

4 Seeing Things

“Oh, you gave me a fright,” said Jenny to her friend Emma, who had just walked in the door. “I saw you walk past the window out of the corner of my eye, and just for a moment I thought you were some sort of monster! Then I realised it was you, not a monster at all.”

“Yeah, your eyes can play tricks on you sometimes, can’t they,” laughed Emma. “It’s like when it’s nearly dark, sometimes I think I see monsters, too.”

“It’s worse when it’s completely dark.” Jenny was smiling too. “Then you can’t see anything at all – but you can imagine! Sometimes it really gives me the creeps!”

“But after a while your eyes get used to it, don’t they, and then you can see a bit, anyway,” said Emma.

“That’s not right,” objected Jenny. “When it’s completely dark – no light at all – then you can’t see anything, no matter how long you’re there. You’ve got to have light to see.”

“Well, I reckon you can, when your eyes get used to the dark,” said Emma, “but let’s not argue about it. You can see me well enough now, can’t you?”

“Yeah, it’s light enough here for that. The sun’s shining in the window ...”

“But it’s not shining on us,” interrupted Emma. “It’s just shining on the wall over there, but we can see each other anyway.”

“The light’s everywhere,” said Jenny. “It’s day, so it’s light.”

“What are you two rabbiting on about?” asked Jenny’s older brother Ray, as he came into the kitchen. “You want the lights on in the middle of the day, or something?”

“No,” the girls laughed together. “We’re just talking about how you can see things, and light and stuff,” continued Emma. “If it’s light, it helps you to see, doesn’t it? But what does the light do?”

“I reckon it’s all the light rays bouncing around ...” Ray started, but Jenny interrupted him.

"Light ray? I reckon you're heavy, Ray!" she teased, and dodged as he good-naturedly pretended to clip her over the ear, then joked, "You're not going to bounce off me, heavy Ray!"

"I mightn't," he went on, "but the light is, right now. Can't you feel it?"

"No, I can't. Is that because it's too light?" They all laughed.

"Light bouncing? You're so funny, Ray," Emma smiled. "Light can't bounce off things! It just shines on them, and lights them up."

"Then how does your eye see them?" asked Ray. "The light has to get into your eye, so it has to bounce off things to get there, that's what I think."

"Well I don't. You just look at it – the sight goes out to the thing, that's how you see it," countered Emma. "That's right, isn't it, Jenny?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm all confused," wailed Jenny. "I've never seen light move, or bounce, or anything. I've never felt it bounce either. But they're always talking about the speed of light, aren't they? So I guess it must move. And I don't know what you mean by light getting into the eye, Ray. It would blind you, wouldn't it? Like when we flashed the light off your watch into Mrs Sharkey's eyes, remember, Em?"

But Ray was off. "Sorry, can't stay. Tell mum I've gone to Sam's, Jen. I'd better rush, 'cos he's waiting for me," he yelled back over his shoulder as he walked out the door. "Anyhow, you'll see I'm right one day."

"I can see already," retorted Emma, "and I can see I'm right!" The girls laughed again as Ray disappeared up the drive.