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Overnight

by Miriam Silver

Overnight our neighbours began to look at us differently when a bulky bloke appeared at our garden gate.

Now, of course this could mean several things, but it obviously brought us into their vision. Until then - we moved in 9 months ago - we had been ignored, not even approached for a donation or asked in for a cuppa, although Jethro did attract interest at school when he took his spider Bubbles to display on the nature table.

Our Agents have insisted they employ protection for us now we have become, albeit reluctantly, in the public eye and social media, which produces death threats. Apparently anything is possible

The Festival of Crime Writers featured my latest, giving rise to gossip, accusing me of using real live criminals because it read like a confession. All the book reviewers loved it. The TV programme is even looking forward to my next one.

Reaching this point has taken me years, and now having won several covetous prizes and the money that goes with them to say nothing of the screen rights and the advance in hand for a sequel, here I am, having left my origins far behind, living in a green suburb where I appear to have gone up in my neighbours' estimation. With all its lack of friendliness we still love the space and the near access to woods, water and wonderful walks for Jethro's dog, Jumbo, which a boy of nearly eleven can now do on his own.

We allowed him to go out via the back entrance to take Jumbo across the field, up through the woods and back, usually took him half to three quarters of an hour. He knew we could see him, he loved having some independence.

At the weekend, this was his favourite thing and allowed us to complete essentials before going out as a family and as had become usual he went off at his usual run at about 8 taking his toast with him. An hour went by, no Jethro. We didn't panic immediately, thinking he was involved in throwing sticks, instantly the bulky guy, Geoff joined us looking, calling Jumbo, while we explained Jethro's audio limitations. When there was no dog we were acutely concerned and dashed off into the woods leaving our minder to call the police, who came with dogs telling us to stay inside.

That whole day, we spent under scrutiny by not only the police also by the erstwhile disinterested neighbours, who formed a search party, while we became more and more distraught.

Jethro was an obedient boy, easy going, loved his dog and taking him out, letting him run, he, they, enjoyed their freedom. Darkness began to fall, we couldn't rest or eat. No one had seen anything. We had to wait until daylight wishing we had let him have a phone,

“When you go to secondary school,” we promised.

The media gangs were outside as we consistently told them to go away and barricaded ourselves inside.

As a family, we have all grown together with his deafness, at school, he sits in the front where he can see the teacher, making sure he is always the same as his classmates.

The searches resumed at daybreak as we reluctantly showered and dressed and sat drinking coffee morosely when we heard a shout and rushed outside pushing the officer out of the way.

“We've found him,” we heard as Jumbo, wagging his tail ran back and forth to the man carrying our son.

It transpired he had fallen, broken his leg, unable to move or shout, he must have knocked his head, became unconscious and spending the night hidden from view under the fallen wood that caused the accident, under the leaves that we are sure Jumbo covered him with.