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Unrequited Love

by Miriam Silver

There had been no negotiation, their mothers were adamant, something to do with welcoming a newcomer, being neighbourly, being grateful that they'd been asked, "party's up there at the manor are very Grand," they were assured

"A girl's party, we can't," William groaned.

"I'm gonna get something awful and catching."

"Good idea, we can all come out in spots," Henry sounded marginally hopeful at Douglas's suggestion.

Ginger didn't offer any hope either, his mother was adamant.

"Even criminals are allowed to be heard before they're sentenced," said William.

The four were huddled dejectedly under the rusty corrugated iron that was the roof of their rickety den, a collection of recycled materials lovingly put together by their inadequate skills airing their dissatisfaction with adults.

"Gotta wear proper jackets and ties..."

"Violet Elizabeth told me they play kissing games..."

Silence was the only possible response to these threats.

“Got an idea...” William had suddenly come to life, he felt responsible for the gang’s misery, it was his mother who had assured Mrs.Bott that of course he and his friends would like to play with her little girl. William had never admitted he’d met and played with a girl even though it had been under duress.

She’d come to tea and had taken an immediate liking to him threatening to scream and scream until she was sick if he didn’t kiss her. And he was only in the garden supposedly showing her Jumbo, his personal mongrel.

The other three, too miserable, just ignored him. Undaunted William outlined his plan and gradually their spirits lifted and they went home to tea restored.

William’s Mother had her suspicions when William meekly washed and brushed until he shone, agreed yes he’d play nicely and walked demurely down the path.

Then he met his fellow conspirators, looking equally shining, Henry, his face red from wearing a tie, was hanging onto his jacket, which was tightly wrapped round a wriggling bulge.

“Hurry up, get moving, it’ll jump.”

The four immediately reverted to their usual scrambling, pushing, jumping mode arriving to their den, party clothes torn, hands and faces back to normal, smudged with dirt.

The rest of the plan depended on the cat which Henry had kidnapped, kept prisoner and assured his mother that he would find it, “We’ll look for it on our way to the party,” he had assured her.

An uncooperative cat took the first opportunity to make a dash for freedom, with the boys in hot pursuit, tearing through brambles, thicket and puddles leading them right to Violet Elizabeth who waved to them,

“I’m coming, you’re playing Indians, I’ve got to be your squaw,” and she was off, her parents too busy to notice, that is not until they couldn’t find anyone for tea.

“Go away, we don’t play with girls,” William shouted.

“Yeth you do, cos’ if you don’t I’ll scream!”

The kidnapped cat suddenly appeared, curling round Violet Elizabeth’s leg, William made a swoop and shouted, “Gotta get this back home, can’t come,” and ignored Violet Elizabeth’s

“I’m gonna scream and scream...”

While just hoping the return of the cat would compensate for their misdemeanours.