

Boo

Boo!

Have you ever hidden something? Or *someone*? I have.

If Grandpa Pete was still alive he would've let me keep Boo in his shed. He would've said "Be my guest, Stan my man". Mum wouldn't want me to even *talk* to a stranger, so I don't ask her, I hide him.

Now I'm in year Five, I walk home on my own over the field. And that's how I meet Boo.

At the top, in the long grass, there's this old caravan. When I get up close, my breath goes funny and I can't swallow my spit. The windows are black like two staring eyes. My heart's beating so fast I might die. Suddenly the door bursts open, and someone jumps out.

"Boo!"

My scream hurts my throat as I run. My hood catches on a bramble and rips, the thorn pings back in my face. He's running after me. I slip, with him just behind me. I'm totally covered in mud all up one side, and there's blood dripping down my cheek. I'm not crying.

He's not much bigger than me, and you'll never guess - he's smiling! He pulls me up, but I slip and fall on top of him. It's so funny! We laugh for ages.

It's not his real name, it's a nickname his Gran gave him as he always does that.

'Do you think it's a girl's name?' Boo asks.

'No way,' I say. The caravan's really dark – only candles, not a proper light. I'm not sure how long he's been there.

Boo

'Since we lost our flat,' he says. How can you *lose* a flat? I don't ask this. There are loads of matches, and it smells like old carrots. And his mum doesn't make him go to school!

Mostly we make camps in the field. If I've got any lunch left he shoves it in his mouth and bits fly out, it's really funny. His mum buys him weird stuff. Like one time he had on this massive jumper, new, with a label sticking out the back. It's not his dad's cos he told me his dad's dead.

We light candles in the camp, and he tells me about his Gran who's got psychic powers.

'She lives in Manchester. She's famous,' he says, 'everyone goes to her to contact dead people. It's hereditary. I can do it too.'

I nod. It's very rare.

'Can we go to your house?' he says.

'No, cos we have tea at six.'

He runs back into the caravan and slams the door.

It isn't really about tea. Mum won't like him. His hair sticks together, and his clothes are weird.

The next week though she's on a late shift. We take some candles and roll down the field.

We always roll, Boo and me.

At mine he finds the Hula-Hoops and mini Kit-Kats.

'Be my guest, Boo my man,' I say. Then we go into the cupboard-under-the-stairs, my idea, and light the candles.

Boo

There are different ways to contact dead people: a Wee Jee board, a glass ball. We do what his Gran does. The first time, we're crammed in with the candles lit.

'Stay really quiet Stan,' he says, half-closing his eyes. I try not to swallow.

'HmMMMMMM,' he hums one long note. Then he sort of chants 'HmMMMMMM may - we - speak - to - you - out - there?'

'Shall I join in?' I whisper.

He looks unsure. 'Yeah. Yeah, it's better with two, you know.'

I don't know. But I close my eyes and hum.

We're both humming, and Boo starts rocking forward and back. I do too. We're humming and rocking, Boo's face twitches. He's a bit mad-looking then.

'Dad? Is that you?' he says, really quiet. The candles flicker, my nose whistles.

'Stan, it's my dad!'

I'm scared. I don't want to talk to dead people any more. But Boo's having a conversation.

'I'm good Dad. At Stan's house. He's my best friend.' That cheers me up.

'Mum's got a new job. Bye Dad!' For a minute he looks so happy. Then he says in a wobbly voice

'Stan, can I stay here?'

I think for a second. There's no way I'd sleep in that caravan on my own.

'You'll have to hide,' I tell him. Luckily he likes it under the stairs.

It makes it a lot easier, him being here. From the cupboard we talk to all sorts of people, dead and alive - like Mrs Mills from downstairs who died last year. And Sir Alex Ferguson,

Boo

the ex-manager of Man United. Well Boo does, and he tells me what they say. He contacts my dad, who says I'm a great son, which is a bit weird as he hasn't seen me since I was four. It's the best week ever - it's like having a brother.

We don't hear her come in. We're doing the humming, quite loud, and Boo's Uncle's telling us swear words.

'Shitting piss! Bollocks! Twathead!' Boo yells.

And suddenly the door flings open. We're so shocked we knock over the candles.

'Boo! You're on fire!' I shout. I wrestle him to the floor and smother him with a cushion. And Mum's just screaming.

'What the hell? Who are *you*? Bloody hell, Stan!'

And I'm crying now cos she's ruined everything.

I really don't want Boo to go.

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He does go, of course. Mum called Social Services, and now he's in Manchester with his Gran. He says he'd rather live with her anyway.

We've talked a lot about Boo since he left. There's no one to make camps with now. It turns out his Gran *is* famous in Manchester, and in half term we're going up on the train. Mum says there's a thing or two she'd like to ask Grandpa Pete. And me and Boo are going to see Man United, cos Boo's asked Sir Alex Ferguson, and he's sorted us out some free tickets.

989 Words