

knew the perspiration was not from the heat alone. He reached into his pocket for his handkerchief. The one he pulled out was of delicate white lace.

The Resolution

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JAMIE didn't cry—brave boys were not supposed to cry. Besides, he was a big boy now. Sure he was a big boy. He had not cried, had he? That proved he was a big boy—and brave. From now on, he would not cry at all. Never again.

Jamie kicked an old tin can with the toe of his scuffed, brown shoe. It clattered up in front of him, turned, and skidded into the gutter with its red label flapping. Jamie wished the can were his third grade teacher. That's what he would do to her. Even make her flabby red cheeks shake like the red label when he kicked her hard, so hard she would fall into the gutter. And there she would stay with all the dirt just like the can.

A dog bounded from behind a brownstone house and began to bark viciously. Its teeth were bared and sharp, and its coat was a dirty yellow.

"Shut up, dog!" Jamie shouted. He reached down, grabbed the tin can, and threw it with a wild swing of his arm. As if aimed, the can struck squarely on the nose of the dog which yelped and ran back behind the house.

"Dumb dog. Stupid mutt," Jamie yelled after the fleeing dirty yellow tail. "Bet you don't bark at me anymore. Dumb dog," he stated with final victory.

Jamie walked on for another block until he came to the big rock at the corner of Mr. Harrison's yard. Mr. Harrison's rock was supposed to be very old. Even older than Mr. Harrison. And Mr. Harrison was very old. He had white hair and a face like dried leather. Jamie dropped his books to the ground and jumped on the rock.

"I am a king," he proclaimed as he stood straight and tall with his hands on his hips.

"Hey, kid, get off that rock!" shouted Mr. Harrison from the yard. "Ain't one of you kids that's got any respect fer a landmark!"

Jamie jumped from the rock and bundled up his books.

"Git, I tells ya," Mr. Harrison growled.

Sneaky old man probably was hiding. Probably was behind that big bush all the time. Old Harrison always chased kids. Some of the kids said he was crazy. And some of them said he was just a dirty old man, because he was the oldest man in town.

"Chase me, Harrison," Jamie commanded, turning around after running a half a block. Walking backwards he chanted, "Harrison won't chase me. Harrison won't chase me." That will show him.

Just then the overcast sky finally decided to let loose its all-

day burden of rain. At first the drops were scattered and slight. Jamie danced and skipped along finding pebbles to kick into the gutter. But when the drops became larger and more frequent, Jamie began to run. He splashed through the puddles forming on the sidewalk. The legs on his jeans were soaked a deep blue. He rushed up the cement steps to the wooden porch. Once in the shelter, he threw down his books and cupped his hands to catch the tiny waterfalls from the roof.

A thin woman with faded brown hair and faded blue eyes appeared at the door. "Jamie, you come right in here. Goodness, look at you. You're soaked to the skin."

Jamie surrendered. He picked up the books and entered the warm living room.

"You've been playing along the way again, Jamie. You're late. How many times must I tell you?" asked the thin woman taking his books.

"Aw, Mom, I just came straight home."

"Hum. I know your straight home excuses. Get in the bed-room and get out of those wet clothes."

Jamie sat on the end of his bed in his stocking feet and underwear. Darned rain. Always keeps you inside. No playing now. No bicycle riding either. He fell over on his stomach and put his chin on his hands to watch the little rivers on the window pane. One. Two. That one joined the other one. Down, down to join the sea on the ledge outside.

"Jamie, are you getting dressed?" asked his mother from the kitchen.

"I can't find anything to put on." Three. Four. The rivers got bigger and the sea got fuller.

"For heaven's sake, Jamie. I put your clothes on the chair." His mother stood in the doorway. "What are you doing? Get dressed," she sighed. "Here's your clothes. If they'd been snakes, you'd have been bit." She shoved a red polo-shirt at him. Jamie yanked it over his blond head.

"Be careful. How many times have I told you not to stretch the neck? Here," she handed him freshly ironed wash pants. "If you had come straight home like I told you to, you wouldn't have got all wet," she stated flatly while picking up the wet clothes from the brown carpet.

"Don't put your shoes on over wet socks, young man."

Jamie jerked off the shoes, pulled off his wet socks, and handed them to her.

"I don't know what your father's going to say."

"About what?" he asked with innocence in his blue eyes. He pulled on a sock.

"You know what. Miss Hendricks called me today."

Pulling on the other sock, Jamie stated, "It wasn't my fault."

"It never is. But why did you have to push Marge Bronton in

the mud for?"

"Marge is a nasty girl. She called me names." Jamie turned on his stomach and watched the raindrops on the window pane. It was raining harder.

"What kind of names?" she asked unbelieving.

"You wouldn't let me say them. They're dirty." One. Two. Three. The rivers all ran together.

"Why didn't you tell Miss Hendricks that?"

"I did."

"But you were spanked," she returned. "Jamie?"

The window was covered with rivers all bunching together.

"Jamie, look at me," his mother stated as she pulled his face around with her smooth hands. "Jamie, if she did call you names, Miss Hendricks would not have spanked you, I'm sure. She's a fair woman. Now, you deserved the whipping if you pushed Marge—"

"But I didn't," he declared. "I didn't do it on purpose. She called me bad names. And I told her she was dirty—dirty like old Mr. Harrison. And—and she got mad and yelled that I was dirty. So I pushed her. And she fell in the mud herself."

"And you told Miss Hendricks?"

"She didn't believe me. She believed Marge. Marge told her I pushed her. And she believed Marge."

"Why didn't you tell her what Marge said?"

"I did. She said I was lying. I was making it up. That I didn't know what I was saying. That good girls don't say such things. Marge was a good girl. She said Marge wouldn't say those things. And Marge is her pet. So I got spanked."

"Are you telling me the truth, Jamie?" she asked with her forehead in wrinkles.

"Yes, Mom. I wouldn't lie to you."

"You are absolutely certain that that was the way it happened? Be sure now." Her voice was gentle but firm. "Because if you lied to me, I am going to punish you again."

"It did," he stammered through a knotted throat.

"Your father and I will have a talk with Miss Hendricks tomorrow—a severe one," she said as she walked to the door. "And with Marge and her parents right away," she added, going out.

Jamie turned to look at the window. But everything was blurred now. He could not see. The hot tears welled in his eyes and fell on his cheeks. He was a big boy. He was brave. He hadn't cried when Miss Hendricks spanked him. He knew he was right, and that if he was right nobody could hurt him. But it felt good to cry now when he was all alone.