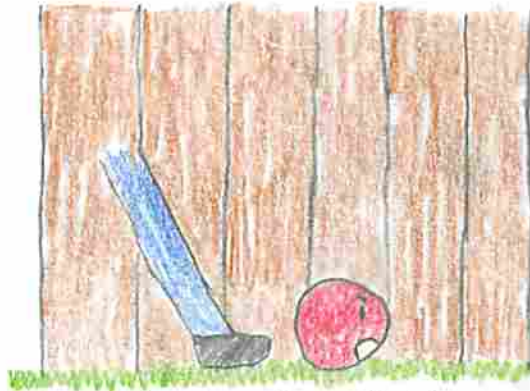
"I'll...t-take it," said Bobby nervously.

Spending all of his remaining lunch money plus a bit of his allowance, he finally had another ball of his own. As soon as he got home, he went into his backyard and started to kick the ball around. He did this for a couple of minutes until, after a particularly hard kick, he heard a voice.

"Hey, could you not kick me so hard!?!? I can feel things too, you know!"

Bobby looked around his surroundings trying to find the source of the voice. The only thing around was the ball. Shrugging, he continued to play around with it. But then he heard the same voice.

"Hey, did you hear me? Don't kick me so hard!"



Bobby looked around again, trying to find the source of the voice, but once again, only found the ball. Hesitantly, he asked, "Did you just speak, red ball?"

"Yeah, I did. Why?"

Bobby couldn't believe his eyes. He rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to make sure that he wasn't dreaming. The pinch hurt.

"Do you have a name, red ball?" asked Bobby.

"I'm not sure. No one ever called me anything. I was just something that could be kicked around."

Bobby felt pretty sad for the ball. It didn't even have a name. So Bobby decided to name it.

"You know what, I'm going to call you Bounce. Yeah, Bounce the Ball!! That sounds like a great name for you!"

"Yeah, it does. Thanks! What's your name?" asked the ball.

"My name is Bobby. Nice to meet you."

Thus, Bobby and the talking ball became friends.



Bobby and Bounce the ball had great fun with each other. Bobby was careful not to hurt his new friend, knowing how much his friend didn't like being kicked too hard. They would always go to the park when Bobby returned from school and play with each other. However, one day, when they were playing around, Bobby accidentally kicked Bounce too hard, causing Bounce to go flying into the sky and out of the park. Bobby tried to run after Bounce, but didn't see where Bounce landed.



He looked everywhere nearby: in the bushes, on the sidewalk, in the trees. He couldn't find a trace of Bounce. Sadly, with his head down, tears streaming down his face, he headed back home.

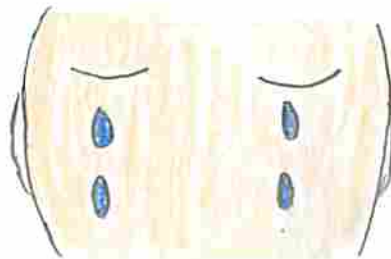
The next day, Bobby went to school, still upset over the missing Bounce. He couldn't think of any way to find Bounce and thought very hard to come up with a solution during class. However, by the time recess came around, he still didn't have a plan. Overcome, he put his face in his hands and cried. Just then, he heard a voice.

"Hey, are you okay? Why are you crying?"

Bobby looked up. Through his tears, he saw the face of a classmate of his, Franklin. Bobby didn't speak, suddenly overcome with shyness, his surprise overcoming his sadness. No one had ever really paid attention to him before, because he kept to himself a lot. A few kids before had tried to talk to him, but he never really said anything, so they lost interest.

"Cat got your tongue? Want to tell me what's wrong?"

Bobby remained silent, thinking to himself. *Should I tell him? I don't know if he'll believe me or even help me.* But then, Franklin started to walk away. Bobby called out to him.



"I lost my special ball yesterday and can't find it anywhere."

“Do you want help finding it? I can get some of my friends to help too, if you want. They always like adventuring around.”

Bobby couldn't believe his ears. “O...Okay. Thanks, Franklin.”

“No problem, buddy. We'll find that ball. Let's meet after school and we'll start looking.”

As Franklin left, Bobby was excited. He finally had a chance to find Bounce. He couldn't sit still in class and couldn't wait for school to end. When the last bell rang, he ran to meet up with Franklin and his friends in front of the school. Together they set out, looking all over the neighborhood, searching everywhere they could. They looked up, they looked down, and everywhere else in between. The sun sank lower as their search continued on. Finally, just as it was getting late, one of Franklin's friends spotted something red and round hidden in a dense area of bushes.

“I think I found it over here, Bobby!”

Bobby rushed over and there was Bounce!



Everyone gathered around, congratulating each other. Together, they headed back to Bobby's house and ate snacks.

“Made some friends, Bobby?” said Bobby's mom.

Bobby looked around at all the smiling faces around him.

“Yeah, I did.”

When everyone left, Bobby spent the rest of the night, talking to Bounce about how he got new friends and other things. The next day, Bobby brought Bounce to school and played with Franklin and his new friends. However, as Bobby was walking back to class, he saw a kid walking by himself. No one paid any attention to him. A new kid, Bobby thought to himself. After whispering to Bounce about what he wanted to do to Bounce, Bobby went over to the kid and gave him Bounce.

"Here you go. This is Bounce. He'll help you make friends, like he did for me."

With that, Bobby walked off, waving goodbye to the kid and Bounce.

