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It was a hot summer day and I was sitting under the big tree down by the road, where we caught the bus when school was in, when Wendell Haney came up the road on his bike and told me somebody had found a skeleton in a cave down in Moonshine Hollow.

"No lie," he said. "My cousin Wilma Jean lives in town and she came by the house just now and told Mama about it."

I put down the Plastic Man comic book I had been reading. "You mean a human skeleton?" I said, not really believing it.

Wendell made this kind of impatient face. "Well, of *course* a human one," he said. "What did you *think*?"

He was a skinny kid with a big head and pop eyes like a frog and when he was excited about something, like now, he was pretty funny-looking. He was only a year younger than me, but I'd just turned thirteen last month and a twelve-year-old looked like a little kid now.

He said, "Gee, Ray, don't you want to go see? Everybody's down there, the sheriff and all."

Sure enough, when I looked off up the blacktop I saw there was a lot of dust hanging over the far end of Tobe Nelson's pasture, where the dirt road ran down toward Moonshine Hollow. Somebody in a pickup truck was just turning in off the road.

I stood up. "I'll go get my bike," I told him. "Go on, I'll catch up with you."

I went back to the house, hoping Mama hadn't seen me talking to Wendell. She didn't like for me to have anything to do with him because she said his family was trashy. They lived down a dirt road a little way up the valley from us, in an old house that looked about ready to fall down, with a couple of old cars up on blocks in the front yard. Everybody knew his daddy was a drunk.

Mama was back in the kitchen, though? I could hear her through the window, singing along with Johnny Ray on the radio? and I got my bicycle from behind the house and rode off before she could ask me where I was going and probably tell me not to.

I caught up with Wendell about a quarter of the way across Tobe Nelson's pasture. That wasn't hard to do, with that rusty old thing he had to ride. When I came even with him, I slowed down and we rode the rest of the way together.

It was a long way across the field, with no shade anywhere along the road. Really it wasn't much more than a cow path, all bumpy and rutty and dusty, and I worked up a good sweat pedaling along in the sun. On the far side of the pasture, the ground turned downhill, sloping toward the creek, and we could ease off and coast the rest of the way. Now I could see a lot of cars and trucks parked all along the creek bank where the road ended.

*William Sanders has been writing fiction professionally since the 1980s, with stories in major magazines and anthologies, as well as numerous books in various genres. His new collection, **Are We Having Fun Yet?** (Wildside Press), contains several stories that first appeared in *Asimov's*. Here he returns to the time and place of his own childhood, and the strange discovery of some . . .*

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