

The chase

Larry ducked down behind the wall where the boys couldn't see him. It was good to have a chance to get his breath back. The chase had been totally exhausting and he had the feeling that it wasn't over yet. He breathed deeply and tried to relax but every muscle in his body seemed to be aching. Still, he could put up with the pain ... if he could get away.

The boys were searching the ground lower down the slope. Larry could hear them crashing around, beating the bracken with sticks. He didn't dare look, not even a peep over the wall, as those sticks could be beating him instead of the bracken.

Larry decided he should move. It would be safer with more ground between him and them. Besides, they would find the track that led up the slope soon.

He stretched out his legs and wriggled his toes, then gently revolved his feet to prepare his ankles. The slope further up was covered with loose stones and the last thing he wanted was to twist his ankle.

He looked up at the stones on the slope to try to plan his route. He would have to be careful not to get part way up then simply slide back down again. That would make too much noise as well. There was a spindly tree near the bottom left of the slope. If he could reach that he could pull himself up then push himself on towards the next tree, a bigger one that he could hide behind if need be. Then there was an open patch with no trees, just stones and some odd roots from the trees higher up – that would be tricky but it was only a few metres and he might be able to do that on his hands and knees, grabbing hold of the roots where he could. Beyond that, he would reach the safety of the woods. He would be fine then, because there was plenty of shelter.

Being careful not to allow his head to be seen above the low wall, Larry eased himself up to a squatting position. He turned towards the wall to pick up his bag then turned round again ready to start the climb. His face was suddenly level with a pair of heavy boots.

“Where do you think you're going Larry?” The voice was full of menace. Larry sank back and held his head in his hands.

