

Charlie's Sick Day

Gilbert leaned his bicycle against the side of Charlie's house. "Hello!" he called in to his friend.



"Hello!" Charlie echoed back cheerfully.
"Come in! Make yourself at home!"

Gilbert helped himself to some lemonade and pulled up a chair at the kitchen table. Then he stopped and stared at Charlie.

"Hey, you're all orange and splotchy. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing is wrong with me," Charlie started to say, but Gilbert kept talking.

"Charlie, you look so sick. You really ought to be in bed."



The more Gilbert talked about how sick Charlie looked, the more Charlie began to think that maybe he *did* feel a bit odd today. He couldn't quite put his finger on it. So he crawled into bed and covered up his head. "You're right," he said. "I'm sick! What do you think is wrong with me, Gilbert?"



"Let's look at your symptoms," said Gilbert. "I studied biology in school. I'm sure I can figure out this mystery."

"Thank you, Gilbert," said Charlie. "You're a good friend."

Gilbert went right to work. First he made Charlie as comfortable as possible. He found extra pillows in the closet and propped up his friend in bed. But as he tucked Charlie in, Gilbert noticed something.

"Charlie, your tail seems to be extra curly today."

"Oh no! What does that mean?" Charlie asked weakly. He closed his eyes.

"It means that we'll have to put your tail in a splint to straighten it out." Gilbert fashioned a padded splint from a ruler and a kitchen towel and tucked Charlie back into bed.

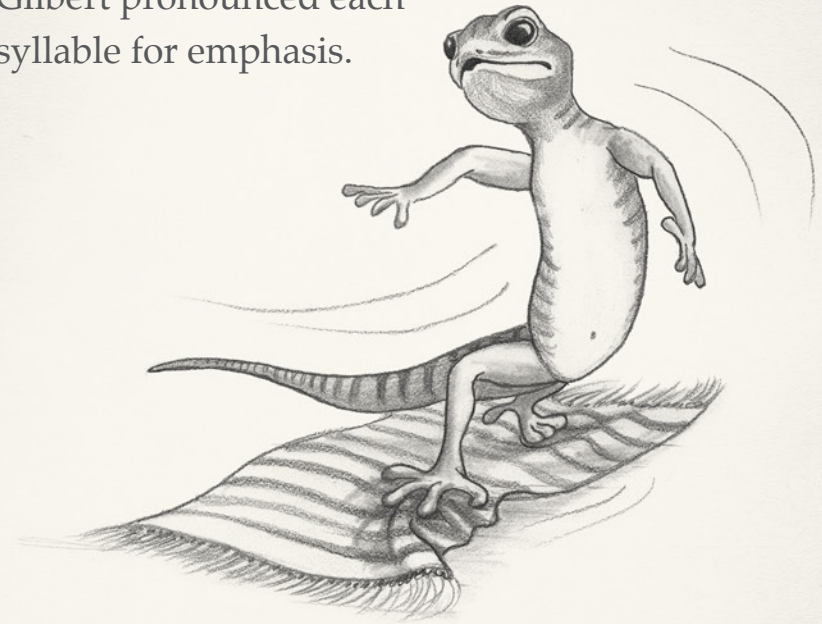
"But wait ... my tail is *supposed* to be curly," said Charlie.

“Hush now. This is the best treatment for a curly tail,” Gilbert said firmly as he started to walk away. “Believe me, your tail will feel better in no time.”



Charlie curled up with his pillows and cleared his throat.

Gilbert spun around. “Did you just cough? Maybe you have a *bron-chi-al* infection.” Gilbert pronounced each syllable for emphasis.

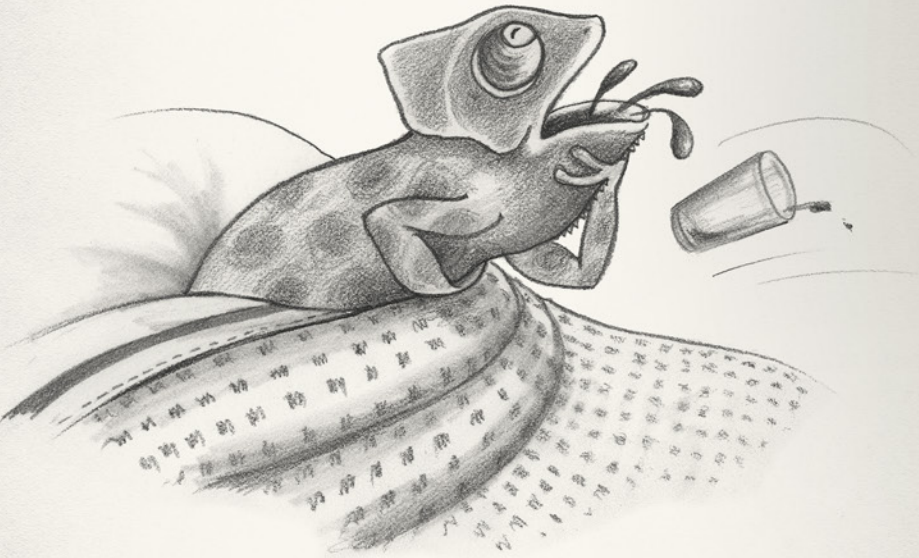


“Open your mouth and say *ahh*,” Gilbert instructed. Charlie did as he was told.

“Hm. A sore throat and a cough. I have just the thing to soothe it.” Gilbert flew to the kitchen and whipped up a cough syrup using thyme, honey, and water. Then he sprinkled in other herbs and spices for good measure: ginger, garlic, cinnamon, rosemary, and lots of hot pepper.

Gilbert carried the glass back to Charlie's room, stirring the thick mixture with a spoon. "Now," he said. "Drink this right up and you'll feel better in no time."

It took a Herculean effort, but Charlie drank the thick, brown syrup in two big gulps. It tasted awful! Charlie doubled over, clutching his throat with one hand and his stomach with the other.



Gilbert's eyes filled with alarm. "You have a stomachache!" He pressed on Charlie's stomach. "Does this hurt?"

Charlie winced. "Well, it hurts now that you're pressing on it." Charlie tossed his head from side to side and moaned. "I need some help, Gilbert!"

"Your stomach hurts, so you must have some type of chronic physical ailment. Do you have a thermometer? Perhaps you have a fever."



Then Gilbert had an idea. "I've got it! I saw this on television once and I think it will work. I'll bring you a hot water bottle and you can lie next to it until you feel better."

Gilbert boiled some water on the stove and filled the water bottle.

“Now, lie in bed and hug the hot water bottle, Charlie.”

Charlie did as he was told, but drew back with a yelp. It was HOT!



“Just do as I say,” said Gilbert. “And you’ll feel better in no time.” Charlie gritted his teeth and carefully hugged the bottle.

Gilbert went back to the kitchen to fix himself something to eat.



Meanwhile, alone in his room, Charlie was feeling too warm lying next to that hot water bottle. He wasn’t even sure that his stomach hurt, plus he was hungry and bored and wanted to play. But then Charlie remembered he was sick, so he leaned back against his pillow.

He could hear Gilbert rustling around in the cupboards and fridge. He thought he heard Gilbert making himself a sandwich. Then he was sure he could smell hot chocolate.

Hot chocolate would taste really good right now, but I probably shouldn't have any because I'm sick. But I don't really feel sick. Maybe I should analyze the situation, Charlie thought.

He went over the symptoms that Gilbert had talked about.

Do I have a sore throat? No.

Do I have a cough? No.

Do I have a stomachache? No.

Is my tail curly? It's *always* curly.

Charlie, he said to himself, you are well!

Leaping from his bed with joy, Charlie shouted, "I'm well!"



Then he pulled the splint off his tail and ran to the bathroom sink. He drained the hot water bottle and rinsed the spicy syrup out of his mouth with cold water.

When Charlie skipped into the kitchen, Gilbert looked up from his enormous sandwich. "Charlie? What are you doing?"

“Gilbert, look at me! I’m well! Your cures worked!”



“But Charlie!” Gilbert mumbled through a mouthful of food. “You must be sick. Now you’re turning green!”

“Of course I’m turning green. I’m a chameleon!” said Charlie. “And I’m a chameleon with a very good friend. May I have part of your sandwich?”

The End





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