

Busy Ben and Idle Isaac

Ben opened his book and studied the instructions to build a toy boat. His best friend Isaac raced around the yard.

“Isaac! How will you ever learn to do anything if you don’t study and work?”

“Phew,” said Isaac. “I don’t like to work. I just want to play and have fun.”

Ben shook his head and went back to work. Isaac went on playing.

Six years later, at sixteen, Ben was taken on as an apprentice ship builder. For the next four years, he worked hard and paid attention to everything he was shown.

The manager of the shipyard approached Ben one day. “I’ve had my eye on you, Ben. You’re one of the hardest workers I’ve ever seen. You’ve gone from apprentice to lead worker to foreman. Although you’re young, we’re promoting you to supervisor over the entire yard.”

Ben shook the manager’s hand. A sense of pride filled his chest. “Thank you, sir. I will be the best supervisor you ever had.”

The manager smiled. “I’m sure you will be.”

Over the next several years, Ben continued to work hard. He created his own ship building company and built a famous ship. He was proud of himself for working to make his dream of becoming a respected shipbuilder come true.

One evening, Ben happened into a butcher shop. There with a broom in his hand was his old friend. “Isaac is that you? It’s been so many years. How have you been old friend?”

Isaac threw the broom behind the counter. “Ben, it’s so good to see you. What have you been up to?”

Ben explained what he had done over the past years. He told Isaac how he apprenticed then worked his way up to supervisor of a shipyard. And, that now he was his own master of a shipyard. “So, what about you? Is this your shop?”

Isaac’s eyes darted back and forth. “Ugh. Oh, yes. This is my shop. It’s not much, but I do pretty well.”

Ben threw his shoulders back and let out a big laugh. “I’m so glad for you, Isaac. To be honest, I was worried how you’d make out. You never wanted to work. Good for you that you realized with work comes rewards.”

Isaac lowered his head. "I have a confession to make. This isn't my shop. I sweep the floors at night. And, I sleep in the back room because I can't afford anything else. I've been doing this since I'm 16."

"I see," said Ben. "Well, we're going to do something about that." Ben handed Isaac his card. "Come to my yard on Monday morning, and I'll make you an apprentice ship builder. But I warn you, you must work and move forward on the job, or I will have to fire you."

A tear welled up in Isaac's eye. "I'll be there, my friend. And, I'll make both of us proud."

Questions

1. How were Ben and Isaac different?
2. Why do you think Isaac lied about owning the butcher shop?
3. Do you think Isaac will do a good job working for Ben? Why or why not?
4. What is the moral of the story?