



## Dust Bunnies

By William Stevens



"Did you check under the bed?" Pete asked worriedly, his back propped up on the pillows and his legs firmly tucked under the covers.

"There's nothing under the bed, Petey." his father dutifully answered with a little cough, his eyes now peering over the bed under which his head had just been.

In the third house on the left, the red house, the smallest house with the biggest tree, it has become habit, an absolutely necessary tradition, to both methodically and thoroughly search Pete's room every evening at bedtime.

Pete smiled as he watched the from-under-the-bed dust bunnies dance at the ends of what was left of his father's thinning hair. Why do we call them 'dust bunnies'..? Pete allowed himself to wonder and his smile grew a bit broader. But Pete's smile disappeared quickly and completely as his thought turned back to the task at hand.

"The closet. The closet..?" Pete yelled anxiously.

Pete eyes grew large as he focused across to the other side of his room. His father's head snapped around to the direction of Pete's attention. Pete didn't even notice that two of the from-under-the-bed dust bunnies had just leapt from their new home on top of Dad's head into the air.

There, emerging from the closet, from behind and between Pete's neatly-hung shirts, appeared his mother.

"No, nothing in the closet either" announced his mom as she carefully stepped out and over eight and one-half pairs of various shoes.

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Pete watched as one from-under-the-bed dust bunny that had leapt from Dad's hair into the air came to rest, ever so lightly, on the left side of his mother's now closet-tussled hair.

"I'll get the flashlight." His father said as he left Pete's room.

Pete narrowed his eyes and scanned the room. He noticed, on the shade that covers the window of his room, creeping shadows that the moonlight filtering through the big tree made.

He thought that he could actually hear those shadows until a from-inside-the-closet dust bunny floating by the shade from left to right on its way to the top of his dresser caught his attention.

Then, out of the very left corner of his left eye, he saw it. At the foot of his bed under the covers. Something was there.

"There!" Pete squealed, pointing and pointing with the outstretched index finger of his left hand.

Mom pulled her head quickly out from behind the toy bin. Dad, out of breath, ran into the room, lit flashlight in hand.

They both saw it too. Something was there at the foot of Pete's bed under the covers.

Mom bounded over the toybox toward the bed, nearly tripping. Dad reached both hands at the bed covers, dropping the still-lit flashlight into Pete's hamper.

In that split-second, both Mom and Dad realized that Pete had completely disappeared under covers. The lump under the covers that was now Pete's body and the lump under the covers at the foot of the bed were now one big writhing lump under the covers at the middle of the bed.

Mom froze in mid near-trip, two from-behind-the-toy box dust bunnies and one from-under-the-bed dust bunny leaping from the ends of her hair. Dad pulled his hands away quickly from the now missing under-the-covers lump at the foot of the bed, wondering what had happened to his flashlight.

Then, as quickly as it had begun, the writhing under the covers of Pete's bed stopped.

Something began to emerge from under the covers at the head of the bed. It wasn't Pete. A quite well-worn and quite well-stuffed brown bear with button eyes appeared. Then the left hand that held the quite well-worn and quite well-stuffed brown bear with button eyes appeared.

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"Commander Buttons was in my bed the whole time." Pete announced in a muffle, his entire person still under the covers except for his left hand which now held the quite well-worn and quite well-stuffed brown bear with button eyes.

Pete climbed out from under the covers, exhausted yet proud of another successful search.

"All right, we found Commander Buttons. Time to sleep." His mother softly said as she properly tucked Pete under the covers.

"I found Commander Buttons." Pete said to only himself with a smile, correcting his mother.

Mom tucked Commander Buttons in neatly at Pete's side, remembering when she had sewn the two shiny black button eyes on that well-worn and well-stuffed brown bear.

"Goodnight Pete." Mom said with a gentle kiss to his forehead.

"Night Petey." Dad said as he lifted his still-lit flashlight from Pete's hamper.

All was now right in the world. Mom and Dad turned off the light in Pete's room and quietly walked away down the hall.

"Goodnight dust bunnies." Pete said quietly only to himself.

"Dust bunnies." Pete whispered out loud in the dark so his ears could hear the words too. Pete smiled while his heavy eyes slowly closed as he settled in for a good night's sleep -- with Commander Buttons, of course.

By the light of the moon filtering through the big tree, Pete might have noticed a from-behind-the door dust bunny lighting on what was left of the bristle fur on Commander Buttons' head.

The End.

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