



Harold's Hat

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The Fourth of July was finally here and Harold could not be happier.

Parades. Swimming. Fireworks. The town picnic.

Oh, and there was also The Hat. Harold could hardly think of The Hat without saying “Mwah-ha-ha!”

Last year, Betsy Lominzer won the Fourth of July Hat Contest at the town picnic. Her hat had red, white, and blue glitter and a

cup holder for her lemonade.

Harold asked her if he could try it on.

“No,” Betsy replied.

“For just a minute?”

“No.”

“For just one teeny, tiny little millisecond?”

“No.”

“OK, then. I’ll show you next year,” said Harold.

In that instant, new and exciting ideas

filled Harold’s head. He would build a bigger hat. A better hat. The Best Hat Ever.

Then he turned to Betsy Lominzer and said, “Mwah-ha-ha!”

Harold worked on The Hat every night.

Sometimes the work was bangy. Sometimes it was gluey. Sometimes it sounded like a fire truck going by.

“What are you doing down there?” Dad would call as he passed the basement steps.

“Arts and crafts!” Harold would call back.

When at last Harold couldn’t make The Hat any better, he put it in his closet to keep it safe for the big day.

Today was the big day.

The Hat Contest was in half an hour.

Harold swung open the closet door. “Mwah-ha . . . huh?” It wasn’t there!

Maybe he had put The Hat in his toy box.

Hmm.

Under the bed?

Um . . .

Behind the hamper?

In the dresser? Basement?

Garage? Attic? The closet again, just to make sure?

“MOM!”

“Yes?” Mom was lighting the barbecue.

“Have you seen my Hat? The one with red, white, and blue

glitter? And the cup holder and flashing lights?”

“No,” she replied.

“Did you say ‘flashing lights?’”

“DAD!”

“Not so loud!” Dad was cleaning the pool.

“Have you seen my

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Hat? The one with battery-powered waving flags and the siren?”

“You have a hat with a siren?” Dad asked.

“BILLY!”

“Bankee boodle!” Billy was sucking on his foot.

“Have you seen my Hat? The one with the megaphone and the solar-powered jukebox that plays a medley of patriotic songs when you push a red button on the brim?”

“Yankee doodle,” Billy said.

Wait. That wasn’t Billy.

Harold followed the “yankee doodles” to Sparky’s doghouse. He found Sparky trotting in circles to the sound of fife and drums.

The Hat was safe and sound—except for some dog drool, but that wiped off easily enough.

“Now I can show that Betsy Lominzer,” Harold chuckled. “Mwah-ha-WHOA! THE CONTEST STARTS IN FIVE MINUTES!”

Harold leaped onto his bike and tore down Main Street to the town square. The Hat’s lights blazed and its siren wailed. Cars screeched to a halt to let him pass.

The town square! Harold dumped his bike in the parking lot and flew through the crowds, past the farmers’ market, the pie-eating contest, the spin-art stations, and the pony rides.

“Happy Independence Day!” Harold shouted into The Hat’s megaphone as his flags waved and “The Star-Spangled Banner” played.

People scurried out of his path.

There it was! The Fourth of July Hat Contest booth! He made it! He’d finally show that Betsy Lominzer!

But Betsy’s hat had improved a bit since last year.

Her hat had improved quite

a lot, actually.

“Wow,” Harold said, wide-eyed. “Can I try on your hat? For just a minute? For just one teeny, tiny little millisecond?”

“No,” Betsy Lominzer replied.

“OK, then!” said Harold. “I’ll show you next year.”

And in that moment, Harold’s mind burst with new and exciting ideas.

A bigger hat. A better hat. The Best Hat Ever.

His lips curled into a giant smile. Then he clicked on The Hat’s megaphone.

“MWAH-HA-HA!” he said. 4

