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## I'm Not Sure I Exist At All

by Miriam Silver

"There seems to be little any of us can do to persuade you Brown that the best place for your pets is at home, in their cage," the headmaster said, while looking down at the only somewhat recalcitrant boy.

"But Sir, he gets lonely," the 'he' being his white rat.

"Try, Brown, and do a one hundred line essay justifying that a pet's best place is at home, now off you go, by tomorrow mind, here," William's exasperated headmaster added.

"Oh sir, I can't...anything but writing..." Only to be cut short as he was gently pushed out of the door, finding his friends hadn't even waited for him.

Sunk in grim gloom he slowly made his way home, hands deep in his pockets, eyes firmly fixed on the ground remembering , 'never know what you may find,' being the only expectation he had currently, that, and hoping Jumble would hear his whistle as he went up the garden path.

"Let him stay outside dear," we're the first words he heard from his mother, which didn't exactly endear him to his homecoming, no one wanted to know anything about his rotten day, or his impossible essay. He wasn't wanted, anywhere.

Whistling again, Jumble followed him as he went back, he knew he'd only be told to wash, clean himself up and get ready for tea if he went inside, and although the thought of food was attractive, he trudged on, up and out. He'd decided, he was leaving, find a pirate ship to join or an expedition going excavating, anywhere.

Cheering at these thoughts he followed Jumble, into the woods where a happy time was had by all with sticks coming and fetching, at least Jumble was with him.

When they found the bridge over the river, it was perfect for playing Poo sticks. Jumble loved swimming and easily found sticks to bring back to a William now nicely settled, leaning against a tree dreaming about a future where he'll be hailed victorious, just like that Roman, only to be rudely awakened by,

"You ok ole' chap?" a kindly voice asked causing him to forget his dream and jump upright.

"Oh, err yes, just on my way..."

"Lovely place to find all sorts, here in the water, the trees, but expect you know that's?" the man added.

"Yes of course," William replied, "but just was thinking I'd find better stuff wiv the expedition I'm joining," his grown-up gruff voice emphasising his learned position.

"I'm impressed, not many folk realise what wonders there are to be found in the natural world, especially, food, look there, mushrooms, and there, that green stuff, all edible."

By this time the thought of food made the young crusader feel faint, all he could find in his pocket were sticky wrappings from pear drops used in exchange for that penknife.

"Trouble is, just at this moment I'm a bit down," William began hopefully, "I left rather quickly, forgot to bring even a drink, am a bit weak, was just resting," he explained trying to look the part.

At which the man rummaged in his shoulder bag, found a packet of something and offered it to the now bedraggled boy.

"Go on, have this, then perhaps I can join you, would love an expedition."

As our hungry boy and his dog gratefully took it, he decided he'd elucidate his position.

"I'm not sure I exist actually, you see, I've left home, no adult there cares, an' I've got an essay to write, my pets like my company at school, an' it's all hopeless cos' I'll never get it on his desk by tomorrow, so I'm not going back," William ended looking pathetic, adding for good measure, "an' they will make me go to bed without tea."

The man looked at the well-fed boy in front of him, decided in his favour and said, "troubles never come singly. Bad luck old chap. Perhaps if we go your way together we might think of a story, get them on our side, also I don't want to boast, but I'm quite good at essays and I'd love to see your pets."

