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The Alibi

by Miriam Silver

It was not open to negotiations, their mothers were adamant, something to do with being neighbourly, the Bott daughter was very upset, her cat was missing, the party was to cheer her up.

“A girls party, we can’t,” William groaned as he threw himself down on the dusty floor of his gang’s secret den.

He’d gone straight there as soon as he heard his mother had accepted that awful invitation.

No sympathy there, they’d all been invited. Parents had accepted on their behalf.

“You’ll enjoy yourself, parties up there at the manor are very nice and er grand.”

“I’m gonna get something awful and catching,” William announced.

“And I’m gonna come out in spots,” Henry agreed followed by Ginger’s pessimistic,

“When my Mum makes up her mind there’s no hope.”

“Even criminals are allowed to be heard before they’re sentenced,” the would be lawyer Douglas observed.

The four of them were huddled dejectedly under the rusty corrugated iron that served as a roof for their den which was made with a collection of recycled materials lovingly put together by their inadequate skills.

“Gotta get dressed up too,” Douglas pointed out.

Which led to further complaints about collars, ties and suits.

“Violet Elizabeth’s spread it she’s gonna play kissing games.”

Silence and deeper gloom was the only response to this threat.

Undaunted as ever he shouted, “Gotta’n idea!” and proceeded to outline a plan that would involve Henry’s cat, which raised their spirits, just in time for tea.

William’s mother suppressed her suspicions when her youngest meekly submitted to being washed and brushed agreed to play nicely and keep clean when he joined the other boys who were going to the party.

They all met in spite of warnings about party clothes Henry, his face red from hanging onto his too large jacket, looked worried,

“Hurry up, get moving, she doesn’t like being held.”

Immediately reverting, warnings ignored, they arrived at their den with dirty faces and torn clothes.

The rest of the plan depended on the cat which Henry had kidnapped, and was keeping sort-of safe under his jacket, although it obviously didn’t like it, jumping out at the first opportunity, causing all four boys to follow shouting,

“Come on pussy - lovely pussy,” which had no effect enabling them to carry on crawling through the undergrowth.

Eventually arriving at the garden they could see a mouthwatering tea laid out, which they couldn’t claim until a cat, any cat was found.

“Let’s look for hers - this way I bet its behind the shed in the sun.”

More enjoyable hissing, and crawling soon found a poor animal quietly enjoying the sunshine.

One grab by Douglas, made it dash straight into Henry’s now torn jacket. The others grabbed his arm and secured the scratching animal.

“Here’s your cat!” they shouted in unison as their hostess greeted the dishevelled boys as heroes. They had an alibi now, parents will be proud, their tea was well earned.