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opening extract from

Marvin Redpost: A Flying Birthday Cake ?

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1
Seven Minutes After Midnight



It was green.

Marvin stared up at it. He didn't know what it was. He was lying on his back, in a sleeping bag, in Nick Tuffle's backyard.

It glowed as it moved across the night sky.

Nick and Stuart were in sleeping bags beside him. They were asleep.

Today was Nick's birthday. Or maybe that was yesterday. Marvin didn't know if it was after midnight yet.

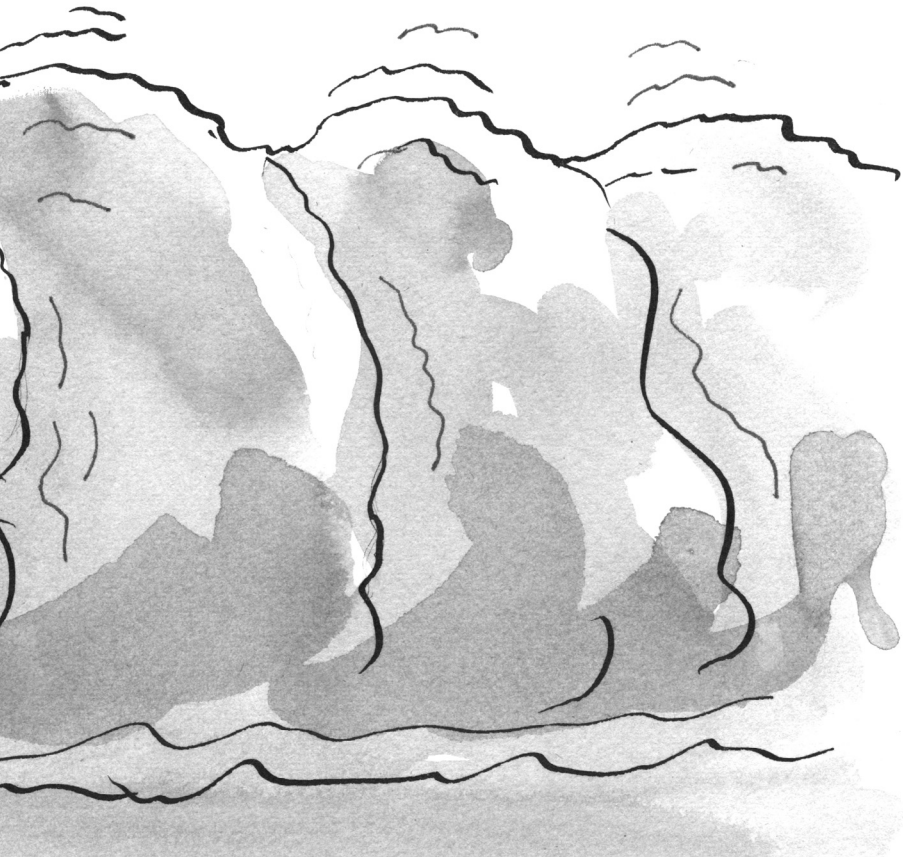
Seven kids had come to Nick's party, although only Stuart and Marvin got to sleep over.

But Marvin couldn't sleep. He had eaten too much cake. He had drunk too



much punch. The ground was too hard.

He heard a low humming noise. The glowing green thing hovered directly above him. He felt the ground shake beneath him.



He wondered if he was dreaming. It had to be a dream. Maybe he really *had* fallen asleep and didn't know it.

There was a bright flash, then the thing zoomed away. Marvin could no longer see it, hear it, or feel it.

Marvin couldn't fall asleep after that. He stayed up all night, staring at the sky.

At least, he *thought* he stayed up all night. In the morning, he woke up, so he must have fallen asleep sometime. Maybe he was really asleep the whole time.

He remembered that Nick's birthday cake was covered with green icing.

He must have been dreaming, he decided. Now that he thought about it, the green thing had looked like a flying birthday cake. The candles made it glow …