

A PRIVATE TUTOR

Summer is for playing, swimming in the pool, throwing stones in the river, catching lizards or cycling. / But for the minister's son, this summer was going to be very different. His Dad had so much work that he drove him to the edge of town every morning, then left for the office. / (00:48) The minister's son played by himself, pretending to be - a super-sophisticated "W" who's travelled all over the world "Welcome!"

He could also be a really E-l-e-gant "E". And to make a "B" he took a deep breath and he blew himself up like a Balloon.

But the minister's son soon got bored. He hated being alone. But that summer he wouldn't have to be, as very soon, he was going to start his extra classes with...

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That summer, his father had decided that, to make sure he wasn't left on his own, and to make the most of the time, he would have private lessons.

"What's my tutor going to be like?" the minister's son asked himself, feeling a little anxious. When he arrived at the school, there was no-one there, so he started to play: Welcome, what an Elegant Balloon. He felt so embarrassed when the tutor walked in! The minister's son was very shy. But the tutor was a bit of a scatter brain himself. He'd come in upside down!

"Welcome!" - said the tutor. "Oh, sorry, I meant good Morning. What would you like us to do?" - he asked.

But the minister's son didn't say anything, nor did he answer any of the tutor's questions. In fact, he didn't say a thing the whole time.

Next day, the minister dropped his son off at the entrance to the town once again. The tutor would have liked to walk to school with him, and have a chat. But his pupil ran away. The tutor couldn't understand why his pupil was avoiding him, and wouldn't speak. He thought that maybe, since he was a minister's son, he was very clever, and needed more difficult and demanding lessons.

The tutor stood like a Greek Sigma, all serious, and introduced one of his favourite subjects: The number "e":

"e equals the sum, as n goes from zero to infinity, of 1 divided by the factorial of n. Isn't that incredible?" -exclaimed the tutor, trying to transmit some of his excitement to his

student. But the minister's son still didn't say anything. It seemed that the cat had got his tongue. "What a horrible summer!" thought the minister's son. He was convinced that if the tutor were to find out that he didn't actually understand a word of what he was saying, he'd laugh at him.

But that day, when he got to school, he saw something that he'd never have imagined. At the back of the classroom, the tutor was crying. And this time, the minister's son plucked up the courage to ask:

"Why are you crying?"

And the tutor was so happy to hear his voice, that he explained that he was sad because there was a problem that was giving him a real headache. He didn't know if he was doing a good job, and if he carried on not talking then he wouldn't be able to teach him anything, and they'd fire him. Fire him? The minister's son felt more ashamed than ever. Because of him, his father would get rid of the tutor, and he'd be left all alone again.

What could he do?

That night, he decided that if he did all of the exercises that the tutor had set him, then perhaps he wouldn't be fired. But no matter how hard he tried -and he did try- the minister's son couldn't do it. He got addition mixed up with subtraction, and the numbers jumped all over the place, doing crazy acrobatics. The symbols for alpha, omega, pi and mu seemed to decompose into simple fractions and made him feel so small he was infinitesimal. It was sooo difficult! How was he going to work out what it meant?

The next day, the minister's son sat waiting for the tutor with a giant stack of homework on his desk.

"What's all this?" -asked the tutor in amazement.

But all the minister's son could do was confess that he didn't understand it himself. And then his tutor explained that there was only one way to solve the problem.

"How?" -asked the minister's son impatiently.

"By doing what you did just now, asking." -replied the tutor. The only way to solve a problem is by asking, and together they went out to find more questions.

Why is the sky blue? Why do flowers grow up and carrots grow down? How many poppies fit in a box the size of your hands? And how does a worm breathe without a nose?

The minister's son was dying to find out all the answers. But the tutor told him that you only learn when it's you who's asking the question. And to do that, all you need is curiosity.

"Go on, ask!" - he encouraged him.

The minister's son was frozen to the spot. Could he really ask questions?

"Er... What does 'tutor' mean?" -he burst out.

“Good question! ‘Tutor’ comes from the Latin 'tutor', a protector or guardian, from the stem ‘tueri’ which means ‘watch over’. It literally means one who teaches another” answered his teacher.

“Aaaaand... How do you know so much?” -asked the minister's son, more enthusiastically.

“Because teachers are like children, they never lose their curiosity.” –he replied.

That day, the minister's son learned that it's asking questions that makes a person wise. / The cleverest people aren't the ones who knows things, they're the ones who want to know things.

“So, why is it raining?” -asked the minister's son who was beginning to get wet.

“Perhaps because summer's ending and autumn's on the way?” -replied his tutor.

“But I don't want it to end. I want to keep asking questions”

The tutor smiled happily. Now he knew that he had done a good job. What about you? Does anyone have a question?

Script: Mireia Vidal