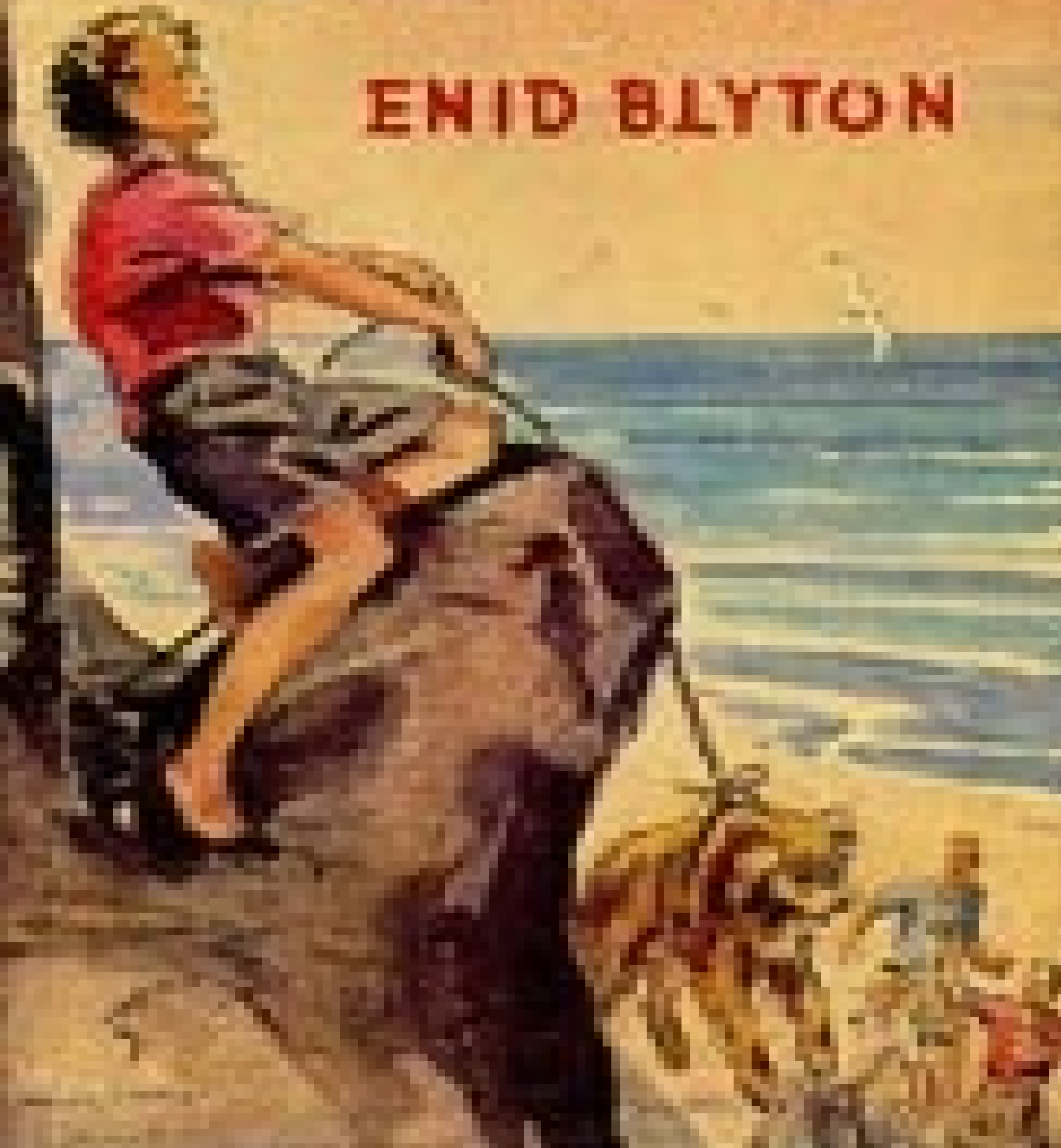


FIVE FALL INTO ADVENTURE

ENID BLYTON



Chapter One

AT KIRRIN COTTAGE AGAIN

Georgina was at the station to meet her three cousins. Timmy her dog was with her, his long tail wagging eagerly. He knew quite well they had come to meet Julian, Dick and Anne, and he was glad. It was much more fun when the Five were all together.

Here comes the train, Timmy! said George. Nobody called her Georgina, because she wouldnt answer if they did. She looked like a boy with her short curly hair and her shorts and open-necked shirt. Her face was covered with freckles, and her legs and arms were as brown as a gipsys.

There was the far-off rumble of a train, and as it came nearer, a short warning hoot. Timmy whined and wagged his tail. He didnt like trains, but he wanted this one to come.

Nearer and nearer it came, slowing down as it reached Kirrin station. Long before it came to the little platform three heads appeared out of one of the windows, and three hands waved wildly. George waved back, her face one big smile.

The door swung open almost before the train stopped. Out came a big boy, and helped down a small girl. Then came another boy, not quite so tall as the first one, with a bag in each hand. He dragged a third bag out, and then George and Timmy were on him.

Julian! Dick! Anne! Your trains late; we thought you were never coming!

Hallo, George! Here we are at last. Get down, Timmy, dont eat me.

Hallo, George! Oh, Timmy, you darling - youre just as licky as ever!

Woof, said Timmy joyfully, and bounded all round like a mad thing, getting into everybodys way.

Any trunk or anything? asked George. Only those three bags?

Well, we havent come for long this time, worse luck, said Dick. Only a fortnight! Still, its better than nothing.

You shouldnt have gone off to France all those six weeks, said George, half-jealously. I suppose youre gone all French now.

Dick laughed, waved his hands in the air and went off into a stream of quick French that sounded just like gibberish to George, French was not one of her strong subjects.

Shut up, she said, giving him a friendly shove. Youre just the same old idiot. Oh, Im so glad youre come. Its been lonely and dull at Kirrin without you.

A porter came up with a barrow. Dick turned to him, waved his hands again, and addressed the

astonished man in fluent French. But the porter knew Dick quite well.

Go on with you, he said. Argy-bargying in double-Dutch like that. Do you want me to wheel these up to Kirrin Cottage for you?

Yes, please, said Anne. Stop it, Dick. It isnt funny when you go on so long.

Oh, let him go on, said George, and she linked her arms in Annes and Dicks. Its lovely to have you again. Mothers looking forward to seeing you all.

I bet Uncle Quentin isnt, said Julian, as they went along the little platform, Timmy capering round them.

Fathers in quite a good temper, said George. You know hes been to America with Mother, lecturing and hearing other scientists lecturing too. Mother says everyone made a great fuss of him, and he liked it.

Georges father was a brilliant scientist, well-known all over the world. But he was rather a difficult man at home, impatient, hot-tempered and forgetful. The children were fond of him, but held him in great respect. They all heaved a sigh of relief when he went away for a few days, for then they could make as much noise as they liked, tear up and down the stairs, play silly jokes and generally be as mad as they pleased.

Will Uncle Quentin be at home all the time were staying with you? asked Anne. She was really rather afraid of her hot-tempered uncle.

No, said George. Mother and Father are going away for a tour in Spain - so well be on our own.

Wizard! said Dick. We can wear our bathing costumes all day long then if we want to.

And Timmy can come in at meal-times without being sent out whenever he moves, said George. Hes been sent out every single meal-time this week, just because he snapped at the flies that came near him. Father goes absolutely mad if Timmy suddenly snaps at a fly.

Shame! said Anne, and patted Timmys rough-haired back. You can snap at every single fly you like, Timmy, when were on our own.

Woof, said Timmy, gratefully.

There wont be time for any adventure these hols, said Dick, regretfully, as they walked down the lane to Kirrin Cottage. Red poppies danced along the way, and in the distance the sea shone as blue as cornflowers. Only two weeks - and back we go to school! Well, lets hope the weather keeps fine. I want to bathe six times a day!

Soon they were all sitting round the tea-table at Kirrin Cottage, and their Aunt Fanny was handing round plates of her nicest scones and tea-cake. She was very pleased to see her nephews and niece again.

Now George will be happy, she said, smiling at the hungry four. Shes been going about like a bear

with a sore head the last week or two. Have another scone, Dick? Take two while youre about it.

Good idea, said Dick, and helped himself. Nobody makes scones and cakes like you do, Aunt Fanny. Wheres Uncle Quentin?

In his study, said his aunt. He knows its tea-time, and hes heard the bell, but I expect hes buried in something or other. Ill have to fetch him in a minute. I honestly believe hed go without food all day long if I didnt go and drag him into the dining-room!

Here he is, said Julian, hearing the familiar impatient footsteps coming down the hall to the dining-room. The door was flung open. Uncle Quentin stood there, a newspaper in his hand, scowling. He didnt appear to see the children at all.

Look here, Fanny! he shouted. See what theyve put in this paper - the very thing I gave orders was NOT to be put in! The dolts! The idiots! The...

Quentin! Whatever's the matter? said his wife. Look - here are the children - theyve just arrived.

But Uncle Quentin simply didnt see any of the four children at all. He went on glaring at the paper. He rapped at it with his hand.

Now well get the place full of reporters wanting to see me, and wanting to know all about my new ideas! he said, beginning to shout. See what theyve said! This eminent scientist conducts all his experiments and works out all his ideas at his home, Kirrin Cottage. Here are his stack of notebooks, to which are now added two more - fruits of his visit to America, and here at his cottage are his amazing diagrams, and so on and so on.

I tell you, Fanny, well have hordes of reporters down.

No, we shant, dear, said his wife. And, anyway, we are soon off to Spain. Do sit down and have some tea. And look, cant you say a word to welcome Julian, Dick and Anne?

Uncle Quentin grunted and sat down. I didnt know they were coming, he said, and helped himself to a scone. You might have told me, Fanny.

I told you three times yesterday and twice today, said his wife.

Anne suddenly squeezed her uncles arm. She was sitting next to him. Youre just the same as ever, Uncle Quentin, she said. You never, never remember were coming! Shall we go away again?

Her uncle looked down at her and smiled. His temper never lasted very long. He grinned at Julian and Dick. Well, here you are again! he said. Do you think you can hold the fort for me while Im away with your aunt?

Rather! said all three together.

Well keep everyone at bay! said Julian. With Timmys help. Ill put up a notice: Beware, very fierce dog.

Woof, said Timmy, sounding delighted. He thumped his tail on the floor. A fly came by his nose and he snapped at it. Uncle Quentin frowned.

Have another scone, Father? said George hurriedly. When are you and Mother going to Spain?

Tomorrow, said her mother firmly. Now dont look like that, Quentin. You know perfectly well its been arranged for weeks, and you need a holiday, and if we dont go tomorrow all our arrangements will be upset.

Well, you might have warned me it was tomorrow, said her husband, looking indignant. I mean - Ive got all my notebooks to check and put away, and...

Quentin, Ive told you heaps of times that we leave on September the third, said his wife, still more firmly. I want a holiday, too. The four children will be quite all right here with Timmy - theyll love being on their own. Julian is almost grownup now and he can cope with anything that turns up.

Timmy snapped twice at a fly, and Uncle Quentin jumped. If that dog does that again, he began, but his wife interrupted him at once.

There, you see! Youre as touchy and nervy as can be, Quentin, dear. It will do you good to get away - and the children will have a lovely two weeks on their own. Nothing can possibly happen, so make up your mind to leave tomorrow with an easy mind!

Nothing can possibly happen? Aunt Fanny was wrong of course. Anything could happen when the Five were left on their own!

Chapter Two

A MEETING ON THE BEACH

It really was very difficult to get Uncle Quentin off the next day. He was shut up in his study until the last possible moment, sorting out his precious notebooks. The taxi arrived and hooted outside the gate. Aunt Fanny, who had been ready for a long time, went and rapped at the study door.

Quentin! Unlock the door! You really must come. We shall lose the plane if we dont go now.

Just one minute! shouted back her husband. Aunt Fanny looked at the four children in despair.

Thats the fourth time hes called out Just one minute, said George. The telephone shrilled out just then and she picked up the receiver.

Yes, she said. No, Im afraid you cant see him. Hes off to Spain, and nobody will know where he is for the next two weeks. Whats that? Wait a minute - Ill ask my mother.

Who is it? said her mother.

Its the Daily Clarion, said George. They want to send a reporter down to interview Daddy. I told them he was going to Spain - and they said could they publish that?

Of course, said her mother, thankfully, Once thats in the papers nobody will ring up and worry you. Say, yes, George.

George said yes, the taxi hooted more loudly than ever, and Timmy barked madly at the hooting. The study door was flung open and Uncle Quentin stood in the doorway, looking as black as thunder.

Why cant I have a little peace and quiet when Im doing important work? he began. But his wife made a dart at him and dragged him down the hall. She put his hat in one hand, and would have put his stick into the other if he hadnt been carrying a heavy despatch case.

Youre not doing important work, youre off on a holiday, she said. Oh, Quentin, youre worse than ever. Whats that case in your hand? Surely you are not taking work away with you?

The taxi hooted again, and Timmy woofed just behind Uncle Quentin. He jumped violently, and the telephone rang loudly.

Thats another reporter coming down to see you, Father, said George. Better go quickly!

Whether that bit of news really did make Uncle Quentin decide at last to go, nobody knew - but in two seconds he was sitting in the taxi, still clutching his despatch case, telling the taxi-driver exactly what he thought of people who kept hooting their horns.

Good-bye, dears, called Aunt Fanny, thankfully. Dont get into mischief. Were off at last.

The taxi disappeared down the lane. Poor Mother! said George. Its always like this when they go for holiday. Well, theres one thing certain - I shall NEVER marry a scientist.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief at the thought that Uncle Quentin was gone. When he was over-worked he really was impossible.

Still, you simply have to make excuses for anyone with a brain like his, said Julian. Whenever our science master at school speaks of him, he almost holds his breath with awe. Worst of it is, he expects me to be brilliant because Ive got a brilliant uncle.

Yes. Its difficult to live up to clever relations, said Dick. Well - were on our own, except for Joan. Good old Joan! I bet shell give us some smashing meals.

Lets go and see if shes got anything we can have now, said George. Im hungry.

So am I, said Dick. They marched down the hall into the kitchen, calling for Joan.

Now, you dont need to tell me what youve come for, said Joan, the smiling, good-tempered cook. And I dont need to tell you this - the larders locked.

Oh Joan - what a mean thing to do! said Dick.

Mean or not, its the only thing to do when all four of you are around, to say nothing of that great hungry dog, said Joan, rolling out some pastry vigorously. Why, last holidays I left a meat pie and ham a tongue and a cherry tart and trifle sitting on the shelves for the next days meals - and when I came back from my half-days outing there wasnt a thing to be seen.

Well, we thought youd left them there for our supper, said Julian, sounding quite hurt.

All right - but you wont get the chance of thinking anything like that again, said Joan, firmly. That larder doors going to be kept locked. Maybe Ill unlock it sometimes and hand you out a snack or two but Im the one thats going to unlock it, not you.

The four drifted out of the kitchen again, disappointed. Timmy followed at their heels. Lets go down and have a bathe, said Dick. If Im going to have six bathes a day, Id better hurry up and have my first one.

Ill get some ripe plums, said Anne. We can take those down with us. And I expect the ice-cream man will come along to the beach too. We shant starve! And wed better wear our shirts and shorts over our bathing costumes, so we dont catch too much sun.

Soon they were all down on the sand. They found a good place and scraped out comfortable holes to sit in. Timmy scraped his own.

I cant imagine why Timmy bothers to scrape one, said George. Because he always squeezes into mine sooner or later. Dont you, Timmy?

Timmy wagged his tail, and scraped so violently that they were all covered with sand. Pooh! said Anne, spitting sand out of her mouth. Stop it, Timmy. As fast as I scrape my hole, you fill it up!

Timmy paused to give her a lick, and then scraped again, making a very deep hole indeed. He lay down in it, panting, his mouth looking as if he were smiling.

Hes smiling again, said Anne. I never knew a dog that smiled like Timmy. Timmy, its nice to have you again.

Woof, said Timmy, politely, meaning that it was nice to have Anne and the others back again, too. He wagged his tail and sent a shower of sand over Dick.

They all wriggled down comfortably into their soft warm holes. Well eat the plums first and then we have a bathe, said Dick. Chuck me one, Anne.

Two people came slowly along the beach. Dick looked at them out of half-closed eyes. A boy and a man - and what a ragamuffin the boy looked! He wore tom dirty shorts and a filthy jersey. No shoes at all.

The man looked even worse. He slouched as he came, and dragged one foot. He had a straggly moustache and mean, clever little eyes that raked the beach up and down. The two were walking at high-water mark and were obviously looking for anything that might have been cast up by the tide. The boy already had an old box, one wet shoe and some wood under his arm.

What a pair! said Dick to Julian. I hope they dont come near us. I feel as if I can smell them from here.

The two walked along the beach and then back. Then, to the childrens horror, they made a bee-line for where they were lying in their sandy holes, and sat down close beside them. Timmy growled.

An unpleasant, unwashed kind of smell at once came to the childrens noses. Pooh! Timmy growled again. The boy took no notice of Timmys growling. But the man looked uneasy.

Come on - lets have a bathe, said Julian, annoyed at the way the two had sat down so close to them. After all, there was practically the whole of the beach to choose from - why come and sit almost on top of somebody else?

When they came back from their bathe the man had gone, but the boy was still there - and he had actually sat himself down in Georges hole.

Get out, said George, shortly, her temper rising at once. Thats my hole, and you jolly well know it.

Findings keepings, said the boy, in a curious singsong voice. Its my hole now.

George bent down and pulled the boy roughly out of the hole. He was up in a trice, his fists clenched. George clenched hers, too.

Dick came up at a run. Now, George - if theres any fighting to be done, Ill do it, he said. He turned to the scowling boy. Clear off! We dont want you here!

The boy hit out with his right fist and caught Dick unexpectedly on the jawbone. Dick looked astounded. He hit out, too, and sent the tousle-headed boy flying.

Yah, coward! said the boy, holding his chin tenderly. Hitting someone smaller than yourself! Ill fight that first boy, but I wont fight you.

You cant fight him, said Dick. Hes a girl. You cant fight girls - and girls oughtnt to fight, anyway.

Ses you! said the dirty little ragamuffin, standing up and doubling his fists again. Well, you look here - Im a girl, too - so I can fight her all right, cant I?

George and the ragamuffin stood scowling at one another, each with fists clenched. They looked so astonishingly alike, with their short, curly hair, brown freckled faces and fierce expressions that Julia suddenly roared with laughter. He pushed them firmly apart.

Fighting forbidden! he said. He turned ta the ragamuffin. Clear off! he ordered. Do you hear me? Go on - off with you!

The gipsy-like girl stared at him. Then she suddenly burst into tears and ran off howling.

Shes a girl all right, said Dick, grinning at the howls. Shes got some spunk though, facing up to me like that. Well, thats the last well see of her!

But he was wrong. It wasnt!

Chapter Three

FACE AT THE WINDOW

The five curled up in their holes once more. Dick felt his jawbone. That ragamuffin of a girl gave me a good bang, he said, half-admiringly. Little demon, isnt she! A bit of live wire!

I cant see why Julian wouldnt let me have a go at her, said George sulkily. It was my hole she sat in - she meant to be annoying! How dare she?

Girls cant go about fighting, said Dick. Dont be an ass, George. I know you make out youre as good as a boy, and you dress like a boy and climb trees as well as I can - but its really time you gave up thinking youre as good as a boy.

This sort of speech didnt please George at all. Well, anyway, I dont burst into howls if Im beaten, she said, turning her back on Dick.

No, you dont, agreed Dick. Youve got as much spunk as any boy - much more than that other kid had. Im sorry I sent her flying now. Its the first time Ive ever hit a girl, and I hope itll be the last.

Im jolly glad you hit her, said George. Shes a nasty little beast. If I see her again Ill tell her what I think of her.

No, you wont, said Dick. Not if Im there, anyway. She had her punishment when I sent her flying.

Do shut up arguing, you two, said Anne, and sent a shower of sand over them. George, dont go into one of your moods, for goodness sake - we dont want to waste a single day of this two weeks.

Heres the ice-cream man, said Julian, sitting up and feeling for the waterproof pocket in the belt of his bathing trunks. Lets have one each.

Woof, said Timmy, and thumped his tail on the sand.

Yes, all right - one for you, too, said Dick. Though what sense there is in giving you one, I dont know. One lick, one swallow, and its gone. It might be a fly for all you taste of it.

Timmy gulped his ice-cream down at once and then went into Georges hole, squeezing beside her, hoping for a lick of her ice, too. But she pushed him away.

No, Timmy. Ice-creams wasted on you! You cant even have a lick of mine. And do get back into your hole - youre making me frightfully hot.

Timmy obligingly got out and went into Annes hole. She gave him a little bit of her ice-cream. He sat panting beside her, looking longingly at the rest of the ice. Youre melting it with your hot breath, said Anne. Go into Julians hole now!

The five of them had a thoroughly lazy morning. As none of them had a watch they went in far too early for lunch, and were shooed out again by Joan.

How you can come in at ten past twelve for a one o'clock lunch, I don't know! she scolded. I haven't even finished the housework yet.

Well - it felt like one o'clock, said Anne, disappointed to find there was so long to wait. Still, when lunch-time came, Joan really did them well.

Cold ham and tongue - cold baked beans - beetroot - crisp lettuce straight from the garden - heaps of tomatoes - cucumber - hard-boiled egg! recited Anne in glee.

Just the kind of meal I like, said Dick, sitting down. What's for pudding?

There it is on the sideboard, said Anne. Wobbly blancmange, fresh fruit salad and jelly. I'm glad I'm hungry.

Now don't you give Timmy any of that ham and tongue, Joan warned George. I've got a fine bone for him. Coming, Timmy?

Timmy knew the word bone very well indeed. He trotted after Joan at once, his feet sounding loudly the hall. They heard Joan talking kindly to him in the kitchen as she found him his bone.

Good old Joan, said Dick. She's like Timmy - her bark is worse than her bite.

Timmy's got a good bite, though, said George, helping herself to three tomatoes at once. And his bite came in useful heaps of times for us.

They ate steadily, thinking of some of the hair-raising adventures they had had, when Timmy and his bite had certainly come in very useful. Timmy came in after a while, licking his lips.

Nothing doing, old chap, said Dick, looking at the empty dishes on the table. Don't tell me you've chomped up that bone already!

Timmy had. He lay down under the table, and put his nose on his paws. He was happy. He had had a good meal, and he was with the people he loved best. He put his head as near George's feet as he could.

Your whiskers are tickling me, she said, and screwed up her bare toes. Pass the tomatoes, someone.

You can't manage any more tomatoes, surely! said Anne. You've had five already.

They're out of my own garden, said George, so I can eat as many as I like.

After lunch they lazed on the beach till it was time for a bath again. It was a happy day for all of them - warm, lazy, with plenty of fun and romping about.

George looked out for the ragamuffin girl, but she didn't appear again. George was half sorry. She would have liked a battle of words with her, even if she couldn't have a fight!

They were all very tired when they went to bed that night. Julian yawned so loudly when Joan came in with a jug of hot cocoa and some biscuits that she offered to lock up the house for him.

Oh, no, thank you, Joan, said Julian at once. Thats the mans job, you know, locking up the house. You can trust me all right. Ill see to every window and every door.

Right, Master Julian, said Joan, and bustled away to wind up the kitchen clock, rake out the fire, and go up to bed. The children went up, too, Timmy, as usual, at Georges heels. Julian was left downstairs to lock up.

He was a very responsible boy. Joan knew that he wouldnt leave a single window unfastened. She heard him trying to shut the little window in the pantry, and she called down:

Master Julian! Its swollen or something, and wont shut properly. You neednt bother about it, its too small for anyone to get into!

Right! said Julian, thankfully, and went upstairs. He yawned a terrific yawn again, and set Dick off, too, as soon as he came into the bedroom they both shared. The girls, undressing in the next room, laughed to hear them.

You wouldnt hear a burglar in the middle of the night, Julian and Dick! called Anne. Youll sleep like logs!

Old Timmy can listen out for burglars, said Julian, cleaning his teeth vigorously. Thats his job, not mine. Isnt it, Timmy?

Woof, said Timmy, clambering on to Georges bed. He always slept curled up in the crook of her knees. Her mother had given up trying to insist that George didnt have Timmy on her bed at night. As George said, even if she agreed to that, Timmy wouldnt!

Nobody stayed awake for more than five seconds. Nobody even said anything in bed, except for a sleepy good night. Timmy gave a little grunt and settled down, too, his head on Georges feet. It was heavy, but she liked it there. She put out a hand and stroked Timmy gently. He licked one of her feet through the bed-clothes. He loved George more than anyone in the world.

It was dark outside that night. Thick clouds had come up and put out all the stars. There was no sound to be heard but the wind in the trees and the distant surge of the sea - and both sounded so much the same that it was hard to tell the difference.

Not another sound - not even an owl hooting to its mate, or the sound of a hedgehog pattering in the ditch.

Then why did Timmy wake up? Why did he open first one eye and then another? Why did he prick up his ears and lie there, listening? He didnt even lift his head at first. He simply lay listening in the darkness.

He lifted his head cautiously at last. He slid off the bed as quietly as a cat. He padded across the room and out of the door. Down the stairs he went, and into the hall, where his claws rattled on the tiled floor. But nobody heard him. Everyone in the house was fast asleep.

~~Timmy stood and listened in the hall. He knew he had heard something. Could it have been a rat somewhere? Timmy lifted his nose and sniffed.~~

And then he stiffened from head to tail, and stood as if turned into stone. Something was climbing up the wall of the house. Scrape, scrape, scrape - rustle, rustle! Would a rat dare to do that?

Upstairs, in her bed, Anne didnt know why she suddenly woke up just then, but she did. She was thirsty, and she thought she would get a drink of water. She felt for her torch, and switched it on.

The light fell on the window first, and Anne saw something that gave her a terrible shock. She screamed loudly, and dropped her torch in fright. George woke up at once. Timmy came bounding up the stairs.

Julian! wailed Anne. Come quickly. I saw a face at the window, a horrible, dreadful face looking in at me!

George rushed to the window, switching on her torch as she did so. There was nothing there. Timmy went with her. He sniffed at the open window and growled.

Hark - I can hear someone running quickly down the path, said Julian, who now appeared with Dick. Come on, Timmy - downstairs with you and after them!

And down they all went - Anne too. They flung the front door wide and Timmy sped out, barking loudly. A face at the window? Hed soon find out who it belonged to!

Chapter Four

THE NEXT DAY

The four children waited at the open front door, listening to Timmys angry, excited barking. Anne was trembling, and Julian put his arm round her comfortingly.

What was this dreadful face like? he asked her. Anne shivered in his arm.

I didnt see very much, she said. You see, I just switched on my torch, and the beam was directed on the window nearby - and it lighted up the face for a second. It had nasty gleaming eyes, and it looked very dark - perhaps it was a black mans face! Oh, I was frightened!

Then did it disappear? asked Julian.

I dont know, said Anne. I was so frightened that I dropped my torch and the light went out. Then George woke up and rushed to the window.

Where on earth was Timmy? said Dick, feeling suddenly surprised that Timmy hadnt awakened them all by barking. Surely he must have heard the owner of the face climbing up to the window?

I dont know. He came rushing into the bedroom when I screamed, said Anne. Perhaps he had heard a noise and had gone down to see what it was.

Thats about it, said Julian. Never mind, Anne. It was a tramp, I expect. He found all the doors and windows downstairs fastened - and shinned up the ivy to see if he could enter by way of a bedroom. Timmy will get him, thats certain.

But Timmy didnt get him. He came back after a time, with his tail down, and a puzzled look in his eyes. Couldnt you find him, Timmy? asked George, anxiously.

Woof, said Timmy, mournfully, his tail still down. George felt him. He was wet through.

Goodness! Where have you been to get so wet? she said, in surprise. Feel him, Dick.

Dick felt him, and so did the others. Hes been in the sea, said Julian. Thats why hes wet. I guess the burglar, or whatever he was, must have sprinted down to the beach, when he knew Timmy was after him - and jumped into a boat! It was his only chance of getting away.

And Timmy must have swum after him till he couldnt keep up any more, said George. Poor old Tim. So you lost him, did you?

Timmy wagged his tail a little. He looked very downhearted indeed. To think he had heard noises and thought it was a rat - and now, whoever it was had got away from him. Timmy felt ashamed.

Julian shut and bolted the front door. He put up the chain, too. I dont think the Face will come back

again in a hurry, he said. Now he knows theres a big dog here hell keep away. I dont think we need worry any more.

They all went back to bed again. Julian didnt go to sleep for some time. Although he had told the others not to worry, he felt worried himself. He was sorry that Anne had been frightened, and somehow the boldness of the burglar in climbing up to a bedroom worried him, too. He must have been determined to get in somehow.

Joan, the cook, slept through all the disturbance. Julian wouldnt wake her. No, he said, dont tell her anything about it. Shed want to send telegrams to Uncle Quentin or something.

So Joan knew nothing about the nights happenings, and they heard her cheerfully humming in the kitchen the next morning as she cooked bacon and eggs and tomatoes for their breakfast.

Anne was rather ashamed of herself when she woke up and remembered the fuss she had made. The face was rather dim in her memory now. She half wondered if she had dreamed it all. She asked Julian if he thought she might have had a bad dream.

Quite likely, said Julian, cheerfully, very glad that Anne should think this. More than likely! I wouldnt worry about it any more, if I were you.

He didnt tell Anne that he had examined the thickly-growing ivy outside the window, and had found clear traces of the night-climber. Part of the sturdy clinging ivy-stem had come away from the wall, and beneath the window were strewn broken-off ivy leaves. Julian showed them to Dick.

There was somebody, he said. What a nerve he had, climbing right up to the window like that. A real cat-burglar!

There were no footprints to be seen anywhere in the garden. Julian didnt expect to find any, for the ground was dry and hard.

The day was very fine and warm again. I vote we do what we did yesterday - go off to the beach and bathe, said Dick. We might take a picnic lunch if Joan will give us one.

Ill help her to make it up for us, said Anne, and she and George went off to beg for sandwiches and buns. Soon they were busy wrapping up a colossal lunch.

Do for twelve, I should think! said Joan, with a laugh. Heres a bottle of homemade lemonade, too. You can take as many ripe plums as you like as well. I shant prepare any supper for you tonight - youll not need it after all this lunch.

George and Anne looked at her in alarm. No supper! Then they caught the twinkle in her eye and laughed.

Well make all the beds and do our rooms before we go, said Anne. And is there anything you want from the village?

No, not today. You hurry up with your jobs and get along to the beach, said Joan. Ill be quite glad of a peaceful day to myself. I shall turn out the larder and the hall cupboards and the scullery, and enjoy

myself in peace!

Anne seemed quite to have forgotten her fright of the night before as they went down to the beach that day, chattering and laughing together. Even if she had thought about it, something soon happened that swept everything else from her mind.

The little ragamuffin girl was down on the beach again! She was alone. Her dreadful old father, or whatever he was, was not there.

George saw the girl first and scowled. Julian saw the scowl and then the girl, and made up his mind at once. He led the others firmly to where rocks jutted up from the beach, surrounded by limpid rock-pools.

Well be here today, he said. Its so hot well be glad of the shade from the rocks. What about just here?

Its all right, said George, half sulky and half amused at Julian for being so firm about things. Dont worry. Im not having anything more to do with that smelly girl.

Im glad to hear it, said Julian. They had now turned a corner, and were out of sight of the girl. Big rocks ran in an upwards direction behind them, and jutted up all around them. Julian sat down in a lovely little corner, with rocks protecting them from the sun and the wind.

Lets have a read before we bathe, said Dick. Ive got a mystery story here. I simply MUST find out who the thief is.

He settled himself comfortably. Anne went to look for sea anemones in the pool. She liked the petal-like creatures that looked so like plants and werent. She liked feeding them with bits of biscuit, seeing their petals close over the fragment and draw them quickly inside.

George lay back and stroked Timmy. Julian began to sketch the rocks around, and the little pools. It was all very peaceful indeed.

Suddenly something landed on Georges middle and made her jump. She sat up, and so did Timmy.

What was that? said George indignantly. Did you throw something at me, Dick?

No, said Dick, his eyes glued to his book.

Something else hit George on the back of the neck, and she put her hand up with an exclamation. Whats happening? Whos throwing things?

She looked to see what had hit her. Lying on the sand was a small roundish thing. George picked it up. Why - its a damson stone, she said. And Ping! Another one hit her on the shoulder. She leapt up in a rage.

She could see nobody at all. She waited for another damson stone to appear, but none did.

I just wish I could draw your face, George, said Julian, with a grin. I never saw such a frown in my life. Ooch!

The ooch! was nothing to do with Georges frown; it was caused by another damson stone that caught Julian neatly behind the ear. He leapt to his feet too. A helpless giggle came from behind a rock some way behind and above them. George was up on the ledge in a second.

Behind one of the rocks sat the ragamuffin girl. Her pockets were full of damsons, some of them spilling out as she rolled on the rocks, laughing. She sat up when she saw George, and grinned.

What do you mean, throwing those stones at us? demanded George.

I wasnt throwing them, said the girl.

Dont tell lies, said George scornfully. You know you were.

I wasnt. I was just spitting them, said the awful girl. Watch! She slipped a stone into her mouth, took deep breath and then spat out the stone. It flew straight at George and hit her sharply and squarely on the nose. George looked so extremely surprised that Dick and Julian roared with laughter.

Bet I can spit stones farther than any of you, said the ragamuffin. Have some of my damsons and see.

Right! said Dick promptly. If you win Ill buy you an ice-cream. If I do, you can clear off from here and not bother us any more. See?

Yes, said the girl, and her eyes gleamed and danced. But I shall win!

Chapter Five

RAGAMUFFIN JO

George was most astonished at Dick. How very shocking to see who could spit damson stones out the farthest.

Its all right, said Julian to her in a low voice. You know how good Dick is at that sort of game. Hell win - and well send the girl scooting off, well and truly beaten.

I think youre horrible, Dick, said George, in a loud voice. Horrible!

Who used to spit cherry-stones out and try and beat me last year? said Dick at once. Dont be so high-and-mighty, George.

Anne came slowly back from her pool, wondering why the others were up on the rocks. Damson stones began to rain round her. She stopped in astonishment. Surely - surely it couldnt be the others doing that? A stone hit her on her bare arm, and she squealed.

The ragamuffin girl won handsomely. She managed to get her stones at least three feet farther than Dick. She lay back, laughing, her teeth gleaming very white indeed.

You owe me an ice-cream, she said, in her singsong voice. Julian wondered if she was Welsh. Dick looked at her, marvelling that she managed to get her stones so far.

Ill buy you the ice-cream, dont worry, he said. Nobodys ever beaten me before like that, not even Stevens, a boy at school with a most enormous mouth.

I do think you really are dreadful, said Anne. Go and buy her the ice-cream and tell her to go home.

Im going to eat it here, said the girl, and she suddenly looked exactly as mulish and obstinate as George did when she wanted something she didnt think she would get.

You look like George now! said Dick, and immediately wished he hadnt. George glared at him, furious.

What! That nasty, rude tangly-haired girl like me! stormed George. Pooh! I cant bear to go near her.

Shut up, said Dick, shortly. The girl looked surprised.

What does she mean? she asked Dick. Am I nasty? Youre as rude as I am, anyway.

Theres an ice-cream man, said Julian, afraid that the hot-tempered George would fly at the girl and slap her. He whistled to the man, who came to the edge of the rocks and handed out six ice-creams.

Here you are, said Julian, handing one to the girl. You eat that up and go.

They all sat and ate ice-creams, George still scowling. Timmy gulped his at once as usual. Look - he had all his, marvelled the girl. I call that a waste. Here, boy - have a bit of mine!

To Georges annoyance, Timmy licked up the bit of ice-cream thrown to him by the girl. How could Timmy accept anything from her?

Dick couldnt help being amused by this queer, bold little girl, with her tangled short hair and sharp darting eyes. He suddenly saw something that made him feel uncomfortable.

On her chin the girl had a big black bruise. I say, said Dick, I didnt give you that bruise yesterday, did I?

What bruise? Oh, this one on my chin? said the girl, touching it. Yes, thats where you hit me when you sent me flying. I dont mind. Ive had plenty worse ones from my Dad.

Im sorry I hit you, said Dick, awkwardly. I honestly thought you were a boy. Whats your name?

Jo, said the girl.

But thats a boys name, said Dick.

Sos George. But you said she was a girl, said Jo, licking the last bits of ice-cream from her fingers.

Yes, but George is short for Georgina, said Anne. Whats Jo short for?

Dont know, said Jo. I never heard. All I know is Im a girl and my name is Jo.

Its probably short for Josephine, said Julian. They all stared at the possible Josephine. The short name of Jo certainly suited her - but not the long and pretty name of Josephine.

Its really queer, said Anne, at last, but Jo is awfully like you, George - same short curly hair - only Jo is terribly messy and tangly - same freckles, dozens of them - same turned-up nose...

Same way of sticking her chin up in the air, same scowl, same glare! said Dick. George put on her fiercest glare at these remarks, which she didnt like at all.

Well, all I can say I hope I havent her layers of dirt and her sm - she began, angrily. But Dick stopped her.

Shes probably not got any soap or hair-brush or anything. Shed be all right cleaned up. Dont be unkind, George.

George turned her back. How could Dick stick up for that awful girl? Isnt she ever going? she said. Or is she going to park herself on us all day long?

Ill go when I want to, said Jo, and put on a scowl, so exactly like Georges that Julian and Dick laughed in surprise. Jo laughed, too, but George clenched her fists furiously. Anne looked on in distress. She wished Jo would go, then everything would be all right again.

I like that dog, said Jo, suddenly, and she leaned over to where Timmy lay beside George. She patted him with a hand that was like a little brown paw. George swung round.

Dont touch my dog! she said. He doesnt like you, either!

Oh, but he does, said Jo, surprisingly. All dogs like me. So do cats. I can make your dog come to me easy as anything.

Try! said George, scornfully. He wont go to you! Will you, Tim?

Jo didnt move. She began to make a queer little whining noise down in her throat, like a forlorn puppy. Timmy pricked up his ears at once. He looked inquiringly at Jo. Jo stopped making the noise and held out her hand.

Timmy looked at it and turned away - but when he heard the whining again he got up, listening. He stared intently at Jo. Was this a kind of dog-girl, that she could so well speak his language?

Jo flung herself on her face and went on with the small, whining noises that sounded as if she were a small dog in pain or sorrow. Timmy walked over to her and sat down, his head on one side, puzzled. Then he suddenly bent down and licked the girls half-hidden face. She sat up at once and put her arm round Timmys neck.

Come here, Timmy, said George, jealously. Timmy shook off the brown arms that held him and walked over to George at once.

Jo laughed.

See? I made him come to me and give me one of his best licks! I can do that to any dog.

How can you? asked Dick, in wonder. He had never seen Timmy make friends before with anyone who was disliked by George.

I dont know, really, said Jo, pushing back her hair again, as she sat up. I reckon its in the family. My mother was in a circus, and she trained dogs for the ring. We had dozens - lovely they were. I loved them all.

Where is your mother? asked Julian. Is she still in the circus?

No. She died, said Jo. And I left the circus with my Dad. Weve got a caravan. Dad was an acrobat till he hurt his foot.

The four children remembered how the man had dragged his foot as he walked. They looked silently at dirty little Jo. What a strange life she must have led!

Shes dirty, shes probably very good at telling lies and thieving, but shes got pluck, thought Julian. Still, Ill be glad when she goes.

I wish I hadnt given her that awful bruise, thought Dick. I wonder what shed be like cleaned up and brushed? She looks as if a little kindness would do her good.

Im sorry for her, but I dont much like her, thought Anne.

I dont believe a word she says! thought George angrily. Not one word! Shes a humbug. And Im ashamed of Timmy for going to her. I feel very cross with him.

Wheres your father? asked Julian at last.

Gone off somewhere to meet somebody, said Jo vaguely. Im glad. He was in one of his tempers this morning. I went and hid under the caravan.

There was a silence. Can I stay with you today till my Dad comes back? said Jo suddenly, in her singsong voice. Ill wash myself if you like. Im all alone today.

No. We dont want you, said George, feeling as if she really couldnt bear Jo any longer. Do we, Anne?

Anne didnt like hurting anyone. She hesitated. Well, she said at last, perhaps Jo had better go.

Yes, said Julian. Its time you scooted off now, Jo. Youve had a long time with us.

Jo looked at Dick with mournful eyes, and touched the bruise on her chin as if it hurt her. Dick felt most uncomfortable again. He looked round at the others.

Dont you think she could stay and share our picnic? he said. After all - she cant help being dirty and - and...

Its all right, said Jo, suddenly scrambling up. Im going! Theres my Dad!

They saw the man in the distance, dragging his foot as he walked. He caught sight of Jo and gave a shrill and piercing whistle. Jo made a face at them all, an impudent, ugly, insolent face.

I dont like you! she said. Then she pointed at Dick. I only like him - hes nice. Yah to the rest of you!

And off she went like a hare over the sand, her bare feet hardly touching the ground.

What an extraordinary girl! said Julian. I dont feel weve seen the last of her yet!

Chapter Six

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE NIGHT?

That night Anne began to look rather scared as darkness fell. She was remembering the Face at the Window!

It wont come again, Ju, will it? she said to her big brother half a dozen times.

No, Anne. But if you like Ill come and lie down on Georges bed instead of George tonight, and stay with you all night long, said Julian.

Anne considered this and then shook her head. No. I think Id almost rather have George and Timmy. mean - George and I - and even you - might be scared of Faces, but Timmy wouldnt. Hed simply leap at them.

Youre quite right, said Julian. He would. All right then, I wont keep you company - but youll see, nothing whatever will happen tonight. Anyway, if you like, well all close our bedroom windows and fasten them, even if we are too hot for anything - then well know nobody can possibly get in.

So that night Julian not only closed all the doors and windows downstairs as he had done the night before (except the tiny pantry window that wouldnt shut), but he also shut and fastened all the ones upstairs.

What about Joans window ? asked Anne.

She always sleeps with it shut, summer and winter, said Julian, with a grin. Country folk often do. They think the night airs dangerous. Now youve nothing at all to worry about, silly.

So Anne went to bed with her mind at rest. George drew the curtains across their window so that even if the Face came again they wouldnt be able to see it!

Let Timmy out for me, Julian, will you? called George. Anne doesnt want me to leave her, even to take old Timmy out for his last walk. Just open the door and let him out. Hell come in when hes ready.

Right! called Julian, and opened the front door Timmy trotted out, tail wagging. He loved his last sni round. He liked to smell the trail of the hedgehog who was out on his night-rounds; he liked to put hi nose down a rabbit-hole and listen to stirrings down below; and he loved to follow the meanderings c rats and mice round by the thick hedges.

Isnt Timmy in yet? called George from the top of the stairs. Do call him, Ju. I want to get into bed. Annes half-asleep already.

Hell be in in a moment, said Julian, who wanted to finish his book. Dont fuss.

But no Timmy had appeared even when he had finished his book. Julian went to the door and whistle

He listened for Timmy to come. Then, hearing nothing, he whistled once more.

This time he heard the sound of pattering footsteps coming up the path to the door. Oh there you are, Tim, said Julian. What have you been up to? Chasing rabbits or something?

Timothy wagged his tail feebly. He didnt jump up at Julian as he usually did. You look as if youve been up to some mischief, Tim, said Julian. Go on - up to bed with you - and mind you bark if you hear the smallest sound in the night.

Woof, said Timmy, in rather a subdued voice, and went upstairs. He climbed on to Georges bed and sighed heavily.

What a sigh! said George. And what have you been eating, Timmy? Pooh - youve dug up some frightful old bone, I know you have. Ive a good mind to push you off my bed. I suppose you suddenly remembered one you buried months ago. Pooh!

Timmy wouldnt be pushed off the bed. He settled down to sleep, his nose on Georges feet as usual. He snored a little, and woke George in about half an hour.

Shut up, Timmy, she said, pushing him with her feet. Anne woke up, alarmed.

What is it, George? she whispered, her heart thumping.

Nothing. Only Timmy snoring. Hark at him. He wont stop, said George, irritated. Wake up, Timmy, and stop snoring.

Timmy moved sleepily and settled down again. He stopped snoring and George and Anne fell sound asleep. Julian woke once, thinking he heard something fall - but hearing Timmy gently snoring again through the open doors of the two rooms, he lay down, his mind at rest.

If the noise had really been a noise Timmy would have heard it, no doubt about that. George always said that Timmy slept with one ear open.

Julian heard nothing more till Joan went downstairs at seven oclock. He heard her go into the kitchen and do something to the kitchen grate. He turned over and fell asleep again.

He was wakened suddenly twenty minutes later by loud screams from downstairs. He sat up and then leapt out of bed at once. He rushed downstairs. Dick followed him.

Look at this! The masters study - turned upside down - those drawers ransacked! The safes open, too. Mercy me, whos been here in the night - with all the doors locked and bolted, too! Joan wailed loudly and wrung her hands as she gazed at the untidy room.

I say! said Dick, horrified. Someones been searching for something pretty thoroughly! Even got the safe open - and wrenched the drawers out.

How did he get in? said Julian, feeling bewildered. He went round the house, looking at doors and windows. Except for the kitchen door, which Joan said she had unlocked and unbolted herself as soon as she came down, not a window or door had been touched. All were fastened securely.

Anne came down, looking scared. Whats the matter? she said. But Julian brushed her aside. How did that burglar get in? That was what he wanted to know. Through one of the upstairs windows, he supposed - one that somebody had opened last night after he had fastened it. Perhaps in the girls room?

But no - not one window was open. All were fastened securely, including Joans. Then a thought struck him as he looked into Georges room. Why hadnt Timmy barked? After all, there must have been quite a bit of noise, however quiet the thief had been. He had himself heard something and had awakened. Why hadnt Timmy, then?

George was trying to pull Timmy off the bed. Ju, Ju! Theres something wrong with Timmy. He wont wake up! she cried. Hes breathing so heavily, too - just listen to him! And whats the matter downstairs? Whats happened?

Julian told her shortly while he examined Timmy. Somebody got in last night - your fathers studys in the most awful mess - absolutely ransacked from top to bottom, safe and all. Goodness knows how the fellow got in to do it.

How awful! said George, looking very pale. And now somethings wrong with Tim. He didnt wake up last night when the burglar came - hes ill, Julian!

No, hes not. Hes been doped, said Julian, pulling back Timmys eyelids. So thats why he was so long outside last night! Somebody gave him some meat or something with dope in - some kind of drug. And he ate it, and slept so soundly that he never heard a thing - and isnt even awake yet.

Oh, Julian - will he be all right? asked George anxiously, stroking Timmys motionless body. But how could he take any food from a stranger in the night?

Maybe he picked it up - the burglar may have flung it down hoping that Timmy would eat it, said Julian. Now I understand why he looked so sheepish when he came in. He didnt even jump up and lick me.

Oh, dear - Timmy, do, do wake up, begged poor George, and she shook the big dog gently. He groaned a little and snuggled down again.

Leave him, said Julian. Hell be all right. Hes not poisoned, only drugged. Come down and see the damage!

George was horrified at the state of her fathers study. They were after his two special books of American notes, Im sure they were, she said. Father said that any other country in the world would be glad to have those. Whatever are we to do?

Better get in the police, said Julian, gravely. We cant manage this sort of thing ourselves. And do you know your fathers address in Spain?

No, wailed George. He and Mother said they were going to have a real holiday this time - no letters to be forwarded, and no address left till they had been settled somewhere for a few days. Then theyd telegraph it.

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