

And the Winner Is ...!

by Kathleen O'Sullivan


"I'm not telling you again, Chris," said Dad as he slammed the door. "You will mow that lawn *today!*"

We heard the car screech out of the drive. I knew from the way Mum was holding her mouth as she put Sally into her pushchair that *this* time Chris would have to do as he was told.

As soon as Mum and Sally were out of sight down the street, Chris rushed to the phone. Ringing up his mates, I guessed.

"You'll be in trouble – you heard what Dad said."

"Mind your own business," he hissed as he scooted out the door.



It wasn't too long before I saw Josh and Hemi come round the side of the house. Soon Blake arrived too, flinging his bike against the rubbish bin with a crash.

I watched them sit in a row along the top of the brick wall as I swished the water round in the sink. It was my week for dishes – Chris always tried to get out of those, too.

I saw Chris jump down off the wall and race off to the shed. He came out dragging the old hand mower. Dad won't let us use the motor mower – he says the old one does a better job. But I think he's just worried that we might chop our toes off. As it is, we always have to wear shoes when we mow the lawn.

Josh, Blake, and Hemi crowded round as Chris pointed to the mower and waved his arms around in the air. I saw them nodding and grinning. Then Chris sprinted towards the house and burst in through the back door. He grabbed Mum's old oven timer and shot back out through the door, slamming it so hard that the windows rattled.



Blake grabbed hold of the mower. Josh and Hemi stood on the path next to Chris, who was holding the timer. I opened the window so I could hear what was going on.

“GO!” shouted Chris.

Blake charged down to the end of the lawn, shoving the mower in front of him. With a magnificent skid, like a rally car doing a wheelie, he turned and raced it back to the other three.

“How did I go?” He waved his arms over his head in a victory sign.

“Not too bad – just over two minutes,” said Chris.

“Now it’s Hemi’s turn.”

This time the mower just took off. The blades sounded like a helicopter coming in to land. Hemi was much, much faster than Blake.





Just as Hemi finished, Josh rushed forward, grabbed the mower, and tore off down the garden. I've never seen a mower go like that. Josh's legs were moving so fast, it was like watching a video on fast forward. When he finished his turn, he let go of the mower and sprawled face down on the grass. The mower crashed into the steps with a bang that almost took the back door off its hinges.

"Who won? Who won?"

Josh did a fierce haka when Chris called his name, but Hemi and Blake said it wasn't fair. They said Josh had cheated by not waiting for Chris to say "Go!"

While they were arguing, I noticed that Chris had the same triumphant grin on his face that he gets when he's cheating at cards. I saw him looking at the uncut part of the lawn, almost as if he was measuring it up.



“How about another go, then, if you think that one wasn’t fair?” He grinned with delight when they all nodded. “OK, then – but this time we’ll make it two runs each.”

Chris held the timer as each of the other three puffed and panted up and down the lawn, their legs going like pistons on an old steam engine. In no time at all, the grass was cut.

Josh, Hemi, and Blake flung themselves onto the wall and watched as Chris took the mower to the shed. When he came back with the yard broom and started to sweep the grass off the path, they all begged him to tell them who had won.

It was just at that moment that Mum came round the side of the house with Sally fast asleep in her pushchair. She was just in time to see Chris busily pushing the broom. Her face lit up, and she gave him a huge hug. Chris turned bright red and was about to push her away when she opened her purse.

“Thanks so much, dear – you *have* been busy! Why don’t you take your friends down to the dairy and shout them an ice cream?”

With a whoop, the four of them disappeared.

There was no ice cream for me. All *I* got was a dirty look because the dishes were still in the sink.

illustrated by Christine Ross

