

The Caravan

by Pie Corbett

“Now Mitch, don’t go playing up by the pylon,” my Mum had warned me often enough. “It’s dangerous. You’ll get yourself electrocuted.”



Did I listen? Of course I didn’t. Most days after school that was exactly where I went. Daft really, but she actually thought that I was doing my homework with Connor. Mum worries too much. I’ve still not forgotten how she used to tell me not to play under Hanger Bridge by the railway in case the troll snatched me. Of course, I was younger then. The pylon she was

talking about stood at the end of Muggie Moss Road. Red and brown rust fluttered from its lean body and it made odd creaking sounds when the wind blew. It was there we found the caravan. It had been empty for years. If you go past, you’ll just see a small patch of overgrown land under the pylon, a mess of brambles and nettles that smothered the van. It was damp inside and the windows were smeared with green grime. Moss clung to its wheels. It was a place of dead spiders and dust but it was our special place. Most days after school we went straight there. Just to muck about.

That afternoon, a storm raged. It had been brewing all morning. The trees were like crazed zombies thrashing wildly. Rain lashed down, drumming on the metal roof. Inside the caravan it felt safe, almost cosy really. We shoved newspaper into any cracks to keep out the wind. I’d found a bit of old carpet and Connor had brought along some cushions that his Mum had thrown out. He’d also found a candle and in the semi-gloom its flame flickered with a cheerful glow. Outside, dusk shadowed the bushes. Soon, the streetlights would come on, casting orange pools of light.

We were arguing over whether the last goal in the Man United game was the best yet when we heard it: a clap of thunder so close that it sounded like an explosion. Connor wiped the **condensation** from the window and we peered out. At that very moment, there was another

tremendous crack, and lightning struck the pylon. Sparks flew, the pylon shuddered and, as if in slow motion, it crashed down towards the caravan roof.

Instinctively, we both ducked down fast. There was an enormous crash and the caravan roof crumpled. The air **prickled with electricity** and rain lashed through the opening in the roof. For a moment, I was certain that I was about to be fried alive. In the half-light, I could see Connor's face. His eyes were wide with fright and he gulped like a fish. "Come on," he hissed. We slithered like snakes across the floor with the rusted pylon creaking dangerously above us.

Luckily, the door had flown open when the pylon had struck. We slipped out onto the muddy ground and lay there with the thunder grumbling above us and the rain beating down. Then Connor started to laugh. He curled up into a ball and laughed so much that I thought he was crying. I couldn't help myself. The next thing I knew, I was laughing too. Inside, I just felt relief. On the outside, I was laughing crazily. Then we ran, through the brambles and out onto Muggie Moss Road.

Of course, Mum was furious. "I'm not made of money," she said, eyeing the state of my school clothes. "Still, maybe a good wash will sort them out." She glared at me suspiciously. "So, a tree nearly hit you?" I nodded, avoiding her icy stare. "You could have been killed," she said. **Shamefaced**, I nodded. She was right.

She'd been right from the start.



Questions

1. What did Mum warn Mitch about?
2. Find and copy a phrase that shows that the storm was expected.
3. Find and copy another word for guilt.
4. Order the following events from 1 being the earliest.
 - A. We both ducked down instinctively.
 - B. We lied to Mum and said that we were at Connor's doing homework.
 - C. We were arguing over the Man United game.
 - D. All we could both do was laugh.
5. Did the boys think that they would make it out alive? Find a quote from the text to support your answer.
6. How can you tell that the boys are frightened? Give **TWO** reasons/pieces of evidence and explain your answer using evidence from the text.
7. Why does Mitch think that his Mum worries too much?
8. '*Shamefaced, I nodded.*' Why was this Mitch's reaction?
9. '*The air prickled with electricity*'. What does the author mean by this?
10. How can you tell that the area was dangerous?
11. Why might Mum have made up the story about the troll?
12. What could the moral or lesson of the story be?

Answers

1. That the caravan/area was dangerous.
2. 'It had been brewing all morning.'
3. Shamefaced
4. b,c,a,d
5. No - Link to boy's reactions and expressions. Phrase 'I was certain that I was about to be fried alive.'
6. Reference to expressions and reactions. 'His eyes were wide with fright and he gulped like a fish.' 'We both ducked down fast.' 'We slithered like snakes across the floor.'
7. Because Mum told him not to visit Hanger Bridge as a troll might grab him.
8. He was guilty. He knew he had lied to Mum and also done what she told him not to.
9. That the sparks and electricity was all over. It made lots of small dents or pricks within the air just like getting pricked. There would be little marks all over.
10. Description of the pylons. 'Red and brown rust fluttered from its lean body and it made odd creaking sounds when the wind blew.'
Reference to the fact that Mum did not want them to go. Mention of the fact that the area is secluded and the caravan is old, mossy and uninhabited.
11. To protect her son. She might not have wanted him to wander off alone or to an area that could be dangerous.
12. To understand the risks associated with electricity, being alone, not asking for permission and lying to parents.
13. That he should not have lied. That the children should have been aware of the possible dangers.