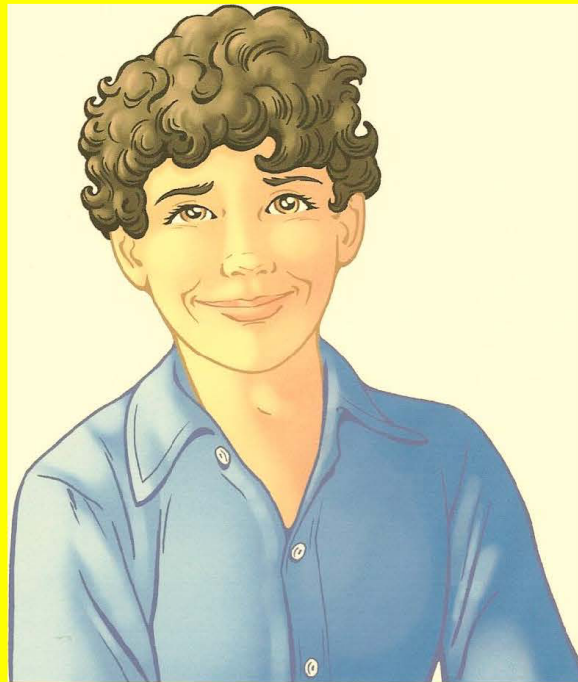


THE BARTON SERIES

BARTON MOVES ALONG



BY

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(Ages 8 and over)

BARTON MOVES ALONG

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A SECOND TONGUE

It was by a strange twist of events that Barton's long, lost friend returned to the country, and so after he had migrated many years before. The two boys were very close when they were young.

At that time Barton knew Dane to be an orphan, living with an old couple. Then, Dane was adopted and was taken away to live in a foreign land. There was no communication between Barton and Dane for the seven years when he was abroad. But as fate would have it, the two friends now stood side by side again.

As the weeks passed, the two young boys continued to renew their acquaintance and Dane, easily warmed the hearts of his new family. The many similarities between Barton and Dane were clearly visible, but a few differences between them were also noticeable. Physically, Barton was strong and well built. Dane though was slightly bigger and a bit taller than Barton. He had broader shoulders and showed tremendous gymnastic and athletic ability.

The young Dane had admitted to spending many evenings at the gymnasium, near where he lived. He was also a masterful player in several sports, many of which were not very popular in this part of the world.

As young Dane settled in school, both he and Barton were popularly called 'the athletic twins' of the school. Their plump friend, Kwame, meanwhile, had appointed himself as their athletic coach. Kwame was Barton's coach from before. He added Dane to the list.

Dane was as amiable, kind-hearted, and helpful as Barton, and all of Barton's friends invited and easily welcomed him into their groups, clubs, and their little folds.

"We can now understand why you two were so close since you were small boys," said Shanna, causing the two boys to smile and Dane to throw his arm affectionately across Barton's shoulders.

As the weeks passed by, Dane also became part of the group that met often at Barton's treehouse. He remembered when they were small boys, and when there was a much smaller treehouse which was built in the lower branches.



The present treehouse was a much larger one and was erected on larger, stronger, and higher branches. Dane had generously donated a thermometer and an analogue clock to the furnishing of the treehouse, which added much to the decor of the cosy room. It was not unusual to see all of the friends Kwame, Alfredo, Barton, Sian, Shanna, Malaika, and now Dane, seated comfortably and having their club meetings there.



Though Dane was a star academic pupil in his former country, he was slightly behind when compared to the students in Barton's class in which he was placed upon his return. Barton and the others did much to bridge this gap, narrow though it seemed. Their prize student was both able and willing and did make them proud. His progress was quick and he, in turn, entertained his 'young tutors' with wondrous tales of foreign places that he had visited during the years of living abroad. However, a rather interesting discovery was made one evening, when there was a club meeting held.

It all started when Alfredo, unexpectedly had to run an errand for his mother at around the same time as the scheduled club meeting. As a result, he arrived late to the meeting and slightly out of breath.

“I am sorry to be late,” he apologised to the members, as he climbed up to the treehouse.

As the others welcomed him and excused him, Dane was heard muttering some strange words. Though he had spoken softly, Kwame who was lying down next to him had heard. Dane had answered Alfredo by saying, “Mas vale tarde que nunca.”

Kwame was quick to sit up and take notice, for very little passed unnoticed, the eyes and ears of the plump individual.

“What was that you said, Dane,” asked the pudgy one?

Dane seemed to be caught unawares by Kwame’s question and appeared a bit confused. Finally, he realised what Kwame was asking him and he responded to the question.

“I said to Alfredo that, it is better to be late than never,” said Dane, going red and wondering if he had done any wrong.

“It sounded quite different,” said Kwame, poking Dane in the side and making him laugh.

“I now understand what you mean, Kwame,” he responded. “It is a popular proverb. I thought you might have heard it before?”

Kwame looked at Dane sternly and threatened to sit on him if a better explanation for the strange words he uttered before, was not given.

“I meant, what were the words you used, for you certainly did not say it in that English form. And, yes, I have heard of the proverb before, mind you, in English.”

Dane looked at the six pairs of eager eyes that were now focused on him and which were set in the ‘inquisitive mode’. He paused for a moment and looked at his new friends, as they all awaited the explanation. He decided to oblige them.

“Mas vale tarde que nunca,” he began, “says that it is better to be late than never to attend.”

Dane continued to look intensely at his friends. Most of them seemed to await a further explanation.

“My dear, new friends and especially my long lost friend Barton, whom I have found again,” he said smilingly, “I can speak and write in Spanish just as well as I can speak and write in English. I am what you may call, bilingual.”

“C’est tres bien,” interrupted Kwame.

“I’m afraid that is the French for ‘it is very good’, and is not Spanish,” corrected Dane. “I even studied a bit of French as well. However, I am not as fluent in French as I am in Spanish.”

Kwame and the others were quite impressed.

Sian, who was sitting quietly all along, shuffled a bit in her chair. She was a brilliant student of the English language. She often wrote beautiful verse and prose and was an avid reader.

Young Sian often astonished her friends with quite interesting and amazing facts and would also denounce many fictional statements based on information that she acquired from reading. The class always found their friend, Sian, to be a growing fountain of knowledge.

“How did you master Spanish during those years, Dane,” asked Sian?

“My new parents were bilingual,” replied Dane, “and they spoke both Spanish and English at home. I quickly learned conversational Spanish, long before I could write the language.”

“Are you saying that you could speak in Spanish long before you could write in Spanish,” asked Alfredo?

“I could,” replied Dane. “Did all of us not learn to speak English long before we could ever write it or even learn the basic rules of English grammar?”

“That is quite true,” admitted the group of friends.

They had not realised this fact until Dane had mentioned it.

“I have a thought,” said Sian. “I have a most brilliant thought, Dane, and because of this fabulous idea of mine, I now have a request of you.”

Dane laughed at Sian’s antics as she bowed and performed a small act.

“I have a pretty good idea of what your request is going to be, and without even hearing it, I willingly oblige.”

The small group applauded since they too seemed to guess what Sian was going to ask Dane. Now it was Dane’s turn to stand and bow as though he was on stage. After they all laughed at his comical behaviour Dane spoke to the small group of friends.

“Juntos, vamos a aprender a hablar español muy bien.”

This means, together, we shall all learn to speak Spanish, very well.”

Loud cheers were heard to erupt from the treehouse at this pronouncement.

“Muy bien,” muttered Kwame, finally getting his limited language bearings correct.