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The Nightmare

by Miriam Silver

From the window all he could see were shadows, vague figures and the glint of something shining, he couldn't move, terrified, he could hear something, downstairs, he tried to shout but the words wouldn't come.

"Wake up," his mother was shaking him, "you've had a nightmare."

William was standing at his bedroom window.

"I saw it," he tried to explain but his mother wasn't listening.

"You read too many comics, you were sleepwalking, dreaming, back to bed now."

At breakfast he asked anyone who'd listen, "Can dreams come true?"

"Probably ate too many stolen apples," this from an unsympathetic sister.

"Bad dreams are for little boys who..." Richard just managed to duck as William threw his toast, causing his brother to plead, "I'm not a little boy, I'm trying to tell you what I saw."

"Will you all leave the table and let me finish my breakfast in peace."

Their father had reached the end of his patience.

As William left the room and the house shouting, "No one cares about me having a nightmare," he suddenly had an inspiration.

"It wasn't a nightmare, I know I saw it."

Determinedly setting off, with his MI5 mask firmly in place, he went to find his gang - Ginger, Henry and Douglas who would all be in their secret den.

"I'm sure I saw them, burglars, and they had a knife, I saw it I tell you," he announced on entering their unsafe construction composed mainly of discarded cardboard and corrugated iron.

"You only had a nightmare, I always have em' special when I eat lots..." Douglas explained unsympathetically.

"No I didn't, I'm going to look for clues."

And when there was no response mumbled, loudly, "Don't bother, I'll go on my own, I'll manage, I'm good at clues"

"You're not the only one," Douglas contradicted.

"We can find stuff too," Henry and Ginger contributed.

But their leader ignored them, "Come on" He shouted, "let's go, start over there," pointing to the ditch, "keep low, they've got a head start."

Progress was slow due to distractions concerning ownership to valuable findings, causing disputatious struggles in the mud.

"Look found something."

"That's only a dead frog," sneered Henry narrowly missing Ginger's missile.

The serious stuff started in the ditch opposite William's bedroom when Ginger whooped, "Found, cigarette ends!"

"Don't touch anything," Henry warned, his uncle was a policeman.

"S'all muddy anyway, won't get fingerprints," Douglas was well informed from comics.

William's persuasive powers had energised them now crawling along the ditch eyes firmly fixed on the ground beneath them, each determined to find whatever it was that their leader had seen shining in the moonlight.

Enjoyment prevented them noticing that they were in forbidden territory in his neighbours garden, folk who were already exasperated by William's badly aimed missiles and tired by a disrupted night, suddenly caught sight of four boys crawling all over what remained of their vegetable garden and roared exasperatedly.

"Get out of there!"

The would-be detectives became aware they were being attacked, not by robbers but by something worse, exasperated adults who were requiring an explanation.

"We saw them, we've got something!" William tried to explain, until the forbearing Mrs Smith spotted the thing in William's hand.

"What on earth are you doing with that?" she said, pointing to a dangerous looking knife.

"I tol' you, least I tol' my mother I saw something last night."

It appeared that someone had tried to steal their neighbours' prize vegetables.

Even William's father looked proud, his honest son quick to ask him not to remember the times he'd been somewhat economical with the truth, asked,

"Could we have the reward, now?"