

At the airport

Gary Kent is watching planes on a Thursday afternoon. He's sitting beside a road next to the airport. A big plane is taking off. It comes along the runway. The noise is loud. The plane takes off and flies over some trees near Gary. It's a 747 with a blue and yellow tail.

That's Lufthansa Flight 9745 to Bangkok, thinks Gary. There it goes!

Gary is thirteen. He and his family live near Sydney Airport. The planes come over their house. Gary's mother doesn't like them. 'They make a lot of noise,' she says. But Gary likes the noise. And he loves watching planes – he's a planespotter.

Gary likes to ride his bike to the road near the end of the runway. He sits there and watches planes take off and land. He takes a camera with him. He likes to take pictures of planes. He takes a small book and writes down the names of the planes. Gary knows all the planes, all the airlines and all the flights. The planes have the colours of the airlines on their tails – red and white for Qantas, blue and white for KLM, red, white and blue for British Airways... There are big 747s and A340s and small Learjets and Turboprops. Gary knows them all.

It's late in the afternoon. The sun is going down and the lights of the airport are coming on. The lights on the planes are coming on too.

Gary's mobile phone makes a noise. He takes it out and



looks at it. There's a message from his mother. *Come home for dinner.*

He looks at the time on his mobile phone. It's six forty-five. He has to go. He gets on his bike.

Then he thinks, *I want to watch another plane.*

A plane is taking off. Gary stops and watches it. Its tail is blue and green. It's a Pan Pacific plane.

That's Pan Pacific Flight 401, thinks Gary. It's a 747. It's going to Los Angeles.

The plane takes off. The noise is loud.

Then something falls from the plane. Gary sees it fall.

Hey, what's that? he thinks. *Is that a part of the plane?*

The thing falls to the ground. It lands in some trees and bushes near the road.

It's over there – in those trees.

Gary wants to see it. He gets off his bike and puts it on the ground. He walks into the bushes.

It's getting dark now, and it isn't easy to walk through the bushes.

It's near here, Gary thinks.

Then he comes to a high fence. He stops. There is a sign on the fence. It says AIRPORT. KEEP OUT.

Oh, no – I can't go in there. I can't get over the fence, he thinks. *But the thing from the plane is in there.*

He looks through the fence and into the bushes. But it's dark now and he can't see.

He takes out his camera and puts it up to the fence. He points the camera through the fence and takes a picture. There's a flash of light from the camera. In the flash, Gary sees something on the ground.

What is that? he thinks. *Is that it?*

Then he hears a shout. 'Hey, what are you doing here?'

A man comes out of the trees and walks up to the fence. He's wearing a guard's uniform and he has a big dog with him. He has a torch and he points it at Gary's face.

'Who are you?' the guard asks. The guard's dog barks at Gary.



'My name's Gary Kent.' Gary puts his hand to his eyes. 'Er – please don't point your torch at my eyes. I can't see.'

The guard points his torch at the ground and says, 'What are you doing here?'

'I'm watching planes.'

'You can watch the planes from the road,' says the guard. 'What are you doing near this fence?'

Gary points through the fence. 'There's something in there –'

'Yes, there's an *airport* in there,' says the guard, 'and it's not a place for boys to play.'

'I'm *not* playing,' Gary says. 'Something –'

But the guard's dog starts to bark at Gary again.

Then Gary's mobile phone makes a noise again. It's another message from his mother. *Come home NOW – dinner is on the table.*

The big dog barks and barks and the guard says, 'Go home.'

'Okay, okay, I'm going,' says Gary.

'And don't come here again,' says the guard.

Gary walks to the road, gets on his bike and rides home. But he thinks, *What is that thing on the ground? Is it a part of the plane? What can I do?*