

The Tell-Tale Toy, by Suz Broughton



TRUE! How very, very annoyed I was with that inane toy. My best friend pawned it off on my young daughter, Emily. The instant the toy made my daughter laugh, she said, "Why don't you take it home with you, Em!" Then hastily shoved the toy in the diaper bag to make sure we took it home with us.

It is impossible to say how much that toy's music and repeating rhymes got into my head and tortured me. When it was turned off and I slept, I heard it. I love my daughter so much and wanted her to be happy, but sheesh, that toy! It wasn't her playing with the toy that drove me nuts. I brings me great joy to watch her have fun. It was that one EVIL phrase "Wee Willy Winkie" that she would make it say—by hitting the button again and again—that made me decide, I had to put an end to the life of that toy. It had to die.

Now this is the point where you might say that I'm the meanest mom ever. How could I take away something that meant so much to my daughter. But this is where you will see I'm not so dastardly, I'm quite smart. I had a plan and I would take Emily to Build-a-Bear to make up for it later.

On the eighth night she had that vile toy, I snuck into her room while she was asleep and took her toy. I slipped it into a Glad trash bag. But then it went off suddenly, "Wee Willy Winkie." I froze. "Mommy?" she said sweetly. I didn't answer. After waiting for what seemed like an eternity I felt satisfied she was asleep again and crawled out of the room.

I quickly got to work taking apart the toy. "Wee Willy Winkie" it shouted for the last time—and I smirked back at it. First I took out the batteries and then disassembled the plastic pages that lay on top, and then plucked out a few keys on its keyboard. I put it all back into the Glad trash bag and put it in the garbage under a crumpled milk carton and cereal box.

When I was done with the business of murdering the toy, it was time for bed. When I woke up in the morning I felt refreshed and hopeful, not a hint of guilt haunted me when I made my way downstairs to the kitchen to make breakfast for my kids.

I smiled as they took their seats at the kitchen table. I filled their cups and spread butter on their waffles and chatted happily. But, then I heard it, very, very quiet at first, "Wee Willy Winkie." No, I said to myself, just leftover echos of that dreadful toy—it must still be ringing in my ears. "Would you two like more juice?" I breezed and tried to push it from my mind.

"Mommy, is *dat* my toy?" my daughter asked as she walked toward the trash compactor. "No, your toy is up in your room somewhere." I said, feeling less confident and a little shaky. "We can go look for it later."

We all sat back down to finish breakfast when I heard it again. "Wee Willy Winkie." This time louder. But it seemed my kids heard nothing. "Wee Willy Winkie" it blasted again through the white steel of the trash compactor. "Wee Willy Winkie!" Oh. My. Gosh! But how could it be? I killed it. It has no batteries! I took off the pages! I smirked at it! "Wee Willy Winkie!" It blared!

Finally, I bounded from my chair, pressed down on the foot lever to release the compactor. I dug into the garbage and let loose some choice words directed at the sealed bag. It grew—louder—louder—louder! "Wee Willy Winkie!" But the kids just kept eating their waffles and watching "The Wiggles." But it kept getting louder and louder...

"FINE!" I screamed. "I stole your stupid toy and disassembled it! I admit it, okay!" I motioned to the trash compactor. "Look in the garbage! Here! It is the toy that says that hideous phrase "Wee Willy Winkie!"

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If this story sounds familiar to you: A, you paid attention in

your high school English class and B, you are far too smart to be reading this blog. It's loosely based on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart."