



The cone-gatherers are sitting high in the branches of a tree after a day of collecting cones.

It was past time to climb down and go home. The path to the earth was unfamiliar; in the dark it might be dangerous. Once safely down, they would have to find their way like ghosts to their hut in the heart of the wood. Yet Neil did not give the word to go down. It was not zeal to fill the bags that made him linger, for he had given up gathering. He just sat, motionless and silent; and his brother, accustomed to these trances, waited in sympathy: he was sure that even at midnight he could climb down any tree, and help Neil to climb down too. He did not know what Neil was thinking, and never asked; even if told he would not understand. It was enough that they were together.