

Always Great, Never Late!

by Bill Nagelkerke



Always great, never late! That's my mum's motto. It might be true for her, but it's only partly true for me. She's never late for work, but I'm nearly always late for school.

In the morning, my mum takes ages to get dressed. I'm always dressed before she is. Sometimes I have to get her breakfast.

My mum wears funny clothes to work. Well, you'd think they were funny. I'm used to them. They're a kind of uniform, I guess. She wears baggy trousers, a sparkly waistcoat, a fat bow tie, and a purple jacket with lots of pockets. That makes her sound like a clown, but she isn't a clown.

My mum spends far too long in front of the mirror. That makes her sound like a model, but she isn't a model. She doesn't put on make-up. It's just that she always does lots of practice in front of the mirror. I'm not allowed to see what she's practising. It's secret. She doesn't tell me, even when I beg.

"Can you keep a secret?" she asks me.

"You bet!" I say. I really, *really* want to know what her secret is.

And then she says, "So can I!"

How mean is that? She tricks me every time with that question.

"Is your bag ready?" my mum asks me.
"Have you packed your lunch?"

"Yes, Mum," I say.

"And your exercise books?"

"Yes, Mum."

"And your library book?"

"Yes, Mum."

"And your tablet?"

"Yes, Mum."

"Is it fully charged?"

"Yes, Mum."

Then it's my turn. "Is your bag ready?" I say to her. "Have you packed your handkerchiefs?"

"Yes," she says.

"And your ribbons?"

"Yes," she says.

"And your eggs?"

"Yes," she says.

"Have you packed your lunch?" I finish.

"Whoops!" she says. "I almost forgot." (The eggs are not her lunch.) There are lots more things my mum takes to work, but these are some of the things she needs the most.

"Are you fully charged?" I ask.

"One hundred per cent," she replies.





I open the front door and lock it behind us. I open the garage door. I open the sliding door of our van. Mum throws in her bag.

Our van is already full of other things, mainly boxes – lots of boxes. That makes my mum sound like a courier, but she’s not a courier.

I look at the clock. It’s not nearly time to go. It’s not exactly time to go. It’s *after* time to go. I’m going to be late. The third time this week.

“Hurry up, Mum,” I say. “Ms Wright is going to growl at me again.”

“I’m sorry, so sorry, so sorry,” says my mum. “You won’t be very late.”

She grabs her bag with one hand and her hat with the other. Yes, my mum takes a hat to work. That makes her sound like a builder, but she’s not a builder.



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illustrations by Kat Chadwick

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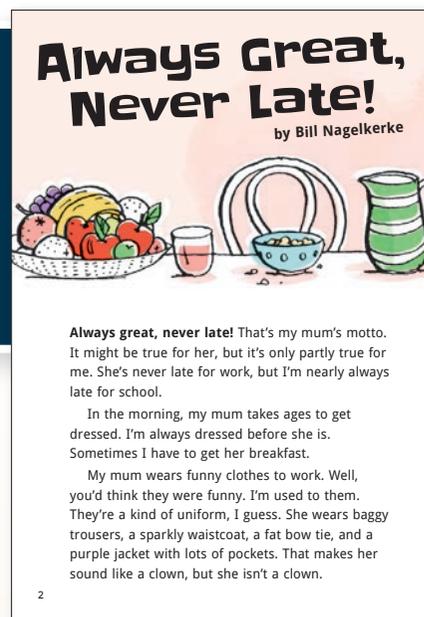
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