Jimmy sat on the steps of his back porch, elbows planted firmly on his knees, chin resting in the palms of his hands. His dirty-blonde hair was hanging in his eyes, but he didn’t seem to notice. Jimmy was thinking. Thinking harder than he had in his life.

The last few days had been strange to say the least, perhaps the strangest ever. Granted, Jimmy was only 11 years old so he didn’t have that many days to use for comparison, but the past few were doozies alright, that was for sure. And now, he had a decision to make. A giant, change your life forever type of decision, and Jimmy was afraid that he was going to make the wrong one.

The strangeness had started three nights ago - last Sunday night - the night of the annual Leonid meteor shower. Since it was a school night, and since the peak of the annual event didn’t occur until 2 a.m., Jimmy’s parents had strictly forbidden him from staying awake that late to engage in, as they called it, “such foolishness”. Jimmy, being a normal 11 year old, immediately found the loophole in his parent’s argument. They said he couldn’t stay awake that late but they said nothing at all about waking up at 2 a.m. and trotting out into the cold November night to watch what might just be the best meteor shower in the last 50 years. And so, that’s exactly what Jimmy did.

His alarm, gently buzzing at him from beneath his pillow so as not to wake the entire household, went off precisely at 1:50 a.m. as planned. Jimmy pulled on an old pair of black sweat pants and a black sweatshirt to protect against the chill of the night. He then reached into his closet, grabbed his favorite stocking cap, and pulled it tightly over
his head. He started to put on his tennis shoes but then decided against it, figuring it would be easier for him to sneak out of house unnoticed if he wasn’t banging around in the big size 10 boats he wore. With shoes in hand, Jimmy crept out of his room into the hall.

His room was upstairs, right next to his parent’s, so he would have to slip by their open bedroom door unnoticed and then negotiate the creaky stairs. Jimmy’s dad suffered occasionally from insomnia, and hopefully wasn’t having one of “those nights”, as his father called them. If he got caught sneaking around in the middle of the night, there would be hell to pay, probably at least a week of being grounded and doing the supper dishes, but it was worth the risk.

As Jimmy passed the mirror hanging in the hall between his bedroom door and his parent’s room, he glanced at himself. He smiled. He looked a little like a burglar, dressed in black with a stocking cap over his head. It kind of made him look tough, and he liked that.

Jimmy The Burglar, shoes in hand, slipped down the hall, quiet as death, past his parent’s door. As he slid by his parent’s room, a thought came to him. Wonder if his dad was awake, had seen him, and really thought that he was a burglar? He knew that his dad kept a baseball bat under the bed for just such an emergency, and he certainly didn’t want to be on the receiving end of the hammer blow that Louisville Slugger would deliver. For just a fleeting moment, Jimmy thought about what he was doing. Maybe he had better just turn around and go back to his room. Stay out of trouble for once, do as his parents asked. But the call of the night and the excitement of the moment had already worked their magic. Jimmy continued on.
Having made it over the first hurdle, Jimmy stood still, not daring to even draw in a breath, until he was sure he had not awoken his parents. Satisfied that his escape was a success so far, he began his descent down the stairs. He gingerly placed his right foot on the first step, hoping against hope that it wouldn’t let out a loud groan as it had been known to do. The fates were with Jimmy that night, and he made his way soundlessly down the stairs.

Once downstairs, Jimmy executed a right turn and headed towards the back door. It was on the opposite side of the house from his parent’s room, and there it would be safe for him to stop and put on his shoes before heading outside. Jimmy sat on the cold tile entryway next to the back door and laced up his shoes. He could feel some of the nights chill creeping in through the cracks in the doorjamb but nothing was going to stop him now. Jimmy The Burglar, Jimmy The Fearless, Jimmy The Adventurer, was ready to go.

Before going to bed that night, that fateful Sunday night three days ago, Jimmy had stashed a lawn chair and a blanket next to the back door so, if he made it out of the house in one piece, he could observe the meteor shower in comfort. He picked up the items and headed into the back yard. Once there, he unfolded the chair, sat down, and spread the blanket over his lap. There. Finally. He was all set. Now all he needed were the meteors.

Jimmy didn’t have to wait long. He hadn’t been in the back yard for more than a minute or two when the first Leonid streaked by almost directly overhead, leaving a long, luminescent trail behind it. That one was almost immediately followed by another, and then another. Within the first 5 minutes, he had counted over 30 meteors.
Jimmy was in awe. “Wow,” he whispered. “This is so cool.” Jimmy had seen other meteor showers, but they were always a disappointment. Maybe 1 or 2 meteors every 30 minutes or so, but nothing like this. This year’s Leonid shower, as predicted, was not a disappointment.

As Jimmy continued to crane his neck from his sitting position and look overhead, a particularly large and bright meteor exploded in a soundless detonation of light. Instinctively, Jimmy brought his hands up over his face and closed his eyes. As he did so, he heard a loud whistling sound, like the sound of a bottle rocket being shot off on the Fourth of July, as something blasted past his head at breakneck speed. At almost the exact same moment, he heard a loud “thwap” as something struck the wooden fence that separated his back yard from the Johnson’s yard behind him.

As the initial shock of the exploding meteor slowly wore off, Jimmy lowered his hands, opened his eyes, and began to take stock of his situation. He glanced around to see if everything was still where it was a few seconds ago. At least the house was still in front of him. That was a good sign. He looked down at his arms, legs, and hands. Everything looked good there. He began to relax.

“What in the heck was that?” Jimmy asked aloud. He remembered that there was a term for meteors like that, the kind that exploded in huge balls of light. He thought for a moment. *Was that what they call a bolide?* he wondered. That seemed right, but he wasn’t sure. Oh well, it didn’t really matter what it was called. It was the most awesome thing he had ever seen and he couldn’t wait to tell his friends about it tomorrow.

Jimmy then remembered the sounds he had heard when the meteor exploded overhead. Hadn’t something whizzed by his head at about a million miles per hour and
hadn’t that something crashed into the fence at the back of the yard? He quickly got to
his feet and turned. Even in the dark, Jimmy could see a huge, black scar across two
sections of the stockade fence. At the right most end of this scar, was a small, glowing,
red ember.

Jimmy ran towards the glowing red spot on the fence. As he got closer, he could
see that the spot wasn’t actually on the fence, it was in the fence. The meteor had grazed
along the wooden planks, digging a deeper and deeper gash into them until finally, just
before it was ready to go completely through the boards, it had encountered one of the
4x4 cedar posts that held the fence up and had lodged itself in it.

Jimmy moved closer to the red spot and peered in at it. The glow had almost died
away completely, and he could see the black chunk of iron that was the meteor. He could
smell the pungent scent of burnt cedar from the charred fence boards and could feel a
faint hint of warmth against his cold cheeks as the ancient visitor, as old as the Solar
System itself, gave up its final last bit of heat to the cold November night.

“Holy cow,” Jimmy whispered. “This is awesome.” This was definitely the
coolest thing that had ever happened to him. Just wait until he showed everyone
tomorrow at school! Jimmy wanted to pluck the meteor from its resting spot but was
afraid that it still might be too hot. He slowly and delicately raised his right hand and
moved his index finger to within a few centimeters of the rocks surface. He didn’t feel
any heat radiating from it, so he quickly touched it and withdrew his finger. Nothing. No
heat. No burn. The prize was going to be his. The prize would be his if, that was, he
could figure out how to dislodge it from the fence post.
This task turned out to be quite simple. When the meteor had struck the fence post, it had done so with enough force that it had blasted a hole that was slightly larger than the rock itself. When Jimmy reached up and tried to remove the meteor, it came out easily and fell at his feet.

Stunned and surprised at his good fortune, Jimmy bent down and picked up the meteor. He held it tightly in his hand, hardly able to contain his excitement. Even though the Leonid shower continued unabated overhead, Jimmy was ready to call it a night. He wanted to get up to his room where he could examine the meteor more closely. As he walked back towards the house, he did have enough presence of mind to remember to put the lawn chair and blanket away so as not to arouse the suspicions of his parents. He guessed that the huge black mark across the back fence would be enough to do that anyway.

Once inside the house, Jimmy walked towards the steps, and then began the slow, delicate process of sneaking up the stairway without waking his parents. He was nearly to the top when the step he had just placed his right foot on let out a long, loud groan.

Oh no, Jimmy thought. That one was really loud. No sooner had this thought gone through his mind then he heard another, even more terrifying sound. The sound of his parent’s bed creaking and groaning as his father sat up.

Jimmy stood frozen in place. He could hear his heart thumping in his ears. His face went flush as he stood poised on the steps, right foot one step above the left, left hand on the banister, right hand clutching his prize meteor. He stood like this for what seemed an eternity, straining to hear if his dad decided to lay back down, or get up and find him standing there, dressed like a burglar, sneaking up the stairs.
After a few more moments, Jimmy started to relax. Maybe he hadn’t heard anything at all. Maybe it was just the excitement of finding the meteor. Maybe … The next sound was unmistakable. It was the sound of his dad walking towards the bedroom door, probably to use the bathroom down the hall. If that was where his dad was going, he might be ok. The bathroom was the other direction down the hall from the stairs so maybe, if he stood perfectly still and crouched down a little, his dad wouldn’t see him. If his dad was getting ready to head downstairs to get something to eat from the kitchen, he was going to be busted for sure. And busted big time. He had always been a little hard to handle, but this was going to make some of the other things he had done in the past seem small by comparison.

Jimmy waited as the footsteps continued their inexorable march across his parent’s bedroom floor. A few seconds later, he saw his dad’s tall, lanky frame in the door. His father stood there half awake, scratching his chest and arms, looking like a man who had forgotten where he was going. Jimmy stood there, fully awake, adrenaline coursing through his body, like a soon-to-be-convicted felon waiting for the hammer to fall.

*Oh God,* Jimmy thought, now near panic. *He’s gonna see me. He’s gonna see me for sure. Oh God. Oh Geezz. He’s gonna see me. Oh please go the other way. Please don’t see me. Please don’t see me.*

Click. Even in his near panic mode, Jimmy heard and registered an audible click inside his head as he stood there waiting for his dad to catch him. He didn’t have time to think much about it, however, because his dad was now staring straight at him, and was walking toward the steps.
Oh crap. Here we go. Here comes World War III. I hope he doesn’t think I’m a burglar. Maybe I should say something…let him know it’s me. In a hoarse whisper that betrayed Jimmy’s panic, he croaked, “Dad? Dad? It’s me, Jimmy. Don’t get the baseball bat. It’s just me Jimmy. I was outside watching the meteor shower and …” Jimmy’s voice trailed off into nothingness.

While Jimmy had been speaking, his dad had walked over towards the steps, knelt down, and squinted his eyes into tight little slits. He looked like he was trying to see something in the dark, but couldn’t quite make it out.

“Dad? I know you’re mad but it’s really not that big of a deal. I just had to see the meteor shower. It was supposed to be the best one in the last 50 years and …”

Jimmy’s dad abruptly stood up, reversed direction, and made his way down the hall towards the bathroom. Jimmy was dumbfounded. What in the heck had just happened? He was looking right at me, right square at me, Jimmy thought. He wasn’t so caught off guard, however, that he didn’t recognize that this was his chance to escape. As soon as his dad entered the bathroom and had closed the door behind him, Jimmy again started towards his bedroom.

On the way there, he glanced at the hall mirror as he had done on his way out earlier that night. This time, instead of seeing the tough looking character he had seen before, he saw nothing. Absolutely nothing except the reflection of the wall opposite the mirror. Jimmy stopped and peered closer at what should have been his reflection. Still nothing. Can a mirror stop working? he wondered. His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of his father moving around inside the bathroom down the hall. This got Jimmy moving again and he slipped into his room and quietly closed the door behind him.
Once inside his room, Jimmy knew that he had no time to waste. His dad might decide to poke his head in on the way back to his bedroom to make sure that everything was OK. If that happened, he had better be in bed, and at least look like he was sleeping peacefully.

Jimmy pulled the stocking cap off of his head and threw it under the bed. He then took his prize, the meteor, and placed it gently in his top dresser drawer. As he did this, he again heard a sound in his head. The sound was a soft click. It reminded Jimmy of the sound someone might make while trying to coax a reluctant animal over to them to eat out of their hand. A low, soft, clucking kind of noise.

While Jimmy was puzzling over the sound he had heard, his father had finished his business in the bathroom and was making his way down the hall. Jimmy was so engrossed in his own thoughts that he didn’t even register his father’s footsteps until, luckily, his dad was past his room. Had his dad decided to make a nightly inspection of Jimmy’s room, he would have seen his 11 year old son standing in front of his dresser, lost in his own thoughts, dressed in black. Jimmy shuddered involuntarily as he realized how close he had just come to disaster.

But, the disaster hadn’t happened and Jimmy had made it! He had seen the meteor shower and collected a prize beyond his wildest dreams. In his dresser drawer was a piece of the early Solar System. How cool was that!

Quietly, Jimmy slid his dresser drawer open and picked up the meteor. Wow, he thought. What a night it’s been. He turned the meteor over in his hands, investigating every square inch. The thought that the chunk of rock he held in his hands had been floating around in outer space gave him goose bumps.
Behind Jimmy’s dresser was a large mirror. Jimmy looked up from the meteor and saw his reflection. *At least my mirror works,* he thought. *But how can a mirror not work? As long as it’s in one piece and not broken, how could it not work? And how could my dad not have seen me? I was standing there, hoping that he wouldn’t see me, wishing I was invisible …*

Click. There was that sound again. What was that all about?

As Jimmy heard the clicking sound for the third time that night, he watched his reflection in the mirror wink out. Just like that, he was gone. One moment he could see himself in the mirror and the next, all he could see was the reflection of his bed and the poster hanging over it on the wall opposite the mirror.

Frightened, Jimmy let out a little yelp and dropped the meteor.

Click. His reflection was back. He was back. But what was going on?

Jimmy stood looking at his reflection. *What the heck?* he wondered. *Is this really happening? Can the meteor really make me invisible?*

Jimmy bent down and picked up the meteor. He slowly stood up and, again, looked in the mirror. There he was. Dirty blonde hair. Black sweatshirt. There he was. The same Jimmy he had seen every time he looked in a mirror. He was a little disappointed, and a little relieved. He laughed softly.

*I guess all of the excitement kinda got to me,* he thought. *It would be cool, though, if I could make myself invisible …*

Click. He was gone.

*Oh my gosh, It’s true! I really can make myself invisible.* Jimmy carefully set the meteor down on his dresser. Click. He was back.
Jimmy spent the rest of that Sunday night practicing disappearing and reappearing. He found that he didn’t need to physically let go of the meteor to make himself reappear, he only needed to think about it. He did, however, need to have the meteor in his hands for any of the magic to occur.

Jimmy decided against telling his friends about the meteor right away. Instead, he thought that it would be fun to use it to play little tricks and jokes on them. On the way to school Monday morning, Jimmy saw one of his best friends, Walter, coming up the sidewalk behind him. Normally, Jimmy would have stopped and waited for him to catch up but, on this morning, he turned around, made a horrible face, and then took off running in the opposite direction. Jimmy then ducked behind a tree and click, he was gone.

Walter had seen Jimmy run behind the tree, but when he got there, not a trace of Jimmy was to be found. Absolutely no trace at all. Not a book bag. Not a lunch bag. Not one of the many notes they sometimes passed back and forth during class. Nothing. After staring blankly at the spot where Jimmy should have been for nearly a minute, Walter gave a small shrug of his shoulders and continued on his way. Jimmy silently laughed at the puzzled look on his friend’s face, but he wasn’t finished with his practical joke quite yet.

Using his invisibility to its fullest, Jimmy slowly crept up behind Walter until he was practically breathing down his neck. Then, click, Jimmy was back. Walter didn’t realize that there was anyone behind him until he heard a single word, whispered quietly into his left ear, “Boo.” Walter visibly jumped off of the ground as his entire body shook with
surprise. Jimmy laughed until he nearly cried. *Oh yeah,* he thought, *this is going to be great.*

The rest of that Monday had been pretty much the same thing. Jimmy must have scared at least a dozen people by mysteriously showing up out of nowhere behind them, and the hide-n-seek game at recess was really no contest. He had even been bold enough to go into the teacher’s lounge during lunch and watch as they smoked, cussed, and talked about the students.

By Tuesday, the novelty had certainly not worn off, but things were getting a little weirder, if that was possible. Jimmy was finding that it was getting harder and harder to make himself reappear, while becoming invisible was increasingly easy. After a brief foray into the girl’s locker room, for example, he had just barely been able to make himself reappear. He had even set the meteor down and still nothing. It was only after several minutes of panic and concentration that he finally heard the now familiar clicking sound and was back in the world. That had scared Jimmy and after school, he had placed the meteor back in his dresser drawer. That had been the last time he had held the meteor. And now, Wednesday afternoon, he sat on his back porch, trying to decide what to do.

Actually, Jimmy knew what he _should_ do. He should take the meteor and chuck it into Mead’s pond, that’s what he should do. But that wasn’t what he _wanted_ to do. What he wanted to do was to go upstairs to his room, pick up the meteor, and give it another try. He loved being able to make himself disappear. It was so much fun and, while invisible, he was virtually invincible. No one could see or, as he had found out, hear him. He could come and go as he pleased and there was no place that was out of
bounds for him. He was sure that he would be able to control it with a little more practice. It was with this thought in mind that Jimmy stood up, went inside, and made his way up the creaky staircase to his bedroom.

Jimmy acted without hesitation. He was certain that things would be different this time. He walked into his room, opened the dresser drawer where he had placed the meteor on Tuesday, and picked it up. Before Jimmy even had time to think, it was over. Click.

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Thursday morning.

“Okay folks, thanks for the information,” Officer Williams said. “Try not to worry too much, I’m sure he’ll show up soon.”

“Thank you,” Jimmy’s mother replied. “Please do everything you can. I want my baby back.” Jimmy’s mother buried her face in her husband’s shoulder and began to weep, again, uncontrollably.

Jimmy stood there, watching the scene, his heart aching. “Mom! Dad! I’m right here! I’m right here in front of you! Can’t you see me? Oh God, can’t you see me?” With that, Jimmy dropped to his knees and began to sob. Invisible tears fell from his eyes as his wails and moans continued unabated, and unheard.