Charlie and Fly, and Fly's wealthy cousin Olivia, learn how to be enterprising and also how to profit from the local bully, Liam.

'Charlie Fly and the Nice Dream', the story by Nicola Morgan, signed in British Sign Language (BSL).

Transcript: Charlie Fly and the Nice Dream

Business was dead at Charlie Fly (Private Eye). The summer holidays were already three days old and we’d had zero customers. Not even one lost key or cat.

Charlie was examining his toenails through my magnifying glass. Charlie is brainy but I didn’t see how even *he* could find answers in his toenails.

I was looking at my computer screen. ‘Jobs,’ it said. The rest of the screen was empty. I scrolled to the next page. ‘Money,’ it said. That page was empty too.

Charlie is the clever one; but I’m the one with the computer so I am important. Charlie has to share his with his sisters, which is a nightmare for anyone trying to run a business. Can you imagine Richard Branson sharing a computer with his sisters? No, exactly. Mind you, can you imagine him examining his toenails with a magnifying glass?

My name is Fly and Charlie’s name is Charlie. I’m called Fly because I can run very fast. This could be useful because we are private detectives, but it has not been useful yet. Except when old Mr Lambert chased us for spying on him, but I’d rather forget that.

We can investigate any problem you might have. Like, is that really the gas man or is he an international spy? Or, if you have lost your hamster or your cat or your key, we could definitely find it for you. Well, not definitely, but maybe. And if fast running is necessary, you’ve come to the right place.

But if you have anything more exciting than that, please tell us. Hamsters and cats and keys are very important but we’d be even more interested in cracking an international spy ring. We keep our eyes open for things like that. Once, we followed a man from the High Street to Bothwell Road (which is a long way, in case you don’t know it) because some suspicious white powder was coming out of his carrier bag. It could have been drugs or poison, so we didn’t get too close. But it was a bag of flour. We discovered this when we crept up to his window and heard his wife using extremely bad language.

We have everything detectives need. Walkie talkies, notebooks, magnifying glasses and fingerprint

powder. Well, flour. Charlie has a camera. And we have cards saying Charlie Fly (Private Eye), which I did on my computer.

It’s extremely exciting being private detectives. Or it would be if we had any customers. Then we could earn some money. But we are not in it for the money. We have something my dad calls ‘job satisfaction’. He says sometimes you can have money and sometimes you can have job satisfaction.

Personally, I’d like both. I would get a lot of satisfaction out of having loads of money.

Charlie had finished exploring his toenails and I was about to play a computer game. It’s amazing how much inspiration a computer game can bring. No, it’s not really amazing but I couldn’t think what else to do. If customers won’t come, I can’t force them.

Just then the phone rang downstairs but I ignored it. I have parents to answer the phone. It’s better than a secretary because you don’t have to pay parents.

The computer game was nearly ready to start.

Then my secretary called up the stairs, ‘Fly, here please! Hurry!’

OK, not my secretary – Mum. Charlie and I went downstairs, where Mum was flapping. She likes flapping at home because she can’t flap at work.

She’s a librarian and libraries are peaceful places where flapping is not allowed.

‘Panic stations, Fly! Olivia’s coming. I’m collecting her from the airport this afternoon.’

‘Who’s Olivia?’

‘Your cousin, for goodness’ sake.’

‘Oh, Olive Oil.’

‘And you’d better stop calling her that. You’re going to have to get on with her. She’s coming for six weeks.’

‘Aghh! Why?’

‘Uncle Joe’s broken his leg.’

‘What about Aunt Sarah?’ I wailed.

‘She’s filming. In Mongolia.’

‘Can’t she come back? They’re rich enough, aren’t they? They don’t need the money she earns – you said so.’

‘No, I didn’t. Of course I didn’t. When did I?

Anyway, she’d be letting a lot of people down. It’ll be nice, Fly. You and Charlie don’t have anything to do this summer…’

‘We have a business to run,’ I pointed out.

‘Olivia can help you,’ said Mum. ‘She’s probably good at things like that, what with her dad being so ri… um… ridiculously clever at business. She could be your finance director.’

‘She could be my secretary, more like,’ I muttered.

‘We’d have to share our profits with her, wouldn’t we?’ asked Charlie.

‘Do you *have* any profits?’ asked Mum.

‘Not as such,’ he replied. ‘Just job satisfaction.’

‘Well, just think, you could have a lot more job satisfaction if you had some profits. Now stop whingeing and go and vacuum the house while I make a shopping list.’ And she went off, muttering about strawberries and expensive ice cream and the sort of posh food I only get if I’ve done something special or I’m ill. When I don’t feel like food at all.

I’ve read books where authors talk about sinking feelings and heavy hearts. Well, I know what they mean. In a book, at this point the sun would go behind a cloud. I looked out of the window. Sure enough, massive grey clouds everywhere.

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Normally I see Olive Oil once a year. They are stinking rich and Mum says it’s awkward. I don’t think it’s awkward, just unfair. They moved south when Olive Oil was a baby. Anyway, now we usually just see them near Christmas. But last Christmas Olive Oil’s family went to South Africa to buy a holiday house.

Uncle Joe owns a company that makes lots of money and Aunt Sarah makes films that make lots of money.  I expect they also have job satisfaction.

But you can’t have everything. Great profits, great job satisfaction, creepy daughter.

So, that’s why I had a heavy heart and a Titanicsized sinking feeling as we waited for her to arrive.

There was our car. And there was Olive Oil. She’d changed in the eighteen months since I’d seen her. I’d remembered her with silly pigtails and pink fairy bobbles, and clothes that seemed to matter if they got a speck of dirt on them. But now her hair was big and shiny and long, and she wore jeans with scruffy edges and quite normal-looking trainers. She was taller than me and Charlie, even though she was the same age.

Why are girls so confident? She gave Dad a kiss and said how kind it was of us to have her. She smiled at me and Charlie and said hello. Luckily, she didn’t kiss me.

I didn’t know what to say while we were all showing her where everything was. Dad made a rude comment about how my bedroom smelt, and said something about how we were detectives but it would be surprising if we could detect the carpet there was so much stuff on it.

‘Let’s leave them to play,’ said Mum, and off they went. *Play?* Why do parents always think kids play?

We have a business to run and no time to be entertaining rich cousins.

Olivia saw my computer was on. ‘Cool,’ she said.

‘You’ve got Shock Tactix! Can I have a go?’

Half an hour and two computer games later, I realised the summer might not be totally ruined after all. Although she had a posh voice and you could *tell* she was rich, she was not that bad. She was even *quite* good at my computer game.

The next day, I decided she was definitely OK, because she told me I was brilliant when I accidentally came up with an idea that would save our business.

Every business needs a person with ideas and I have decided that’s me.

What happened was this. We were having a meeting. By the way, I’d invited Olive Oil to join our business. This was partly because Mum had dropped me in it by saying, ‘Olivia can help you with your business, can’t she, Fly?’ And Olive Oil had looked all smiley and *interested*. And partly because she had money and we might need some. All businesses need money to get them going. It has a special name but I’ve forgotten it.

So, the meeting. We were lying on Portobello beach, just down the road from our house. Charlie was scanning the horizon with binoculars and making notes in his notebook. Olive Oil was playing a game on her phone.

I was thinking. I was thinking that being a private eye was not a good way to make money. And there wasn’t even much job satisfaction right then.

‘Here’s what I think,’ I said, in a business-y voice.

‘We need to earn some money.’

‘Good idea,’ said Olive Oil.

‘But you could just ask your parents for money,’ said Charlie to her.

‘They don’t believe in giving me lots of money,’ she said.

‘But that’s mean,’ said Charlie. ‘They’re loaded.’

‘They don’t want me to be spoilt.’

‘So how come you’ve got money in your purse?’ I asked. Well, I couldn’t help peering over her shoulder, could I?

‘I’ve got birthday money saved up, and my dad gave me some for emergencies while I’m staying with you.’

Fair enough. Olive Oil was really not that different from us. I think I might stop calling her Olive Oil.

‘So, how did your dad make lots of money?’ I asked.

‘He says all businesses need the same thing. It’s the secret of success. He wrote a book about it.’

Crikey. He writes books too. He MUST be loaded.

Maybe he knows J.K. Rowling.

Charlie looked at me. I looked at Charlie. ‘Well?’ we asked.

‘He says the secret of success is to find something people want and then sell it to them at the highest price they will pay.’

We were silent. The sun beat down. I was sweating. It wasn’t a very helpful secret.

We were silent some more. I had no ideas. None at all.

‘I’m thirsty,’ I said. ‘Let’s get an ice cream.’

The shop was on the way home. A boy who lives near me was working there. He’s in senior school. Liam, he’s called. He’s got sweaty skin and an earring. And scary hair that’s so short it’s almost invisible.

‘Haven’t you got anything cheaper?’ asked Olivia, rummaging in the freezer. ‘And sort of plainer?’

He was staring at Olivia as though he really fancied her. *Eughhh*. Him, I mean, not her.

‘What about your boyfriends?’ he said. ‘They’re cheaper. And plainer.’

Olivia stared at him for a moment. ‘We’ll go somewhere else. We wouldn’t buy anything from you if you paid us,’ she said coolly. And we walked out.

‘Aye, suit yourself. I’ll be here if you change your mind,’ he called after us in a leery sort of voice.

‘So, where else is there?’ asked Olivia, scowling.

‘Nowhere,’ said Charlie. ‘You’ve just lost us our only chance of ice cream before we get home.’

He was right. And I was very hot and thirsty. I watched some kids walk into the shop and come out with expensive ice creams. Must have cost a fortune.

That was when I had my idea. I knew I was the ideas person.

And that was how we came to be making ice cream later that afternoon in our kitchen. Olivia had used her money to buy lemons, sugar and cream, and I’d persuaded the greengrocer to sell us over-ripe bananas extra cheap. Then we bought a pack of 200 plastic cups and a pack of 200 plastic spoons. Olivia seemed to know what we needed.

Charlie wrote down the costs in his notebook.

At my house, we started to make lemon ices and banana creams.

It wasn’t as easy as we’d thought. In fact, being a private eye was a lot easier. Probably because we had no customers. Life is easy if you have no customers.

But there’s no money and no job satisfaction.

If you’d seen the kitchen you’d have thought we were completely out of control. OK, we *were* completely out of control. Every bowl was out and every surface was covered. The floor was sticky with lemon and slimy with banana and crunchy with sugar. The dog thought she was in heaven. All we needed was for my mum to come in. My mum came in.

I won’t go into what she said and the look on her face and the fact that she had to sit down very suddenly. On something slimy. But once we’d explained, she calmed down. A bit.

‘You need a division of labour,’ she said.

I looked at Charlie and Charlie looked at me. What?

Olivia nodded. ‘You mean one of us should do this and the others should do something else.’

‘What else?’ asked Charlie.

‘Well,’ said Mum, ‘you’ll need to advertise, and make posters, and think of a name, and decide prices, and where to sell the things, and find a table, and plenty of change, and a coolbox to keep them frozen while you sell them, and make space in the garage freezer and…’

I was glad to get out of that kitchen. To be honest, I was feeling sick. But we had to taste the products *very* often, otherwise how could we know our customers would like them?

Charlie picked up his notebook and licked banana cream off it. ‘You have ideas and I’ll write them down,’ he said.

‘And afterwards you’ll all clean the kitchen,’ said Mum.

‘We could pay you to do it,’ I said.

‘I am much too expensive,’ said Mum.

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We called our new business Nice Dream. That was my idea as well.

The first day of Nice Dream was amazing. People had to pass our house on their way to the beach, and our ices were cheaper than shop ices. And we gave a few free samples and told everyone to tell their friends.

So, by the time Liam came past at four o’clock, we had nearly sold our first batch. He was walking back from his job, looking tired and sweatier than ever.

‘Lemon Nice, Liam?’ I called. ‘Only a few left!’

‘Banana Dream, Liam?’ called Charlie, grinning.

‘Get ’em while they’re cold!’

Liam slouched over. ‘You allowed to do this?’ he asked, sneering.

‘Why not?’ asked Olivia. ‘People want to buy them. It’s a free country.’

‘Is it?’ drawled Liam. He paused. ‘You been cleared by Health and Safety?’

Sinking feeling. Big time. Horror washed over me like some cold wave full of bits of slimy seaweed and dead fish. Liam’s dad works for a thing called Health and Safety. He inspects restaurants. He makes rules about things like washing hands and checking that fridges are cold.

Mind you, you have to feel a bit sorry for Liam’s dad. I mean, there can’t be much job satisfaction OR money in inspecting people’s hands and fridges.

But, there was definitely something menacing in Liam’s face. And when he picked up one of our ices, coughed on it and then put it back, there was something even worse than menacing.

Then he and his friends started kicking a ball nearby, and spitting, and with bits of mud flying around and boys shouting, no more customers came near. He knocked over a pile of Charlie Fly cards that we had on the stall, and laughed as he picked

one up and read it:

Charlie Fly

(Private Eye)

Lost it? We can find it.

Puzzled? We can solve it.

If we don’t, you don’t pay!

He put it in his pocket, pretending to be an interested customer, and I didn’t like the thought of it being there.

Still, we’d almost sold our first batch – nearly 50 ices altogether. And we weren’t going to leave while Liam was there, so we stuck it out, and then we cleared up, leaving no rubbish. Of course, we weren’t going to leave any rubbish anyway but Dad came home just then, bought the last Banana Dream, and said something about how businesses must respect the environment. He even picked some things up for us, including jumpers and shoes and sunglasses and things that we’d left lying around when we got too hot. We stuffed everything in bags.

Then, of course, we had to get busy making more ice creams for tomorrow.

‘Make sure you wash your hands,’ I said to Olivia, who glared at me.

‘Why is Olivia doing the kitchen stuff?’ asked Dad.

‘Isn’t that sex discrimination?’

Charlie looked at me and I looked at Charlie. Was it? But it wasn’t that Olivia was a girl, was it? She was just better at making ices.

‘Have you seen the boys’ hands?’ asked Mum.

‘Think about health and safety.’

I shuddered. Liam’s dad. Inspecting our hands and our fridge.

Charlie had been adding up some figures in his notebook. ‘Hey!’ he said. ‘Guess what?’

I looked at Olivia and Olivia looked at me. ‘What?’

‘We made a profit!’ We all looked at each other. ‘Even after we’ve paid back Olivia’s investment.’

That was the word.

‘Wow!’ I said.

‘And we have the assets, of course,’ said Olivia.

‘What?’ I said.

‘Assets, stupid,’ said Charlie.

‘Oh, right. I thought you said asses.’ Charlie looked at Olivia and Olivia looked at Charlie.

Later that evening, when Olivia was in another room, I asked Mum what our assets were. ‘The things you bought which you’ve still got. Like the extra plastic cups and spoons. So if you sell all your ices tomorrow as well, you’ll make even more profit because you won’t have to buy more things. And you’ve still got plenty of ingredients left too.’

Wow. So we’d made a profit. One day we’d be rich.

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Unfortunately not. Next day it rained. And the next day too. We stared at the grey skies. Our ices stayed in the freezer.

Nice Dream was nothing more than a nice dream.

Except for one thing. Olivia had an idea. It was, I admit, a good idea, and it might have worked. Except that we never got as far as trying because something happened.

Olivia’s idea was to make hot lemon drinks instead of ice creams, and sell them to wet shoppers. She said businesses must ‘adapt to new circumstances’.Mum said, ‘Yes, and diversify, too.’ Olivia nodded wisely, but I don’t think even *she* had a clue what Mum meant. Nor did I.

More importantly, we checked with Mum whether this would work, health and safety-wise. She said it would if we heated them properly. ‘That’ll be 50p for professional consultancy,’ she said.

‘Get real, Mum,’ I said.

‘To be honest,’ said Charlie, ‘there was no contract, so we are not obliged to pay you a penny.’

Sometimes, you can tell Charlie’s mum works at Citizen’s Advice.

‘You can tell your mum works at Citizen’s Advice,’ said Mum.

So, we got out the bags of stuff that we’d brought in from the garden on the day we sold our ices. We would need to change the posters and prices and everything. A lot of thinking must be done to get this new business going. Diversifying was hard work, whatever it was. Olivia went on about how it was good to manage risk. I just thought it seemed like common sense. I didn’t see that it needed special words, but Charlie and Olivia can’t do things without using big words.

‘We should have a meeting,’ I said.

‘We are having a meeting,’ said Olivia.

‘But Charlie isn’t taking notes. It can’t be a meeting if someone isn’t taking notes.’

‘Minutes,’ said Charlie. Whatever. Charlie got out his notebook and I was about to say something important when the doorbell rang.

My secretary-mother had gone out so we all went to answer it.

It was Liam. Looking odd. Not horrible and fierce. Well, actually, he was looking horrible but it was a different sort of horrible. Horrible and worried. And he was holding a scrumpled Charlie Fly (Private Eye) card.

‘Can you really do this?’ he asked. ‘Like find something that’s lost?’

‘Of course,’ said Charlie confidently. ‘It’s what detectives do. It’s the whole point.’

‘Why?’ asked Olivia. ‘Have you lost something?’

‘My phone,’ he said. ‘And my dad’s mad at me.’

‘Are you taking notes?’ I asked Charlie. Charlie was. ‘So,’ I said to Liam, ‘are you asking us to find your phone?’

‘As in *commissioning* us, Liam?’ added Olivia.

‘Yeah, but what’s it cost if you find it?’ he asked.

‘£19.99,’ I said firmly. ‘Plus expenses.’

‘How quickly can you find it?’ he asked. He was looking really worried. I almost felt sorry for him.

Almost.

‘It’s a tricky one,’ said Charlie. ‘We can only do our best.’

‘I’ll pay you an extra fiver if you find it today.’

‘We can’t promise anything,’ said Olivia.

Then Charlie took more notes while we asked questions. Things like, what the phone looked like and all the places he had been on the day he lost it.

We even asked him all the places he’d been to the toilet in that same day, which was extremely amusing. He had been to the toilet in some seriously weird places.

‘Don’t call us, we’ll call you,’ I said.

‘He can’t call us – he hasn’t got his phone,’ said Charlie.

‘Oh, of course,’ I smiled. ‘You haven’t got your phone, have you? But we’ll call your home when we find it.’

‘Don’t tell my mum or dad,’ pleaded Liam.

‘Don’t worry, we won’t tell your mum or dad. Or your gran. Or your sisters. Or your dog. Or anyone else at all.’

He left and we did high fives all round. ‘Charlie Fly (Private Eye), we’re back in business!’ Charlie shouted.

‘The sun’s come out,’ noticed Olivia. ‘We can sell ice creams again. While we think how to find his phone.’

So we started to get everything out of the bags, the bags which we hadn’t emptied since the day when we sold all those ices… And that was when I found it. The phone. In one of the bags.

It must have fallen out of his pocket when he was messing around. Served him right.

‘Wow!’ said Charlie. ‘THAT was easy money!’

‘Yes, and that’s what Liam will say too. He might be suspicious. We won’t tell him yet,’ said Olivia.

‘But he said we could have an extra fiver if we find it today,’ Charlie pointed out. ‘It would be bad business to miss out on extra profit.’

I did some thinking. After all, I am the ideas person. ‘If we tell him in a couple of hours and also NOT take his extra fiver, he will be so pleased that he might use us again and tell his friends,’ I said.

‘Brilliant idea, Fly!’ said Olivia. Charlie nodded carefully. I could tell he was worried about missing that extra profit but, the way I saw it, we’d make more profit if Liam told everyone how clever we were.

A couple of hours later, Liam came round in answer to our phone call. ‘How did you find it?’ he asked, actually smiling, and Liam smiling was even more horrible than Liam looking normal.

‘We can’t reveal our methods,’ said Charlie.

‘It’s a trade secret,’ explained Olivia.

‘That’s for us to know and you to wonder about,’ I added.

‘Well, thanks anyway,’ and he paid us. ‘I’ll tell all my friends about Charlie Fly (Private Eye),’ he added, as he left.

‘Oh, one thing,’ Olivia called after him. ‘Do ask Health and Safety to inspect us. At any time.’ And we all held out our hands.

‘Fridge, Liam?’ I asked, pointing towards the kitchen. But he was too busy grinning and texting someone on his mobile phone.

As we celebrated with a free Lemon Nice and Banana Dream each, we realised that we had the best of both worlds: job satisfaction *and* money.

The summer was looking good. We had two businesses to run now. There’s probably a name for having several businesses. Millionaire will do me. Maybe, one day, if we work really hard. And if I keep coming up with good ideas. And if Charlie uses his brains.

And Olivia? Well, she’s our finance director. And chief cook.

One day, we might even be able to afford to pay Mum to wash up for us. It’s a Nice Dream.