Direct Versus Indirect Objects

Beloved Grammar

Indirect objects are rare. You can read for pages before you encounter one. For an indirect object to appear, a sentence must first have a direct object.

Direct objects follow transitive verbs [a type of action verb]. If you can identify the subject and verb in a sentence, then finding the direct object—if one exists—is easy. Just remember this simple formula:

\[
\text{Subject} + \text{Verb} + \text{what? or who?} = \text{Direct Object}
\]

Here are examples of the formula in action:

➢ **Jim built a sandcastle on the beach.**
  ➢ *Jim* = subject; *built* = verb. Jim built what? *Sandcastle* = direct object.

➢ **Sammy and Maria brought Billie Lou to the party.**
  ➢ *Sammy, Maria* = subjects; *brought* = verb. Sammy and Maria brought who? *Billie Lou* = direct object.

➢ **To explain the broken lamp, we told a lie.**
  ➢ *We* = subject; *told* = verb. We told what? *Lie* = direct object.

When someone [or something] gets the direct object, that word is the indirect object. Look at these new versions of the sentences above:

➢ **Jim built his granddaughter a sandcastle on the beach.**

➢ **So that Darren would have company at the party, Sammy and Maria brought him a blind date.**
  ➢ *Sammy, Maria* = subjects; *brought* = verb. Sammy and Maria brought who? *Blind date* = direct object. Who got the blind date? *Him* = indirect object.

➢ **To explain the broken lamp, we told Mom a lie.**
  ➢ *We* = subject; *told* = verb. We told what? *Lie* = direct object. Who got the lie? *Mom* = indirect object.