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DARK IS FUN

That evening when it was getting dark, Mr Barn Owl invited Plop to go hunting with him again. 'Coming, son?' he said. 'It's a lovely night.'

'Er – not this time, thank you, Daddy,' said Plop, who was sitting just outside the nest-hole. 'I'm busy.'

'You don't look busy,' Mr Barn Owl said. 'What

are you doing?'

'I am busy *remembering*,' said Plop.

'I see,' said his father. 'In that case I shall have to go by myself.' He swooped off into the darkness like a great, silent jet aeroplane.

'What are you remembering, Plop?' asked his mother.

'I'm remembering what the old lady said about dark being kind. She says she is never lonely in the dark because she has so much to remember.'

'Well then,' said Mrs Barn Owl, 'this would seem to be a good moment for me to slip out and do a little hunting.'

'You're not going to leave me by myself!' said Plop.

'I shan't be very long. I'll try to bring you back something nice.'

'But I shall be lonely.'

'No, you won't. You just keep busy remembering like the old lady said.'

Plop watched his mother float off into the darkness like a white feather. The darkness seemed to come towards him and wrap itself around him.

'Dark is kind,' Plop muttered to himself. 'Dark is

kind. Oh dear, what shall I remember?' He closed his eyes and tried to remember something to remember. Fireworks! He would remember the fireworks. He had enjoyed them. The darkness had been spotted and striped and splashed with coloured lights above the glow of the bonfire. He still had stars in his eyes when he thought of it.

Shouts – happy shouts – from under his tree brought Plop back from his remembering. He opened his eyes and peered down through the leaves. There were people running about in his field, and flames were flickering from a pile of sticks. Another bonfire! Did that mean more fireworks?

Plop watched excitedly. He could see now that the people running about were boys – quite big boys in shorts. They were collecting more wood for the fire.

Suddenly they all disappeared into the woods with squeals and yells. All but one, that is. There was one boy left, sitting on a log near the fire.

Plop forgot about being afraid of the dark. He had to know what was going on. So he shut his eyes, took a deep breath, and fell off his branch.

The ground was nearer than he expected it to be, and he landed with an enormous thud.

'Coo!' said the boy on the log. 'A roly-poly pudding! Who threw that?'

'Nobody threw me – I just came,' said the roly-poly pudding, 'and actually I'm a barn owl.'

'So you are,' said the boy. 'Have you fallen out of your nest?'



Plop drew himself up as tall as he could. 'I did not fall – I flew,' he said. 'I'm just not a very good lander, that's all. I came to see if you were going to have fireworks, as a matter of fact.'

'Fireworks?' said the boy. 'No. What made you think that?'

'Well, the bonfire,' Plop said.

'Bonfire!' said the boy. 'This is no *bonfire*! This is a camp-fire – and I'm guarding it till the others get back.'

'Where have they gone?' asked Plop.

'They've gone to play games in the dark, lucky things.'

'Do you *like* playing games in the dark?' asked Plop.

'It's super!' said the boy. 'DARK IS FUN. Even quite ordinary games like Hide-and-Seek are fun in the dark. My favourite is the game where one of you stands outside a "home" with a torch in his hand, and shines it on anything he sees or hears moving. The rest of you have to creep past him and "home" without being spotted. It's super!'

There was a crash, and a yell of 'Scumbo! Got you!' from the wood.



‘There – they’re playing it now. Old Scumbo always gets caught first. He’s got such big feet. You have to creep like a shadow not to be caught. Oh, it *would* be my turn to guard the fire.’

‘What’s the fire for?’ asked Plop.

‘Well, we cook potatoes in it, and make cocoa, and sing round it.’

‘What for?’

‘What for? Because it’s fun, that’s why, and

because Boy Scouts have always had camp-fires.’

‘Is that what you are? A Boy Scout?’

‘Of course, silly, or I wouldn’t be here, would I? I must put some more wood on the fire.’

Plop watched the Boy Scout build up the fire.

‘Could – could I be a Boy Scout, do you think?’ he asked.

‘I doubt it,’ said the Scout. ‘You’re a bit on the small side. I suppose you could be a Cub, but you have to be eight years old.’

‘I’m eight weeks,’ said Plop.

‘Looks as if you’ll have a long wait, then, doesn’t it?’ said the Scout. ‘Anyway –’ he grinned – ‘you’d look jolly silly in the uniform!’

Plop looked so disappointed that the Scout added, ‘Never mind. You can stay for the sing-song tonight.’

‘Oh, can I!’ cried Plop. ‘That would be soo-super!’

‘You’d better go home and ask your mother first, though.’

So Plop flew up to the nest-hole – and found his mother waiting.

‘Where have you been?’ she said.

She sounded a bit cross, like all mothers when

they have been worried.

‘I’ve been talking to a Boy Scout, and he says DARK IS FUN, and he says I can stay for the camp-fire, so can I, Mummy, please?’

‘Well, yes, all right,’ she said.

‘Oh, super!’ said Plop.



So Plop was a Boy Scout for a night.

He sat on his new friend’s shoulder and was

introduced to all the others. They made a great fuss of him and he had a wonderful time. He did not care for cocoa, but he enjoyed a small potato. His friend blew on it for him to cool it, because he knew that owls swallow their food whole, and a hot potato in the tummy would have been very uncomfortable for Plop!

The Scouts huddled round the fire and sang and sang while the sparks danced.



They sang funny songs and sad songs, long songs and short songs. Plop did not sing because he wanted to listen, but every now and then he got a bit excited and fluttered round the boys' heads crying 'Eeek! Eeeek!' and everybody laughed.

They sang until the fire had sunk to a deep, red glow and Plop had turned quite pink in its light.

Then it was time to go home, for the boys and for Plop. And when Plop had said goodbye to them all, and bowed and bowed till he ached, he spread his wings and flew up to the landing branch.

'Well?' said his mother.

'I told you. The Boy Scout says DARK IS FUN.'

'And what do you think, Plop?'

'I still do not like it AT ALL – but I think camp-fires are super! Did you bring me something special?'

'I did.'

Plop swallowed it in one gulp.

'That was nice,' he said. 'What was it?'

'A grasshopper.'

'I like grasshopper,' said Plop. 'What's next?'



Task – To write a summary of this chapter.

Remember – a summary pulls out the **most important things that have happened.**