

writenow! competition 2009

Year 7 – Runner Up

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Story starter by Garth Nix

Call it a day's work!

I was just getting off the bus when an old guy with a waist length white beard burst out of the newsagency and ran towards me saying "At last! The savior of the world you have arrived!"

I kept walking and pretended I hadn't seen him, even when he lay down on the footpath behind me and started calling out "All hail to the great one!"

A quick backwards glance confirmed that in addition to the long white fake beard, he was wearing a kind of orange jumpsuit with a zip up the front, yellow gumboots and a New York Yankees cap that was about four sizes too small.

"That's your dad, isn't it?" whispered my best friend Ellen "In disguise?"

"Nope" I said "Never seen him before."

I hoped no one else would recognize him. It wasn't much of a hope, since my equal best-friend Roger, known as Rabbit said "What's your dad dressed up like that for? Has he gone crazy?"

"No he hasn't gone crazy" I hissed through my clenched teeth.

"He's got a good reason."

He did too but it was incredibly top secret. So amazingly top secret I couldn't even tell my two very best friends in the whole wide world. Not if I wanted to stay alive.

My dad was a secret government agent. After my mother died he developed a system of secret codes to communicate with me in dangerous situations. He used various outfits and scenes to convey various meanings to me such as lock all the doors, don't answer the door bell or phone etc. Because of the secret nature of his job I was

never able to explain my dad's odd behavior to any of my friends. Today's code was very serious though, and a thousand thoughts were screaming in my head.

The white beard meant we were in danger, the orange jumpsuit indicated his cover had been blown and the baseball cap meant 'retrieve the USB'. The USB held all his top secret information and was kept secretly hidden in the spare room. Dad obviously needed me to get that USB because something had gone horribly wrong and it would be unsafe for him to be near the house.

Feeling anxious and wanting to get to the house as soon as I could I turned to Ellen and Rabbit and said "Sorry I need to go".

"Are you sure you're okay?" asked Ellen.

"Yeah, you look really pale" agreed Rabbit.

"I'm fine" I blurted "I'm just so late" and I hurried off in the direction of my house.

Coming around the corner of my street I noticed an old beaten up car parked outside our driveway with two men sitting in it. I quickly took cover in the safety of the neighbor's hedge to stay out of sight and observe what was going on. After a short while a hand crept up on me.

"What are you doing in the bushes?"

My heart stopped!

It was Rabbit and Ellen. What a relief.

"SSSHHH" I hissed at them. "You really shouldn't be here".

"You were acting really strangely. We were worried about you," Ellen replied.

"I am just trying to help my dad".

"No kidding" laughed Rabbit "He looks like he can use all the help he can get".

"Actually, it is no laughing matter, but I don't have time to explain. See that car across the road?"

"Yeah" Rabbit replied "What about it."

"Well, my dad is a spy and I reckon those are bad guys that are hoping to get rid of information my dad has on them."

They both stared at me with open mouths and a look of disbelief on their faces.

"I don't have time to explain or argue with you, my dad's cover has been blown and I need to retrieve a USB from the house. If you could create a diversion I might be able to get into the house unseen."

"Cool" Rabbit replied enthusiastically, "How do you want us to help?"

Ellen suggested "Let's just pretend we're lost and ask for directions."

So we were set! As soon as they reached the car and the men turned to face them I shot straight out of the bushes, across the yard and through the front door. With my heart in my mouth I ran upstairs into spare room. Removing the light switch cover to reveal a small

fingerprint reader, I placed my thumb firmly against it. Dad's secret compartment in the wall opened up containing his USB. At that moment I heard a commotion outside and glanced out the window, something must have gone wrong because the men were out the car and heading for the door.

My heart raced! I needed to get out! Without a thought I headed to the open window, grabbed onto a tree branch and used an escape rope to swiftly swing into the backyard (an escape route dad had practiced with me many times.) "Follow me" I cried to Rabbit and Ellen as I raced through a hole in the neighbor's hedge and bolted towards the park.

Arriving breathlessly, I glanced around to make sure we hadn't been followed. Racing, I placed my hand in a hollow tree trunk and found the hidden fingerprint reader. A grate in the ground opened revealing hidden stairs which led us to a safe hiding place.

Collapsing in a heap, they looked at me stunned in disbelief.....

.....my dad arrived, relieved to find me safe but surprised to find me with my friends. After much explaining he understood and thanked them for their help telling us the information on the USB would help them track some pretty bad criminals.

Three weeks later I handed Ellen and Roger a newspaper in class. On page four was the heading '**Drug Gang Brought to Justice after years of Undercover Investigation**'. We looked at each other and smiled knowingly. Our own little gang of secret agents had played a part!