

Solution to Playful Pranks

Obstacle—hindrance—barrier... Do ya know what these words mean? Then why—tell me why—you had to go and get in the way again? For cryin' out loud, you guys gotta learn to follow directions and let me do my job. Geeze the Cow Cheese...

It's clear you need far more training. My forehead's throbbing from all the head-banging you're causing. Guess I have to spell it out for you—that was all an act, a pooch production, a sleuthing sketch, a hound dog hoodwink— I was pretending. Of course I wasn't really insane. That hokey chokey didn't bother me. No jail turns my tail. I'm dogged. Hound dog dogged ruff. Nah, that crazy bit back there was just good acting on my part. But I don't blame you for falling for it, can't blame a newbie. Nope, that whackadoo performance you witnessed was my escape tactic, Maneuver One. And if that scheme didn't work, Maneuver Two was...well, shouldn't say, really. My other maneuvers are filed away in my brain's top-secret hard drive. Should explain, my hard-driven brain has zillions of gigabytes left to use should I need to create more strategies. (one gigabyte = one unit of empty space) See, if they thought that I was crazy, they wouldn't keep me in the jail cell. But then, you kind of interrupted my tactic and got involved in the bobbies' game of cricket. You didn't need to do that; I was about to perform Act Two, my peak performance, which, of course, would have been the clincher to set me free, but then you—you came and got all involved. Really muffed up my ruffer, you did. I realize you want to be a hero. I get it. But you're too green for that. Best leave the hero business to me.

But don't go getting your whiskers in a tangle. I'm not trying to sandbag your balloon. I know you were just trying to help. It's kind of sweet how you tried getting me out of the slammer. While you were goofing off with those stupid water balloons, balloon-bathing the jail cell, I studied the clues I've been gathering during my excursion around the globe. After taking the time to examine them, I discerned that I needed to head back to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D. C. where the Hope Diamond is really supposed to be.

The minutes passed like torturous hours, but I finally landed in D.C. So, now I see that you novices have decided to join me. Fine. Try to keep up this time, will ya? I'm in the Smithsonian; walk with me. Come on—hurry up. And try keeping quiet this time; will ya? Leave the hound-dogging to me.

Thester

There you are. It's been a while since I got to tell my side of the story. While good old Dilbert has been off having mesmerizing adventures, I've been stuck here at the farm. Don't get me wrong; I love the Fieldjoy farm; I just kind of wish Dilbert would include me when he plays his super sleuth games.

I've been working all morning building a diving board over the mud pool in the pigs' pen. Ran into a few bugaboos though. Found out that the mud pool wasn't deep enough for the propelling power of the diving board. Fixed that problem by dumping the sloshy muck from the manure tank into the pen. Now the mud pool is plenty deep. A little stinky though. Hopefully, I'll be able to coax the little piglet, Charlie, to give it a test run.

B-R-I-I-I-N-G... B-R-I-I-I-N-G...

Hey, there's the phone. Dilbert must be calling me! I scuttle over to the farm's drainpipe and stoop low so that my mouth fits the opening.

"Howdy, Dilbert! How's my favorite wiener dog?"

"Uugh. You know I'm a hound dog, Thester. Have you got any data for me?"

"Well, I've concocted this great diving board for the pigs to—"

"I mean concerning the case, Thester. Focus!"

"Oh," I feel my face grow hot. "Uh, no—not really," I mutter, wishing I could hide in the mud pool.

Just between you and me, I had kind of forgotten about the Hope Diamond. But I quickly recover my dignity when I remember a piece of information Dilbert would love to hear.

"I bet you don't know that Isie's all in a panic right now 'cause her diamond-shaped crystal is missing too."

"WHAT?! Now I have two cases to solve?! Hmmm... Maybe the cases are linked. Maybe the diamondnapper is the same criminal who took the crystal!"

Dilbert's strategizing mind is already concocting new tactics for the investigation—I can tell. I see that crook in his whiskers, that hook at the end of his tail. I know what that means... Soon he'll be daydreaming about all the awards he'll get for solving two cases at once. He thinks he'll be signing autographs, holding news conferences, answering phone calls from the President—Brrrrrrr...that's all I got to say about that.

"Can I come and help you with the investigation at the Smithsonian Museum?" I eagerly ask, hoping... While I wait for Dilbert's reply, Newster the Gooster flies over and lands on my shoulder. I know what he's doing; he's listening in and taking notes on the underside of his webbed foot so that he can make a report at the next secret barn meeting.

"No, Thester. You stay there and gather data for me," Dilbert instructs.

"But, when am I gonna help you chase criminals and use secret spy devices?" I plead, struggling to shove Gilly out of the way. No goat who wears a silly apron like that gets to interrupt my phone call and talk to Dilbert.

"When pigs fly. You're still a novice, Thester."

I feel my insides wilt when he says that. But then, I see out of the corner of my eye...

Z-I-I-I-I-IN-N-NG-G-G... Charlie is flying through the air like a rocket. His piglet diving board is still boinging up and down. Uhhhh, he's going... a bit far...over the mud puddle...over the fence...going... going...

"Ok!" I cheerfully answer Dilbert. "When pigs fly!"

Detective Dilbert

Trekking through the Smithsonian Museum, I shrewdly scan the area. Humans are all over the place. Clickety-clack, shuffle-squeak, thud and stomp. Their footsteps echo throughout the hallway where I walk. Hey, there's Mr. Flabtastic! Look over yonder. Good ol' Mr. Blubberbounce, my hero. Remember him— the human airbag who saved my life? Such a clever guy...

Food is only allowed in the cafeteria. But he's managed to bamboozle the guards and get inside the museum with all kinds of goodies. See, he's clever like me; he knows how to use all that gorgeous extra skin of his to store his vital tools of the trade, which in his case are his snacks. Between each voluptuous layer of blubber is tucked the secret weapons that sustain his flab power—potato chips, cans of coke, donuts, cheese pizzas. The guard at the entrance didn't have a clue as to what that guy was hiding. So great.

As Mr. Flabtastic lumbers down the hall, he carefully places each treat on his middle stomach—his portable table. This way he can gobble wherever he goes. Today, he's decorated his portable table with a green checked tablecloth, a yellow place mat, and a green vase filled with yellow roses. Quite a creative guy, this guy.

"Hello, Mr. Flabtastic!" I howl.

But Mr. Flabtastic can't answer; I've caught him with his mouth full. He waves to me. Nice guy.

I continue to examine the area with my sharp eyes. Everything looks normal. Three kids on a field trip are playing tag, running circles around their school teacher who's busy texting a friend. Two boys are riding the back of a dinosaur skeleton, acting like they're Bronco Bill. Just normal, boring, crazy human stuff—as usual.

Wait a minute... What's that weird sound I hear? Instantly, my ears perk up; my tail straightens; my antennae-like whiskers all turn toward the sound.

Clip clop; clip clop... The sound echoes in the hallway as I walk. The sound of footsteps—but not human footsteps. Clip clop; clip clop. There it is again. And it's not coming from my paws. My paw steps make a click click noise as I walk across the museum's shiny, marble floor.

I step slowly.

C-l-i-p c-l-o-p. It steps slowly.

I step quickly.

Clipclopclipclop-clipclop. It does too.

Hmmm... This is kind of strange. I stop walking to listen. The echo stops. I start walking and... Clip clop; clip clop. Ugh. There it is again. I stop. The sound stops. I take a step.

Clip.

I take another.

Clop.

I take two steps backward.

Clop clip.

Shrewdly, I lift my sniffer into the air, inhale, and wait for the print out. Instantly, I see the words move across my eyeball screen: ***co-logne, ap-ple, hay,*** and ***co-co-nut cake.*** Hey... These words sound familiar.

Even more shrewdly, I take out my compact mirror and pretend to check my fake mustache, but really I'm checking to see who or what is behind me.

Ha! It's him! The guy with the cheap, stupid, fake mustache is following me! Quickly, I duck around the corner, planning to jump the diamondnapper as he walks by. I wait. And wait...

Feeling antsy, I peer around the corner to see what happened to the mustache maniac. Amazingly, he peers around a different corner at the same time. Glimpsing each other, we both snap back into position and stand flat against the wall, trying not to be seen.

"I've got to get to a phone and call Thester!" I mutter to myself.

A phone is just down the hall... I pull down on my hat to hide my face and shimmy over to the phone.

...

B-R-R-R-I-I-I-NG... B-R-R-R-I-I-I-NG...

“N-E-I-G-H”

“Hello, Thester?”

“Yea, it’s me. So where are you, Oscar Mayer? My break time is almost up; they’ll be calling me back to the living horse exhibit any minute! I’ve wasted all this time waiting for you to call; I was hoping to search the cafeteria for a little coconut cake!”

“The name’s Detective Dilbert; I’m a hound dog, not a wiener dog. And, may I ask you one little question? HAVE YOU GONE MAD!? What on earth are you talking about? Aren’t you at home?”

“You called my cell phone. No, I’m at the Smithsonian, where you are. The Fieldjoys entered me into a horse show. You didn’t know about that? Well, apparently some designers think the outfit that Isie put together for me is pretty hot—kind of a detective/ ballerina costume, real edgy, real horsey-hip—so they say.”

“I think being with Isie for so long is making you fruity! Now you’re a horse model? It must be r-e-a-l-l-y strenuous work—prancing up and down the stage,” I say, enjoying the taste of the sarcasm oozing from my mouth. “What... Do they have you dressed up in glass slippers and a tutu? Are you doing a pony-prance? Are you competing for the ‘Twinkle Toes’ crown?” I whine, trying to pay Thester back for calling me Oscar Mayer.

“Great put down, Dilbert. That just doesn’t even make sense; horses don’t have toes; they have hooves. Anyway, you’ve got to get here and fast; someone’s been following me, and I think he could be the thief!”

“What does he look like?”

“He’s wearing a black trench coat, a low-brimmed hat, and I think that’s a fake mustache.”

“Funny, someone dressed just like that is following me too! They must be in cahoots; they must be partners, and they’re following us because they know we’re on to them!” I shrewdly deduce.

“Good thinking, Dilbert. Hurry over here!”

Detective Dilbert

I hang up the phone and look to my left. The man in the trench coat is pretending to be reading the newspaper while waiting in line for the phone. And when he sees me looking at him, he ducks behind the paper he's holding. Without a second to spare, I bolt down the hallway, searching for the "Living Horse Exhibit."

Dashing into the room, I immediately spy Thester. There's no way to miss him, because he's prancing across the runway, stopping every few feet to strike a pose for the audience. My eyeballs nearly disappear into my skull. He looks ridiculous. He's got that tutu on, but over it is a rumpled coat. Plus, he's got bright blue eye shadow plastered on his eyelids and ruby red lipstick smeared on his lips, but he's also sporting a stupid, fake mustache and a flattened detective's hat. Pffftt...

"Pssss... Thester. I say, Pssss... Thester, let's go!" I whisper as I peer up at the stage at Thester, who's got one hoof positioned on his hip and the other is holding out the side of his puffy pink tutu. He has that monstrous horsey smile of his plastered on his face while posing for the audience.

Barely moving his lips, Thester tries to whisper out the corner of his mouth, "Not now, Dilbert. Can't you see I'm a little busy? Everyone's watching..."

The crowd is roaring with laughter each time he poses.

Thester begins to trot to the other side of the stage.

Suddenly...

CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! Twelve machine guns are pointed right at us.

"FREEZE! DON'T MOVE!" the men—all in black, rumpled trench coats and fake mustaches shout.

We freeze. We don't bat an eyelash.

"This is the police!" the men holler as they whip out their police badges and rip off their fake mustaches. "Where have you hidden the Hope Diamond?" one officer demands.

Gulp. Thester doesn't turn his head; he just moves his eyeballs to glance at the men who have surrounded them.

I pry my mouth open and squeeze my answer past the knot in my throat: "We seem to have a little misunderstanding. " I feel my face tingling. It feels like there's a hot air balloon inflating in my brain. "We haven't stolen anything; we're trying to capture the thieves and return the diamond." I even sound fake to myself.

Thester doesn't say a word.

"Tell them, Thester," I plead for a little support from my old pal, my voice limp like a wet dish towel.

Thester's face turns red with fear and humiliation, and he lets out a nervous chuckle.

My heart drops to my toes.

"Say it isn't so, Thester. You didn't take the diamond; you were trying to find the diamond; RIGHT?!" I screech, wanting it to be true.

"Well..." he's still got that monstrous smile on his face... "Yes and no..."

"Oh no..." I yip in despair.

The officers start waving their machine guns in our faces. They're shouting at us. One officer even bops Thester's behind with the end of his gun. The tutu cushions the blow. I'm really nervous now. I'm feeling dizzy. Things are getting fuzzy. I feel a howl coming. I close my eyes...

H-O-O-O-O-O-W-W-W-L!

...

"Thester and Dilbert, what are you two doing in the kitchen?! Look at the mess you've made. Coconut cake is smeared all over the floor!"

The voice sounds familiar. I open my eyes. It's Mrs. Fieldjoy and Isie. And those aren't machine guns being waved in our faces; they're fly swatters. I can't help but wag my tail and jump up and down with relief.

"No time for lovin' right now, Dilbert. We want to know where Isie's crystal is!" Mrs. Fieldjoy says firmly.

I turn and look at Thester. The look prints my question across Thester's brain cells: "Where's Isie's crystal, Thester? Did you take it?"

Thester tries to look me in the eye, but his eyeballs are kind of wobbly. He almost seems drunk. Then, it dawns on me—the coconut cake—all that sugar. Thester must have a sugar high from all that coconut cake. I grab his shoulders and give a little shake.

“Try to remember!” Thester’s head bobs left and right; he has a dopey look on his face.

Mrs. Fieldjoy and Isie just stand there, not sure what’s going on. Of course they’re not skilled in foreign languages like I am. When they listen to my discussion with Thester, all they hear is a bunch of barking.

I’m not getting far with Thester, who’s drunk on sugar. All he can say over and over is “Coconut cake, coconut cake, coconut cake...”

But that gets me thinking... The clues I gathered for the Hope Diamond—one talked about a tropical scent; coconut cake has a tropical scent. Another said that the diamond was cold to the touch. The refrigerator makes things cold. The diamond was between fire and ice—Mrs. Fieldjoy’s salsa with roasted peppers and her icy smoothie. Plus, remember the guy who passed out because he ate too much coconut cake. It all fits! I turn toward the refrigerator and “H-O-O-O-W-W-L!” My tail is as straight as a metal pole; my nose is pointing at the refrigerator’s door.

Luckily, Mrs. Fieldjoy gets the message and opens the door...

And just as I suspected, there on the refrigerator shelf, which is covered with coconut cake crumbs, sitting between the icy smoothie and the fiery salsa, is Isie’s crystal.

“Well, Dilbert, you did it again; you solved another mystery,” Thester states proudly as we scrub the kitchen floor with our tongues, licking up all the smeared coconut cake. With my amazing hound dog tongue, the floor will be sparkling clean again in no time.

“Yep, it makes me feel pretty good, knowing how we saved the crystal and helped restore order. I don’t even mind pitching in and completing these 20 hours of “volunteer” work Mrs. Fieldjoy asked us to do. At least I think that’s what she meant when she called us her “floor-licking loonies.” Guess we’re pretty important since they want our help so much,” I mutter and then give the sticky, frosting-covered floor another huge swipe of the tongue.

“I think it’s kind of more like a punishment, Dilbert.”

“Nah, that’s what they made it look like so no one knows what great detectives we are—a sort of undercover operation, you see.”

“Did I hear you say I’m a detective too?!”

“Shhhh, top secret.”

“But what about the Hope Diamond, Dilbert?”

The room is quiet for a while. All I can hear is our slurping as we clean the floor. I am quiet, but my mind is deciphering. Then, ding, ding, ding... Just like that, my adept mind discerns the answer.

“The clues for the Hope Diamond mystery worked to solve the Case of the Missing Crystal. So, maybe the clues will still work to locate the diamond. We better get a move on it, Thester. We’ve got a plane to catch and a cafeteria refrigerator door to open! And, I’ll need an assistant to go with me this time,” I turn and look at Thester.

"N-E-I-G-H!" he says gleefully.

I twist my floppy hound dog ear, putting my tongue into my bionic mode. Thester just sits there watching me in awe as my tongue begins to whirl like a fan. This dodgy, slippery mess will be gone in no time. I told ya; I’m the Great Detective Dilbert. I sniff out danger, track it down, and WIPE it out—or—up, in this case!

So, bye. Looks like we’ve got a plane to catch.