The Birthday Invitation

By Sharon Holt

Illustrated by Marjory Gardner





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Chapter 1	The Invitation	2
Chapter 2	A Lie	4
Chapter 3	Mum's Story	6
Chapter 4	The Surprise	12

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Chapter 1

The Invitation

Josh was tidying the sports shed when he overheard Jake and Tommy talking outside.

"Are you going to Will's birthday party on Saturday?" That was Tommy's voice.

"Of course," replied Jake. "It'll be the coolest birthday ever. My brother went to a party at one of those cyber cafes a few weeks ago and he said the computer games were brilliant."

"I'm really looking forward to it," said Tommy.

As the voices faded into the distance, Josh could feel a frown tightening his forehead. "Birthday party?" he thought to himself. "This Saturday?"

It was the first he'd heard about it.

As Josh locked the sports shed, he wondered why he hadn't received an invitation to Will's birthday party. He thought he and Will were quite good friends.

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All sorts of possibilities went through his mind. Maybe the invitation had got lost in the post. Perhaps Will's mum had talked to his mum about the party and she hadn't mentioned it to Josh yet. There was another possibility, of course, but Josh didn't want to think about that.



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Chapter 2

A Lie

At home time, Josh was zipping up his school bag in the corridor. Will was near him, muttering under his breath because he couldn't find anywhere for his homework book inside his bulging school bag.

Josh decided it was now or never. "Will," he said nervously.

"What?" said Will, grunting as he heaved his bag onto his shoulder.



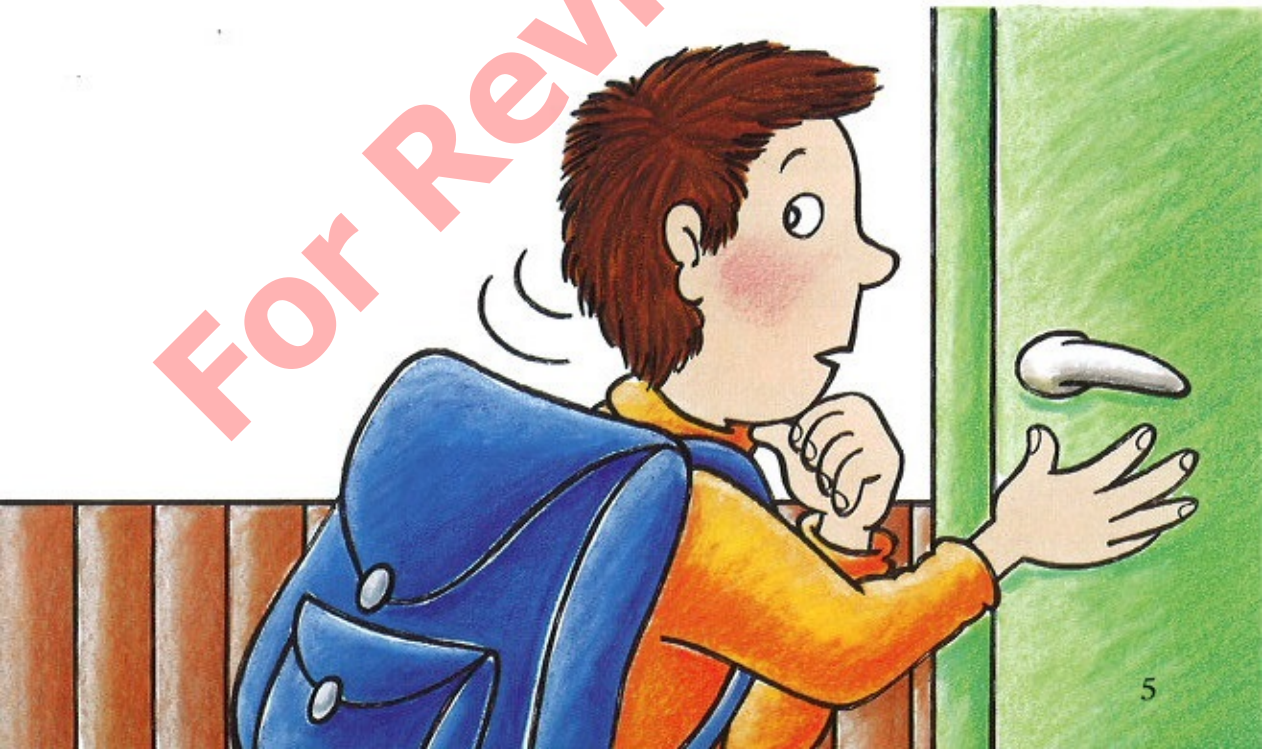
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Josh swallowed hard. "Is it your birthday on Saturday?"

Will looked at Josh, then started to turn away.

"It is, but there's nothing much happening. Mum said I can have a proper party next year when I turn ten. See you later."

Josh watched as Will went out to the school gate and pushed into the bus queue between Tommy and Jake. He could feel his forehead tightening again. He knew somebody was lying, and he suspected it was Will. Josh walked to the back of the bus queue. He didn't want to hear what the other boys were talking about.



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Chapter 3

Mum's Story

Mum was grating cheese when Josh walked in through the back door.

"Hi, Josh. How was school?" said Mum.

"Don't ask," said Josh, as he threw his school bag into the corner.

"I guess it wasn't so good," said Mum.

Josh was quiet all through dinner.

"What's eating you?" asked Dad.

"Nothing," said Josh.

"Pretty big nothing, if you ask me," said Dad. "You look like someone's painted your bike pink."

That did it. Josh felt the corners of his mouth twitching as he tried not to smile. His dad always managed to find a way to get to the truth.

"I overheard Jake and Tommy talking today," said Josh. "They said they were invited to Will's birthday party on Saturday, but when I asked Will about it, he said he wasn't having a party."

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