

Waiting at the bus stop

An original short story by Ryan Cartwright

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It was raining. It always rained after craft club. Alice hated that because it meant her artwork either got wet or crumpled as she tried to stuff it in her bag for protection. She looked at Jack who was inspecting his creation intently.

"What was it again?" she asked.

"You know very well it's a door hanger." said Jack.

"You should keep it out of the rain." Simon said, "It'll get ruined."

Jack shrugged, "I can't put it in my bag because the glitter isn't dry."

"Glitter!" the others laughed.

"Yep!" Jack said, "best way to do the stars." He gingerly held up his door hanger so as not to let the glue run.

"Well, mine's dry." Simon declared, "So it's safely in my bag."

"Not that bit." Alice commented pointing a corner of green paper poking through the zip.

"Rats!" said Simon, "It must have got caught. It'll rip when I try to undo the zip now."

Alice looked at her poster again. She was quite pleased with it really. It was a picture of Wendy sewing Peter Pan's shadow back onto his feet. She wasn't too happy with the way Wendy had turned out but using black net curtains as the shadow was a great idea.

Jack's door hanger was a picture of Superman flying through space. He'd run a bit short of time and so had cut out Superman's face from a magazine. Only after he stuck it down did he notice the man he cut out had a beard. Jack snorted as he saw it.

"Looks pretty good." Simon said.

"He has a beard." Jack said, "A beard!"

"Well he still looks like Superman to me." Alice said.

"Yeah, I s'pose." Jack sighed. "I just wanted it to be better than this."

"What is this obsession with Superman?" Simon asked. He had joined the school at the beginning of term so he didn't really know about Jack and Superman.

"I just love everything about him: the costume, the stories, his powers." Jack said

"Do you ever wish you could fly?" Simon asked.

Jack nodded, "Yeah but if I had a superpower it wouldn't be flying. It would be invisibility. That would be way cooler."

"Why would you want to be invisible?" Simon snorted, "I think flying is better."

"Well if you're invisible, you could walk right out of school and nobody would know." Jack said.

"Yes they would," Alice said, "they'd know because they couldn't see you and then you'd get an absence mark."

"So?" Jack said, "You could play football in the park instead. Imagine being able to go past

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defenders without them seeing you!"

"They'd see the ball though," Simon said, "and they'd just take it off you."

"Ah but they couldn't see my feet could they?" Jack smirked. "So why do you want to fly?"

"Well I wouldn't have to wait for this bus then would I?" Laughed Simon, "And it would save me walking up stairs ever again."

Alice looked up at the dark clouds above the bus shelter, "Bet you wouldn't like flying in this weather though?"

"Easy! I'd fly above the clouds." Simon proclaimed, indicating with his hand how he would do that.

"That's pretty high you know?" Jack said, "You might not be able to breathe up there."

"I'd have the power to hold my breath for hours then." said Simon.

"You can't have two!" Jack said, "One power only."

"But Superman has loads!" Simon said.

"Yes but we're talking about what power would you like to have - not powers." Jack retorted. Then he turned to Alice, "What about you Alice?"

"Hmm?" Alice said, not really listening. She had been caught daydreaming again, staring at her feet, dangling from the bench.

"What superpower would you most like to have?" Jack asked with a sigh.

"Oh I don't know. I hadn't really thought about it."

"You must have!" Simon said, "Everyone knows their favourite superpower!"

Jack thought this was probably not true but it did seem odd that Alice hadn't thought about it. "So go on then, think about it now, what power would you like to have?"

Alice pondered and looked at her poster again. Then she smiled and said "I suppose having a detachable shadow would be fun."

There was a stunned silence from the others. Whatever they were expecting her to say, it wasn't that.

"What?" Jack said.

Alice nodded at her poster, "Like Peter Pan. Having a shadow which you could detach would be fun."

"Er, no, it wouldn't." scoffed Simon, "I mean what good is that? You're hardly going to save the world or catch a crimelord with a detachable shadow are you?"

Alice smiled, "Well maybe I don't want the power for that. Maybe I want it for other reasons."

Jack was still stunned by her choice, "Such as?" he said.

"Such as always having someone to talk to or play with." Alice replied.

"What?!" Simon blurted, "You can't very well play football with your shadow! The ball would go through it!"

"And," Jack added, "how could you talk to a shadow, it hasn't got ears - just shadows of your ears."

"I didn't say it had to hear me," said Alice, "just that it would be nice to have someone to talk to. To tell about how your day has been. That kind of thing."

"Surely you can talk to your shadow now though." Jack said, "It doesn't have to be detached, does it?"

"No," Alice smiled, shaking her head, "But it would be nice if it was. It could help you carry

large things or fetch your homework if you forgot it."

"That's what little brothers are for!" Simon smirked.

"I don't have one of those," Alice said, "or a sister. It's just me and my shadow."

"I still think flying is a cooler power to have." Simon said.

"That's because you have so little imagination, Simon." Alice smiled.

The bus pulled up as she said this and the boys got on first and just before Alice climbed Jack saw that she stopped and turned to the bench. She smiled and gestured with her head as if someone was supposed to follow her. There was nobody he could see on the bench but just for a second he thought he saw something move or maybe it was the shadow of something moving.

The End