

# Trouble with Dandy Lions

## *A My Grandad story by Bill Lennox*

Every day, I phone Grandad to see how is. He tells me what he's doing, and I tell him what I'm doing.

One day I said: "What I'm doing is talking to you." Grandad laughed so much he started coughing and couldn't talk for a while.

Another day, Grandad said he'd been getting rid of Those Blasted Dandy Lions. I asked why he wanted to get rid of Dandy Lions.

"They take over the place," he said. "They kill off the grass. Make a mess of my lawn."

I asked Grandad how he got rid of Dandy Lions.

"Chuck them over the fence," he said.

"What about the neighbours?" I asked. "Do *they* want Dandy Lions?"

"Oh, that's not a problem," said Grandad. "There's no-one next door. It's an empty section."

"So what do the Dandy Lions do over there?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Grandad. "I suppose they just lie there in the grass and dry up. Anyway, what have *you* been up to?"

Later on, I asked Mum what *she* knew about Dandy Lions.

"I suppose they are very Flashy lions," she said. "They must be well dressed. Bow tie, hat with a feather, dancing shoes, that sort of thing. Maybe a purple ribbon on their tails. That would be Dandy *and* Flash." Then she went back to typing on her computer.

"Could you throw a Dandy Lion over a fence?" I said.

"I suppose you could if you grabbed it by the tail and swung it round a few times," she said, and started sending a text on her phone.

"Wouldn't its hat come off if you did that?" I said.

"Not if it was held on by a bright pink ribbon," Mum said, and went off to make another cup of coffee.

I was a bit puzzled. I couldn't figure out why Grandad had so many Dandy Lions on his lawn. And did they look as Flash as mum said they would?

I don't have a lion but I do have a tiger. I got him for my last birthday and I was still deciding what to call him. I started off calling him Terry, but that didn't sound right for a tiger. After talking to Mum and Grandad, I decided to call him Dandy. Then I decided he needed to look Flash.

I had some old plastic containers in my toybox, and found one the right size for a hat. I used marker pens to colour it green and purple, then I cut holes on each side to tie it on.

I went into the sunroom where Mum keeps her bits and pieces. She sometimes decides to do some sewing or knitting but it never lasts very long. So she has lots of bits and pieces in boxes under the sofa. That's where she keeps stuff for wrapping presents too, but she doesn't know I know that.

I had no trouble finding pink and purple ribbons. I can tie my own shoe laces, so it was no trouble tying them into bows. I put one on Dandy's tail and used the other one to tie his hat on.

Then I went into the drawer where Dad keeps his socks. I knew he had a bow tie stuffed in the back of the drawer because I saw him putting it on when he went to a Flash dinner last year. He was grumbling about that. The tie was on an elastic strap so I just had to slip it over Dandy's head and wrap the elastic round a few times to make it tight.

The dancing shoes were a bit harder. My shoes were too big for Dandy and my dolls' shoes were too small. But then I remembered my gloves. I had yellow gloves and green gloves, and they fitted Dandy's feet just right.

My Dandy Tiger looked really Flash. I showed him to Mum.

"Gosh, Terry does look Flash and Dandy now," she said.

"He's called Dandy now," I said. "Dandy Tiger."

"Well, he lives up to his name," she said, and got onto her exercycle. That's where she sits to read magazines.

When I phoned Grandad, I didn't tell him about Dandy Tiger. I wanted it to be a surprise.

We always go round to see Grandad on weekends. When Dad and Grandad went out to look at the garden I sneaked outside and went into the empty section next door. I couldn't see any lions there – just a few dead flowers lying round.

I could hear Dad and Grandad talking in the garden. I swung Dandy Tiger round my head by the tail and threw him over the fence onto Grandad's lawn.

It was quiet for a while, but then I heard Grandad say: "Look at that! I've just got rid of Blasted Dandy Lions and a Blasted Dandy Tiger turns up!"

Then Dandy Tiger came flying back over the fence. I picked him up and checked to see if he was hurt. He seemed OK, so I threw him over the fence again into Grandad's place.

Then I heard Grandad say: "There's another one! I don't know! He's quite cute, though. Quite Flash. I think I'll take him inside. Put him on the end of my bed. He'll brighten the place up."

When I went into Grandad's house, Dad and Grandad were sitting at the table having a cup of tea. Dandy Tiger was sitting on the chair beside Grandad.

"Look at this!" he said. "I finally got rid of those Dandy Lions, and this Dandy Tiger turns up. He's so Flash, I've decided to keep him. What do you think?"

I didn't say anything. I pretended I was fixing Dandy Tiger's hat.

Grandad took Dandy Tiger into his bedroom and sat him on the bed.

"There, he makes the room look much brighter," he said.

Then I thought of something to say: "I don't think Dandy Tiger looks happy there. He looks worried."

"What's he got to worry about?" said Grandad. "I know how to look after Dandy Tigers."

"That's what he's worried about," I said. "He's worried you'll chuck him over the fence, like you did with the Dandy Lions."

"Not me!" said Grandad. "Dandy Tigers are a different cup of tea altogether."

"Well just to be sure, I think I should take him home with me," I said.

"That's a good idea," said Grandad. "He'll be company for *your* Tiger. Mind you, *your* Tiger will probably want to dress up Flash too."

"No worries." I said. "That'll take no time at all."

Then we had a cup of tea, all together.

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