

Is Allen Brewster really a threat to national security?

TOP SECRET

by JOHN REYNOLDS GARDINER
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Miss Green

It was the day we had to tell Miss Green what our science projects were going to be. I was excited because I had thought of something really neat.

You see, Miss Green made a big deal out of these science projects. At the end of the year there was a Science Fair and schools from all over the country were represented. There were awards and prizes and a *silver trophy* for the best project.

There was also an award for the best science teacher — an award Miss Green had never won. But she wanted to. That's why your science project was more important than your homework or even your test scores. Last year, Miss Green had actually flunked two kids because their projects weren't good enough.

“Come to order,” came the sound of Miss Green’s deep voice, and there was instant quiet in the room.

Miss Green stood facing the class, her hands on her hips, her mouth curved downward into a frown. She was a big woman with a large head and a large lower lip that curled up like a bulldog’s.

“Let’s start with you, Peggy.”

Miss Green had written each student’s name on the blackboard in alphabetical order, starting with Peggy Applegate.

I was next.

“Ant farm,” said Peggy who was sitting right in front of me.

“Stand up when you address me!”

Peggy shot to her feet, her pigtails swaying. “I’m sorry. I forgot.” She took a deep breath. “I want to do an ant farm for my science project, if that’s all right?”

Miss Green grumbled. “In my twenty years of teaching there has never been a year without an ant farm. Why should this year be any different?”

As she walked to the blackboard, the tractor-tread soles of her shoes made squishy sounds on the slick linoleum floor. “Where are all the thinkers of tomorrow? The scientists? The engineers? They had to be kids once, didn’t they?”

She picked up a stick of chalk with her thick fingers. "How I've longed to find a student in my class with an original idea. Someone who showed real imagination. Just one. That isn't too much to ask, is it?"

Miss Green wrote the words ANT FARM on the blackboard in large capital letters next to Peggy's name.

"Allen Brewster," came the sound of my name in a voice that sounded more like a bark than speech.

My heart began to pound against my chest as I stood up. I noticed everyone in the class was looking at me. I couldn't wait to tell Miss Green about my project. She had said she wanted something original. Well, she was going to get it.

"I have an idea," I said, "that's going to win the *silver trophy*."

Everyone in the class started laughing.

Peggy Applegate twisted around in her seat and was grinning at me with a mouthful of braces. Barry Cramer, who sits right behind me, and is the toughest kid in the fourth grade, started kicking my chair.

Even Miss Green looked as if she were about to laugh. "The silver trophy?" she said. "Now really, Allen. You know as well as I do that the silver trophy

I'm writing this down in case something should happen to me. There's a brown car parked outside in the street with two men in it. They're watching the house. . . .

So begins the highly confidential case history of Allen Brewster, the boy who has an amazing idea for his school science project: *human photosynthesis*, turning sunlight into food for humans. Everyone laughs at his outrageous scheme — until Allen turns green, sprouts roots, and develops an overwhelming desire to soak up the sun instead of eating his dinner. Allen is turning into a plant! But no one seems to believe that he isn't just playing a practical joke — no one, that is, except the President of the United States, who declares Allen a threat to national security! Suddenly Allen Brewster and his discovery are . . . TOP SECRET.

\$5.99

\$7.99 in Canada

ISBN 0-316-30363-1

UPC



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30363



Printed in the U.S.A.