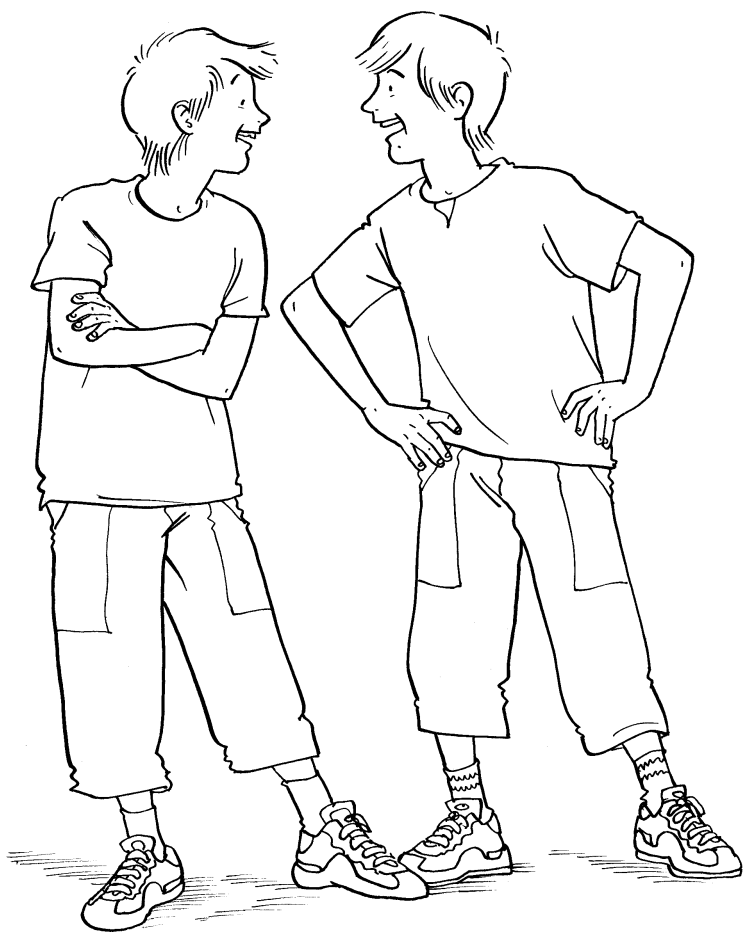


No Change

by Jonathan Meres



When Callum and Rory's grandma came for tea, she said what she always said.

'Look at those two. Like peas in a pod.'

Callum smiled.

'If I had a pound for every time you said that, Gran!'

Rory looked at his brother, expecting him to carry on. But he didn't.

'Well?' said Rory.

'Well what?' said Callum.

'How much would you have then? If you had a pound for every time Gran said that?'

'Erm... let me see.'

Callum screwed up his face in concentration.

'£47,' he said at last.

'You're weird,' laughed Rory.

'What's so weird about that?' said Callum. 'Mum! Rory says I'm weird!'

'Now, now you two,' said Mum. 'Wash your hands and get up to the table.'

Callum did as he was told immediately. Rory had to be told another three times.

They were the same but different, Callum and Rory. It was no surprise that they *looked* the same. They *were* twins after all. You'd expect them to look the same. And they did, pretty much. They both had blond hair and blue eyes for a start. They were both tall and skinny. They both had noses that turned up ever so slightly at the end, like miniature ski jumps. If you'd never met them before, it was almost impossible to tell them apart. But they weren't identical. Not *quite* anyway.

Their mum and dad could tell them apart. Their friends could tell them apart too. So could their teachers. But you had to know what to look for. You had to know that Callum was the one with the tiny mole on his chin and that Rory was the one with the slightly chipped front tooth. If you knew that, then you were fine. If you didn't, you'd either have to guess, or ask.

'Which one are you then?'

If Callum was the one who was asked, he'd usually give the right answer. It was less bother that way. It seemed only polite.

'I'm Callum,' Callum would say.

But if Rory was the one who was asked, he'd usually give the *wrong* answer. On purpose. It was more fun that way.

‘I’m Callum,’ Rory would say, grinning mischievously.

You see, just because they *looked* the same didn’t mean they *were* the same. Which is why Callum and Rory were the same but different.

Callum was the calmer of the two. He was more shy and a bit more serious than his brother. He was thought of as ‘The Quiet One’ – the one most likely to be found with his nose in a book, or playing on the computer. He was also the elder of the twins. Only by ten minutes. But he was the elder nevertheless and Rory had never quite forgiven him.

Rory was forever on the go. Always doing something different, or trying something new. Constantly flitting from one obsession to another and from one hobby to the next, Rory had the concentration span of an ironing board.

When Callum and Rory’s grandma was getting ready to leave, she did what she always did. She gave each of her grandsons a pound coin.

‘Thanks, Gran,’ said Callum.

But Rory said nothing. He was already thinking what he was going to buy with the money.

‘Rory?’ said Mum. ‘What do you say?’

‘What?’ said Rory. ‘Oh right. Sorry, yeah, thanks Gran, that’s wicked!’

Gran smiled.

‘Don’t spend it all at once now, boys,’ she said.



‘Course not, Gran,’ said Callum.

But Rory said nothing.

‘Rory?’ said Mum. ‘Your grandma’s talking to you.’

‘Sorry, Gran, what was that?’ said Rory.

‘I said don’t spend it all at once,’ said Gran.

‘OK, Gran,’ grinned Rory.

The twins’ mum looked at Rory. She knew that if he *didn’t* spend it all at once it would be an absolute miracle.

‘Coming out for a bike ride, Cal?’ said Rory.

It wasn’t even five minutes since Gran had left. Rory had been fidgeting about like he’d got ants in his pants ever since.

‘Er, yeah, all right then,’ said Callum.

‘Be back soon, Mum, OK?’ said Rory, heading for the door.

‘Bye, Mum,’ said Callum, following on behind.

‘Where are we going, Ror?’

But Rory didn’t reply. He’d already gone.

‘Bye, boys. Take care,’ called Mum. *She* knew *exactly* where they were going. They were going to spend the money they’d just been given. Or rather, *Rory* was going to spend the money he’d just been given. Callum was going with him.

As it turned out, Mum was right.

‘Why have we stopped?’ said Callum approximately two minutes later.

They’d only got as far as the end of the road. Rory had got off his bike and was leaning it against the newsagent’s window.

‘I thought we were going for a bike ride.’

‘Correction,’ said Rory. ‘We’ve *been* for a bike ride. You got that pound?’

‘Eh?’

‘That pound that Gran gave you. You still got it?’

Callum looked at his brother like he’d gone completely mad.

‘Course I’ve still got it!’

‘Lend us it then,’ said Rory.

‘Eh?’ said Callum. ‘What for?’

‘So I can get some football stickers.’

‘No way!’ said Callum. ‘Spend your own money!’

‘I haven’t got enough.’

‘Why? How much are they?’

‘35 pence a packet,’ said Rory.

Callum did a quick mental calculation.

‘So that means you can get two packets then,’ he said. ‘Two packets would be 70 pence and you’d get 30 pence change.’



‘Yeah, but I want more than that, don’t I?’ said Rory. ‘If you lend me *your* pound I could get... er... I could get...’

‘Five packets,’ said Callum. ‘Five packets would cost £1.75.’

‘There you go!’ said Rory. ‘You’d get 25 pence change!’

‘No, I wouldn’t,’ said Callum.

‘What do you mean, no, you wouldn’t? Yes, you would!’ said Rory.

‘No, I wouldn’t. Because I’m not going to lend it to you in the first place!’

Rory looked like he’d just been told the world was about to end.

‘What?’

‘I’m saving it.’

‘Saving it? But why? You’ve got loads of money already!’

‘That’s because I save it!’ said Callum.

‘But you never *spend* any of it! What’s the point of having money if you don’t spend it?’

‘I’m *going* to spend it,’ said Callum. ‘Once I’ve got enough.’

‘Enough for what?’ said Rory.

‘A skateboard.’

‘A skateboard?’ said Rory. ‘Whoa! They’re dead expensive!’

‘Yeah, I know,’ said Callum, rolling his eyes.
‘*That’s* why I’m saving up!’

Rory looked puzzled. He just didn’t get this *saving up* thing at all. But then that was another crucial difference between him and his twin brother. Callum always seemed to have money. Rory never had any. Well, at least not for very long anyway.

They were both *given* the same amount of money. £2.50 a week pocket money plus a pound whenever Gran came. But whereas Callum *saved* his, Rory spent his money as soon as possible. He couldn’t *help* spending it. It was as if the money was burning a hole in his pocket. He just *had* to spend it before his trousers caught fire! Even if it was on something he didn’t particularly want. The possibility of saving the money just didn’t enter Rory’s head. He couldn’t save money if his life depended on it.

‘So that’s a no then?’ said Rory.

‘Yes, it’s a no,’ said Callum.

But Rory was nothing if not determined. He decided to give it one last shot.

‘I’ll buy you some sweets with the change?’

Callum couldn’t quite believe what he was hearing.

‘Correction,’ he said. ‘*My* change.’

Honestly, thought Callum. *What was his brother like?*

‘Can I have some new trainers, please, Mum?’ said Rory.

They’d only just got in the door. Callum had eventually agreed to *lend* his brother five pence so that he had £1.05p altogether – enough to buy three packets of football stickers at 35 pence a packet. It was the only way to keep him quiet. Rory was delighted. Not as delighted as he would have been with *five* packets mind! But Callum figured it would keep him happy until the *next* time he wanted to buy something. Which wasn’t very long as it turned out. Even by Rory’s standards.

‘New trainers?’ said Mum.

‘Yeah. They’re silver with these two blue stripes down the side and these wicked yellow laces! I’ve seen them in this catalogue! They’re dead cool! And they’re only, like, seventy quid or something!’

Callum and his mum exchanged knowing glances. Rory really didn’t have a clue when it came to money. He had no concept of the *value* of money. £70 for trainers, or 35 *pence* for football stickers. It was all the same to Rory. He really *did* appear to think that money grew on trees!

‘Did you say *only* seventy quid?’ said Mum.

‘Yeah, I know. Bargain eh?’

‘So that would be £140 on trainers! Just like that!’

Rory groaned. He’d forgotten that Callum would have to have new trainers too.

‘Mum you don’t *always* have to dress us the same, you know,’ said Rory. ‘Just because we’re twins.’

‘It makes life easier,’ said Mum.

‘For *you*, maybe,’ said Rory. ‘Not for us. It’s getting embarrassing. It’s not like we’re three or something anymore. We’re nearly eleven!’

‘I don’t mind,’ said Callum. ‘I quite like dressing the same.’

‘Shut up, Cal!’ hissed Rory.

‘Would *you* like some new trainers, Callum?’ asked Mum.

Rory looked at his brother, willing him to say yes. They said that some twins were telepathic and could read each others’ minds. Well, now was the chance to find out if Callum could read *his*!

‘Erm... not really,’ said Callum. ‘The ones I’ve got are fine, thanks, Mum.’

Rory could have sworn. So much for telepathic twins!

‘There’s your answer then I’m afraid, Rory,’ said Mum.

‘What? So I can’t have them then?’ said Rory. ‘All because of goody two trainers here?’

‘Sorry, love, but you don’t actually *need* them. You *want* them,’ said Mum.

Mum smiled, sympathetically. But Rory was having none of it. His mum was wrong. He *did* need those

trainers! He *needed* them like he'd never needed anything before. He was fed up with people saying no to him. Why couldn't they just say yes instead? Was that really too much to ask?

'If you *needed* them that would be different,' said Mum.

Rory thought about that for a moment.

'Really?' he said.

'Of course!' laughed Mum. 'We couldn't have you running round in trainers with holes in, could we?'

Hmm, thought Rory to himself. *Interesting. Very interesting.*

'Well?' said Mum. 'Could we?'

'What?' said Rory. 'Er, no, Mum. Don't suppose we could.'

Callum glanced across at his brother. He recognised that look in Rory's eyes. He knew he was up to something. But what?

'You asleep yet, Cal?' whispered Rory.

'No, why?' replied Callum.

'Nothing. Just wondered.'

'I'll let you know when I am if you like.'

'Shut up.'

The twins were lying in bed. Callum, being the elder by ten minutes, was in the top bunk. Rory was in the bottom bunk. It was way after ten o'clock. *Match of the Day* was blasting out of the TV in the front room. It was so loud it was like being at the match itself, except of course that at the match you didn't get a commentator shrieking hysterically in your ear every couple of seconds.

'Rooney chests the ball down! He turns! Shoots! One-nil!'

Rory waited and waited. *He* was wide awake. Not because of the volume of the TV, but because he had a plan. And in order for the plan to work, he needed his brother to be asleep.

Eventually, Rory became aware that Callum had stopped moving around in the bunk above. His breathing had become heavier. He was pretty sure that he'd dropped off. It was time for action.

He got out of bed as quietly as possible and crept along the corridor. He could hear his mum splashing about in the bath and singing to herself. Rory knew she'd be there for ages. He tiptoed downstairs and stuck his head round the front room door. Sure enough, his dad was fast asleep and snoring in front of the TV. *So far so good*, thought Rory, heading for the porch.

The shoes were lined up as usual. Dad's, Mum's, Callum's and Rory's. But something was wrong. Rory could see that straightaway. There was only one pair

of trainers there. One pair was missing. *Callum's* pair! Rory knew because *his* were marked with an 'R' inside, just like all the rest of his shoes and clothes. It was the only way of knowing who's were who's.

So where were they? Where were Callum's trainers? The ones Callum thought were *fine*? Because they wouldn't be fine after Rory had got hold of them, that was for sure! What was it that Mum had said? We couldn't have you running around in trainers with holes in? Well, by the time Rory had finished with them there'd be more hole than actual trainers! His skinflint parents would have no choice. They'd *have* to buy new ones! For *both* of them!

Rory went through to the kitchen. He opened a drawer and took out a big pair of scissors.

Yep, thought Rory. *They should do the trick.*

He tiptoed back upstairs and into the bedroom. Maybe Callum had put his trainers in the wardrobe? He opened the wardrobe door. Nope. No trainers there. *Oh well*, thought Rory. *Maybe they're under the bed?* But when he looked, the trainers weren't there either.

There was a sudden click as Callum switched his bedside light on.

'You looking for these by any chance, Ror?'

'Aaaaaaaaaaaggggghhhhhhhhh!!!!' screamed Rory.



He looked up to see that Callum had thrown his duvet off. He was wearing his pyjamas. But on closer inspection Rory could see that, on the end of his pyjama-clad legs, Callum was also wearing his trainers. He'd clearly been expecting Rory. Perhaps he really *could* read his brother's mind after all!

'You want to be careful with those scissors,' said Callum. 'You could do some serious damage with those!'

But before Rory could say anything, there was a knock at the door.

'You OK in there, boys?'

'We're fine, Mum,' said Callum.

'Rory just had a bad dream, didn't you, Ror?'

'Yeah,' muttered Rory, glaring at his brother.

Callum may have out-thought him *this* time. But there'd be a next time. *And* a time after *that* if necessary! One thing was certain. Rory would stop at nothing to get those trainers.

It had seemed such a good idea at the time. Colouring in his brother's mole with a pink felt tip pen as he slept, then standing in front of the mirror with a brown pen and giving himself one in exactly the same place. But now, with one hand on the kitchen door handle, Rory suddenly didn't feel quite so sure. Would his parents fall for it? *Oh well*, he thought. *Only one way to find out.*



Dad was standing by the sink, making himself a cup of coffee, as Rory walked in.

‘Morning, son.’

‘Morning, Dad.’

Son, thought Rory. He’d said *son*. But did he know *which* son?

‘Is your brother coming down?’

‘I think so, Dad, yeah.’

Brother, thought Rory. He’d said *brother*. But *which* brother?

Dad turned around and looked at Rory. Rory allowed himself a quick glance back. He needed some kind of sign. Did Dad think he was Callum or not?

‘Mum tells me Rory had a bad dream last night.’

‘Yeeesssss!!!’ said Rory under his breath. His dad *had* fallen for it!

‘Pardon?’ said Dad.

‘Er, yes, Dad. He did,’ said Rory, quickly.

It was now or never. Rory knew he had to act quickly before anyone else came in and messed things up.

‘Dad?’

‘What?’

‘Can I have some new trainers, please?’

Dad took a slurp of his coffee.

‘But I thought yours were fine.’

‘What?’ said Rory.

‘That’s what your mum told me you said. You said the ones you’ve got were fine.’

‘Er, yeah, but I’ve changed my mind,’ said Rory. ‘I had another look and they’re not actually fine at all. I need some new ones.’

‘I see,’ said Dad. ‘You *need* them, do you?’

‘Definitely.’

‘Right.’

‘So can I, Dad?’ said Rory. ‘Pleeeeeease?’

‘Hmmm,’ said Dad.

But at that moment the door opened and in walked Mum.

‘*Callum* here’s changed his mind,’ said Dad.

‘Oh yeah?’ said Mum.

‘Yes, apparently he *does* need new trainers after all.’

‘Does he now?’ said Mum. ‘That’s interesting.’

She stared at Rory.

‘By the look of it, that’s not the *only* thing that’s changed.’

‘What do you mean?’ said Rory.

‘The mole on your chin’s swapped sides,’ said Mum. ‘It used to be on the right. Now it’s on the left.’

‘Amazing!’ said Dad.

The game was up and Rory knew it.

Mum smiled.

‘Nice try, Rory. Next time remember, everything looks back to front in the mirror, OK?’

‘OK, Mum,’ said Rory, grinning and exposing his chipped front tooth.

The door opened again and in walked the *real* Callum, complete with a very obvious pink dot on his chin where his mole used to be. Mum, Dad and Rory took one look at him and all burst out laughing.

Callum looked puzzled.

‘What are you lot looking at?’ he said. ‘Why are you all laughing at me?’

‘You’ve got something on your chin,’ said Rory.

‘Here you go, Cal,’ said Rory.

It was after breakfast. The twins were in their bedroom getting dressed, having first called in at the bathroom to scrub the felt tip from their faces.

‘What’s this?’ said Callum.

‘The five pence I owe you,’ said Rory. ‘We’re quits now.’

‘No, we’re not,’ said Callum.

‘What do you mean no we’re not? Yeah we are! You lent me five pence and now I’m giving it you back!’

‘Yeah, but you owe me six pence,’ said Callum.

‘Six pence?’ said Rory. ‘How come?’

‘One pence interest.’

‘What do you mean *one pence interest*? What are you talking about?’

‘When you borrow money from a bank and you pay it back, you have to pay a bit extra,’ explained Callum. ‘And that extra bit is called *interest*.’

‘But that’s not fair,’ said Rory.

‘Course it’s fair,’ said Callum. ‘You can’t just borrow it for free.’

Rory sighed. His brother might as well have been talking an entirely different language.

‘There’s a good side to it as well,’ said Callum.

‘There is?’

Rory didn’t look so sure.

‘Yeah,’ said Callum. ‘If *you* save money in your bank account, the bank pays *you* interest!’

‘Really?’ said Rory, brightening all of a sudden.

‘Yeah really,’ said Callum. ‘And the more money you have in your account, the more interest you get.’

Rory thought about this for a moment.

‘Whoa! I had no idea!’

Callum laughed.

‘That’s because you never have any money in your bank account! Try saving some for a change instead of spending it straightaway!’

But Rory didn't reply. He'd just realised something.

'Oops,' he said.

'What's the matter?' said Callum.

'Does that mean I have to pay Dad interest then?'

'I don't understand,' said Callum. 'Why would you have to pay *Dad* interest?'

Rory grinned.

'Where do you think I got the five pence from?' he said.

Callum looked at his brother.

'Let me get this straight. You borrowed money from *Dad* so that you could pay *me* back?'

Rory shrugged.

'Where else was I supposed to get it?'

There was a knock at the door. Mum and Dad walked in. They didn't look especially happy.

'Your dad and I have been thinking,' said Mum.

'Really?' said Rory, nervously. 'What about?'

'Those trainers you want,' said Mum. 'Sorry. *Need.*'

'Ah, well you see the thing is...' began Rory.

But Mum didn't let him finish.

'If you stop spending all your pocket money the second you get it and actually *save* some for a change. Say £20...'

Mum paused for dramatic effect.

‘We’ll give you the rest!’

Mum and Dad broke into broad smiles.

‘Do you hear that, Rory?’ said Dad. ‘Not *lend*. *Give!*’

‘We won’t even buy Callum an identical pair,’ said Mum. ‘You can be different for a change!’

‘What do you say, son?’ said Dad.

It was a good question. What *should* Rory say?

‘That’s very kind, Mum.’

‘Sound fair enough?’ said Dad.

‘Very fair Dad,’ said Rory. ‘But...’

‘But what, son?’

Rory looked at his parents for a moment.

‘I don’t actually *want* trainers anymore.’

‘What?’ said Mum.

‘What?’ said Dad.

‘I’ve changed my mind,’ said Rory. ‘I want a skateboard instead!’

‘A skateboard?’ said Mum.

The twins looked at each other and grinned.

‘Copycat,’ said Callum.

