

The Stowaways

47 Mill Way was an ordinary house. The tatty front garden was framed by a picket fence with peeling white paint, and weeds poked between the paving slabs. A broken brick propped the garden gate open.

Inside lived ordinary parents with their three ordinary children. That was what they believed. In reality, Oliver, Elliott and Millie were far from ordinary. Quiet and well-mannered by day, they became unruly adventurers at night.

One Monday last summer, they were sent to bed early. Millie's bedroom overlooked the park. As she closed her curtains, she noticed a helicopter sitting in the centre of the football pitch. There was no pilot, no flashing lights or swirling blades. Just a silent, outsized metal hawk.

Even stranger was the sight of her cousin Simon in the back garden, gesticulating frantically to get her attention.

Millie opened the window, held one finger to her lips and mouthed, ‘One minute.’

She crept into the boys’ room.

‘Oiy,’ snarled Oliver. ‘Get out, this is a boys-only zone.’

‘Boyzone? Isn’t that a band from back in the day?’

‘This is no time to be clever’ said Elliott.

‘Stop waffling, snapped Millie. ‘We have a situation. Simon is in the garden, we need to get him up here.’

Elliott whispered, ‘Let’s go down to him. I read a book where they knotted bedsheets together to make a rope.’

That is exactly what they did. They tied three sheets together, secured one end around the leg of Millie’s bed and climbed through the window. Oliver slipped halfway down, but eventually all three children landed safely.

They sneaked through the back gate and ran towards the helicopter. There was no sign of a pilot or anyone else. Curious, they climbed onto the metal bars beneath it. The machine roared into action.

‘Hold tight, everyone!’ shouted Simon. ‘Looks like we’re going flying!’

The helicopter lifted into the air. The children gripped the bars for dear life.

As they flew over their house, Simon shouted, ‘I can see your parents through the lounge window!’

Millie shouted back, ‘I know this is naughty, but what a fantastic adventure!’

They reached a farmer’s field. Surrounded by cows was a large pile hidden beneath a grey tarpaulin. A bicycle wheel poked out from one end.

The helicopter flew lower. Simon yelled

‘This is dangerous, when I count to three, let go!’

They released their grip and landed safely, falling into cow pats. Oliver breathlessly gasped ‘We need to get home before they realise we’ve gone.’

When they reached the house, Simon whispered, ‘Get into bed quickly. Remember, not a word to anyone, I will see you tomorrow.’

The children climbed into bed and pulled the covers over them just as their mum opened the door.

‘All tucked up and fast asleep,’ she whispered.

The next morning, Dad explained. ‘Sorry about yesterday. Several bicycles have been stolen, including mine, we wanted to talk it over without worrying you.’

Oliver winked at his siblings. ‘After school, can we help look for them? I know where we could search.’