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Misfitz Mystery: The One That Got Away

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Ben was woken at 5.25 in the morning. He shoved his hand under the pillow and felt for his phone. He'd set it on silent, so the alarm vibrated through the pillow, interrupting his sleep without making any noise.

He pressed a key to switch it off.

He sat up slowly and peered over the edge of his bed, looking down at the bottom bunk. There was a lump under the duvet. It didn't move. It carried on not moving. Frank was still asleep.

Dawn wasn't for another ten minutes, but slim chinks of light were already sneaking through the curtains. Ben knew he didn't have any time to waste. If he was going to catch the thief, he had to do it now.

He pushed aside the duvet, slid out of bed and climbed down the ladder, trying not to make any noise.

The floorboards felt cold against his bare feet.

Ben had slept in his T-shirt and boxer shorts, ready for an early start, and left his jeans, socks and trainers in a neat pile on a chair. He bundled them into his arms and tiptoed across the room. Dressing downstairs would make much less noise. He opened the door, glanced once more at Frank, checking he hadn't woken up, then went into the corridor.

He closed the door behind him and listened for a few seconds.

If his mum or his sisters had woken up, he would have heard their voices or their footsteps, but the house was quiet. They were still asleep.

Ben padded along the corridor and down the stairs. In the hallway, he pulled on his clothes, then crouched on the icy flagstones to tie up his shoes.

He opened the front door. The cold air grabbed the bare skin of his face and arms. He should have worn a jumper. Too late now. Maybe the air would warm up when the sun rose.

Pulling the door shut behind him, he walked into the front garden and had a pee against the stone wall. He hadn't wanted to use the loo upstairs in case the noise woke anyone.

Birds flitted between the trees that surrounded the cottage. In the sky, a few wispy clouds were catching the first rays of the rising sun. Ben didn't often take much notice of nature, but this was beautiful. He should have brought a camera.

No time to worry about that now.

He walked round the side of the cottage, opened the gate and went into the vegetable garden.

There was no one to be seen. The garden looked the same as yesterday. Nothing had been disturbed.

Ben walked to a patch of grass at the far end of the garden and sat down. It was the perfect spot. As soon as someone came into the garden, he would see them.

He might have to hang around for an hour. Maybe even two. But he didn't mind. He'd stay all day if he had to.

He leaned back against the fence and settled down for a long wait.

When he opened his eyes, the sun had risen above the trees.

Hours must have passed. He had fallen asleep.

I'm an idiot, thought Ben. What kind of detective falls asleep in the middle of a stake-out?

Someone could have come and taken everything and he wouldn't even have noticed.

He sat up and looked around, checking to see if anything had changed.

That was when he saw the thief.