The Signal from Room Twelve



The first time Sam saw the light, he thought someone was taking a photograph. It flashed in the window of room twelve, three floors above the basketball court. The second afternoon, it happened again. By Thursday, he was watching the window instead of the game.

"That room has been closed since the science club stopped meeting," Alex said. She had counted the flashes: three short bursts, a pause, then three more. Sam thought it might be a message. Alex thought it might be a broken lamp. Neither explanation made the mystery less interesting.

They asked Mr Green, the school caretaker, about it. He checked his list of rooms. Room twelve was being used for old science equipment while its usual teacher worked in another building. "We can have a look together," he said. "But you're leaving the boxes exactly where they are."

Inside, the air smelled of paper and warm dust. A small yellow light was blinking beside the window. Wires connected it to a box and a tomato plant. The plant's leaves were hanging down, and its soil was pale and dry. Beside it lay a notebook with a date from the previous summer.

Alex read the first page. "Plant monitor. Three flashes mean low moisture." The next pages described a student experiment. A small solar panel powered a

sensor in the soil. When the plant needed water, the light came on. The invention was working. Almost nobody was there to see it.

With Mr Green's permission, they watered the plant slowly. A little later, the light stopped flashing. Sam felt slightly disappointed. He had imagined a secret club, perhaps a hidden message from someone who had left the school. Instead, they had found a thirsty tomato plant.

"It was a message," Alex said. "Just not the one you expected." She turned to the notebook's final page. The students had written a question: "How can we make sure someone notices the warning?" There was no answer underneath. Alex borrowed a pencil. "Send it to the caretaker's office?" she wrote.

Mr Green agreed to ask the science teacher about restarting the project. The following week, four students met in room twelve, including the boy who had built the first sensor. Sam took photographs for their instructions, while Alex tested a second light for the office. From the basketball court, the window was dark again. Up close, however, the tomato plant had two tiny new leaves. Sam decided that was a better ending than a ghost.



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