



JUST LIKE COKER!



Peter Todd
(of the Greyfriars Remove)

It is not like Horace Coker to make a success of a booby-trap—but it is just like Coker to walk into it himself!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

COKER IN CONFLICT

"HALLO! Here comes Coker!" Bob Cherry made the remark, and Harry Wharton & Co. smiled. Fellows usually did smile when they sighted Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars.

The chums of the Remove were chatting together under the old archway that gave admittance from the quadrangle to the ruined part of the school. They were discussing cricket. And Coker, as he came along with his chums, Potter and Greene, was talking about the same subject.

The Famous Five could scarcely fail to know that. Coker's voice, like Coker himself, was big and strong, and he was fairly letting himself go.

"Cricket!" Coker was bellowing. "Don't talk to me about cricket,

George Potter. What the thump do you know about cricket, I should like to know?"

"Well, I'm in the First Eleven, Coker," responded Potter warmly. "And that's more than you are, or ever likely to be!"

This, obviously, should have flattened Coker, for it was true. But Coker took a great deal of flattening. His voice fairly bawled in a typical Cokerish retort:

"And why aren't I?" he asked in derisive accents. "Why, indeed! Because our cricket skipper's a born idiot and an incompetent footer; because of rank envy and ranker jealousy; because——"

Coker paused there—not because he had no more to say, but because he had reached Harry Wharton & Co.

Instead of continuing his entertaining remarks on cricket to Potter

and Greene, Coker addressed one brief, autocratic word to the Famous Five.

"Shift!" he said.

The Famous Five stared at him. There was plenty of room to pass. Potter and Greene had already strolled round the juniors and passed. But not so Coker. The great Horace was not accustomed to moving aside for mere "fags," as he termed them.

"Shift?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What d'you mean, Coker—if you mean anything?"

"I said 'shift'—and I mean 'shift'!" said Coker. "Look lively, kids—shift!"

Coker fairly bawled that last. But it did not move the Famous Five.

"Oh, you mean you want us to get out of the way!" said Bob Cherry in surprise. "But, my dear man—why? Heaps of room to pass—even if you bring your feet with you, Coker; that is, of course, provided you bring them any way but broadside-on."

"That's cheek!" decided Coker, after thinking over Bob Cherry's remarks. "I want no cheek from scrubby fags, young Cherry. Are you, or are you not going to shift?"

"Not, old bean!"

"Then I'll jolly well shift you!" stated Coker grimly.

Being prompt in action, as well as a man of his word, Horace Coker proceeded to carry his threat into instant effect. He grabbed Frank Nugent and slung him aside like a feather pillow. Not being quite prepared for such quick action from Coker, Nugent thumped into the wall of the archway, his head coming up against the masonry with a fearful crack.

Nugent's howl was almost fiendish. But Coker had finished with Nugent—or imagined he had. He turned to Harry Wharton, evidently selecting him as the next man to be "shifted."

Harry Wharton was more prepared, however, and he stopped Coker by the effective expedient of hitting him hard on the nose.

Coker quite lost his temper, then. Nugent might be hurt, but Nugent was merely a junior, and that was a small matter. A punch on the nose is decidedly painful. Coker was hurt, and Coker being hurt was a serious matter calling for drastic measures. He promptly dropped the selection of individuals, and went for the Famous Five, hitting out right and left.

What happened next, Coker least of all knew. But somehow Coker's right and left hits didn't register anywhere, and Coker himself went down in the grasp of five pairs of youthful hands.

He went with a crash that almost shook the massive masonry of the ancient archway, and his yell almost equalled the effect. The next moment a wild and whirling struggle was in progress.

As yet, Coker had made no appeal for help to Potter and Greene. It was a case of five to one, but Coker never counted the odds. They were there, counted or uncounted, none the less. And presently it began to dawn in upon Coker's mind that he had taken on much more than he could handle, so he gave a yell for help:

"Help! Yow-ow! Oh, you—you young sweeps! Gerroff! Help! Potter—Greene—pile in and help! Don't stand—ow-ow!—staring and grinning there! Rescue!"

Potter and Greene heard—they could scarcely fail to hear—but they did not heed. In their view Coker had asked for what he was getting and they were more than willing to let him have it all to himself.

Coker did have it all to himself. By the time Harry Wharton & Co. had drawn off, Coker felt as if he had



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been mixed up in the revolutions of an aeroplane propeller.

"That should teach the ass a lesson, anyway!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Now into that basket with him, chaps—that's where rubbish should be shot!"

Once again five pairs of hands fell upon Coker. Feebly struggling, Coker was raised aloft and shot, head foremost, into a wire litter-basket clamped to the wall of the archway.

Leaving Coker tightly jammed by the shoulders in the basket, with legs wildly waving in the air, the Famous Five strolled on, a trifle breathless, but satisfied.

To judge by his bellowing roars,

Coker was far from satisfied. Presently his roars changed to choking gurgles, and, realising he was on the point of suffocating, Potter and Greene decided it was time to go to his rescue.

After a struggle they hauled Coker from his uncomfortable position and removed stray scraps of paper and bits of orange-peel from his person. Coker didn't seem grateful.

"You—you footling owls!" he choked, the moment he could speak. "You—you disloyal sweeps! Call yourselves pals! Why didn't you lend a hand, Potter—and you, too, Greene?"

"We—we thought you were licking them," explained Potter, with obvious

insincerity. "So—so we left it to you, Coker. You see—"

"Of course I was licking them!" To their great relief Coker accepted the explanation. "Think a swarm of grubby fags can lick me, George Potter? I'll smash them to bits! I'll pulverize the little sweeps! Where are they?"

Coker glanced around him a trifle dizzily. He was just in time to glimpse Harry Wharton & Co. as they passed through the gateway in the shattered wall of the ruins.

"Gone for a walk in the ruins," said Greene, winking at Potter. "Better let 'em rip, Coker!"

"Much better, old man," said Potter, returning Greene's wink. "The little cheeky imps will only put you through it again—that is," added Potter, correcting himself hastily, "you can finish lickin' 'em again, Coker."

Evidently Coker agreed upon that. Possibly the licking he had bestowed upon the Famous Five had proved more painful to the giver than the receivers. At all events Coker seemed to have had enough for the moment. He did not rush after the Famous Five.

"Licking! I'll give 'em licking when they come back!" he panted, ferociously glaring at the gateway in the wall. "They'll have to come back through that dashed gateway, and then—by jingo!"

Coker broke off, his eyes fixed upon the gateway in the ruins. Evidently an idea had ventured into the mighty brain of Horace Coker.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

COKER COMES A CROPPER!

"By jingo!" he repeated excitedly. "Just the very thing, you chaps! I'll teach 'em! See those turves yonder?"

"Eh? Turves? Yes, old man!"

"And that gateway?"

"Gateway? Why, yes, Coker. But—"

"Just the very thing!" stated Coker eagerly. "Those turves are simply soaked after the rain, and they'd make an awful mess of anyone if they dropped on them from that gateway, wouldn't they?"

"They would—in more ways than one, I should think!" grinned Potter. "Must be nearly a hundredweight there. But what—"

"A giddy booby-trap, of course," said Coker, nearly grinning now. "See the idea? Rather a kids' game, of course, but then it's for kids! We fix the turves above the gateway there, and fasten a rope from them to the iron gate, so that when those cheeky sweeps open the gate—well, they'll get the lot. See?"

Potter and Greene did see. They stared at Coker. That self-satisfied senior imagined it was a stare of admiration, and he chuckled.

"Good wheeze, what? Well, let's get busy! Come on!"

Coker rushed off to find a suitable rope for his purpose. As he vanished Potter looked at Greene and Greene looked at Potter. The looks were expressive.

"The—the born idiot!" gasped Potter. "Jevver see such an idiot, Greene?"

"Never! There couldn't be one!" said Greene. "A—a Fifth Form chap—a dashed senior, you know—rigging up a silly booby-trap! And as if we're going to muck up our hands with those filthy things!"

"Not likely!" said Potter. "I'm off!"

"Same here!" grinned Greene, and the two of them walked off—quickly.

But not quite quickly enough! As they turned into the archway again they almost collided with a running figure carrying a short length of rope. It was Coker. He stared

wrathfully, and Potter hastened to explain.

"Just off for a rope ourselves, Coker!" he gasped. "Oh, g-good! You've already got one, then."

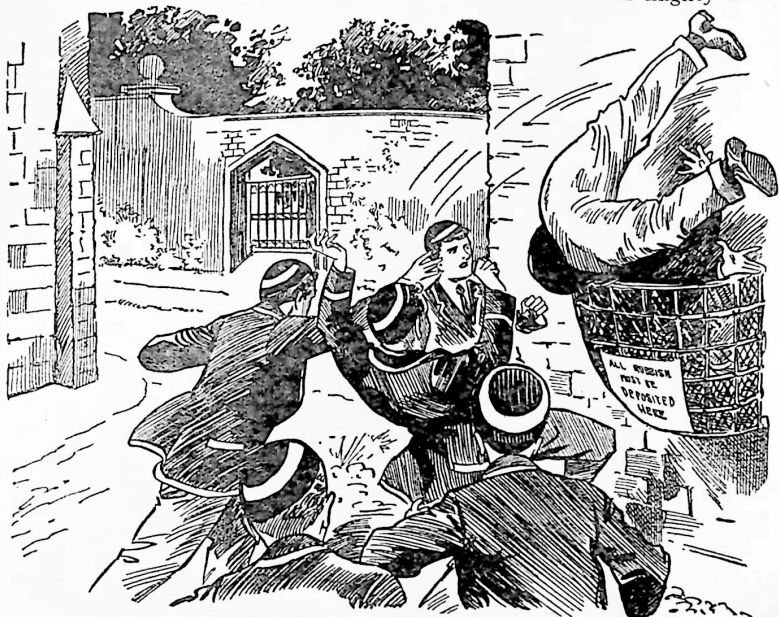
"Yes—almost tripped over it outside the tuckshop!" grinned Coker. "Come on—look lively before those kids return!"

Potter and Greene groaned. Coker was quite satisfied with their "explanation," but the fact brought little satisfaction to them now. They dare not disappear after that.

None the less, they had no intention of soiling their hands on the turves. Fortunately, Coker simply didn't bother to ask them again—he was too

busy even to notice they weren't helping. He found a length of board, and tied one end of the rope round this. The other end he fastened to one of the rusty upright bars of the iron gate. This operation completed, Coker started on the turves.

These had, at some time or other, been piled against the wall by the gardener, and they were in a sodden state. But Coker didn't seem to mind. He piled some of them up on top of the wall. Then he clambered up, set the board in position and began to pile the turves delicately on top of the board. Satisfied at last, Coker jumped down again gleefully. Apparently it hadn't occurred to his mighty brain



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that anyone in the ruins could have seen his burly figure easily.

"Now you'll see," Coker grinned, joining his chums. "Matter of fact, I didn't feel up to finishing licking those kids just now, and this will pay 'em out much better, what? Bright idea, eh? Now wait."

They waited. They did not have to wait long. One minute later Potter gave a grim chuckle and pointed.

"Here they come, Coker!"

Coker saw them coming—and his jaw dropped. He gave a startled gasp. For Harry Wharton & Co. were not coming through the gateway at all. They were coming along, grinning broadly, on the outside of the wall!

"You—you silly owl!" said Potter. "Didn't you realise they could easily see you on that wall, Coker? They must have spotted you, anyway, and they've climbed over the wall higher up. You've had all your silly work for nothing."

"And made yourself look silly, too!" said Greene. "Look how they're grinning—like Cheshire cats, only more so."

The Famous Five certainly were grinning. They came along cheerily, and they called to Coker:

"Cheerio, Coker old son! Still here, old bean?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Hasn't the rubbish man called for you yet?" inquired Bob Cherry, in surprise. "I thought it was his day for emptying the litter-baskets."

Coker did not reply—not in words, at least. He was dirty, he was aching from his recent exertions with the turves, he was bitterly disappointed—and he was wrathful.

He gave a roar of rage and went for the Famous Five with a rush.

He grabbed at them, and they grabbed at him. But five pairs of hands did better than one. Coker was lifted and strewn over the ground.

Only stopping to grab Coker's cap and pitch it over the wall, Harry Wharton passed on after his chums.

Coker scrambled up. He was raging. He bawled to his pals.

"Stop 'em! After the little sweeps, Potter—after 'em, Greene! Hold 'em! Wait till I get my dashed cap. I'll show 'em! I'll—I'll——"

Coker didn't stay to finish his remarks. Leaving Potter and Greene to stop the Famous Five and hold 'em, Coker rushed to get his cap. Of course, he forgot all about his booby-trap. Coker was like that; only Coker did this sort of thing!

He rushed at the gate, and the booby-trap worked beautifully.

Swoop! Thump! Flop! Flop! Floppity-flop!

The rope displaced the board, and the board let down the turves.

They came with a rush, amid a shower of soil and stones. Coker gave a fiendish howl as the end of the heavy board caught him a fearful clump on the head. His further howls were smothered as the sodden turves swooped down with a rush over his head. He went to the ground under a shower of wet and slimy turves. From beneath the heaving pile Coker bellowed for aid.

But he bellowed in vain. Neither Potter and Greene, nor the Famous Five were in a condition to aid Coker. They were all doubled up, helpless with hysterical laughter.

Once again Coker had to work unaided. At last he unearthed himself and rose to his feet, dizzy and utterly squashed in more ways than one. Choked, half-blinded, battered and bruised, and smothered from head to foot in wet soil, Horace Coker tottered away indoors for a much-needed wash and change, followed by shrieks of laughter. But apparently he had had enough of vengeance.

THE END