

## Henry and Mudge and the Best Day of All

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On the first day of May Henry woke up early and said to his big dog Mudge, "I'm having a birthday today." Mudge wagged his tail, rolled over, and snored. "Mudge," said Henry, "wake up. I'm having a birthday today." Mudge wagged, rolled to the other side, and snored some more. "Mudge," said Henry, "*birthday cake.*" Mudge opened one eye. "Ice cream," said Henry. Mudge opened the other eye. "And lots and lots of crackers," said Henry. Mudge jumped up. He shook Henry's hand. Henry was having a birthday and Mudge would be having crackers. The first day of May looked pretty good.

Balloons were all over Henry's house. Pink ones, orange ones, green ones, yellow ones. They were in the bathroom. They were in the kitchen. They were in the living room. And the porch was full of them. "Dad likes balloons," Henry told Mudge. Mudge licked a yellow one and wagged. Henry's father came into the house. He was carrying a camera. "Pictures!" cried Henry's father. "Oh no," Henry whispered to Mudge. "Dad likes pictures, too." Henry's father took lots of pictures. He took one of Henry. He took one of Mudge. He took one of Henry and Mudge. He took one of Henry and Mudge and Henry's mother. Then the bookcase took one of all four of them. After the pictures, Henry's mother fixed Henry's favorite breakfast, pancakes with strawberries. The family ate and ate and ate. When they were

done, they had four very sticky red mouths. The first day of May was looking even better.

Henry had invited his friends for a party. They came at three o' clock. At first everyone was shy. No one knew what to do. Then Henry's mother said, "Everybody outside!" In the backyard Henry's mother and Henry's father had fixed games. There was ring toss. There was go-fishing. There were potato-sack races. And hanging from a tree was a big piñata shaped like a donkey. The winners at the ring toss got decoder rings. The winners at go-fishing got baby goldfish. The winners at potato-sack races got bags of potato chips. Finally it was time for the piñata. Henry's father tied a cloth over Henry's eyes. He put a stick in Henry's hand. He whispered a message in Henry's ear. Then Henry

started to swing. "ONE!" everyone shouted. "TWO!" "THREE!" Mudge was wagging hard. "FOUR!" On the fourth swing the piñata cracked open. Out fell suckers and bubble gum and taffy and hundreds of little crackers. Everyone was happy and Mudge most of all. He never knew that crackers could come from the sky.

After the games Henry's parents brought out a big bowl of cherry-nut ice cream and a very wide birthday cake. The cake looked like Henry's fish tank. It had blue water, colored rocks, and striped and spotted fish. Mudge sniffed and sniffed. Maybe it looked like water, but it smelled like *cake*. After the fish-tank cake was eaten up, it was time to open presents. Red bows, purple paper, big cards- everything went flying in the air. Henry got an airplane model, a robot, a

stuffed snow leopard, and a basketball. He also got a box of dog treats. "These must be for you," Henry told Mudge. When the party was over, everyone went home. They all had lots of taffy and bubble gum and suckers and baby fish and potato chips. They were full of cake and ice cream. Some of them were full of crackers. Henry and Henry's parents and Henry's big dog Mudge sat quietly in the backyard and closed their eyes. They listened to the birds. They rested. And each dreamed about birthday wishes on the best day of all.