

Silly Billy

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Mr. Wise was a retired professor and a genius investor with reputation and a lot of money. It was his intelligence that made him the role model among students, while it was his successful investment which gave him the thought to put his teaching career into an end. Mr. Wise had a keen observation on almost every investment since he had been teaching Economics in a well-known college for years. His motto was "The worst investment one can ever make is breakeven." That is, he wasn't used to losing money in any investment. What's more, he tended to take advantage of anything if it's possible to do so. Rich as Mr. Wise was, he didn't live a high-level life. For example, he had the habit of buying groceries which were off-season, because everything that wasn't in-season was cheaper. Ridiculous as it seemed, that's how Mr. Wise took advantage of the supermarket. After all, it all made perfect sense in his state of mind. Besides, all of his furniture was second-handed. His pet dog, Chubby, was adopted from a pet shop, which was technically second-handed. The most expensive decision he had ever made was to buy a mansion and move to a place where many millionaires lived.

"What a nice community, don't you think so?" said Mrs. Wise. "It is, my dear, it's the most expensive community in this area; can't go wrong with the price we spent on it," replied Mr. Wise. It has been two months since he retired from school and moved to a whole new place in pursuit of a tranquil and better life. Everything seems perfect, normal, and a bit expensive.

It's 7:30 in the morning. Mr. Wise took a stroll, which was an exercise free of charge and no equipment needed. By the time he walked through a street, he saw a little boy surrounded by a group of teenagers at the corner of the street. Suddenly, these teenagers all burst into laughter and left. "Silly Billy! Silly Billy!" they walked away and said. The little boy said nothing but with a grin on his face. "Hmmm...that's

strange. Judging by his outfit, he must be from other community.” Mr. Wise said to himself. Thirty minutes later Mr. Wise arrived home, and he spent the rest of day playing Sudoku. “Where should I put these numbers?” Filling out number one to nine in a certain manner was the rule of Sudoku. Tired of making investments, Mr. Wise thought of Sudoku as the most suitable pastime related to his interest.

It’s 7:30 in the morning. “I must be crazy if I didn’t take a walk in such a good weather,” said Mr. Wise. Then he took a walk. Again, the same people surrounded the same person at the same place. “Dat one.” “You sure? You sure? You can’t change it once you’ve made your choice!” This time, Mr. Wise got a little closer to see what’s going on. Two coins, 25 cents and 5 cents, were put in front of the boy. Although 25 cents was more valuable, its size was smaller than 5 cents. Unfortunately, it seemed that the boy judged everything by its size; he instantly chose the bigger one. Teenagers giggled, chuckled, and left. “Silly Billy! Haha! The nickname suits him best!” they said. “Poor little guy! That’s why people say little kids are naïve and innocent. Guess he isn’t old enough to take advantage of others.” Mr. Wise thought to himself and left. In the evening, Mr. Wise told Mrs. Wise about what he had seen in the morning. “How did he know that?” said Mrs. Wise, “He’s just a kid.” “That just didn’t make sense, right? Someone’s going to give you one thing for nothing. Always make sure you choose the one which is more valuable between the two.” Mr. Wise wasn’t the only person who saw the boy and his “dumb choice,” and he’s not the only one who had the same logic—the more valuable, the better.

It’s 7:30 in the morning. Mr. Wise was expecting what would be put in front of that silly little kid and what his choice was. As he walked on the same path to the corner of the street, a shiny little piece of gold and a ten-dollar bill were put in front of the boy. Awfully, Silly Billy chose to have the ten-dollar bill while Mr. Wise is wondering when was last time he saw a pure gold nugget. “Oh no! It’s too late!” Mr.

Wise tried to give the kid a lesson, hoping he could let the kid understand the well-known logic, so that the kid could make the “right decision” next time. “Hey! Kid! What you have done just didn’t make sense at all. You can’t always choose the one that looks bigger! Let me put it this way. Eyes could mislead your decision. For example, a big chunk of meat and a truffle are put on the table. Which will you choose? Although meat looks a lot bigger, the prize of a truffle can buy you plenty of meat. What you gonna do next time is to choose the smaller one from those teenagers, and I bet you can take advantage of them.” The boy kept silent for a second and replied in a confident tone. “Sir, I know my choice doesn’t seem sensible to you grown-ups. If I choose the right one, will they come to test me the following day? Every time they come to me, they bring something more valuable than the previous day. All I need to do is patiently wait for those stupid teenagers. It’s been two months since I made the first “wrong decision,” and I’m glad I can pretend to be as silly as they think I am. So far, I received pretty much everything I need. Look, it is your eyes that mislead your thought. I am young, but I am not silly.” The boy left happily.

“Oh, I didn’t see that coming.” Mr. Wise was stunned and speechless.