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Finders Keepers

by Miriam Silver

The house had a forbidding symmetrical facade with curtained windows surrounded by what was their own jungle playground. It had been destroyed, to use their own description, the place where they had whooped, chased and hidden was no more.

“What’ they do that for?” an indignant expectant William asked no one in particular, adding, “no good for nuffin’ now.”

Disconsolate and fed up they, the gang shuffled, kicked and dug through the undergrowth ignoring the brambles both tearing their clothes and scratching their legs.

“Can’t play explorers here,” Douglas announced while giving Henry a shove.

“Rotten spoil sports, that’s what they are,” grumbled Ginger, only after he’d extricated himself in Henry’s defence.

“We’re wasting good time, let’s be explorers, yer know like wot they have for museums, ruins, stuff like valuable old stuff.”

This idea from William that was greeted with derision by a sceptical Henry who was a bit academic, "Only archaeologists do that."

Ignoring their gang member's cynicism William urged them on with a hissed warning of instructions.

"Could be that someone will come, better hide," Douglas said as he threw himself into the undergrowth.

Inspired and encouraged all four obeyed their leader's... "keep low, crawl."

"Like wot soldiers do in the jungle", Ginger agreed.

"Keep eyes out for treasure" William was really involved now, "Shsh! someone'll hear."

"You shsh yourself William Brown," Douglas growled, he wasn't one to be told what to do but fortunately was distracted when he heard...

"Found something, over here," which prompted untangling torn cloth and limbs to go and see a mass of old bricks surrounded by something like a ditch in which there were copper looking discs.

"Crumbs, treasure!" William managed to say as he made a grab, at the same time the others dived in, causing yet another rough and tumble while they shouted...

"We're rich! The museum will pay for this find, told yer!"

Absorbed with their find they didn't hear the man until he spoke,

"Hello! What have you found?"

The boys warily stood up to their full 4ft plus height, muddy and scratched and looked suspiciously at a man dressed like William's father, wearing a dark suit.

"My name is David Hastings," he said introducing himself.

“We’ve never seen you here and we come a lot to play, yer know we’re explorers an’ treasure hunters and we’ve found real treasure.”

“Can I have a look?” David asked carefully avoiding the brambles.

“Finders keepers,” William quickly claimed ownership.

“Well, yes, but you see I live here.”

“How do we know that?” Henry, their academic queried.

“You could be anyone,” Ginger and Douglas joined in.

“You’re quite right, tell you what we’ll do. I’ll follow you to your house and introduce myself to your parents. I was going to do that today anyway.”

Anxiety overcame their dealings, one and all chorusing,

“Can’t go now, they’ll make us do our homework for the rest of the weekend, and take away our pocket money an’ make us wash an’ all that stuff.”

“Probably send me to bed with no tea,” William said fearfully.

Mr. Hastings cast a quizzical eye over the four bright-eyed well-fed boys.

“How about I tell them that I would never have found these valuable coins without your help?” said Mr Hastings.

“An’ we’ve earned our share,” William insisted, adding with emphasis, “Hope we can trust you that’s all.”

“I’ll explain that the story you told could only end in one of two ways, truthfully or artfully, and leave it up to them what to believe.”

With that they made their way home carefully carrying their findings.

