

FRANK RICHARDS

BILLY
BUNTER
AND THE
MAN FROM SOUTH AMERICA

PAUL HAMLYN



CHAPTER 1

The Eve of Breaking Up!

“Tomorrow is the last day of the term!”

“Hear, hear!”

“We’re breaking-up—”

“Hurrah!”

“Bravo!”

Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove Form at Grey-friars, paused. The pause was filled in by another shout from the excited juniors in the Remove Form-room.

“Hurrah!”

“Gentlemen, I thank you for your applause,” said Wharton, in his best manner, “but—”

“Hear, hear!”

“But—”

“Bravo!”

“But if you would be kind enough to shut up for a bit, and let me get to the point, I should take it as a personal favour.”

And the juniors laughed.

On the eve of breaking-up everybody was excited and everybody was in a good temper. Even Bulstrode wore a good-humoured grin. There were a dozen Removites in the Form-room, and when it was understood that Wharton had something to say, everybody was willing to cheer, if not to listen. Wharton had mounted on a form.

“Gentlemen of the Lower Fourth—”

“Hear, hear!”

“Order!” said Bob Cherry, rapping on a desk with a cricket- stump. “Order!”

“Hear, hear!”

“Gentlemen, as we are breaking-up, I have a suggestion to make for winding up the term in a really ripping and satisfactory manner. As the most important Form at Greyfriars—”

Quite a roar of cheering interrupted the speaker. That the Remove was the most important Form at Greyfriars was a fact undoubted by any fellow in the Remove. The Sixth Form might assume grave and reverend airs, and regard themselves as the “giddy Palladium,” as Bob Cherry put it, of the school. The Fifth might “swank” around as half-fledged seniors, and the Shell might think no small beer of themselves. The Upper Fourth might hold their noses high in the air, and affect to look down on the Remove as fags. All these things might be without in the least shaking the serene conviction of the

Remove that they were the most important Form at Greyfriars—in fact, that *they* were Greyfriars.

“Hurrah!”

“Order!”

“Hear, hear!”

“Bravo, Wharton!”

Rap, rap! went the cricket-stump.

“Order!”

“The orderfulness is terrific,” murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur. “Pray moderate the esteemed transportfulness, my worthy chums.”

“Hear, hear!”

“As the most important Form at Greyfriars,” went on Harry Wharton, as soon as there was a lull, “it behoves us—”

“Well, that’s a jolly good word!” said Frank Nugent.

“Order!”

“It behoves us,” went on Harry calmly, “it behoves us to give the term a good wind-up, and I’ve got an idea. You are aware, of course, that the Sixth are in the habit of giving a giddy Greek play at the end of the midsummer term.”

There was a groan for the Sixth and their Greek play. Most of the fellows present had sat out the Sixth Form Greek play, for their memories of it were painful.

“My idea is that the Junior Dramatic Society should give a play to wind up this term, and that the Sixth should come and hear us,” said Wharton. “We have to listen to the Sixth Form play whether we like it or not!”

“Hear, hear!”

“We can send invitations to the Sixth, pointing that fact out,” said Bulstrode. “I suppose you fellows will be acting in the play?”

“Certainly!” said Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, and Hurree Singh together. They were the most prominent members of the Amateur Dramatic Society.

“Good!” said Bulstrode. “It will serve the Sixth jolly well right.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared the juniors.

“It will serve ‘em right,” repeated Bulstrode. “The Sixth are a nuisance, and this will make us even with them for the trouble they’ve given us all the term.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“If that hooligan persists in interrupting the meeting, he will be thrown out,” exclaimed Wharton warmly.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Order!”

“I say, you fellows,” exclaimed Billy Bunter, jumping on a form near Wharton—“I say, I’ve got a suggestion to make.”

“Shut up, Bunter!”

“Oh, really, Wharton, I don’t see why I shouldn’t get up and talk sense, when you’re allowed to get up and talk rot.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Go it, Bunter!”

“Well, I think Wharton’s right in suggesting a sort of celebration to wind up the term,” said Billy Bunter, blinking round upon the grinning juniors through his big spectacles, “but instead of a dramatic entertainment, I suggest that it should take the form of a feed.”

“Hear, bear!”

“I think that’s a jolly good idea,” said Bunter. “You see, it will make the business easier in issuing the invitations. Nobody ever goes to an amateur dramatic entertainment if he can help it, but anybody will come to a feed. In fact, there’s sure to be a rush.”

“And you’ll be the first rusher,” grinned Ogilvy.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I think it’s a good idea—”

“Shut up, Bunter!”

“I shan’t shut up, Wharton. The fellows all approve of my suggestion, and I think you ought to stand down,” exclaimed the fat junior.

“Bunter can stand the feed after the entertainment,” suggested Bob Cherry with a grin.

“Good egg!”

“Oh, really, Cherry! I should be only too glad to stand a feed to the whole Form, but I’ve been disappointed about a postal-order.”

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was expecting a postal-order for a considerable amount this morning, but it hasn't come, owing to some delay in the post. It will be here tomorrow morning, and then I shall be pleased to settle for any little loans you fellows make me tonight. On those conditions I'll stand the feed willingly enough."

"I dare say you will," grinned Bob Cherry. "But you won't find anybody else willing, I think. Get down!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up! You're interrupting the meeting."

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Do shut up, Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "There's no time to waste, and we want to get to business, if we're to give a show this evening."

"Yes, but—"

"Order!"

"Ow!" roared Billy Bunter.

Someone had hurled an apple from the crowd, and it caught Billy Bunter under his double chin. The fat junior gave a jump, and missed his footing on the form.

The next moment he was rolling on the floor.

There was a yell of laughter.

"Do that again, Buntty!" shouted Bob Cherry, with the tears in his eyes. "Do it again! I didn't know you were such a giddy acrobat."

The fat junior sat up, gasping, on the floor. His sudden downfall had knocked all the wind out of his plump carcass.

"Ow! Oh, really—" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"

"Gentlemen, is my suggestion adopted?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Is there to be a performance by the Junior Dramatic Society this evening?"

"Yes ! Yes!"

CHAPTER 2

Bunter Apologises!

"I say you fellows!"

Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry were in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage when Billy Bunter came in. Wharton had a pen in his hand, and the three juniors were wrinkling their brows over a paper he was drawing up. They looked up impatiently as the fat junior came in and interrupted them.

"Oh, get out!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We're not going to stand a feed and we're not going to lend you anything off an imaginary postal-order," said Nugent. "Get out!"

"It's another matter—"

"Shut up!"

"I wasn't going to speak about the feed. I know you're too jolly mean to stand one," said Bunter. "It's another matter, and it's rather important."

Wharton laid down his pen.

"Oh, buck up, for goodness sake!" he said resignedly.

"You see, tomorrow's the last of the term—"

"Yes, we know that already."

"I mean we shall be breaking-up—"

"You'll jolly well get broken up this evening if you don't buzz out of this study soon," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent! What I mean is, I had a jolly good invitation for the Easter holidays, you know—a titled friend of my father's—"

"Rats!"

"I was invited to spend the vacation at his splendid mansion—"

"Rubbish!"

"Where he has at least thirty liveried servants, and I should eat off gold and silver!" said Billy Bunter, glowering with rage.

"Well, I hope you've accepted the invitation!" said Bob Cherry.

"It's fallen through—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Owing to my titled friend having an attack of gout, the invitation's fallen through," said Bunter. "I think I might as well come to your place, Wharton. You haven't told me your plans for the vac, but I suppose you're having a party of friends home?"

"Not at all!"

"Oh, really—"

"I'm spending the vac away," said Harry, laughing; "and as I can't ask you to another chap's house, Bunty, you'll have to look further."

"Oh, very well! After all, I don't particularly want to come to Wharton Lodge. I'd just as soon spend the vac with you, Nugent—in fact, rather!"

"I wouldn't though!" said Nugent. "Besides, I'm going away for the holiday."

"Oh, dear! I'll come home with you, if you like, Cherry."

"You jolly well won't!" said Bob. "I'm not going home, for one thing; I'm spending the vacation away, with Wharton and Nugent, Linley and Inky."

"Oh! You're all going to the same place?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you could get an extra invite for a chum?" said Billy Bunter, in a wheedling voice. "Of course you'd be glad to have me!"

"Well, you've had us often enough!" remarked Nugent. "You have nearly everybody you meet, don't you, Bunty?"

"Oh, really—"

"But we can't invite you to another chap's house," said Wharton, "and we jolly well wouldn't if we could! You're too much trouble, and you're always making your friends feel small by your rotten tricks! That's plain English!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him. The fat junior of the Greyfriars Remove had a pretty thick skin, and it was not easy for his feelings to be hurt.

Bunter did not intend to go home for the vacation, if he could help it. His people did not fully understand the necessity of feeding him as well as he liked to be fed. And Bunter senior often found him work in the garden during the vacation. Billy did not like work.

His people were not rich, but Bunter had expensive tastes. He was fully determined to spend that vacation, as he spent most of them—at another fellow's house. The only question was how was it to be worked.

"What chap are you staying with, Wharton?" he inquired, after a pause.

"What do you want to know for?" said Wharton bluntly.

"Oh— You see— I—"

"You want to get an invitation out of him?" said Harry. "I shan't tell you! Now, buzz off; we're busy!"

"You might tell me the chap's name."

"Rats! Get out!"

"Is it Ogilvy?"

"Get out!"

Bob Cherry rose, and took the poker, and put the end of it in the fire. Then he stood beside the firegrate, waiting for it to get hot.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in a very doubtful way.

"I suppose it's not Linley?" he said. "Of course, I should bar Linley. I couldn't consent to forget my dignity sufficiently to pass a vac with a cad— Ow!"

A handsome, sturdy junior had just entered the study. It was Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire—the scholarship boy of the Remove. He could not help hearing Bunter's remarks, and the colour flushed into his face, but he gave no other sign.

Wharton rose to his feet, and took Bunter's ears between his finger and thumb. That was the cause of Bunter's anguished "Ow!"

"Ow! Leggo! Yow!"

"You rotten cad!" said Harry angrily. "I've warned you before about it. Ask Linley's pardon at once!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Mark Linley.

"It's not all right! Bunter's a cad, a snob, and a rotter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Beg Linley's pardon at once!"

"Oh! Yow! All right. I—I beg your pardon, Linley. Ow! I really didn't mean that, you know. What I—I really meant to say was, that I admired you awfully, you know, and— Ow!"

Mark Linley gave the fat junior a glance of contempt.
 "Ow! Leggo, Wharton, you beast! Ow! I've told the rotter I'm sorry! Ow!"
 "Get on your knees, porpoise!"
 "Ow! I won't!"
 "Down, dog!" said Nugent.
 "To your knees!" grinned Bob Cherry.
 "Ow! Ow! I—I won't—I—I mean, all right, I will!" And Billy Bunter flopped down heavily on his fat knees. "Ow! Yah!"
 "Now, apologise properly!"
 "Ow! I won't! Yow!" Wharton's finger and thumb tightened upon the fat junior's ear, and Bunter howled with anguish. "Ow! All right!"
 "You will say I'm sorry I'm a snob and a cad—"
 "Ow! I'm sorry Wharton's a snob and a cad—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.
 Wharton flushed red.
 "What's that?" he roared.
 "That's what you told me to say!" stammered Billy Bunter.
 "Ass! You're to speak in the first person, that's what I meant!"
 "But you were the first person to speak, and—"
 "Ass! Say I'm sorry I'm a cad—"
 "I'm sorry you're a cad—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "He doesn't seem to understand," said Wharton. "I'll jolly well squeeze his ear till he does. There's nothing like it!"
 "Ow! Yow! I—I think I understand. I—I'm sorry I'm a cad and a snob, Linley!"
 "So am I!" said Mark. "I suppose you can't help it."
 "Ow! Wow! Leggo!"
 Harry Wharton released Billy Bunter's ear, and the fat junior staggered to his feet, rubbing the damaged auricular appendage ruefully.
 "Ow! Beast! I'm hurt!"
 "Now get out!"
 Bunter rubbed his ear, and blinked savagely.
 "I've got to settle about that holiday yet. Look here—"
 "It's settled! Buzz off!"
 "It's not settled! I'm a businesslike chap, and I want to get things definitely fixed up for the vac!" said Bunter. "Where are you going—"
 Bob Cherry drew the poker from the fire. The end was red-hot.
 "Are you going, Bunter?" he asked politely.
 "Oh! Keep off! Yah! Yaroo!"
 Billy Bunter backed away from the glowing tip of the poker. Bob Cherry made a pretended lunge at him, and the fat junior fled into the passage. Bob laughed, and slammed the door.
 "I shall be jolly glad to get a rest from that chap this vac," he remarked.

CHAPTER 3

The Programme!

"My hat!"
 "More Remove cheek!"
 "The Lower Fourth want a licking all round!"
 "Yes, rather!"
 Such were some of the remarks passed by a little crowd of Fifth- and Sixth-Formers gathered, after tea, before the notice-board in the hall.
 There was a new paper pinned up there, and it was in the handwriting of Harry Wharton, the head boy of the Remove, and president of the Junior Dramatic Society.
 The seniors grinned or frowned as they read it, according to the way they looked at the matter.
 Wingate, the Greyfriars captain, laughed, and so did Courtney, and they walked away still laughing.

Loder and Came scowled. Blundell and Bland, of the Fifth, looked extremely indignant.

"The cheek!" said Blundell.

"The nerve!" said Bland.

Temple, Dabney and Co., of the Upper Fourth, were standing at the back of the crowd, greatly interested, and trying to get a look at the notice. But the crowd of seniors was too thick at present, and the Fourth-Formers had to wait.

The seniors read the notice, and their remarks were more emphatic than complimentary to Harry Wharton and his Junior Dramatic Society. The notice ran as follows:

"NOTICE!

"To juniors, seniors, and masters of Greyfriars

"This evening, to celebrate the eve of breaking-up for the Easter holidays, a performance will be given by the Junior Dramatic Society.

"The performance will take place punctually at eight o'clock in the Remove Form-room, and all are invited.

"The play given will be 'Hamlet', and the cast will be as follows:

Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark.....	H. Wharton.
Laertes.....	F. Nugent.
Horatio.....	R. Cherry.
The Ghost.....	P. Hazeldene.
The King.....	M. Linley.
Polonius.....	D. Morgan.
The Queen.....	Omitted.
Ophelia.....	Omitted.
Courtiers, Soldiers, Gravediggers, &c.....	The Remove.

"Owing to the shortness of the time, it is impossible for lady members of the Dramatic Society to be present, and the parts will, therefore, be omitted, with regret.

"Everybody is welcome, and the Sixth are expected to honour the occasion with their presence if they expect the Remove to turn up for the Greek play at the end of next term.

"Signed, H. WHARTON, Pres. D.S." Loder.

"Of all the nerve!" said Loder.

"The cheek!"

"The young sweeps!"

"The Sixth are expected to turn up, are they?" said Came. "I've a good good mind to turn up and bust the show, for their impudence."

"That's a jolly good idea," said Blundell, of the Fifth. "We'll back you up."

"What-ho!" said Bland.

The seniors moved on, indignantly discussing the cheek of this latest wheeze of the Remove, the Sixth-Formers seeming to feel especially keenly the remark about the Greek play.

Then the Fourth-Formers had a chance of reading the notice. They were quite as loud in their condemnation as the seniors—indeed, more so, because Temple, Dabney & Co. had a feeling of rivalry towards the Lower Fourth, and they felt that Harry Wharton had outgeneralled them.

"No good jawing," said Scott of the Fourth. "The question is, are we going to allow the Remove to swank about with their rotten dramatic entertainments like this?"

And like a chorus came the answer of Temple, Dabney & Co.:

"Then what's to be done?"

Temple grinned.

"We're all invited," he said. "We'll go. We'll take rattles and mouth-organs, and things of that sort, and supply the music for the occasion."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Incidental music rounds off a dramatic entertainment," grinned Temple. "We'll supply the incidental music."

"Oh, rather."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Upper Fourth fellows discussed the idea, and the more they discussed it, the better they liked it, and they were soon busy making their preparations. There was a great deal of packing done that evening; but the Junior Dramatic Society found time for a hurried rehearsal of "Hamlet", and at eight

o'clock they were all ready in the Form-room.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were ready, too.

On the last night of the term, a considerable amount of license was allowed, and, besides that, Temple knew that the Remove wheeze had got the backs of the seniors up. The Sixth didn't like the allusion to the Greek play, and they felt that the whole affair was a sort of disrespectful imitation of their own doings at the end of the midsummer term. As for the Fifth, they were averse to the Remove bringing themselves into public notice at all. Whatever the Upper Fourth did that evening, they were not likely to be interfered with unless they carried it very much too far.

Temple, Dabney and Fry came up to the Form-room together, with a crowd of their Form-fellows, ten minutes early. They meant to have good places, whence they could boo and rattle and hoot to advantage. Billy Bunter met them at the door. The fat junior was blinking discontentedly.

"Hallo, aren't you in the cast, Bunter?" asked Temple, with great apparent astonishment.

"No. I'm left out."

"Why?" asked Fry solemnly.

"Jealousy," explained Bunter. "There's an awful lot of personal and petty jealousy goes on in my study. They want to keep me in the shade, you know. They know that if once I showed what I could do, they wouldn't loom much in the public eye again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 4

Playing "Hamlet"

Harry Wharton looked out from behind the "scenes". The curtain was down, but there was a gap where it did not meet in the middle, and he could see into the auditorium. The end of the Form-room had been curtained off—many curtains having been pinned together to make one large enough—and slung on a cord across the room. Two Removites were in charge of the curtains, with orders to signal—on pain of death if they blundered.

The scene on the stage represented that of the opening of "Hamlet"—the ramparts of the castle where the Ghost appears.

Two Removites were already doing sentry-duty in sentinel costume. The costumes of the Junior Dramatic Society were really good, and in a case like this the juniors eked out their own supply by borrowing from the costumier's in Friardale.

Harry Wharton was in Hamlet's garb, and his face was very well made up as that of the sad and doubting Prince of Denmark. Nugent was ready as Laertes, and Bob Cherry as Horatio. Hazeldene, behind the scenes, was rigging up a sheet to serve as a ghost with himself inside it.

Bob Cherry viewed his proceedings with a grin, and Morgan, who was acting Polonius, looked on in grim disapproval.

"It won't do," said Morgan.

"What's that?" said Hazeldene.

"It won't do."

"What won't do?"

"The ghost has to be clad in complete steel. Even an amateur audience couldn't take that blessed sheet for a suit of armour."

"Oh, rats," said Hazeldene, "we haven't any armour except the breastplates on the blessed sentries."

"I don't care. The ghost ought to be in armour."

"Well, he jolly well can't be, and that settles it."

"The sheet's all right," grinned Bob Cherry. "There are more ghosts in sheets than in armour, and very likely Shakespeare wrote the armour business because they had some medieval props on hand, you know."

"Ass," said Nugent.

"Anyway, it will have to do," said Hazeldene. "I think it looks convincing myself."

"But the lines," said Ivlgorgan.

"Oh, they can be altered."

"I don't approve of gagging in Shakespeare."

"Can't be helped."

"It's rot," said Morgan obstinately. "I tell you—"

"Oh, cheese it."

"Look you—"

“Rats!”

Harry Wharton turned round.

“Stop that row,” he said. “The room’s nearly full. You fellows ready with the curtain?”

“Yes,” said Russell and Todd, a little dubiously, however. The curtain was dragged aside. Todd managed his side very well, but Russell’s caught; perhaps the pins had something to do with it. Russell tugged and tugged, and the curtains sagged and swayed, but would not come to him.

“I—I can’t do it!” gasped Russell “It won’t come!” The audience yelled with delight.

Their yells were almost frantic when Hamlet was seen to rush from the scenes, and help the invisible scene-shifter to drag back the curtain.

It came back at last, and the stage was revealed.

Remove fellows in the audience turned the lights low, to make the proper effect on the stage; an acetylene bicycle-lamp behind the scenes playing the part of the moon, and casting beams of more than lunar brightness across the stage.

The two sentinels opened the scene with some diffidence, under the circumstances. Not a word that they said was heard, but nobody cared for that. They forgot half their lines, and stammered and muttered. Then Bob Cherry entered as Horatio, and, in spite of his make-up, the audience greeted him by name.

“Here comes Cherry!”

“Good old Bobby!”

“You asses,” roared Horatio. “Shut up and give a chap a chance!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” shrieked the audience, delighted with that original line.

“Don’t be an ass, Bob,” came a whisper from behind the scenes. “They’re trying to wreck the performance. Sit tight, and go ahead!”

“Oh, all right!” grunted Bob Cherry.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Bob Cherry, with a very red face, began to speak his lines. The scene between Horatio and the soldiers was got through in a hum and buzz of voices. Then at the words “Look, where it comes again—” a sheeted figure entered.

“The ghost!” shrieked Temple.

“Oh!” roared the Upper Fourth. “The g-g-g-ghost. Help! Rescue!”

“The ghost!”

The affected terror of the Upper Fourth made the rest of the audience yell. In the midst of the din someone turned up the lights, and a blaze of illumination descended upon the stage and the ghost. Hazeldene’s chalked face blinked at the audience under the folded sheet.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Wharton ran to the front of the stage.

“You rotters! Order! Fair play!”

“Go it!” shrieked Temple.

And the Fourth-Formers began to stamp on the floor. Rattles, mouth-organs and whistles were produced to add to the din; and the noise was terrific.

CHAPTER 5

Wrecked!

Wharton stood with a frowning brow, undecided how to act. Seniors as well as juniors were joining in the disturbance, and it was pretty plain that all the audience—with the exception of the Remove members—had come there with the special intention of making a row and mucking up the performance.

Rattle! Thud!

Stamp! Bang! Shriek!

The Fourth-Formers had fairly let themselves go now.

The characters in Hamlet gathered on the stage and held a muttered consultation, in utter dismay.

“What on earth’s to be done?” muttered Nugent. “They won’t let us go on.”

“No—it’s a plant.”

“We can’t go on.”

Rattle! Bang! Crash! Thump!

"Play up!" yelled Temple. "On the ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it!"

"Where's Hamlet?"

"To be or not to be, that's the giddy question!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! Crash! Bang!

"The rotters!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll jolly well turn 'em out, and play the play to only the Remove!"

"That's a good idea; we oughtn't to have admitted them. Fancy Sixth Form fellows behaving like this, too!"

"Rotten!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

Rattle! Bang! Crash! Bump!

"Turn them out!" shouted Nugent.

"That's the music!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Turn them out!" And the Remove members of the audience rose as one man to turn the disturbers out. Down from the stage came Hamlet & Co. to help.

That was just what Temple wanted.

All the Fourth-Formers were ready for ructions, and they only wanted the shadow of an excuse for wrecking the place.

Temple jumped up as Nugent seized him.

"Rally, Upper Fourth!" he shouted. "Sock it to them!"

"Hurrah!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yah! Go it!"

"Turn them out!" roared Bob Cherry.

But it was not so easy to turn out a party that outnumbered them. Instead of being turned out, the disturbers gained ground.

They drove the Remove back towards the stage, and invaded the sacred precinct, and the tussle went on among the scenes.

The result was inevitable.

The curtains came swooping down, enveloping the stage, and putting out the moon—in other words, the acetylene lamp which served the purpose of the lunar orb. And the smell that arose from the extinguished moon was terrific.

In the midst of the wreck the tussle went wildly on.

There was a sudden shout as the Form-room door opened.

"Cave!"

"The Head!"

But most of the combatants were too excited to hear or to heed.

The Head stood in the open doorway, looking into the room.

Blank amazement was upon his face.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "Most extraordinary!"

He strode forward with rustling gown.

"Boys, cease this disturbance instantly!"

"My hat! The Head!"

"Phew!"

"Oh!"

"Cease this at once, boys! You hear me!"

They heard him now, and they obeyed. Looking very red and sheepish, the combatants separated. Dr. Locke eyed them sternly.

"Boys! Blundell! Temple! Wharton! What does this mean?"

"You—you see, sir—" gasped Blundell.

"You see—"

"You see, sir—"

"I see a scene of most disgraceful riot!" said the Head severely. "What does it mean, Wharton?"

"You—you see, sir, we—we were giving a Shakespearian performance, and—"

"Indeed! Is this the way you give a Shakespearean performance?"

"You see, sir—"

"The audience didn't like the acting, sir," said Temple, who was the first to recover his coolness. "We thought we were within our rights to testify our disapproval of bad acting, sir."

“You ass!” exclaimed Bob Cherry wrathfully. “What do you know about acting?”

“Silence, Cherry—”

“Yes, sir, but that duffer—”

“Silence! Is it your custom, Temple, to disapprove of acting in this manner—by wrecking the place?”

“I—I think we were a little excited, sir.”

“I think you must have been,” said the Head grimly. “If it were not the last day of term I should cane every boy connected with this disturbance!”

“Oh, sir!”

“As it is, you will clear up this confusion, and then go to bed at once!”

“Oh, sir!”

“And if there is any further disturbance, you will hear from me. I shall keep an eye on this Form-room until you are gone to bed.”

“To—to bed, sir?” gasped Temple. “It’s—it’s not half-past—eight yet, sir!”

“It’s your own fault!”

“But, sir—”

“Not a word more, Temple.”

And the Head marched majestically from the room.

The Removites did not speak. Their feelings were too deep for words, but the members of the Junior Dramatic Society, as they set about collecting up the overturned scenes and props, vowed inwardly that early in the new term Temple, Dabney & Co. should repent them of the mischief they had done.

CHAPTER 6

Not Invited!

Clang, clang!

As the bell rang through the old school next morning the Remove, with the exception of Billy Bunter, turned out with commendable celerity.

Bunter had an almost infinite capacity for sleep. He was always first man in and last man out, as Bob Cherry put it. He was the last up that morning, and as he stood at his washstand, going through his apology for a wash, there was a thoughtful frown upon his fat face. The question of where he should spend the vacation was not settled yet, and the time was getting close.

Bunter cast many glances towards the chums of the Remove, but they did not seem to notice it. They were not inclined to help him out.

The fat junior had imposed so much and so often upon the kindness of his Form-fellows that he had reached the end of their patience, and they simply did not want him to come and be a general trouble during their holiday. Harry Wharton & Co. had not told him where they were going, and Bunter had therefore been unable to fish for an invitation to the same place. But Bunter was not easily defeated in a matter of this kind. He could be very determined when it was a question of securing his own comfort, “I say, you fellows,” he remarked, as they left the dormitory, “have you finally settled about the vac?”

“Long ago,” said Harry curtly.

“I think you mentioned yesterday that you wanted me to come?”

“Something amiss with your thinker, then—we didn’t.”

“Oh, really, Wharton—”

Harry walked on. Bunter blinked after him, and fastened himself upon Bob Cherry, trotting with his fat little legs to keep pace with Bob’s long stride down the passage.

“I say, Cherry, did you say it was Ogilvy’s place you were going to?”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Is it Russell’s?”

“Find out.”

“Oh, really Cherry—”

Bob Cherry quickened his pace and escaped. Bunter turned upon Nugent, but Nugent hurried after Bob. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh hurried on, too, as he saw Bunter blink at him, but the fat junior caught his sleeve.

“Inky, old man, I think it’s Desmond’s uncle’s place you’re going to, isn’t it?”

“The findfulness out would be the good dodge, my worthy chum.”

And the Nabob jerked himself free and fled. Billy Bunter snorted. He went downstairs, and blinked round in search of Mark Linley, whom he knew to be a member of the same party for the vacation. Linley had been out early, and he was coming in for breakfast, looking very fresh and ruddy. Billy

Bunter intercepted him. The sturdy Lancashire lad looked down upon the fat junior good-humouredly. "I say, Linley, I've got something rather important to say," said Billy Bunter mysteriously. "It's about the vac, you know."

"Oh," said Mark.

"You're going with Wharton's lot?"

"Yes."

"Good. I'm coming, too. I've really got an invitation," explained Bunter, "a—a sort of standing invitation, you know."

Linley looked at him in surprise.

"What, has—" he began, and then he broke off suddenly. It struck him all at once that the fat junior was trying to trick him into betraying the name of the junior who had issued the invitations. He burst into a laugh.

"Yes," said Bunter eagerly, "you were going to say—"

"Nothing," said Mark, turning away.

"Yes, yes, you were—you were saying—"

"Rats!"

Mark Linley walked away, leaving the fat junior disconsolate. Hazeldene gave Bunter a slap on the shoulder, and he swung round with a start.

"Ow! Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, is it you, Hazeldene?" Bunter blinked at him. "I say, Hazeldene, I suppose you know that the fellows in my study are going off somewhere for the vac?"

"Yes," said Hazeldene, laughing.

"Do you know where they're going?" asked Bunter eagerly. Hazeldene laughed again.

"Yes, I do."

"Where?"

"Haven't they told you?"

"No," said Bunter, with a snort. "They haven't. They're keeping it dark for some reason. They seem to think that I shall get an invitation to the same place, and then, of course, they'll be put into the shade, if there's any dancing or evening parties, or anything of that sort, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do tell me who it is that's asked them, old chap. Look here, I'll try to get you an invitation to the same place," said Bunter persuasively.

Hazeldene yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" growled Billy Bunter peevishly. "Where's the joke?"

Hazeldene did not reply. He walked away, still laughing. Billy Bunter blinked in a perplexed way. He did not see where the joke came in.

The chums of No. 1 Study were packing a bag in that famous apartment, when the fat junior strolled in after breakfast. Bunter blinked at them. They took no notice of his entering, and were apparently unconscious of his presence.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Pull that strap a bit tighter," said Bob Cherry.

"Right you are."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Halo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter! Do buzz off, Bunter!"

"I'll buzz off when you do," said Bunter. "As I'm going to the same place, I may as well pack some of my things in that bag."

"You're going to the same place?"

"Yes. I've just got an invitation, and I've accepted it."

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Do you mean to say that Hazeldene has been duffer enough—"

"Hazeldene!" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Shut up, Bob, you ass!"

But it was too late. Billy Bunter had made the long-desired discovery.

"Hazeldene!" he exclaimed. "Hazeldene! The—the rotter!"

"Didn't you know?" roared Bob Cherry indignantly. "Why, you said—"

"I—I was speaking figuratively—"

"Why, you blessed fraud—"

The wrathful Bob made a rush at Bunter, who skipped out of the study just in time. He did not stop in the passage. He bolted down the stairs, and blinked round below for Hazeldene.

Hazeldene was not to be seen. Bunter blinked to and fro, and inquired right and left, but there was no sign of Hazeldene.

"Hazeldene! Have you seen Hazeldene?"

"Faith, and he's gone?" said Micky Desmond, affording some information at last; though not of a very welcome kind.

"Gone?" yelled Billy Bunter.

"Faith, and he has intaiely! Did ye want him?"

"Of course I did. But he can't be gone! His box is in the hall!"

"He's gone over to Cliff House to see his sister," exclaimed Micky. "They don't break up for a couple of days yet, you see. He's going to join us at the station again. Wharton's taking charge of his box."

"Oh!"

Bunter drifted into the house again. The fellows were all getting ready to leave; there was a taxi waiting in the Close now, and a crowd of fellows were going by it. Some were going by later trains; but more than half the Remove were to go in that taxi. And Billy Bunter meant to go in it, as Harry Wharton & Co. were going. But how was he to manage about the necessary invitation?

"Put my box in the taxi along with Wharton's, Gosling," said Bunter, to the school porter. "You won't forget?"

Gosling grunted.

"I should like to give you a decent tip, Gosling—" The school porter brightened up.

"Thank you kindly, Master Bunter."

"But I've been disappointed about a postal-order, and I can't. But—"

Gosling grunted again.

"But Wharton is going to give you a decent tip, for both of us, and I shall settle it with Wharton later," explained Bunter. "Don't forget my box."

Harry Wharton & Co. came downstairs. They were heavily laden with bags and travelling-rugs and mufflers. They came out to the taxi, and Billy Bunter clambered into it with them. They looked at him curiously.

"You're going by the same train, Bunter?"

"Yes, certainly!"

And the taxi rolled off.

CHAPTER 7

Off for the Holidays!

The juniors poured into the station. Harry Wharton & Co. secured a carriage for themselves; and, of course, Billy Bunter planted himself in it. Frank Nugent shook him by the shoulder.

"This isn't your train!" he exclaimed.

"Eh?"

Bunter blinked at him, apparently not understanding.

"This is the London train!"

"Well, what about it?" grunted Bunter peevishly. "I can go by the London train, if I like, can't I?"

"Ass! We've got to get to London to change, but you haven't. You're in the wrong train!" bawled Nugent.

"I'm going to change at London."

"Nonsense! You—"

"I think I ought to know best where I'm going to change," said Bunter.

"Oh, have your own way," said Nugent resignedly. "You're in the wrong train, that's all. It's your own look-out."

"There's Hazeldene!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

He leaned out of the carriage door and waved to Hazeldene, who came running up.

"Luggage all right?" he asked.

"Yes. We've seen to that."

"Good!"

Hazeldene climbed into the carriage. There were still crowds of Greyfriars fellows on the platform, waiting for the next train, which was leaving five minutes after the present one. On breaking-up day at Greyfriars extra "locals" were run on the local railway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! We're starting!"

The train gave a jerk. There was a slamming of doors along the train. Frank Nugent shook Billy Bunter by the shoulder once more.

"You're in the wrong train, I tell you, Bunter. There's still time to jump out."

"Rot! My box is in the guard's van."

"Well, I tell you—"

"It's all right."

The door slammed, and the engine shrieked, and the train moved out of the station. Nugent shrugged his shoulders and sat down.

"It's too late now!" he remarked.

Bunter did not seem to mind. He made himself comfortable in his corner seat, and calmly appropriated a rug belonging to Bob Cherry to cover his legs.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked presently, "did any of you think to order a lunch-basket to be put in the train for us?"

"No."

"Then what are we going to do?"

"Go without, I expect."

"I shall be awfully hungry."

"Go hon!"

"Luckily, I thought of bringing some sandwiches," said Bunter, groping in his pocket. "Yes, here they are. I had better have a snack now, I think. Mrs. Kebble makes jolly good sandwiches."

"Did Mrs. Kebble make those for you?" asked Nugent curiously; for the fat junior was far from being a favourite with the Greyfriars housekeeper.

"Well, she made them," said Bunter. "I suppose they were for me. I told her I should like some, and she didn't say anything. Then I saw her put this packet down by Wingate's bag, and I supposed they were for me."

"You young ass! They were for Wingate! He has a jolly long journey to make."

"Well, I dare say they can give Wingate some more," said Billy Bunter comfortably. "It's jolly lucky I thought of bringing them. I should have been awfully hungry before I got to London. I'm sorry you fellows haven't any."

"Oh, we'll have some of them!" said Bob Cherry.

"Well, you see, there's only enough for one. I should like to share out with you chaps awfully, but I have my constitution to think of. I'm a delicate chap, and I can only keep going by having plenty of good nourishment. You wouldn't like to have me ill on your hands in London, would you?"

"We should jolly soon shift you off."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"We could send you to the Dogs' Home at Battersea," said Nugent. "Or I dare say there's a Home for Sick Porpoises somewhere."

"Oh, really—"

"Who says a chorus?" said Hazeldene.

"Jolly good idea."

And the melodious strains of "John Peel" rang out from the carriage windows while the train rushed on through the spring landscape. Billy Bunter didn't sing. He rather prided himself upon his voice; but he was too busy now.

He had said that he would have a snack. But when Bunter began eating it was difficult for him to leave off. He ate steadily till the last sandwich had disappeared, and then he sighed—like Alexander sighing for fresh worlds to conquer.

Then he curled himself up in his corner, with Bob Cherry's rug round his knees, and a muffler of Wharton's over his shoulders, and went to sleep—and slept soundly, in spite of the rocking of the train, and the vigorous choruses of the Removites and did not wake again till the train stopped in a murky station, and Bob Cherry shook him by the shoulder.

Then Bunter started out of slumber, and blinked sleepily.

"Where are we?" he mumbled. "What are you waking me for? Where are we?"

"London!"

"London?"

Billy Bunter sat upright, and blinked round him. The juniors were crowding out of the train upon a crowded platform. There was a general crowding and jostling, and endless voices and rolling of trolleys.

Harry Wharton ran down the train to look after the baggage. It had to be changed to another platform for the Western train. Billy Bunter was the last out of the carriage. Bob Cherry looked up and down.

"When does the train start?" Nugent asked.

"Just an hour."

"Time for some lunch," said Nugent.

"Just what I was thinking."

"Yes, rather!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm awfully peckish, you know."

"With a dozen sandwiches inside you, and we've had nothing," said Nugent, with a sniff.

"Oh, really, I offered to share them with you, you know!"

"Shut up, fatty! Where's the buffet?"

"This way," said Mark Linley.

Billy Bunter walked behind with Hazeldene as the party went towards the buffet. There was an ingratiating grin on his fat face.

"I say, Hazel, old chap—"

"Hallo!" said Hazeldene.

"Wharton wants to have me with him for the vac—"

"Rats!" said Hazeldene bluntly. "He doesn't!"

"I—I mean Nugent wants me—"

"More rats!"

"The fact is, Hazel, an invitation I had for the holidays has fallen through. A titled friend of mine—"

"Rubbish!"

"Oh, really—"

"Stop lying, then!" said Hazeldene unceremoniously. "What do you want? Speak plain English, and come to the point."

"Well, you see. I—I've lost my train now," stammered Bunter. "Some of the fellows might have told me I was in the wrong train, but—"

"Why, Nugent did tell you; I heard him."

"Ye-e-es, of course; but—but the fact is, I haven't told my people that the invitation from my titled friend has fallen through," said Bunter. "They're not expecting me home. I supposed, of course, that I should be going with Wharton. He kept it awfully dark about his spending the vac at your place."

"It isn't my place," said Hazeldene. "It's my uncle's place, on the Devon coast."

"Well, your uncle's place, then. The fact is, Hazeldene, I shouldn't mind coming with you for the vac."

Hazeldene looked at him grimly.

"Does it matter whether I mind?" he said sarcastically.

"Oh, really, Hazel—"

"Stop calling me Hazel, you soapy rotter. Look here, if Wharton cares to bring you, you can come," said Hazeldene abruptly. "I don't care!"

"Oh, all right! I'll settle it with Wharton."

Harry Wharton had consigned the baggage to the care of a porter, and he was coming to join the juniors at the buffet, when Billy Bunter intercepted him.

"Hadh't you better look for your train, Bunty?" asked Wharton, glancing at him.

"Ahem! I'm coming in your train."

"What do you mean?"

"It seems that there has been a mistake," explained Bunter. "Hazeldene says that he didn't know you wanted me to come—"

"I don't want you to come."

"Oh, really, Wharton! What I mean is, Hazeldene has just been pressing me in the warmest way to come with him, if you fellows would like me to. He thinks you ought to be consulted about it, that's all."

"Bosh!"

"I suppose you're not going to be beastly about it," said Bunter indignantly. "I don't particularly want to come, but Marjorie and Clara will be there, and you know jolly well that they'd be glad to see me." Wharton's eyes gleamed danger. He dropped his hand upon the fat junior's shoulder, with a grasp that made the Owl of the Remove wriggle.

"Now, look here, Bunter, enough of that!" said Wharton. "Another word of that kind, and I'll ask Hazeldene as a special favour to kick you out of the party."

"I—I—I—"

"I suppose you can come if you like, if you've got round Hazeldene. But mind, you're to be on your good behaviour. If you play any of your dirty tricks, you'll get brought to order in jolly quick time. Do you understand?"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Do you understand?" exclaimed Harry sharply.

"Ye—e—es."

"That's enough, then."

Wharton strode away to the buffet. Billy Bunter followed with an injured expression on his face. He joined the juniors there, and began to order refreshments. The juniors all had good appetites, but Billy Bunter, in spite of the sandwiches, exceeded any of them. The fat junior, indeed, set into the refreshments as if he had eaten nothing for a couple of days.

"Better get to the other platform now," said Harry presently, with a glance at the station clock. "You fellows finished?"

"All done," said Bob Cherry.

The juniors made their way to the other platform where the Western express was already on the line, though it was not due to start for some time yet.

The bags and cloaks were put into the carriage, and then the juniors strolled up and down the platform to wait for the train to start. A man who was smoking a big, black cigar on the platform watched them curiously, and he seemed so interested in at least one of the party, that the juniors observed him at last. "Blessed if I know what that chap's watching us for," Bob Cherry remarked.

"What chap?"

"That dark fellow yonder. He hasn't taken his eyes off us for ten minutes."

Wharton glanced towards the man. He was a dark-skinned fellow with black eyes, and had a foreign look, increased by the curling black moustaches and the big cigar. Wharton would have taken him for a Spaniard. His bold, black eyes looked at the juniors, and did not fall before Wharton's questioning gaze.

"He seems to be staring at Hazeldene more than anybody else," said Mark Linley. "Do you know him, Hazel?"

Hazel shook his head.

"Never seen him before, that I know of."

"He's coming over here," said Bob Cherry. "He's going to speak to us."

CHAPTER 8

The Man from South America!

The swarthy stranger stopped close to the group of juniors, and slightly raised his broad-rimmed hat. His glinting black eyes rested upon Hazeldene. The look in his eyes was not pleasant, but there was no question that his manner was politeness itself—polite with a certain Spanish exaggeration.

"Pray excuse me, *senorito*," he exclaimed, addressing Hazeldene. "I think that I have seen you before. I think I know your name."

He spoke in perfect English, but with a slight lisping accent. If he were a Spaniard, he had certainly had ample acquaintance with English people.

Hazeldene stared at him.

"I have never seen you before," he said bluntly.

The foreigner smiled, showing a row of white teeth under his black moustache.

"Quite possible. I have never been in this country before, *nino*."

"Then how can you know me?"

"By your likeness to my old friend."

"Oh! You know my father, perhaps?"

"Perhaps. Your father has been in South America?"

"Oh, no! Never out of England, I believe—except to Boulogne," said Hazeldene. "He has certainly never been to America."

"Ah! Perhaps my friend is your uncle, then, or some other relation," said the stranger, with an agreeable smile.

"Perhaps," said Hazeldene, with a grin; "but—excuse me—you are a stranger to me, and one doesn't take strangers on trust in London. I am not exactly from the country, you know, I'm from a school where we have our eye-teeth cut."

The stranger laughed, apparently not at all offended by Hazeldene's plain speaking. The juniors all grinned; they had already made up their minds that this was a new variety of the old, old confidence-trick frequently worked off on strangers in the metropolis.

"Ah! I am not a London swindler, as you imagine," said the man, with perfect coolness. "I will prove that by telling you your name."

"You might have seen it on my trunk," said Hazeldene. "But go ahead."

"Your name is Cunliffe."

Hazeldene started.

The juniors burst into a laugh. The stranger glanced round at them with a puzzled expression.

"What! Is that not correct?" he exclaimed.

"Hardly," said Bob Cherry.

"Then I am mistaken."

"Looks like it," grinned Nugent. "You'd better look a little further for your Cunliffe. Let's go into the train, you chaps."

"But—but——" The dark-skinned man seized Hazeldene by the shoulder. "Listen to me, nino. If your name is not Cunliffe, you have relations of that name."

"Mind your own business," said Hazeldene. "Let go my shoulder."

"I tell you—"

"Let go, confound you!"

The man's grip tightened, and an extremely ugly look came into his dusky face. The juniors did not need telling that his story of an "old friend" was not true. There were no friendly feelings in the man's breast, that was certain.

"Listen to me—"

Hazeldene jerked himself away. Wharton grasped the man's dusky wrist and forced him to release his hold. The foreigner glared at him savagely.

"You young puppy—"

"Nuff said. You'd better clear off!" said Wharton crisply. The man stood biting his lips, and evidently puzzled how to act, while the juniors crowded into the train. The doors were slamming now. The dark-skinned man looked after the boys, and then went slowly down the platform. Mark Linley glanced from the window, and saw him get into the train further along.

The train started.

"Blessed if I can quite make that chap out!" said Bob Cherry, with a perplexed look. "He didn't look like a common confidence-trick man. More like a giddy desperado masquerading in civilised clothes." Hazeldene sat silent, a slightly worried look on his face. The other fellows glanced at him, wondering that the affair should trouble him at all.

"You're not letting it bother you, surely, Hazel!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I can't help wondering about it," said Hazeldene. "It was curious that that chap should know that name."

"But he didn't know your name."

"Cunliffe is my uncle's name!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"I suppose I forgot to mention it to you," said Hazeldene. "I suppose I took it for granted you knew."

The uncle of mine we're going to stay with is named Cunliffe."

"By George!"

"He's my mother's brother, you see. The curious thing is, that he's been a sea-captain, and spent years and years in South American waters. He's only lately returned to England—not more than a few months ago."

"Then perhaps this chap really knew him in South America," explained Nugent.

"That's what I was thinking."

"He may be an old friend, as he said—"

"He didn't look like a friend."

"You're right there," said Harry thoughtfully. "If he wants to see your uncle, he doesn't want to do so from friendly motives, I should say. He looked too savage for that. Anyway, you were quite tight to tell him nothing, and you can mention the matter to your uncle."

"Yes. He must know my uncle well," said Hazeldene musingly. "You see, he knew me by the likeness between us. I am very like my uncle—that's why he's taken to me, I dare say. He's taken a lot of notice of me since he's been home, and I spent a vac at his place in Devon. It's a curious place—as I told you when I asked you there. I don't know whether you'll like it."

"We'll manage to dig up some fun, anyway," said Bob Cherry.

"What I mean is, it's a lonely place," said Hazeldene. "It's all right for an adventurous sort of holiday—there's plenty of cliff-climbing, boating, swimming, and so on; but not much society—no parties or dances, or anything of that sort, like we had at your place, Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"My dear chap, you're describing just the holiday that will suit me," he said. "A week or two's boating and climbing and sailing on the Devon coast—I'd give all the parties and dances in the world for it."

"Then Black Rock will suit you," said Hazeldene, with a grin. "You can have all the rough-and-tumble amusements you like there; but it's a bit off the track of civilisation. My father thinks Uncle Hugh must

be dotty to live in such a place—I suppose it's because he doesn't want to leave the sea, and he doesn't seem to mind solitude. He's fond of young people, though—and he jumped at the idea of my bringing some fellows down from Greyfriars for the vacation."

"Sounds like a jolly good sort," said Bob Cherry. "I like him in advance. But one thing's jolly certain, that Spanish-looking chap doesn't feel very friendly towards either you or your uncle, to judge by his looks, and I'm glad we've given him the slip."

"We haven't given him the slip, Bob," said Mark Linley quietly; "he's in this train."

"What!"

"I saw him get in."

"Great Scott!"

"He's following us," said Hazeldene.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Wharton thoughtfully. "He was waiting on the platform when we saw him. He was most likely waiting for this train."

"I say, you fellows, I've got a suggestion to make—"

"Go ahead—what is it?"

"Suppose we have the sandwiches now? I didn't really have enough to eat at the station. Wharton hurried me so, and—"

The juniors burst into a laugh. They had supposed for a moment that Bunter's suggestion was to have some bearing upon the matter they were discussing. But Bunter was thinking of a matter—to him—far more important.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said the fat junior. "I'm feeling jolly peckish already, and I shall get into a low state if I don't have a snack. I—"

"You can have one sandwich—"

"Good!"

"In two hours' time—"

"Oh!"

"And if you say the word 'sandwich' again, you shan't have any."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Dry up!"

Bunter snorted. As he could not eat, he decided to go to sleep as the best substitute for eating, and he was soon snoring in his corner, while the express rushed on westward, and the landscape flitted by.

CHAPTER 9

Plain English!

"Exeter!"

The Greyfriars juniors, somewhat stiff from sitting so long, alighted from the express. They did not forget to look out for the foreigner when they alighted. The express had made several stops en route, and at each of them they had looked from the window; but the dark-skinned man had not stepped out. He had evidently come as far as Exeter. There the juniors were to change trains, and if the foreigner were really following them, as Hazeldene half-suspected, he would have to do the same.

Hazeldene grasped Wharton's arm suddenly. "Look; There he is!"

The swarthy man had stepped from the train. He had no luggage in his hand, and did not seek for any. Evidently he was travelling just as he was. Had he intended to leave London on that long journey without any personal belongings—or had he, indeed, followed the juniors on the spur of the moment? He did not look at the juniors, however—or if so, it was imperceptibly. He strolled past, and entered into conversation with a porter near the exit from the platform. Harry Wharton & Co. had their luggage trolleyed away for the train they were to change into, and followed it. Wharton glanced back; the dark-complexioned man was coming in the same direction.

He was following them.

There could not be much doubt about it now.

Hazeldene looked very uneasy.

"I don't like this," he muttered. "What can he want? I suppose he can't mean to rob us?"

Wharton shook his head.

"Hardly."

"Then what's his little game?"

"I can't make it out, unless—" Wharton paused. "Unless he really wants to find Mr. Cunliffe, and he is

using us to guide him. You see, he may guess you're going to see your uncle, or he may think you are going home. In either case he could get in touch with your people by following you." "But what could his object be?"

"He might be an old friend of Mr. Cunliffe's, as he said."

"I don't believe it for a moment."

"Or," said Wharton gravely, "he might be an enemy."

Hazeldene looked deeply troubled.

"That's what I'm afraid of," he said, in a low voice. "I know Uncle Hugh has been through some rough times in South America. He might easily have made enemies there; it's a wild country. If this chap means business—and he doesn't look as if he ever meant any good to anybody—"

"He looks an ugly customer!"

"Well, if he means mischief to Captain Cunliffe, we shall be guiding him to the house," said Hazeldene, in dismay.

"Then we jolly well won't!" said Wharton decidedly.

"What can we do?"

"We'll find out first, for certain, whether he's following us. If it's proved beyond a doubt, then we'll dodge him. We can send a wire to Captain Cunliffe to say we're delayed, and will arrive later, and dodge this rotter, if it takes us hours!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"That will be a lark!" he exclaimed.

"We've got three-quarters of an hour to wait here for the train," said Harry. "We'll shove the luggage away, and then take a walk out in the town. If he follows us, that will make it quite clear."

"Good!"

Five minutes later the juniors were strolling down the streets of the ancient city of Exeter. Most of them were quite strangers to that city, one of the most interesting in the south of England, and they were glad of a chance to get a look at it, brief as it was.

As they quitted the station the foreigner in the broad-brimmed hat emerged and walked in the same direction.

Up one street and down another the juniors went, purposely choosing a route that doubled on itself, and so could leave the foreigner no excuse for following it, unless he in effect admitted that he was shadowing them.

They turned a corner and ran hard, dodged round another corner, and ran again, as if on the cinder-path.

They found themselves in narrow streets now, and they alternately walked and ran in the half-light of dusk, and at last, looking back, they could see no trace of the South American.

"We've shaken the brute off!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with a gasp of relief. "He was beginning to get on my nerves!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Wharton looked at his watch.

"Time to get back to the station!" he remarked. "None too much time, either!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm tired! I'm not accustomed to dodging about like that, and you know I've got a weak constitution! Hadn't we better take a cab?"

"Come on!" said Bob Cherry, seizing the fat junior by the ear. "This way!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"But I'm helping you along!"

"Ow! I don't want to be helped along! Ow!"

"Think you can get to the station all right alone?" asked Bob Cherry, with an air of dubiety.

"Ow! Yes! Yes! Ow!"

"Good! If you lag behind, I'll help you again!" said Bob kindly.

Bunter did not lag behind. The juniors came up to the railway-station ruddy and breathless, and in hurrying in almost ran into a swarthy man, in a broad hat and with a black cigar between his white teeth.

The man smiled.

It was the South American!

Harry Wharton & Co. went on to the platform with grim faces. They had succeeded in shaking off the shadower in the city of Exeter, but the man had guessed that that was not their final destination evidently. Perhaps he had observed that their luggage was left at the station. At all events, on losing them in the streets, he had returned to the station to watch for them, and there he was.

He followed them upon the platform. The train for Okehampton was already in, and the juniors crowded into a carriage in silence.

The South American stepped into the carriage next to that occupied by the Greyfriars party. "He's in the train after all," said Wharton ruefully to his chums. "He must have a jolly strong motive in wanting to find Captain Cunliffe."

Hazeldene looked worried.

"We simply can't be his guides there," he exclaimed. "I know it's a rotten way to treat you fellows—my uncle's guests

—but I don't want to get to Black Rock until we've shaken off that brute."

"Of course not! We'll send a wire from Okehampton, and then begin to dodge," said Harry Wharton, his eyes sparkling. "After all, it will be fun. It's getting exciting."

"I wish I knew what his motive was."

"That's a mystery; but you can depend upon it that it's not a friendly one. Nothing could be clearer than that."

Hazeldene nodded. The juniors sat down, and discussed the matter as the train rushed on through the gathering gloom. One thing was fully decided upon—that through them the South American should never reach the home of Captain Cunliffe. Whatever happened, and however great a length of time was occupied in shaking him off, the juniors were determined to do it before arriving at their destination. The South American looked out of the window at every station the train stopped at. At Okehampton the juniors alighted, and the South American stepped Out of the train, too. He lounged away up the platform, keeping a keen eye on the group of juniors.

"Better see the heavy luggage out, Wharton," suggested Nugent. "We change here, you know."

Wharton shook his head, but he hurried away towards the guard's van. There was a great deal of luggage being turned out on the platform. Harry Wharton was seen to talk to the guard for a couple of minutes, and hand him a couple of shillings, and then he came back and rejoined his chums.

"Luggage out?" asked Hazeldene.

"No. It's not coming out, either."

"I don't see—"

"It can go on," said Wharton. "I've told the guard I've changed my mind, and I want the luggage to go on in this train to the next station, and be put off there."

"But why?"

"It will be put out there," said Harry. "We shan't be there to claim it, but we can send for it afterwards. If we're to dodge the rascal yonder, we can't carry it about with us. My idea is to come rushing out of the refreshment-room just in time to miss this train, and the rotter will think that it's the train we should have gone by—it will give him a wholly mistaken idea of the direction of the place we're going to. Then, when we've shaken him off the track, he'll take up the trail here again, and start off in a totally wrong direction."

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Bob Cherry admiringly. "What a head you've got! You ought to have been a detective or a giddy criminal."

Wharton laughed.

"Thanks! Let's get into the buffet!"

"That's a jolly good idea!" said Billy Bunter eagerly.

"Come on!" said Harry.

They went into the refreshment-room, and the South American lounged in after them. He began to eat sandwiches and to drink rum-and-water. Billy Bunter was ordering right and left, and all the juniors were piling into scones and sandwiches and cake, when the bell rang.

"Halo, hallo, halo, there's the train bell!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, loud enough for the South American to hear.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "I haven't really begun yet! I say, wait a minute! The train never starts till a long time after the bell goes, you know."

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"Besides, we could catch the next train," said Bunter, who had been too busy thinking about his feeding to bestow any attention upon Wharton's plans, and who was therefore unconsciously aiding in them. "There's no great hurry."

"Oh, buck up!"

"I am bucking up, but I've hardly started," Bunter took a great gulp of coffee and gasped.

"Ow! Oh! Yah! It's hot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

The coffee was indeed hot, and Bunter had taken in a huge gulp in his hurry. He pranced up and down, clapping his fat hands to his chest, and the juniors roared.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "The train's going!"

"My hat!"

"Come on you kids!"

The juniors rushed from the buffet.

The train was already in motion, and gliding fast out of the station. The juniors ran towards it. A porter dashed in the way.

"Stand back, you young donkeys!"

"But—"

"Stand back!"

The Greyfriars juniors halted. The train dashed away, and disappeared into the night.

"Gone!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Oh, dear!"

"Rotten!"

"Now we're stranded!"

"Well, let's go back and finish the feed," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, we shall have time for a really good feed now, and we can catch another train."

The juniors returned to the buffet. The South American had followed them out. He paused, with a mocking smile, in their path as they turned back.

"You have lost your train, senioritos," he remarked.

"That is our business!" said Harry curtly.

The man's eyes gleamed.

"True. But I also—I have lost mine. It seems that we are fated to keep one another company," said the South American, laughing. And he went back to his sandwiches and rum-and-water.

The juniors resumed the interrupted feed. Billy Bunter did not give the train a single thought; he did not even know that it was not really their train which had been lost. The train the juniors had really intended to proceed by did not start for a quarter of an hour yet. The question was, could they get rid of the South American in time to take it? It did not seem likely.

"I'll go and send the wire to Captain Cunliffe if you fellows can keep that brute off my tracks," said Hazeldene. "There's a telegraph-office at this station, I believe. But if he managed to find the address of the telegram—"

"He shan't follow you."

"You will keep him back—"

"Yes. Or, on second thoughts, let him follow you," said Wharton, with a grin. "You're the chap he wants to keep in sight. If we separated, you're the chap he would follow. Look here! You and Bob take a stroll into the town, and while you're gone I'll send the wire."

Hazeldene chuckled.

"Good! he's bound to follow me, and that'll give you a free field."

"Exactly!"

"I'll write out the wire, then."

"Go ahead!"

Hazeldene scribbled the address and the message upon a sheet of paper from his pocket-book, and Wharton crumpled it in his hand. It was done without the South American observing it, Hazeldene carefully keeping his back to the man while he was writing. Then Hazeldene and Bob Cherry strolled towards the door.

The South American started and looked round. He was evidently perplexed for a moment.

So far, the juniors had not thought of separating, and the South American had observed that they were one party going to one destination. Now that Hazeldene left the others, the man was puzzled how to act.

He looked at Hazeldene and Cherry, and glanced back at the group of juniors still eating cake and drinking coffee at the counter. Then he knitted his brows and followed the two juniors out of the buffet. Wharton smiled.

"He's caught!"

Hazeldene and Bob Cherry left the station, and the South American followed them out. He was evidently determined not to lose sight of Hazeldene, at least.

Wharton watched them clear of the place, and then he dispatched the telegram. It occupied but a few minutes, and then he rejoined his chums. Hazeldene had not yet returned.

"All right?" asked Mark Linley.

"Right as rain."

It was seven or eight minutes more before Hazeldene came back. He brought a bag of tarts in his hand as a reason for having left the station at all. Wharton gave him a quick nod.

"All serene!" he said.

The South American sat down at a little table near the juniors, and lighted a fresh cigar. He was evidently tireless.

“And now what’s the next move?” said Bob Cherry. Wharton was looking over a time-table. He did not reply for some moments.

“There’s a local train leaves here in ten minutes for a place called Fernwood,” he said. “I think we’ll take that, and we’ll stay the night in the place.”

“Jolly good!”

“Captain Cunliffe will not be expecting us now, and we can take our time. We’ll get to bed early at Fernwood, and start early in the morning again, and take the whole day, if necessary, to shake off that rotter.”

“Good enough!”

And when the local train started the juniors were seated in it, and the South American was smoking a cigar in the next carriage.

CHAPTER 10

Early Risers!

“Fernwood !”

The train had been a slow country local, with many stops. It was late in the evening when the juniors alighted in a sleepy country village, in the midst of hills and deep woods.

“Here we are again!” said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

The South American stepped out of the next carriage. He showed no sign of fatigue; but the Greyfriars juniors were getting tired. They had had a long day.

Billy Bunter, as usual, was complaining. He was tired, and he was hungry again, and he did not fail to make his sufferings known.

“I suppose there’s an inn here?” he grumbled. “Nice state of things if it turns out that there’s no inn in the place.”

“We could sleep under a haystack,” said Linley.

Bunter grunted.

“I’m jolly well not going to sleep under a haystack, Mark Linley. I dare say it would be all right for you. Ow!”

Linley coloured, and turned away, and Bob Cherry compressed his finger and thumb upon Billy Bunter’s ear. The fat junior squealed.

“Ow! Leggo!”

Bob compressed his grip till Bunter writhed, and then let go, without a word of explanation. But Bunter knew what it was for.

Wharton was inquiring of the porter who collected the tickets for an inn. He was told that the Fernwood Arms was just outside the station, and the juniors repaired there at once.

The South American followed them, but he was looking very puzzled now.

Perhaps it was dawning upon his mind that the juniors had relinquished their real journey, and were deliberately leading him upon a wild-goose chase.

The landlord of the Fernwood Arms, a jolly-looking, ruddy-faced man, with a broad Devon accent, greeted the juniors hospitably. Custom was not overwhelming in a quiet little place like Fernwood, and the landlord was glad enough to see seven fellows asking for accommodation, especially as they looked as if they could pay well for it.

“Four beds will do,” said Wharton; “and if you can shove them all in one room, so much the better. Supper first, anyway.”

And the juniors sat down to a substantial supper, for which Billy Bunter was quite prepared, in spite of the supplies he had lately laid in.

“I say, you fellows, I’ve heard that Devonshire cream is awfully good,” he remarked. “You may as well order some. Better order a lot while you’re about it.”

And Bunter made an inroad upon the cream which made even those who knew him well open their eyes. The cream was certainly excellent; but Bunter consumed so much that he was in danger of a bilious attack, and he was looking a little green when he rose from the table.

The juniors went to bed. They saw the South American having his supper in the inn before they went up. He had put up at the same place.

Wharton closed the door when they were in their room. The landlord had had the beds put in one room, as Wharton wished. With the South American so near, the juniors naturally did not wish to separate.

"That chap is staying here," remarked Wharton. "I've got an idea. Suppose we don't sleep tonight, but get out of the window and buzz off, and leave that rotter still sleeping. We could leave money for the landlord here."

"Good idea!" said Bob Cherry, but not very heartily.

As a matter of fact, the juniors were fagged out, and there was no way of leaving the village but by walking. Wharton's idea was a good one, but his comrades were not in a state to carry it out.

Billy Bunter blinked at Harry in silence for some moments, as if he could scarcely believe his ears.

Then he burst out:

"You—you utter ass! I'm jolly well going to bed."

"Look here, Bunter—"

"I'm going to bed; and I'm not going to get up early, either. I'm going to have a good night's rest. I never came across such a selfish bounder in all my life. You seem to have no consideration whatever for a chap with a delicate constitution."

"Oh, shut up!" said Wharton, roughly. "Get into bed. I suppose it would be a little too thick, you chaps, under the circumstances. We're tired."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm fagged out," said Hazeldene. "I'm not so hard as you are, you know,"

"And I must admit that I could do with a snooze," said Nugent.

"All right, we'll turn in, but we shall be up at daybreak."

Wharton had not asked to be called in the morning, in case the South American should learn at what hour he intended to rise. Harry could generally depend upon himself to awaken.

He slept soundly, but his eyes opened when the first gleam of dawn was stealing in at the little diamond-paned window.

Wharton sat up in bed.

Then he shook his comrades one after another, awakening them. They all rose quietly, with hardly a word, with the exception of Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove was fast asleep, and did not seem inclined to awaken, though Wharton shook him vigorously.

He grunted at last, but did not open his eyes. Wharton compressed his lips; he felt certain that the fat junior was shamming.

"Hand me that water-jug, Bob," he said at last.

Billy Bunter sat bolt upright with surprising suddenness.

"Oh, I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, you're awake, are you, you worm?"

"Blessed if I like this idea of a holiday!" Bunter grumbled. "I shall be jolly sorry soon that I accepted your invitation, Hazeldene."

"Rats!" said Hazeldene.

"I suppose you think that's a polite way to treat a guest," said Bunter.

"Yes, a guest of your sort."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Don't talk, Billy," said Harry, "and don't make a row."

Wharton was the first ready. He stepped out into the passage. A large pair of tan leather boots stood outside the door of the next room, and Harry Wharton recognised them as belonging to the South American. He smiled quietly; it was evident that the man was not yet up. He had not calculated upon the move the juniors were making, and in that he made the mistake of under-rating his opponents because they were mere juniors. Wharton quietly picked up the boots and carried them into his room.

"What on earth have you got there?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Boots."

"My hat! That chap's boots?"

"Exactly! A capture from the enemy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, Wharton," said Bunter, looking round with a dab of soap on his nose, that dab constituting his morning's wash, "I say, you know, I don't approve of stealing a chap's boots, even if he's no good. I—"

"Hold your tongue!" said Harry sharply.

"That's all very well, but I don't think you ought to be dishonest while you're with me," said Bunter, who had a way of pretending to misunderstand people, and then posing as a rigid moralist on the strength of the misunderstanding. "I've got to consider my good name. Stealing a chap's boots—"

Wharton's fist closed for a moment, and Bunter backed away in alarm.

"Here, hold on!" he said shrilly. "I suppose you don't want me to wake the chap in the next room. I—"

Wharton unclenched his fist. After all, Bunter was not worth licking. He quietly opened the window. He had noticed a water-butt outside the previous night. The juniors chuckled softly as Wharton

dropped the boots into the butt.

"Ripping!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"If he comes after us, he'll have to come in his socks," grinned Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry closed the window. The slight splash in the water- butt had been unnoticeable. The juniors finished dressing and quitted the room, taking their bags with them. The house was very silent, and the landing creaked as they came out of the bedroom.

CHAPTER 11

An Early Start!

Mark Linley paused, and signed to Wharton to stop. The others were stealing quietly down the stairs. "What is it?" whispered Wharton. He knew that the Lancashire lad would not waste time, and he had stopped at once.

Mark pointed to the South American's door.

"That's his room, isn't it?"

"That's it."

"There may be some noise before we get out," whispered Mark. "What price fastening his door on the outside? I've some cord, and a piece tied across from his door handle to the banisters would make him a prisoner!"

Wharton suppressed a chuckle.

"Good egg! You're a giddy genius."

Linley whipped a length of cord from his pocket, and silently knotted the end round the handle of the South American's door. He stretched it taut across the landing, and knotted the other end to the thick oaken banisters.

There was no likelihood of anyone stirring for at least an hour upstairs. And if the shadower tried to leave his room, it would certainly take him some time to attract attention to his predicament. From inside he could not possibly open the door. It opened inwards, and the taut cord would not give an inch. Wharton unbarred the door, and opened it. The sun was glimmering on the woods now, in a greyish light, and a fresh breath of morning came to the juniors as they looked out into the shadows. An early stableman was starting work, and he looked curiously at the juniors.

He walked across their path as they left the house. The thought had evidently come into his mind that they were leaving this early to avoid paying their bill. Strong suspicion was written upon his face.

"We are going away early," said Wharton quickly. "I suppose you know what the charge will be for our accommodation. I don't want to waken the landlord."

The stableman looked at him still suspiciously.

"Don't you want any breakfast?" he asked.

"Yes," said Bunter; "I'm hungry. I—"

"Shut up, Bunter! No, we don't want any breakfast, we're in a hurry to get off."

"Oh, really, Wharton— Oh!"

Billy Bunter subsided as Bob Cherry pinched his arm. The stableman looked at Harry in an extremely doubtful way.

"I'd better call the landlord," he said.

"We are going now," said Wharton. "We haven't a second to spare."

"You be in a great hurry, young master."

"That's our business," said Harry crisply. "Here's tire money; you can take it or not. You can take it straight to your master if you like, but we're not going to wait. I asked the charge last night; it is two pounds. Here's two shillings for yourself."

The stableman took the money, his doubts appearing to vanish at the sight of it.

"That be all right," he said. "I—"

"Good morning!"

The juniors strode on. The stableman stared after them for a minute or two, and then went into the house. He had gone to acquaint the landlord with the sudden departure of his guests. Harry knew that, and he quickened his pace.

"The South American may be awakened," he remarked. "We'd better buzz off just as quickly as we can."

"The buzzfulness is terrific, my worthy chum," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "I will prick the esteemed Bunter pinfully to accelerate his honourable steps."

"You—you black beast—"

"Buck up, Bunty!"

"I can't buck up, Bob Cherry! I'm hungry—sinking with hunger. I can hardly drag one leg after another," said Bunter pathetically. "You're a set of heartless beasts. I wish now I hadn't come with you on this rotten vacation. My titled friend would never have treated me like this."

"Can't you really walk any faster than that, Bunter?" asked Bob.

"No, I can't; it's quite impossible."

"Then we shall have to help you!" exclaimed Bob, seizing the fat junior by one arm. "Take his other arm, Linley."

"Right you are!"

"Oh—oh! Beasts! Oh!"

But Bunter could not resist.

"Oh, stop!" gasped Bunter.

I—I feel very bad!"

"Come on!"

"Ow! I'm ill!"

"Where's my strap?"

"Oh! I—I mean I'm all right, only—only—— Ow!"

"You'd better not get ill again," said Bob Cherry warningly. "I've got plenty of the same medicine left, you know; and you're going to have some whenever you get ill!"

"Oh—oh! Really—"

"We can slacken a bit now," said Harry. "We must be miles from Fernwood. We can get some food at a farmhouse at midday, I think."

"Good! We shall have an appetite for it."

"I know I shall!" groaned Bunter.

The chums slackened into a walk, and tramped on. There was no sign of pursuit so far. They were feeling exhilarated. There is something very exhilarating and refreshing in the keen air of early morning; but, besides that, the juniors had the exultant sense of having "done" the enemy; of having thrown their obstinate shadower off the track.

"We've done him brown," Bob Cherry remarked, with great satisfaction. "When he gets out, he won't know in what direction to look for us. We've only to get a lift in some farmer's cart to a town, and take the railway again, and then we're all right."

"The allrightfulness will be terrific."

"I—I say, you fellows, there's a farmhouse!"

They ate a good dinner and over it discussed the situation. Nothing having been seen of the South American, there was no reason why they should not head for Black Rock, the house of Captain Cunliffe, on the western coast. They had wandered a great deal out of their way, but Wharton had a time-table in his pocket, and inquiry of the farmer at the house elicited information as to where they were now. After a talk with the farmer, Harry rejoined his chums, who were finishing a plentiful repast. Bunter, indeed, showed no signs of finishing. It was pretty certain that the fat junior would not leave the table till he was removed by force.

"We can get a lift in the farmer's cart as far as a town called Moorback," said Harry. "There we can get a train for the nearest railway point to Black Rock. We shall arrive some time this afternoon, I expect."

"Good enough," said Hazeldene.

And the meal being over, and Bunter being persuaded to leave the table—by the gentle persuasion of a tight finger and thumb on his ear—the juniors clambered into the farmer's wagon, and were driven off to the westward.

They kept a keen look-out for any sign of the South American, but he was not to be seen. The town was reached, and the juniors found they had a quarter of an hour to wait at the station.

"Shall we have a stroll round the town?" asked Hazeldene.

Wharton shook his head.

"Better keep in here. That rogue may be on the prowl."

"I think we've quite dropped him."

"Yes, but one can't be too careful. He's a dangerous villain, and we don't know what harm he may intend to your uncle."

"Well, you're right. We'll lie low."

"There's no need to go out," said Billy Bunter. "There's a buffet here, you know."

"Oh, go to the buffet, and be quiet!" said Nugent.

“Will you lend me a bob? I’ve left all my ready cash at Greyfriars by an oversight—”

“Cheese it!”

Nugent handed over the shilling, and the fat junior walked away to the buffet. He stood there negotiating buns and ginger-beer with a reckless disregard for his digestion. The juniors, having taken their tickets, walked up and down the platform.

The train came down the line.

Wharton breathed a deep breath of relief. Though he thought, like the others, that the shadower was shaken off, he had a lingering doubt, and he would feel much easier in his mind when he was speeding away behind a locomotive.

The train stopped, and the juniors were about to start towards it, when Mark Linley uttered a sudden exclamation.

“Stop! Cover, quick!”

“What the—”

“Cover!”

Mark pushed his companions back into the waiting-room. They obeyed him unquestioningly. The Lancashire lad’s face was greatly excited.

“What on earth is it?” muttered Hazeldene.

“The South American.”

“Where?”

“In the train.”

The juniors peered out of the doorway. It was true—the Lancashire lad’s keen eyes had not deceived him.

The South American was in the act of stepping from the train almost opposite the door of the little waiting-room.

The man glanced carelessly up and down the platform, but evidently with no expectation of seeing the juniors there.

It was an unexpected thing; but Wharton easily understood it. Ijurra had lost their track, and sought for it in vain, and he had taken the train in the direction he knew the juniors were travelling in the hope of picking up the trail again. Fortune had led him to alight at the very station where they were waiting for the train—the train he had come in by.

“Keep in cover,” whispered Harry. “He hasn’t seen us— he doesn’t suspect we’re here. He’ll go out of the station in a minute.”

“We shall lose this train.”

“We can wait for the next. If he misses us now, all serene.”

“Good.”

“That shows that he’s still sticking to the trail, though,” said Hazeldene, with a troubled look. “He must have some fearful grudge against my uncle to be so keen to get on his track.”

“All the more reason why we should baffle the rotter.”

“My hat!” muttered Bob Cherry, in dismay. “Bunter!”

“What?”

“Look!”

Billy Bunter was coming along the platform, blinking round in search of his companions. He had not left the buffet because the train was in, but because he had come to the end of the shilling.

“I say, you fellows,” he called out, “where are you? Where—”

Wharton suppressed an exclamation. Bunter had betrayed them. The keen, black eyes of the South American were on the fat junior at once. Ijurra stopped on his way to the station exit, and turned towards Bunter. His eyes were scintillating.

“Ah, that is one of them!”

The juniors heard him mutter the words. Ijurra strode towards the Owl of the Remove, and grasped him by the shoulder.

Bunter started and blinked at him.

“Oh, really, Cherry—”

“Nino!”

“Ow! Ow! It’s that murderous beast!” stuttered Billy Bunter. “Ow! Help! Murder!”

“Boy—”

“Murder!” yelled Bunter. “Help! Fire!”

“Fool! Be quiet! I shall not hurt you!”

“Leggo! Help! Murder!”

“Where are the others?” said the South American, releasing the fat junior, for Bunter’s outcries were attracting attention.

"Lemme alone! Get away! Help!"

"You fat fool—"

"I—I say, you fellows, where are you? I say!"

"I know they are here," said the South American, shrugging his shoulders, and taking out a fresh cigar from his case. "That is enough."

Concealment, of course, was useless now. The Greyfriars juniors came out of the waiting-room. The South American looked at them with gleaming eyes.

"I have found you."

"Yes, you cur!" said Wharton angrily. "And I warned you what would happen if you followed us again. Collar him!"

"Stand back! I—"

"Collar the cad!"

The juniors rushed at him. The South American, as if by force of habit, thrust his hand into his coat for his knife, but couldn't get it out in time. He sprang back, dodging the rush of the juniors, and backed away.

The train was starting.

"Get in," muttered Harry. "Get in quick!"

"But—"

"Quick—do as I tell you!"

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry dragged Bunter into the train, which was already beginning to move. The others scrambled in pell-mell. A porter shouted and rushed up. Harry dashed after his comrades, and just entered the train. The South American rushed for the train, too, though it was now gathering speed, but he was too late.

The porter grasped him and pulled him back, and they fell to the platform together. The train whirled out of the station, the shadower was left behind.

Wharton had fallen in the bottom of the carriage amongst the legs of his comrades. He gathered himself up, gasping for breath.

"Did he get in?"

"No," grinned Bob Cherry, who was looking from the window. "He's left."

"Jolly good!"

"Hurrah!"

The station disappeared behind them. Bunter grunted and sorted himself out from among the boots of the Greyfriars juniors. He was breathless and indignant, but no one minded him. They had beaten their shadower again, but for how long? A feeling was growing in their hearts that the man from South America was not to be shaken off.

CHAPTER 21

Passed on the Road!

Harry Wharton sat with a wrinkled brow as the train rolled on. It was not a fast train. It stopped at every station, and the waits were long. But Wharton knew that there was no other train on the line for half an hour, so pursuit that way, at least, was impossible. Yet the juniors would hardly have been surprised to see the dusky face of the South American on the platform in any station they stopped at. The determination of the shadower was, as Bob Cherry expressed it, getting on their nerves.

"We've done him for a bit, anyway," Nugent remarked.

"But it won't do to go on to the end of this line," said Mark Linley. "He will be able to find out by inquiry which station we alighted at."

"That's just what I was thinking," Wharton remarked. "And if we get out at the station we intended, it will take him too near to Captain Cunliffe's house."

"Exactly."

"We'd better get out about halfway," said Hazeldene. "Then we can cut across country, and get to Black Rock by road."

"That's the idea."

"We'll get out here," said Harry, at last.

The juniors alighted at a little country station. Wharton's intention was to proceed for the remainder of

the journey on the road, either by walking, or obtaining lifts in carts. It was twenty miles yet to the fishing village of Penwyn, the nearest hamlet to the lonely house of Captain Cunliffe. The juniors took the road. They had had a long rest in the train, and they were fresh enough for a walk. A market-cart came lumbering along, and Wharton hailed the driver. The man, who had a ruddy, good-natured face, stopped his horse.

"Can you give us a lift towards the coast?" asked Wharton. "We can pay."

"I'm going four mile," he said. "Jump in, young gentlemen, if you will, and say nought about paying."

"Thanks very much," said Wharton gratefully.

There was straw in the bottom of the cart, and plenty of room for the seven juniors. They gladly clambered in, and the cart lumbered on with them. The driver looked at them curiously, but asked no questions.

The cart rolled on towards the coast, and still there was no sign of pursuit.

"We get down here, you chaps," said Wharton, at last.

"Right-ho!"

The driver stopped.

"Thank you very much," said Wharton. "This will do for us. We're much obliged."

Bob Cherry rolled Bunter out of the cart, and the driver nodded cheerily to them and drove on. The juniors were left standing in the road. Billy Bunter was grunting and scowling discontentedly.

"We can't go on any further," said Harry. "We want to strike out in a different direction. We'll get to Penwyn by making a wide round."

"Good egg!"

"We'll take the first turning, then."

"That rotter has a sort of uncanny gift of getting on the track," Hazeldene remarked. "I shall be surprised if we've seen the last of him."

Harry Wharton nodded. He was thinking the matter out, and he walked on for some time in silence.

"I've got an idea," he said. "You know what the slaves used to do when they were being tracked down—they took to the water, so as to leave no trail. You read about it in the history of the West Indies. I've got a wheeze. Suppose we take to the water, and throw the cad off the track that way."

"But there's no stream here—"

"I was thinking of the sea."

"The sea!"

"Certainly! If we make directly for the sea, I think it is not more than two miles away. Penwyn is some miles down the coast. Now, if we got to the shore, we might get hold of a boat, and get to Black Rock by water."

"By jove!"

"What a jolly ripping idea!" exclaimed Mark Linley. "Once we got on the water, the rascal couldn't spot us again."

"And we should get to Captain Cunliffe's house without leaving a trail of any sort behind," said Harry with satisfaction.

"What about the boat?" asked Bob. "It would have to be returned to the owner, you know, and Ijorra might get in touch with him."

"I have thought of that. We could buy a boat at a fishing village. Any old thing would do for a few miles' row down the coast in calm weather. It could be sold again for two-thirds as much as we gave, too, so the loss wouldn't be so very great. I've no doubt we could pick up an old boat for a few pounds."

"We'll do it."

"Jolly good idea!"

"Then it's settled!"

The lane gave place to a rough footpath over wild heath. The juniors tramped on between green hillocks, and suddenly, between two high points of land, the wide sea and the red sun in the west burst upon their view.

They paused for some moments in sheer admiration at the beauty of the scenery; that glorious scenery of the West of England which one who knows it well will never admit to be inferior to the finest on the Riviera. Between two rugged cliffs, wooded to their very tops, a deep combe sloped, and on the further side gleamed a beach of shelving sand and the deep blue of the Atlantic. The sun was sinking into the gleaming bosom of the ocean, and the water was lit up with red and purple and gold.

"Well, this is jolly," said Nugent, with a deep breath.

"Glorious!"

"We shall have a ripping time here," said Mark Linley, as they picked their way down the rugged path to the fishing village under the cliffs.

"I say, you fellows, I'm hungry!"

"I can see some boats from here," said Wharton, as they went down the rough path. "Some of them look pretty rocky, too. We ought to get one at a reasonable figure."

Half an hour later the juniors stood in the little village. The sunset was deepening into night.

A group of fishermen, in jerseys and huge boots, stood smoking outside a little inn, within a stone's throw of the boats turned up on the beach. The juniors entered the inn, and were soon eating a hearty meal; and for the time Billy Bunter's grumbling was silenced.

Leaving his comrades still at their meal, Harry Wharton sought out the jolly-looking landlord—a little fat man with a red face and a strong smell of fish—and tackled him on the question of the boat.

The innkeeper was astounded at first, and for a long time persisted in believing that the juniors simply wanted to hire a boat; but finally he was made to understand that they really and truly wanted to purchase one. Then he scratched his bald head in a thoughtful way.

"I've got just the craft you want," he remarked. "It was Peter Heard's boat, but 'un never came back from the fishing."

"It's seaworthy, I suppose?" said Harry.

"Seaworthy enough, or I'd never sell 'un to you," said the landlord. "I'm selling it for his widder. And the price is eight pounds."

"Done!" said Harry at once.

"I'll show you the boat," said the landlord. "When do you want it?"

"At once."

"You're not going on the water now, young master?"

"Yes, I am. It's fine weather, and a run on the sea will be safe enough," said Harry.

"Safe enough, I make no doubt, but—" The landlord scratched his head again. He was evidently greatly puzzled to know what to make of Wharton and his comrades; but apparently he came to the conclusion that it was no business of his, for he asked no questions.

Wharton was taken to see the boat, which was drawn up on the beach. It was a large and heavy craft, with the mast lying in it. The landlord promised that the sail should be put in with a couple of oars that belonged to the boat. Wharton returned to his comrades in cheerful spirits.

"It's all right," he announced, sitting down to the bread and cheese again. "I've got a boat, and we can start as soon as we've finished eating."

"Jolly good!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I think we ought to have a rest," said Bunter. "I'm getting absolutely worn out you know. Besides, it isn't safe to go to sea at night."

Wharton laughed. The little run he proposed to make was safe enough for the Greyfriars juniors, who spent many a happy hour on Pegg Bay during the term, who could swim like fishes, and handle almost any kind of craft afloat.

"It will be jolly!" said Bob Cherry. "The moon's coming up, and we shall have lots of light. I suppose you'll know where to land, Hazel?"

"Oh, yes; Black Rock's not to be mistaken!" said Hazeldene. "I should know it in the dark; but if it's moonlight it will be all serene."

The juniors left the inn. Some of the fishermen willingly helped them to get the boat down to the water, while Wharton was settling with the landlord.

The sun had disappeared now, though there was still a red glow on the bosom of the western sea. The moon had climbed the east, and a silver light fell upon the wooded cliffs and the deep, echoing combs. The sea was rolling softly, calm and fair.

The boat grated over the pebbles into the water, and floated, and the juniors stepped the mast. Wharton pushed off and shipped the rudder. The boat glided into deep water, and the sail was shaken out.

There was a sudden yell from the shadows of the shore. "Stop—stop them!"

The juniors started.

"My hat! I know that voice!" cried Bob Cherry. "The South American!"

"Great Scott! He's found us again!"

"But he's found us too late," said Harry Wharton grimly. There was a pounding of feet, and a dim form came tearing down the path to the beach. The fishermen stared at it in blank amazement.

The South American came panting down over the pebbles. "Stop them!" he shouted hoarsely.

"Carambo! Stop them!"

The boat was gliding out; already a dozen feet separated it from the shore, and as soon as the sail caught the wind it would speed along fast enough.

The pursuer was too late.

He halted, panting, on the water's edge, and waved his hand wildly after the boat. His voice rose to a furious shriek.

"Come back—come back!"

Harry Wharton laughed. He was not likely to turn back at the bidding of the South American. He took the rudder, while the others handled the sheets.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" sang out Bob Cherry, kissing his hand to the furious figure on the beach.

The South American raved.

"Come back! I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Too late, sonny!" called out Nugent. "You're done—unless you want a swim! It's a nice night for a swim, if you feel up to it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As if taking the junior at his word, the South American plunged into the water. He swam strongly after the boat, a knife between his teeth. The sail did not fill for the moment, and the strong swimmer came swiftly up.

"My hat! Look at that!" ejaculated Nugent.

Wharton's face set grimly.

"Take the rudder, will you, Linley?"

"Right ho!" said Mark.

Wharton relinquished the lines to the Lancashire lad, and picked up a boathook. Holding it firmly, he stood ready for the South American to come up.

Ijorra's eyes met his in a blaze of fury.

"Go back!" said Wharton. "If you lay a hand on this boat you will suffer for it."

The South American, with the knife between his teeth, made a tremendous effort, and came level, and his dusky fingers flashed up from the water and grasped the gunwale. Without a moment's hesitation Harry brought the boathook down. It rang on the gunwale with a loud crack, but the South American had withdrawn his fingers just in time. He slid back into the sea.

Then the shore and the figure disappeared, as the boat ran seaward. Hazeldene gave a great gasp of relief.

"We want to get southward," he remarked, as the boat sped on into the wide sea.

"Not till we're quite out of sight of land," said Wharton. "We don't want to leave him the shadow of a clue."

"Right!"

And the boat sped on. Not till the shore and the cliffs and the deep woods beyond them were a black mass on the edge of the sea, did the Greyfriars chums change the course of the boat to the southward.

"Baffled—as they say in the six-shilling novels," grinned Bob Cherry. "Dished—as we say at Greyfriars!"

The boat drew towards the shore again. The juniors handled it easily, and it sailed well. A great cliff loomed up from the moonlight. Hazeldene pointed to it.

"That's the Black Rock!"

"And your uncle's house?"

"At the foot of the cliff. There's a cove, and a landing-place there—it's all serene now."

And the juniors steered for the Black Rock; and five minutes later they had made the boat fast in the little cove, and jumped ashore. A light twinkled through dim trees in the distance.

"Home!" said Hazeldene.

The long journey was over. The juniors followed Hazeldene up the rocky path, and for once they all agreed cordially with Billy Bunter that supper and bed and a jolly long sleep would be exactly the proper "menu".

CHAPTER 13

A Startling Greeting!

"Hold on!"

"Hallo, hallo, halo!"

"Quiet, Bob. Hold on a minute!" whispered Harry Wharton.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But—"

"Dry up, will you?" muttered Harry Wharton.

"No, I jolly well won't," said Billy Bunter indignantly. "I'm tired, and I'm awfully hungry, and I want to get in. I tell you—Ow—wow!"

Billy Bunter broke off. He had no choice in the matter, because Harry Wharton's hand was placed over his mouth, and as Harry's other hand was grasping the back of his collar; the fat junior could not escape the pressure.

"Quiet!" whispered Wharton. "If you make another sound, Billy, I'll—I'll squash you!"

"Groo!" murmured Bunter faintly.

"Quiet!"

Wharton released the fat junior, and Bunter wriggled and grunted softly; but he did not venture to speak. He could still feel the grind of Wharton's knuckles in the back of his fat neck.

Wharton had stopped dead in the shadowed garden, and the other juniors had stopped too. The path up the cliff from the cove ran among dark trees and bushes, which rustled in the breeze from the sea.

Ahead of the Greyfriars juniors the dim form of Black Rock House loomed up among the trees, backing on the cliff.

A light was shining through the trees, from one of the lower windows of the house, and Harry was pointing to it, his chums following his glance.

"That's the window of the dining-room," said Hazeldene, in a low voice. "My uncle generally spends the evening there. What's the matter?"

"Look"

As Wharton whispered the word, a shadow crossed the window.

The dark figure of a man showed up for a moment against the lighted blind, and then vanished.

The juniors started.

The shadow of the blind did not come from the inside of the room—it was not a shadow, but a man's actual form that had crossed the light only a dozen yards from where the Grey-friars juniors stood.

Who was it that was lurking in that lonely garden, outside the window of Captain Cunliffe's room?

The juniors stood halted under the trees, silent and dubious. Billy Bunter was not inclined to talk now.

He had seen the shadowy form, and his teeth were chattering. Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"You saw that, you chaps?" he whispered.

"Yes," muttered Mark Linley. "Who can it be?"

"A giddy burglar, perhaps" said Bob Cherry.

Wharton shook his head.

"A burglar—in a lonely place like this ---miles from anywhere? It's not an ordinary burglar, at all events."

"I—I—I say, you fellows," quavered Billy Bunter, "I—I think we ought to go back, you know."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Yes, but—"

"Be quiet!" said Wharton crisply.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "There he is again."

The shadowy form crossed the lighted window again. There was a faint gasp from Billy Bunter in the gloom of the trees.

"Hark!" whispered Wharton.

Footsteps.

The sound sent a strange thrill through the Greyfriars chums. There were footsteps on the path, and the footsteps were coming directly towards them.

In the gloom of the trees it was impossible to see an inch before their faces, the approaching figure was quite hidden; but the footsteps on the shingly path sounded clearly in the stillness of the night.

"Ready!" said Harry Wharton, in the faintest of whispers. "Collar him as he comes near!"

"Right!"

The footsteps abruptly halted. Perhaps some faint sound from the juniors had reached the ears of the approaching man.

A sharp voice rang through the darkness, and there was a faint glimmer as of steel, catching the light from the window.

"Stand back!"

The shout rang so suddenly in the silence that the juniors started. The echo boomed away among the trees towards the sea.

"Stand back, you scoundrel! Mind, I am armed!"

"Uncle!" cried Hazeldene.

"What!" gasped Wharton.

"It's my uncle!" exclaimed the junior pressing forward.

"Uncle! Don't you know me? Uncle Hugh!"

"What?"

"I'm Hazeldene—my friends are here!" exclaimed the junior. "You know me, uncle."

"Hazel!"

The voice changed now, and the juniors could detect the deep relief in it. A powerful form loomed up before them, dim in the gloom. A dark lantern suddenly turned on its light, and the rays shot upon the juniors and revealed them. A dark, sunburnt, not unkindly face peered at them in the lantern light—a face rough from long exposure to sun and wind, with keen and searching eyes.

"So you've come!" exclaimed Captain Cunliffe. "I—I must have startled you, my lads. I was looking through the garden—there have been thieves in the neighbourhood, and I was looking—but never mind now. Come into the house. I was expecting you yesterday, as you know; and since I had your wire I did not know when to expect you. Come in!"

The captain's manner was joviality itself. The juniors wonderingly followed him into the house, and gladly enough they laid down their bags in the hall. They had reached the end of their journey at last; but what kind of an Easter holiday were they likely to pass in this lonely house by the sea—with that strange old sea-captain who searched for intruders in the garden, revolver in hand, and the mysterious man from South America seeking their trail?

CHAPTER 14

A Good Time for Bunter!

"Oh, gorgeous!"

The exclamation broke involuntarily from Billy Bunter as he entered the dining-room of the Black Rock House. The room was very cosy, and a huge fire blazed and roared in the wide old-fashioned chimney.

The table was laid for supper—and such a supper! Captain Cunliffe had shown the boys to their quarters, where they had removed their coats, and changed their boots, and washed away some of the stains of their long and rough journey.

On descending to supper, they found everything ready. The captain evidently had great ideas of hospitality. And uncertain as he had been of the time of the arrival of his guests, he had certainly not lacked in preparation for them. A hot supper was prepared that seemed more suitable for the whole crew of a ship than for half a dozen juniors, however sharp set. The juniors were hungry enough, and their faces lighted up at the sight of the cosy room, and blazing fire, and hospitable table.

Captain Cunliffe was sitting by the fire smoking a pipe, as they came in, and he rose with a smile to greet them.

Now that they could see him fairly in the light, the Grey-friars juniors could not help liking the look of the sea-captain.

He was a man of medium size, of very powerful build, and his thick limbs and deep, broad chest denoted great strength. His face was burnt by the sun almost to the hue of a Spaniard's, and seamed by innumerable lines. There was a deep wrinkle between his eyes, but the eyes themselves were as keen as steel. His hair was thick and dark, and completely untouched by grey. A strong, kindly, good-tempered sailor he looked; and the juniors could not help wondering what could be the cause of the quarrel between him and the mysterious adventurer from South America. Whatever it was, it was easy to believe that the wrong had not been done by Captain Cunliffe.

Not a word escaped his lips in reference to the strange scene in the garden. And, indeed, the juniors were thinking more of their supper now than of anything else.

A grizzled old fellow, who had evidently been a sailor, waited at the table. He had a face as darkly sunburnt as the captain's, and it was easy for the juniors to guess that he had sailed tropic seas with Captain Cunliffe. The captain addressed him as Ben, and Ben replied to every order by touching his forelock and saying, "Ay, ay, sir!" as if he were still on the deck of the old ship.

As the juniors learned later, Ben's wife was the cook and housekeeper of the establishment, and these two formed all the household of Captain Cunliffe.

The captain lighted his pipe.

"Your sister arrives tomorrow, Hazel," he observed, through clouds of smoke. "Marjorie and her friend—."

"Clara," said Nugent.

"Yes, Clara. They will be here tomorrow. And now, tell me why you were delayed. You should have been here yesterday," said the captain. "Your wire explained nothing."

The juniors glanced at one another.

They had spent twice the time arranged upon the journey, for the purpose of throwing off the track of the South American, and Harry felt that it was their duty to acquaint the captain with the circumstances. Yet he shrank from doing so. He had a feeling that it would be a terrible shock to the captain to hear of the pursuit by Pedro Ijurra. The strange scene on their arrival in the dusky garden had shown that Captain Cunliffe lived in expectation of being sought by an enemy.

"The fact is—" said Harry. "But perhaps Hazel had better tell you—"

Go on, Hazel."

Hazeldene coloured a little. But the explanation had to be gone through.

"We met a chap in London," he said. "He saw me, and guessed that I was a relation of yours, by the likeness. You know I'm very much like you, uncle."

"So you are lad."

"Well, the chap wanted to find you out, and we thought it was none of his business, so we dodged him," said Hazeldene awkwardly.

The captain sat bolt upright in his chair.

"He wanted to find me out."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He said he was an old friend of yours."

The captain set his lips. The juniors did not look at him. But they felt that he had grown pale under his brown skin.

"Do you know his name?"

"A name was on the boots we took from him," said Harry.

"And the name?"

"Pedro Ijurra."

"My Heaven!"

There was a crash on the hearth as the captain's pipe fell from his hand. Hazeldene sprang to his feet.

Captain Cunliffe lay back in his chair, breathing heavily, pale as death.

"Uncle! You are ill!"

The captain waved him back.

"It's all right," he muttered thickly. "Let me alone."

"I am all right."

The captain recovered himself in a few moments. The juniors sat in awkward silence. The terrible shock the name had given the captain was only too apparent.

"And the man?" said Captain Cunliffe, after a pause. "What was he like?"

"A dark fellow—a South American."

"Did you see whether he—whether he had a scar upon his forehead?" said the captain, in a low voice.

"Perhaps—"

"He had one," said Harry Wharton. "I saw it when he removed his hat."

There was a long silence.

The captain picked up his pipe with a shaking hand, and relighted it. He smoked on for some minutes without speaking.

The juniors did not know how to break the silence. "Tell me exactly what happened with that man and yourselves," said the captain, at last. "Spin me the whole yarn from the beginning."

Wharton quietly and concisely related how they had been tracked by the South American, and how they had eluded him finally by taking the boat at a point some miles farther up the coast.

The captain nodded approval.

"That was very keen of you!" he exclaimed. "Then the chances are that he has not followed you here."

"I should think not, sir."

Captain Cunliffe nodded.

"You—you startled me a little at first," he said slowly. "I think I owe you some explanation. I knew this man—long ago—in South America, and I have good reasons for not wanting to meet him again. That is all. I don't suppose you lads will see anything more of him. If you should do so, give him a wide berth. He is a dangerous character."

He rose to his feet.

"It will be time for you lads to be getting to bed now," he remarked.

Bunter rose from the table. Even the fat junior of Greyfriars was finished at last. He moved with a slow and heavy motion, as if any movement was rather an uncomfortable process for him.

"I say, you fellows, I'm ready for bed," he said drowsily.

"Good-night, my lads!"

“Good-night, sir!”

The captain shook hands with the juniors, and they left him. Wharton glanced back involuntarily as they quitted the room; the captain was standing by the fire, staring gloomily into the glowing embers. “Come on, you fellows!”

Hazeldene took the candle and led the way to the bedroom— a long, large room, in which seven beds had been placed in a row, curiously resembling a bit of the old dormitory at Greyfriars.

“Well, I’m jolly tired,” Mark Linley observed, as he took off his boots, “I shall be glad to get to bed.” Wharton went to the window, and pulled aside the blind and looked out.

He gazed from the window for several minutes. Suddenly there was a sound below, and he started. A form loomed in the moonlight, and in a moment Wharton recognised it as that of Captain Cunliffe. There was a clink of a slackening chain, and a deep growl that reached the ear of the junior at the window.

The captain was releasing a dog, and Wharton caught a glimpse of a powerful mastiff as it bounded away into the shadows. It was a proof of the watchfulness of Black Rock House incessantly kept. But why?

What was it that Captain Cunliffe feared at the hands of the South American? Why was it that Pedro Ijorra was so grimly bent on tracking the captain to his home?

They were questions that Harry Wharton could not answer, but he went to bed in a very thoughtful mood, and in his dreams that night he saw again and again the dark and threatening face of the South American.

CHAPTER 15

The Enemy Again!

A bright sun blazing in at the window woke the Greyfriars juniors on the following morning. Bob Cherry was the first to awake. He sat up in bed, and looked at the window, where the sun blazed through the curtains, and rubbed his eyes.

“My hat! It’s jolly late!” he exclaimed.

The juniors had not been called. Captain Cunliffe knew that they were fatigued by their journey, and he had let them have their sleep out.

Bob Cherry pulled his big silver watch out from under his pillow, and looked at it. It was a quarter past nine. The junior gave a whistle.

“My hat! This wouldn’t do for Greyfriars!” he exclaimed. “Hallo, hallo, halo, you chaps!”

Wharton opened his eyes.

“Hallo!”

“It’s a quarter past nine!”

“By jove!”

“Up with you, lazybones!”

“Well, I like that! You’re not up yet!”

“I’m getting up!” said Bob Cherry, putting one leg out of bed. “Get up, you slackers! Get up, you lazy bounders!”

“It’s a ripping morning!” said Harry Wharton, looking out of the window. “Look at the cove—smooth as glass! We can get a dip before brekker!”

Harry Wharton & Co. tramped downstairs, and found Captain Cunliffe talking with Ben Topman in the little square hall. The big door was wide open, and a fresh breeze blew in from the sea. From the doorway glimpses of the deep blue water of the cove could be had, through the green trees and straggling bushes of the garden.

The captain was looking cheerful and bright, and there was no trace in his weatherbeaten face of the emotion he had shown the previous evening at the mention of the name of the South American. It seemed hardly possible to the juniors that this bluff, kindly old sea dog was the man they had met under the trees, who had challenged them in a ringing voice and with a levelled revolver.

Indeed, in the bright sunlight the whole affair of the South American seemed less serious than it had seemed in the shadowy night. The juniors were light-hearted enough now, and they hardly thought of the dark face of Pedro Ijorra.

“I thought I’d let you have your sleep out,” the captain remarked, with a smile. “You must have been tired. How do you feel now?”

“Fit as a fiddle, sir,” said Wharton cheerily.

“Right as rain, uncle,” said Hazeldene. “We were thinking of having a dip in the cove before

breakfast.”

“Good! It shall be ready when you come in. Here, Duke!” A huge mastiff came up at the call. It was the great animal Wharton had seen released into the garden in the moonlight.

The dog looked dubiously at the juniors, but a few words from the captain soothed him.

“You can pat his head,” said Captain Cunliffe. “He will be friends with you; but he would be rough on a stranger who came into the place at night.”

Wharton patted the mastiff’s huge head. He was fond of dogs, and dogs generally liked him.

Billy Bunter blinked in a very doubtful way at Duke through his big spectacles.

“I—I say, you fellows, does that beast bite?” he asked. The captain looked at the fat junior sharply.

“Duke will not hurt you,” he said.

“He looks jolly dangerous.”

“You need not be afraid of him.”

“Oh, I’m not afraid,” said Bunter. “I’m a fearless chap, you know; but at the same time—”

“Here, Duke!”

The captain walked away, with the dog following him. Bunter breathed more freely. As a matter of fact, Bunter would have been afraid of a poodle if it had shown its teeth.

The Greyfriars juniors plunged into the sea with great zest. A quieter or safer spot for a bathe could not have been desired.

The morning was fresh, but not cold; the sea-water, however, felt warm after the crisp air. The juniors swam out cheerily into the deeper water, and splashed and sported to their hearts’ content. They splashed one another, and splashed Bunter, to an accompaniment of shouts of merry laughter.

“What a ripping place for a swim!” exclaimed Harry Wharton. “Who’s for a race?”

“Good!”

“First man out to the Point!” exclaimed Harry.

The Point closed in the bay to the north—a jutting tongue of rugged rock, rising abruptly from the sea,

It was a good half-mile from the beach opposite the house. “Right you are,” exclaimed Bob Cherry.

“The rightfulness is terrific.”

“I say, you fellows—”

“Come on, Bunty— you’re going to swim out to the Point.”

“I’m jolly well not. I’m going in to breakfast.”

“Come on!” roared Bob Cherry, splashing noisily towards the fat junior.

He did not really intend to bother himself with Bunter during the race; but Bunter thought he was in earnest, and he splashed hurriedly ashore.

“Come back!” roared Bob Cherry.

“Yah!” gasped Bunter defiantly.

He scrambled out of the water and dashed up the beach at full speed, dripping with water, Without waiting for his clothes.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Bob gasped with mirth as he rejoined his comrades. Harry formed them into a line.

“Ready to start?” he exclaimed.

“Yes.”

“Go!”

And the juniors struck out.

They all started well, and struck out manfully. For the first hundred yards or so they kept level.

Then Hurree Jamset Ram Singh dropped behind. He swam on bravely, but the others were drawing steadily ahead of him.

Hazeldene dropped to the rear a few minutes later. The Nabob overtook him, and they swam neck and neck, but the other four were well ahead.

For half the distance Wharton and Nugent, Cherry and Linley kept almost level, and then Nugent slackened down.

The three strong swimmers went ahead, and now the struggle was keen.

Not a word was spoken; they breasted the water in grim silence, all their energies thrown into the contest. Had it been a struggle for a great prize the juniors could not have thrown more keenness into it.

“My hat!” gasped Bob Cherry at last.

He dropped behind.

It was between Harry Wharton and the Lancashire lad now.

And he seemed to be at the top of his form now. Wharton fought on steadily, but it was all he could do to keep level with the Lancashire lad.

Mark was doing his best now.

The spit of rock was only a hundred yards away. It was the last lap, and all depended upon the next few

minutes.

The extreme end of the Point ran out to sea in a tongue of land rising hardly a few feet from the water for a dozen yards or more beyond the abrupt rock. Beyond that low tongue came a glancing of white. Both the juniors saw it.

It was the sail of a boat coming down the shore from the north. As yet the tongue of rock hid the boat and the man in it, but the white sail glanced into view over it.

The juniors saw it, but paid little attention.

Sails, of course, were common enough on the coast, and they only imagined it to be a fisherman's craft from the northern shore.

The boat was evidently hugging the coast when they had observed it, and was, indeed, dangerously near to the rocks if anything like a swell had come on.

Fifty yards more!

Mark Linley was putting on a spurt now, and he drew ahead.

Wharton set his teeth hard.

He was determined not to be beaten.

He put everything he had into that last tussle. Slowly, inch by inch, he drew level again with the Lancashire lad, and then he passed him.

The spit of rock was a dozen yards ahead.

The water shallowed down, and Wharton dragged himself out of it and turned breathlessly to wave his hand at Mark Linley.

The Lancashire lad had just touched ground a yard behind. He rose from the water with a breathless laugh.

"You've done it, Wharton."

"It was a close thing, though."

The sail glanced under their eyes. Standing on the rock, they could see across into the water on the other side—they could see the boat and the boatman.

Only his legs were visible for the moment, for he was handling the sheets, and the canvas hid the rest of him.

"Hallo!" called out Harry. "Look out for the rocks, my man!"

There was a sharp exclamation in the boat.

"Ha!"

Wharton started.

It was a hurried exclamation, but he fancied that the tone of it was familiar—that he had heard the voice before.

He changed colour a trifle.

"Linley!"

The Lancashire lad nodded quickly.

"I heard it, Harry."

"It was—"

"The man who shadowed us from London," said Mark quietly. "He has found us again. No—it's no good plunging in. He has recognised your voice."

"True."

The man in the boat emerged from behind the sail.

He was a lithe, powerful man, with black hair and eyes, and a face as brown as a berry. His eyes gleamed at the juniors.

"Ha! I have found you!" he exclaimed.

It was the South American!

CHAPTER 16

Three Shots!

Harry Wharton compressed his lips. His face was dark and angry. The South American had run them down again—close to the home of the man he was seeking. There was something terrible in the relentless pursuit of this mysterious adventurer. Nothing seemed to baffle him—he had found them again.

He laughed, showing his gleaming teeth under his black moustache, as he stood up in the boat looking at the juniors.

"I have found you again, senioritos."

Wharton gave him a savage look.

"Yes, you have found us," he said; "but I warned you yesterday that it would not be safe to run us down."

Ijorra laughed again.

"Bah! I have found you—"

"And now what do you want with us?" said Mark Linley.

The South American shrugged his shoulders.

"With you, nothing. I want Captain Cunliffe—El Capitan, as we called him in the South American waters, when we were shipmates."

Wharton started.

"Shipmates?"

"Why not?" said Ijorra.

"I do not believe it! You—a scoundrel like you—were never the shipmate of Captain Cunliffe!" exclaimed Wharton scornfully.

"You do not know what you are saying, little senor. But where is Captain Cunliffe, for your attempts to elude me convince me that he is near at hand? You are living near, or you would not be bathing in the sea."

Wharton's brows contracted.

Again, unconsciously, the juniors had been the means of guiding the South American towards the home of the man he sought. If he had not seen them now— But Wharton reflected that the South American was coasting along and examining the shore with the keenness of a hawk. He would not have failed to explore the cove at Black Rock, and then he would have made the discovery.

Ijorra looked at the juniors with a mocking light in his eyes.

"Well," he said, "where is my old friend, Captain Cunliffe?"

"He is no friend of yours."

"But he will be glad to see me," said Ijorra, laughing.

"That is not true," said Harry, eyeing him steadily; "and you will get no answer from us."

"Bah I shall not lose sight of you again."

The juniors exchanged a hopeless look. The matter was now in the hands of the South American; there was no baffling him further.

"Let us return," said Harry quietly.

Mark nodded. They plunged into the sea again, and swam slowly back to the beach. They met the other juniors on the way, but no explanation was needed, for the South American's boat had glided round the point now, and was entering the bay.

Ijorra handled the boat well. It was clear that he was a seaman. He kept the craft well behind the juniors, but kept them in easy view.

But the swimmers were no longer necessary for his guidance. As he came into the bay he could see the smoke of Black Rock House rising above the trees.

His eyes gleamed at the sight.

He stood up in the boat, his hand upon a sheet, and looked steadily towards the shore, shading his eyes with his free hand.

From the cliff the column of smoke rose against the blue morning sky. Beyond were cliffs on cliffs, here and there wooded at their summits where there was soil, in other places bare and grey.

From the cliffs on the southern side of the bay there came a sudden puff of white smoke, followed a moment later by a report that reverberated strangely among the rocks.

The South American uttered a cry. A tiny round hole appeared in the sail of his craft.

"Carambo!"

The juniors were scrambling ashore now. They, too, had heard the gunshot, and they imagined that it was someone shooting gulls.

They could see the puff of smoke curling away against the dark rock.

But as they looked towards the South American they saw that he did not imagine the marksman to be shooting at gulls.

Instead of standing up in the boat he was crouching down in it, concealed as much as possible by the gunwale, and the colour had wavered in his dark cheeks.

Harry Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"Good heavens! Look!"

"My hat! The chap on the cliff is firing at the boat!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, aghast.

"At Ijorra, you mean!"

"Great Scott!"

Crack!

Another puff of smoke, another crack from the distant cliff. The distance was great, but the aim was good. There was a crack from the boat, audible across the silent bay, as the bullet crashed into the woodwork.

The juniors stood looking on with white faces. All of a sudden they were brought face to face with tragedy—with a matter of life and death. Who was firing from the cliff? His deadly intention could hardly be doubted.

The South American did not doubt it. In the boat, if he rose above the gunwale, he was helplessly exposed to the aim of the marksman, but as he crouched he could not control the sail.

The wind caught it and the boat heeled over and whirled. It drove towards the rocks of the Point, and the South American could make no effort to stop it.

“He’s going ashore,” muttered Linley.

“The safest place for him.”

Crack!

It was a third ringing report from the face of the cliff. Of the marksman nothing could be seen. He was hidden by the rugged rocks.

Crash!

The boat was on the rocky shore now. The South American made a desperate spring to land, and disappeared among the rocks. He had landed two hundred yards or more from the juniors, and they saw him for only a moment as he disappeared.

The boat pounded on the rocks, washed there by the waves, and the mast crashed over the side. The South American did not reappear.

The juniors turned slowly towards the house. The strange and terrible occurrence had given them a shock. Hazeldene was white as a sheet.

“It—it can’t be—” he muttered, and broke off.

Wharton looked at him.

“What do you mean, Hazel?”

“I—I was thinking my uncle—”

Harry started. It had not occurred to him before. But who was firing from the cliff at the boat containing the South American? Who at Black Rock had reason to fear his coming?

Was it possible that the captain—

The dark thought was driven from the juniors’ minds the

next moment by a hearty voice breaking the silence. “Tumble up, my lads! Breakfast is ready!”

It was Captain Cunliffe. He had come down to the beach to meet them. The juniors exchanged glances of relief. Captain Cunliffe was there, and he could not have been a quarter of a mile away on the southern cliff a few minutes before. Whoever had fired those shots across the sunlit bay, it was not their host.

CHAPTER 17

Last in Line!

Billy Bunter was already at breakfast when the Greyfriars juniors came in. He was looking all the better for his short bathe, though he was not inclined to admit it. It may have had the effect of improving his appetite; at all events, he was performing wonders at the breakfast-table, to the evident admiration of old Ben. Eggs and bacon and kidneys disappeared at a wonderful rate, and Bunter had already done very well when the juniors came in. But he showed no sign of leaving off. He blinked up at them as they came to the table. His fat face was assuming an extremely shiny appearance.

“I say, you fellows, the food is jolly good here,” he remarked. “I think I shall enjoy my holiday, after all, Hazeldene.”

Hazeldene did not reply. He was wearing a worried look; the mystery of the shots fired from the cliff was weighing upon his mind.

“Someone was out shooting early this morning,” Captain Cunliffe remarked. “You heard the shots on the cliff, I suppose?”

“Yes,” said Harry.

“Shooting gulls, I suppose,” said Bunter, with his mouth full. “I’m rather a dab at shooting gulls, you know. I’ll show you after breakfast.”

“You jolly well won’t,” said Bob Cherry. “You’re not going to fool about with loaded firearms. I’ve

seen you do that before.”

“Oh, really, Cherry—”

“It wouldn’t matter very much if you blew your own head off, Bunty, but you might blow somebody else’s off, and that makes all the difference.”

“I’m a dab at shooting—”

“Rats! You’re a dab at drawing the long bow!” said Nugent. “You’re no good with a gun.”

Billy Bunter blinked indignantly, and consoled himself with a fresh supply of kidneys and bacon.

The coming of the South American was weighing upon the minds of the juniors, and they felt that it ought to be mentioned to Captain Cunliffe. After breakfast, Harry followed the captain into the garden, and told him.

The skipper’s bronzed face turned a shade paler as he listened.

“You’re sure it was Ijurra?” he asked.

“Oh, yes, sir! I spoke to him.”

The skipper wrinkled his brows.

“And the shots from the cliff were fired at his boat?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“But—but why, and by whom?” said Captain Cunliffe, very much puzzled. “Who should do so? I think it must have been some gull shooter, whose shots went near the boat by sheer chance. Don’t you think that is possible?”

“The bullets struck the boat or the sail.”

“That may have been by accident.”

“The South American did not think it an accident; he crouched under the gunwale and let the boat run ashore,” said Harry. “Of course, though, it may be as you think. I thought I ought to mention the matter to you.”

“Quite right—quite right,” said the captain.

And Harry left him. Captain Cunliffe called after him.

“Then Ijurra is ashore here, Wharton?”

“Yes,” said Harry, turning his head. “He went into the rocks on the north side of the cove.”

“Thank you!”

Wharton rejoined his chums. They had come out of the house in cheerful spirits, and Bob Cherry was seen fingering his necktie, and trying to get it straight—almost a hopeless task with Bob. Harry smiled as he saw it, and guessed at once what it meant.

“What time is Marjorie coming, Hazel?” he asked.

Hazeldene laughed.

“The girls get to Wynne Station at half-past ten,” he said. “That’s about a mile from here. It’s the nearest railway point.”

“We’re going to meet them, of course?”

“Well, I am,” said Hazeldene. “You fellows can come if you like.”

“If we like!” said Nugent.

“The likefulness will be terrific, my worthy chum.”

“I don’t see that it’s necessary for all you fellows to come,” Billy Bunter remarked. “I suppose Hazeldene ought to come, as he’s Marjorie’s brother, and if I go with him, it seems to me that will be enough.”

“It will be to much,” said Bob Cherry. “You can stay here.”

“Oh, really, Cherry—”

“It’s not fair on Marjorie and Clara to make them begin their holiday by seeing a chivvy like yours,” said Bob. “Keep out of sight for a bit, and we’ll break it gently to them.”

“Look here—”

“We’d better start now,” said Harry Wharton, laughing.

And Bob Cherry, having given his offending necktie a final tug, which made it look more awry than ever, and the juniors left Black Rock House, and followed the rocky path down the combe towards the railway-station, a mile away on the inland side of the great, grey cliffs.

The morning was fresh and bright, just the weather for a brisk walk. Billy Bunter lagged behind, and grumbled at having to keep up with the others.

“I say, you fellows, you might walk a little more slowly,” he said. “You know I’ve got a delicate constitution, and hurrying like this may do me some damage.”

Bob Cherry quickened his stride.

“Sit down and take a rest till we come back, Bunty,” he advised.

“Oh, really—”

“You mustn’t overtire yourself, you know,” said Bob Cherry with great consideration. “Think of your

constitution.”

“If you think I’m not coming to meet the girls—” began Bunter wrathfully.

“My dear ass—”

“You know how disappointed Marjorie would be if she didn’t see me. Go a bit slower, you rotters.”

But the Greyfriars juniors were not disposed to accommodate their pace to that of the laziest of the party. They strode on, and Billy Bunter dropped behind.

He made some efforts to overtake them, but it was too much, and he gave it up with an angry gleam in his eye.

CHAPTER 18

Bunter Makes a Bargain!

“Halt!”

It was a sudden voice from the thicket along the path. Billy Bunter snorted.

“Oh, go and eat coke!” he exclaimed. “What’s the good of working off a stale wheeze like that?”

And the fat junior tramped on, fully convinced that the challenge had come from one of the Greyfriars juniors who was playing a trick on him.

“Stop!”

“Rats!”

A figure came hastily through the bushes, and a man with a gun in the hollow of his arm stepped into view.

“Stop!” he repeated.

Bunter stopped.

He did not like the look of the stranger at all.

He was a little man—not much taller than Bunter himself— and one of his legs was curiously twisted, and he walked with a decided lameness.

His face was burnt dark by a tropical sun, and his eyes, deep-set and glittering, seemed to burn under his rugged black brows.

The lame man hobbled in his path.

His clothes, which were of a seafaring cut, showed plain signs of rough usage, and the stains on them seemed to indicate that the lame man was accustomed to sleeping in the open air—at least, of late.

Bunter guessed that he was a poacher of some sort—though in the neighbourhood there was little to poach, unless it was an occasional rabbit in the wood. The gun, however, showed that the man had been out shooting, and Bunter remembered the shots he had heard on the cliff that morning.

“Well, what do you want?” he said feebly. “I haven’t any money to give away. I’m stony broke. I’m treated too jolly meanly by my friends to have any money to spare.”

“I don’t want your money, you young fool. What is your name?”

“William George Bunter, of Greyfriars School, Remove Form—”

“That’s enough. Where are you staying in this neighbourhood?”

“With Captain Cunliffe.”

“Ah! At Black Rock?”

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

The lame man nodded.

“You know Captain Cunliffe?” asked Billy Bunter. The lame man laughed with a curious ring.

“Yes, I know him. But that is no business of yours. How is it that you boys are staying with Captain Cunliffe—he is generally alone, I believe?”

“We’re spending the Easter vacation here.”

“Oh, it is curious! Never mind. Has there been another visitor to Black Rock while you have been there?”

“Not that I know of.”

“A foreign man,” said the stranger—a South American—a man with a scar on his forehead. He landed in the cove this morning, some hours ago. Have you seen him?”

“Then he is not at Black Rock?”

“He can’t be without my seeing him,” said Bunter. “Is he a friend of yours?”

The lame man chuckled.

“Yes, a friend—and a very old friend,” he said. “I’m most anxious to see him. Listen to me, Bunker—”

"Bunter."

"Ah, Bunter. Listen to me. I want to know as soon as that man comes to Black Rock—you understand?"

"Ye-es," said Bunter, though he did not understand very clearly.

"You must let me know."

"I—I'll tell you anything with pleasure," said Bunter, beginning to think that he was dealing with a lunatic. "Would you like me to send you a postcard?"

"No, fool."

"Oh, really—"

"I am never very far from Black Rock," said the lame man, with another of his curious chuckles. "Do you know the sundial in the garden?"

"I have seen it there."

"Well, as soon as you get any news of the South American, leave a note for me on the sundial in the garden, and I shall find it."

Bunter blinked at him.

"But—but—"

The man came closer to him. His dark face and deep-set eyes assumed a terribly threatening look, which caused Bunter's heart to throb wildly.

"Hearken to me," said the lame man in a low, hard voice. "I'd as soon blow your brains out as squash a fly. I've come from a country where murder's not much thought of. Mind, I don't want to hurt you, but if you don't carry out my orders, I'll make you sorry for it. Do you understand? If I find that you have failed to obey me I will put a bullet through your head."

"Ow!"

"Mind, you are to do as I tell you, and not to say a word to a soul!" said the lame man threateningly—"not a word!"

"I—I—— All right."

"I don't want you to do it for nothing," went on the lame man, his voice softening a little as he saw that he had terrorised the fat junior sufficiently. "I'll pay you for what you do."

Billy Bunter brightened up.

"Now you're talking!" he exclaimed.

The lame man laughed.

"Look you, I will leave money for you on the sundial—five shillings every time," he said. "Does that satisfy you?"

Bunter jumped.

"Five bob a day!"

"Yes."

"I'll do anything you like!" exclaimed Bunter eagerly. "You can rely on me. I'll leave you as many notes on the sundial as you like."

"Good! Leave one every morning, then, telling me whether anything has been seen of Pedro Ijurra, and I will leave the money in exchange."

"Jolly good! Perhaps you wouldn't mind paying the first lot in advance!" suggested Bunter. "I'm awfully short of money. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, you see, and—"

"Take this."

The man thrust a handful of small silver into the fat junior's palm, without even counting it. Bunter's eyes glistened.

"Remember what I have told you. Let me know anything that happens at Black Rock. If Ijurra actually comes there, you must come and tell me at once, without delay."

"But where——"

"I shall be on the cliffs on the south side of the cove. I shall see you coming, if it is in daylight, with my field-glasses."

"Good! I'll do it," said Bunter. "I—I like you very much, you know, and I—I'm going to do it out of friendship. Of course, I regard this money simply as a loan."

The lame man did not seem to hear.

"Mind, not a word to a soul—even to your companions," he said.

"That's all right. They won't let me into all their secrets, and I jolly well won't tell them a word,"

"That is right, Don't forget." And the lame man disappeared among the thickets.

Billy Bunter blinked after him in a state of considerable astonishment. Many strange things were happening in connection with that visit to Black Rock, but this seemed to be about the strangest of all. But Billy Bunter was perfectly satisfied. A new source of income had been opened to him, and that was quite sufficient to elate the fat junior. Billy Bunter counted the money in his hand. There were eight

shillings and sixpence.

"By George," murmured Bunter.

He hurried on towards the village. He was in funds now, and when Billy Bunter was in funds the money always burnt in his pocket till he had spent it.

CHAPTER 19

Marjorie Arrives!

"Marjorie!"

The Greyfriars chums were in good time at the station. They were on the platform waiting when the train came rattling in. Two pretty faces in charming hats looked from a carriage window.

They belonged to Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn, the girl chums of Cliff House. The juniors waved their caps at once.

"So jolly glad to see you!" exclaimed Harry.

"The gladfulness is terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The cloudfulness of the esteemed sky is chased farfully by the sunshineful serenity of your honourable presence."

"Good old Inky!" said Hazeldene, "Doesn't he put it concisely?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They stopped outside the station. Billy Bunter had come up breathless, but in the highest spirits.

"I say, you fellows, I am sure Marjorie and Clara are hungry after their journey!" he exclaimed, "I've found a little shop here—"

"Not at all," said Marjorie.

"Not a bit," said Miss Clara. "We had breakfast in Okehampton, where we stayed the night at my aunt's."

"Yes, but—"

"Dry up, Bunter."

"Rats, Wharton! I think you fellows ought to wait while Marjorie and Clara have a bit of a feed!" exclaimed Bunter. "Of course, I'm going to stand it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

"Has your postal-order come?" grinned Nugent.

"Well, I'm in funds,"

"Found a gold-mine?"

"Look here," said Billy Bunter, showing a handful of silver. "What do you think of that?"

The juniors stared at it.

"Where on earth did you get it?" demanded Hazeldene. "You were stony this morning!"

"Never mind where I got it," said Billy Bunter loftily. "I've got it, and that's the chief thing. There's nothing mean about me, either. You fellows don't treat me very well, but I'm willing to stand you a feed. All of you come into the shop here, and you'll see."

"Where did you get that tin?"

"I may have friends, and I may not," said Bunter mysteriously. "It may be a loan, and it may not. That doesn't matter. Are you coming in to feed?"

Wharton glanced at the girls and read "No" in their faces. They did not like Bunter, and they would not accept his hospitality. He shook his head.

"No, Billy."

"But, I say—"

The juniors and the girls walked on. Billy Bunter blinked after them, nonplussed for a moment. Now that he was in funds, he wanted to have the pleasure of standing a feed in a princely way.

He blinked disconsolately.

"Blessed if I know what to make of it," he murmured. He glanced at the silver in his palm, and his fat face brightened up. After all, there was a feed there; and if he were alone there would be more for him. He went into the shop.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked out of the village, and entered upon the rocky path leading to Black Rock.

Marjorie and Clara were delighted with the scenery, and with the description they received of the lonely house of Captain Cunliffe.

"How jolly it will be!" Miss Clara remarked, in her boyish way. "I suppose there are caves in the cliffs, of course."

“Heaps of them,” said Hazeldene, with a grin. “Jolly dark and damp places they are, too.”

“Then I shall explore them.”

“That’s a jolly good idea,” remarked Nugent. “We might as well explore the caves this afternoon. It would be great fun.”

“I’ve heard that the caves used to be used by smugglers, in the good old times,” Hazeldene remarked.

“Old Ben showed me one, when I was here last, that used to have contraband cargoes stored in it, according to his account. You get to it by a path over the cliffs on the north side of the cove.”

“Oh, let’s explore it!” exclaimed Miss Clara.

“We’ll go this afternoon,” said Wharton. “Careful of the path there. It’s steep.”

They followed the rocky path, till suddenly at one end of it the open-wooded combe lay before them, with the sea rolling in the distance. Marjorie uttered an exclamation of delight.

“How beautiful!”

“Yes, rather!”

“But, look! Who is that?” exclaimed Marjorie suddenly. The juniors followed the direction of her glance. Upon a rock at some distance a figure stood, observing Black Rock House through a pair of field-glasses. It was the form of a small man, and he stood in an awkward attitude, with one leg strangely twisted. He moved as the juniors looked at him and lowered the glasses. Though they were behind him, he seemed to have become aware of their presence.

“What a strange-looking man!” said Miss Clara.

“A sailorman, I should say.”

The man looked down at them, and then limped away among the rocks.

“He is lame,” said Nugent.

“Ahoy!” called out Bob Cherry. “Good-morning!”

The lame man did not reply.

He limped on without turning his head, and vanished among the rocks, and was gone in a few seconds. The juniors looked at one another.

“Another queer customer,” said Mark Linley.

Wharton nodded, and they walked on. Who was the lame man, and why was he watching Black Rock House from the cliff path?

It was another mystery; and it seemed to Harry Wharton that a strange shadow of mystery was growing and thickening round that lonely house on the Devon coast. What was to be the outcome of it all?

CHAPTER 20

The Explorers!

Captain Cunliffe was not at home when the juniors reached the house. Neither did he return at lunch, a meal which was taken without him. Billy Bunter came in, and as he was not rattling any money in his pockets, the probability was that he had none left. He did not eat quite so much lunch as usual, either. He only doubled the largest amount consumed by anybody else.

“Uncle’s out,” said Hazeldene, as he sat down at the head of the table. “He told Ben he would be back soon, but he hasn’t come, so I’ll take his place. Anything’s better than waiting for lunch.”

“What-ho” said Billy Bunter.

And the meal proceeded cheerfully enough. Billy Bunter blinked over his glasses at Harry Wharton, as a thought came into his mind.

“I say, Wharton, have you seen that crooked South American chap again?”

Wharton made him an angry sign to be silent.

The juniors had decided to tell the girls nothing of the strange pursuit of the ruffian from South America. It might alarm them, and it could do no good. But they had reckoned without Billy Bunter. Marjorie and Clara were looking rather serious. After lunch, when they went out, Marjorie referred to the matter again.

“I’m sorry Bunter told me, as you didn’t want me to know, Harry,” she said. “But who is the man—the South American?”

Wharton shook his head.

“I know his name, and that’s all I know about him,” he said. “I’ll tell you the whole yarn, as you know about the man now.”

And he did. Marjorie and Clara listened attentively.

“My word!” said Miss Clara, “It’s quite an adventure.”

“I am afraid the man must mean my uncle some harm,” said Marjorie.

"At all events, he is on his guard now," said Harry. "And while we are here the South American wouldn't have much chance against all of us."

"No, that is true."

"Are you ready to start for the cliffs?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming up. "It's a ripping afternoon for exploring the caves."

"We're ready."

And in ten minutes the girls were ready, too. The whole party started out from Black Rock, and followed the curve of the little cove towards the northern cliffs. The sea rolled blue and bright under the bright sun, and the waves broke in little ripples on the pebbles.

"You're guide, Hazel," exclaimed Harry Wharton, as they neared the abrupt rise of the cliffs. "Which way now?"

"Follow me, kids!"

Hazeldene clambered up the rocks, and the juniors followed, Harry helping Marjorie, and Nugent Clara. Billy Bunter clambered over the first rock after them, and then stopped and gasped for breath.

"I say, Hazel, isn't there any other way to the caves?" he exclaimed.

"No," said Hazeldene.

"Then I'm jolly well not coming," said Bunter. "I'll sit down here and wait for you to come back."

And he sank down with a sigh of relief, and leaned his back against a rock, and was soon fast asleep in the sun, with his cap over his fat face.

The juniors grinned and left him.

The fat junior of Greyfriars was not in exactly a fit condition to climb a steep cliff-path, and they were not sorry to leave him behind.

Hazeldene led the way, clambering over rock after rock, and the juniors kept on his track, the girls keeping well up.

"Here's the path!" exclaimed Hazeldene suddenly.

It was a narrow ledge winding up the face of the cliff. It was not more than two feet wide in the widest place, and one side was the steep cliff rising abruptly; on the other, as they advanced, the rock fell sheer away.

The path was terribly dangerous to any save those who had clear and steady heads. Harry Wharton paused.

"This isn't safe for you girls," he said.

Miss Clara tossed her golden head.

"Stuff!" she remarked.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"But it really isn't," he said. "What do you say, Marjorie?"

"Are you going on, Harry?"

"Well, it is safe for us."

"If it is safe for you, it is safe for us," said Miss Clara in her most decided tone. "Isn't it, Marjorie?"

"Certainly," said Marjorie, smiling.

"Oh, come on!" said Hazeldene, from ahead. "Marjorie's been over rougher paths than this, Wharton. Buck up!"

"Right-ho, then!"

And they pressed on.

Cool and calm-nerved as the Greyfriars juniors were, they became very quiet and serious as they advanced up the rocky ledge.

A slip of the foot meant a fall, and a fall meant certain death upon the hard rocks a hundred feet below the ledge.

"Where's the cave, Hazel?" asked Mark Linley at last.

"Just ahead."

Hazeldene halted a few minutes later.

In the great looming cliff on the right hand appeared a huge fissure, extending into deep darkness in the depths of the cliff.

The juniors gathered at the opening and looked into it. "And this is where the smugglers used to store their contraband stuff?" Bob Cherry remarked.

"So the fishermen say."

"Blessed if I know how they got it up the cliff, then," said Bob. "It must have been a pretty good bit of trouble carrying kegs up the way we came."

"They used to sling them up on ropes from the beach," said Hazeldene. "Old Ben says there are still the iron clamps stuck in the cliff that they used to fasten the ropes to."

"Oh, I see!"

Mark Linley was lighting a bicycle lamp. The sunlight extended for some distance into the cave; but after that all was dark.

"What a jolly place!" exclaimed Miss Clara, clapping her hands, and the clap came back echoing from the cave with a sound like thunder. "How it echoes!"

"The echoefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But hark! I thankfully believe that the sound of voices."

Hazeldene shook his head.

"Not likely to be anybody else here," he remarked. "Nobody ever comes here. Why—."

He was suddenly interrupted.

From the interior of the cave came suddenly a deafening report, followed by a fierce cry and the sound of running feet.

CHAPTER 21

Exploring the Cave!

Marjorie turned quite white, and clung to Harry Wharton's arm.

"What—what was that?" she exclaimed.

"It sounded like a shot."

"It was a shot!" said Bob Cherry.

They stared into the cave.

It was still full of echoing sound, and amid the echoes came that sound of running feet—feet approaching the entrance where the group of juniors stood.

Who was it that was running from the gloom of the cavern towards them?

They did not have to wait long to see.

The lithe form of the South American loomed up in the shadows. He had a broken and extinguished lantern in his hand, and his face was pale and startled.

He did not see the juniors for the moment.

He came running out of the cave, upon the ledge, and then he suddenly halted as he saw them.

"Stand aside!" he exclaimed fiercely.

The juniors drew aside to let him pass; they had no desire to stop him. Ijurra did not give them a second look.

He ran past them down the rocky ledge, in his haste sending stones clattering over the edge of the steep path to fall with faint clinking upon the rocks far below.

His speed was so great, in spite of the peril of the path, that he disappeared from the view of the juniors in a few moments.

He left them utterly astonished.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Bob Cherry at last. "What was he afraid of? He seemed to be scared out of his wits."

"He looked like it."

"The pistol-shot explains it, I think," said Harry Wharton quietly. "There is someone else in the cave."

"Can't see anything of him," said Nugent, straining his eyes into the darkness.

"But he's there." Wharton hesitated. "Marjorie, do you feel inclined to go into the cave, after—after that?"

Marjorie was still a little pale.

"Why not?" exclaimed Miss Clara. "Whoever is there has no reason to harm us, I suppose."

"That's so, certainly."

"Let's go in," said Hazeldene. "There are enough of us to be safe, I should think."

"Quite safe," said Mark Linley.

"Yes, let us go in," Marjorie said.

And they went in. Mark Linley carried the lantern, and flashed the light ahead as they advanced into the gloomy depths of the cavern.

"Look out!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "This is a jolly unsafe place to tumble about in. There's a big gap in the ground here somewhere, and if a chap fell into it, he would never get out alive, I think."

"By jove, you're right!" said Harry, halting. "Here it is." The lantern light gleamed upon a yawning gap in the rocky floor of the cavern—a black pit extending to unknown depths. Bob Cherry picked up a stone and dropped it into the opening. The juniors heard faint echoes as it bounded from side to side, striking first one rocky wall and then the other, then silence. They did not hear it touch the bottom.

Marjorie shuddered a little.

"What a dreadful place," she said. "Let us get away." And they went on their way, taking care to give the pit a wide berth.

The cavern was a huge one, extending deep into the heart of the great cliff, and smaller hollows branched off from it in various directions.

The juniors were peering into one of them, when there was a sound of footsteps in the cave behind them, and they turned round quickly.

A dim form appeared for a moment as Linley flashed the lantern round—that of a lame man limping towards the mouth of the cavern.

He was gone in a second.

The juniors stared after him blankly.

"Who—who could that be?" murmured Marjorie.

"The man who fired the shot we heard," said Nugent.

"I—I think I have seen enough of the cavern," Marjorie said uneasily.

Wharton nodded.

"We'll get back."

And the explorers left the cave.

They descended the rocky path in silence.

CHAPTER 22

Bunter Reports!

Captain Cunliffe was at home when the explorers returned to Black Rock. The captain was looking tired, as if he had been exerting himself during his absence, and he said very little.

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter rolled into the room. Bob Cherry gave the fat junior a hearty smack on the shoulder, which elicited a howl from him.

"Ow! Oh, really, Cherry—"

"So you've woken up?" said Bob genially.

"I have been awake a long time!" exclaimed Billy indignantly. "It was rotten of you to go off like that while I was asleep."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I should have liked to come with you," said Bunter. "I say, Wharton—"

But Wharton was walking on with Marjorie, and he did not hear. Bunter turned his spectacles upon Nugent.

"I say, Nugent—"

Nugent marched on with Clara, without turning his head.

"I say, Cherry—"

"Sorry, I'm in a hurry."

"Look here—"

"Goodbye!"

"Hazeldene, old man—"

"Hallo!" said Hazeldene.

"They were getting some fresh tarts in, they told me, at the village," said Billy Bunter confidentially. "I shall have five bob tonight. Will you lend me half a crown off it?"

Hazeldene grinned.

"Where are you going to get five bob from, Billy?"

"Well, I'm going to get it; it's a dead cert."

"Expecting a postal-order? Ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"I suppose a chap can have other resources, Hazeldene. As a matter of fact, I shall have five bob tonight for a dead cert."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Honour bright—"

"Rats!"

"Will you lend me half a crown?"

"Some other evening," grinned Hazeldene.

Bunter grunted.

"Look here, I shall have five bob—"

"Bosh!"

And Hazeldene walked on. The other juniors hurried on before Bunter could tackle them, and left the Owl of the Grey- friars Remove blinking discontentedly.

"Rotters!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I'll jolly well show them."

He went into the house for his coat. Evening was drawing on and it was chilly by the sea. The juniors looked at him as he took his cap down from the peg in the hail.

"Going out, Bunter?" asked Linley.

"Yes," said Bunter importantly. "I've got an appointment."

"At the grub shop?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!" "Don't ask questions, and I won't tell you any lies," said Bunter loftily. "I've got an appointment with a friend of mine, and I dare say I shall be able to raise a loan, and I shan't want any of your rotten money."

And Bunter stalked out.

"What's on, I wonder?" said Bob Cherry.

"I suppose Bunter isn't turning burglar, is he? Blessed if I know any other way he can raise the wind here."

"Oh, it's all gammon!" said Hazeldene.

"The gammonfulness is terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Bunter is endeavouring to pull our honourable legs."

Meanwhile, Billy Bunter was making his way towards the southern side of the cove. He remembered the instructions of the lame man, to go there immediately he saw the South American, and he did not doubt in the least that he had earned the promised reward.

The fat junior made his way over rocks and seaweed with many a grunt, wondering how long it would be before he met the lame man.

The latter had told him to come, and told him that he would see him coming, and Bunter, who was soon tired, stopped at last, standing in full view in the sunset. He thought that the other fellow might as well do the walking.

There was a sound of footsteps on the rocks, and a man scrambled into view, and Bunter gave a grunt of relief at the sight of the lame man.

"So you've come!" he grunted.

The lame man nodded.

"Have you any news for me?" he asked. "Yes."

"The South American—he has come?" exclaimed the other eagerly.

"I've seen him."

"Where?"

"On the cliffs on the other side of the cove," said Bunter. "He came down the path from the cave this afternoon."

A look of disappointment came over the other's face. "Bah!" he exclaimed. "Is that all?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Isn't that enough? I've carried out your instructions." "Yes, yes, that is true. But it is nothing. I saw him there."

A grim smile fitted over the dark face. "You have nothing else to tell me?"

"No."

"Come again if you have news."

And the lame man turned away.

"Here, I say!" exclaimed Billy Bunter indignantly. "I say, you know, you haven't settled up yet."

"Oh, yes! Quite so!"

The man took out five shillings, and placed them in the fat junior's palm.

"Thank you!" grunted Bunter.

As he went back towards the house, several times he heard a faint sound behind him, and he turned his head, with the idea that the lame man might be following him. But he saw the no one.

The dusk was deepening over the shore and the bay now, the rocks were growing dim to the view, and the short-sighted junior did not see very clearly. He was within a hundred yards of the house when a footstep sounded close behind, and a hand fell with a grip of iron on his shoulder.

He swung round with a startled exclamation.

"Oh, really—"

The words died on his

Through the dusk a swarthy face was looking into his.

It was the face of Pedro Ijurra,

CHAPTER 23

Bunter Changes Sides!

Ijurra looked at the fat junior in silence for a few moments, as if enjoying his terror, as a cat might enjoy that of a mouse. Bunter made a feeble effort to get away, but the grip on his shoulder was like that of a vice.

"Stop!" said the South American.

"Certainly," said Bunter faintly. "I—I shall be very pleased to stop. You see, I—I'm really awfully glad to see you. you know."

The South American smiled grimly.

"Give me the money," he said.

Bunter jumped.

"The—the what?"

"The money!"

"I—I haven't any, you know. I—I'm stony broke. My friends treat me very meanly, and I can never raise a small loan from them. I'm stony. Otherwise, I'd be sincerely pleased to lend you some tin."

"Give me the money—the money Halkett gave you."

"I—I don't know anybody of that name."

"The lame man," said the South American sharply.

"Oh!"

"Give me the money. I saw him give it you. I heard all that you said. I was not half a dozen paces from you." Bunter shivered.

Without another word he handed over the five precious shillings, and his dreams of jam-tarts at the village shop faded away.

The South American took the money, but he did not put it in his pocket. With a sweep of the hand he sent it whirling through the air, and the coins splashed lightly into the bay, and sank under the water. Bunter watched this proceeding in blank astonishment.

"W-w-what—" he began.

"Now," said the South American in a gentler tone, "he gives you a few pieces of silver for betraying me. I will give you much silver to betray him."

"Oh, really—"

"Listen to me. That man is a murderer. He wishes to see me, to take my life," said Ijurra. "He has fired at me twice today."

"Oh, dear!"

"You would be arrested as an accomplice if he succeeded," said Ijurra. "You would pay very dearly for the money he has given you."

"I—I—I——"

"You can get more money, and serve the law, by helping me instead of him," said the South American, watching the fat junior's frightened face narrowly. "I want to get him where he can be arrested. You understand?"

"Ye-e-es."

"How are you to communicate with him again?"

"I have to leave a note on the sundial in the garden."

"And he will come and take it?"

"Yes."

"At what hour?"

"I don't know."

"Listen. Will you write a note at my dictation, and leave it for him, so that he may fall into the hands of the police?"

"C-c-certainly!" gasped Bunter. "I—I didn't know—"

"Exactly. You shall write the note here, and I will give you a pound for placing it where he will find it."

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"Of course, I'm jolly willing to help the law," he said. "If the man is a murderer, he ought to be arrested, of course." Ijurra nodded sardonically.

"Then you shall write the note now."

"It's—it's dark."

"I will soon alter that. Come into the shadow of the rocks, and I will light my lantern."

"I haven't a pencil."
 "I have one."
 "Or any paper."
 "A leaf from my pocket-book will do."
 "All—all right. But what—"
 "I will dictate."
 "Just as you like. But—"
 "Write this: 'I have seen him again, and he is hiding in the cave in the cliffs on the northern side again'."
 "That's done," said Bunter, spreading the sheet on the cover of the pocket-book, and scribbling down the words in his sprawling hand.
 "Now sign it."
 "All right."
 Bunter added his signature—"W. G. Bunter"—to the message.
 "Good!" said the South American.
 He groped in his pocket and drew out a rustling Treasury note.
 "That is yours."
 Bunter's fingers closed on it greedily.
 "You shall have five times as much as soon as the man is—is arrested," said the South American, with a curious grin.
 "Jolly good."
 "You will place this note on the sundial?"
 "Yes, rather."
 A terrible look came over Ijurra's face.
 "Mind, if you deceive me—"
 "It's all right; I want that five pounds."
 Ijurra laughed.
 "I believe you. Besides, you will be assisting the law to take its course—helping justice, you know. And—and there is a reward out for the arrest of this man Halkett, and you will be entitled to it."
 "Jolly good! The villain ought to be arrested!"
 "Exactly."
 "I'll go and put the note there at once."
 And Billy Bunter hurried off. He reached the garden gate of the house. From the lighted windows came the merry sounds of a piano and singing. Bunter did not enter the house, however; he skirted it, and made his way to the sundial, in a secluded part of the gardens.
 There he placed the note, with a stone upon it to keep it in place.
 He blinked round into the dusk; there was no one in sight. The moon was showing a silver rim over the cliffs now.
 Bunter went back to the house.
 It was more than an hour later that a dark form appeared among the bushes in the garden and approached the sundial—a dark figure that limped awkwardly—the figure of the lame man.
 He glanced carelessly at the sundial, and then started eagerly as he saw that there was a note there.

 He left a small heap of silver on the sundial in the place of the note, and quitted the garden as quickly as he had come.

CHAPTER 24

On the Cliff Path!

"Halo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!"
 Billy Bunter came into the brightly-lighted room, blinking. He was feeling and looking very satisfied with himself, and he was longing to astonish his friends with the sight of the pound note—a sum of money Bunter very seldom possessed, and never for long.
 "Let's trot in to dinner," suggested Hazeldene.
 "Good egg!"
 "This way!"

And the party trooped into the dining-room.

"This air gives a chap a good appetite," remarked Billy Bunter as he sat down to the dinner-table. "I think I shall be able to do justice to the feed this evening."

"A thing you seldom do, of course!" Bob Cherry remarked. "Well, I'm not greedy, you know, but I like a lot. Besides, a chap ought to do his host justice!" said Billy Bunter.

"Quite so!" said Captain Cunliffe, with his jovial laugh. "Ay, ay, my lad; I like to see a lad eat!"

"Then I'm sure Bunter will please you, sir," said Nugent. "He can keep it up for twenty-four hours a day without turning a hair. He could keep it up longer than that, if there were more than twenty-four hours in a day!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

But Bunter did not finish his remonstrance. He wired into his dinner instead. The meal over, the party went out into the garden, which was brilliant in the moonlight. The full, round moon was sailing over the bay, streaming with silver light upon the cliffs.

"What a glorious night!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!" said Bunter, "I like a moonlight night; it's so romantic. It always reminds me somehow of plum-cake and lemonade!"

"The romanticfulness is terrific!"

"Speaking of lemonade," said Bunter, "if you chaps like to walk down to the village with me, I'll stand a treat all round!"

"Who have you been robbing?" asked Bob Cherry, in his candid way.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Oh, Bunter went out to get a loan this afternoon! Don't you remember?" said Hazeldene, laughing.

"And I jolly well got it, too!" said Bunter.

"I got it!"

"You got what?"

"The loan!"

"Ahem!"

"Look there, then!"

Bunter held out the pound note in his fat palm. The juniors stared at it in amazement.

"It's a quid!" said Mark Linley.

"I suppose you don't see many of them Linley?" grinned Billy Bunter. "It's a quid right enough, and I can jolly well get some more, if I like!"

Harry Wharton looked very serious.

"Where did you get that, Bunter?"

"That's my business, you know!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Wharton sharply. "Where did you get that pound note?"

"I borrowed it!"

"From whom?"

"From a—a friend—well, an acquaintance!"

"What acquaintance?"

"A chap I—I met!"

"Look here, Bunter, you'd better speak out plainly, and tell the truth. You are always getting into some stupid scrape, and nobody who knows you would lend you a pound—and, of course, a stranger wouldn't. Where did you get it?"

Bunter drew himself up with as much dignity as his fat figure would allow.

"Really, Wharton—"

"Are you going to explain?" demanded Harry.

"No; I'm jolly well not. It's my business!" Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"I can get some more, if I like, too!" said Bunter defiantly.

"You fellows have always treated me meanly! I told you I had other sources! I expect to have plenty of money now for the present! Coming down to the village?"

"No!" said Harry curtly.

"Where could you get any more money from?" asked Nugent.

"That's telling."

"You young ass—"

"I've got influence!" said Bunter, with an important look. "I've got friends, too! You chaps aren't the only pebbles on the beach, you know!"

"You've been getting into some mischief!" said Wharton angrily. "You couldn't possibly have got a quid for nothing—honestly!"

"I hope you don't mean to imply that I might have got it dishonestly, Wharton?" said the fat junior,

with a great show of dignity.

"Well, considering the ways you've sometimes raised money at Greyfriars, I don't see why I shouldn't suspect it," said Harry tartly.

"Oh, really—"

"You had better make a clean breast of it."

"Rubbish! You chaps would only interfere, and the game would be up!" said Bunter mysteriously. "I'm going to make a lot more yet!"

"How and where?"

"That's telling!"

Bunter was evidently determined to keep the secret. It was pretty certain to leak out later, Wharton knew that; but for the present it was useless to ask questions. And the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was worried. Bunter was too stupid to realise clearly the distinction between right and wrong, and many of his methods of raising money at school had been extremely shady. Wharton could not help feeling that the fat junior was in some serious kind of mischief this time.

The others were equally sure of it. For Bunter's own sake they wanted to know about it; but Bunter could be obstinate when he liked.

"Who says a walk along the beach in the moonlight?" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Good egg!"

"Would you like it, Marjorie?"

"Very much."

They strolled out of the garden and upon the pebble ridge. The moon was sailing over the bay, which was almost as light as day. They followed the sands round to the northern side of the cove, under the ledge path that, high above their heads, ran to the smuggler's cave high up the cliff.

Harry Wharton paused and glanced up at the cave.

The great dark opening could be seen in the face of the cliff, high overhead. As Harry looked he saw a form moving on the cliff edge towards the cave.

A dark figure, black against the moonlit face of the cliff, limped up the steep path towards the cave.

He was too far off for Harry to make him out clearly, but the limp betrayed him.

It was the lame man—the man they had seen watching Black Rock House through a glass, and again in the cavern when the shot was fired.

"What are you looking at up there?" asked Hazeldene.

"Look!"

"The lame man, by Jove!"

"He's going to the cave," said Billy Bunter. "He'll jolly well be arrested up there, and serve him right." The juniors stared at him.

"What are you babbling about, Bunty?" asked Bob Cherry Pleasantly. "Off your silly rocker?"

"Oh, I forgot!"

"You forgot what?"

"Never mind—you fellows don't know," said Bunter. "I dare say you'll know later."

"What are you talking about?"

"Never mind."

"But I do mind," exclaimed Bob Cherry shaking the fat junior violently by the shoulder. "If you're not only gassing, explain yourself you young ass!"

"Ow!"

"What are you jabbering about!"

"Ow! If you shake me like that, you ass, you'll m-m-make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken, you'll have to pay for them."

"What are you—"

"Good heavens!"

"Look—oh, look!"

Harry Wharton's voice was sharp with horror. His hand trembled as he pointed. The juniors stared up at the face of the cliffs, and their faces grew white.

"Good heavens!" stammered Bob Cherry.

High on the rugged face of the cliff, twenty yards above the ledge that ran along to the cave, was another ledge. On that ledge, clearly visible in the moonlight, was a figure the juniors knew well—that of the South American.

He had a heavy rock poised in his hands, and was about to roll it down the cliff upon the lower ledge, and the lame man who was unconsciously making his way beneath.

If that stone rolled down upon the lame man his doom was sealed, and a crushed body would crash

down upon the beach beside the Greyfriars juniors.
Wharton found his voice.

CHAPTER 25

Black Villainy!

“Look out!”

The shout rang out in the sudden silence of the cliffs, echoing over the bay. The lame man gave a sudden start and looked down.

In doing so he changed his position, and that change saved his life.

For the stone was rolling down the cliff now—a huge mass of rock, as heavy as the South American could move. It crashed upon the lower ledge where the lame man had been standing, and bounded off, and crashed down upon the beach at the foot of the cliffs.

Marjorie gave a low cry, and covered her face with her hands.

“Good heavens!” stammered Nugent.

The juniors gazed up at the cliff in horror.

It was murder that had been intended, and it might yet come to pass. The lame man, startled by the crash of the rock upon the ledge within a foot of him, staggered back against the cliff, and seemed dazed.

The South American, twenty yards above, gritted his teeth, and as his lips parted in a savage snarl, Harry caught the gleam of his teeth in the moonlight, like those of a wild animal.

“Carambo!”

“The—the villain!” muttered Hazeldene. “He meant to kill him.”

“He will not succeed now.”

The lame man shook his clenched fist at the swarthy face on the upper ledge, and darted into the cavern. There he was safe, though he could not venture out as long as the moonlight lasted.

The South American ground his teeth.

He had failed.

It was through Harry Wharton’s warning to the lame man that he had failed, and he cast a glance of poisonous hatred towards the group of juniors down on the beach.

His hand sought out another rock; but he did not hurl it. Instead, he turned and tramped away up the ledge, and disappeared over the cliff.

The juniors were looking very white.

“You saved that chap’s life, Harry,” said Mark Linley.

Wharton nodded.

“I suppose so. What a precious villain that South American is! He meant to kill the chap.”

“That was plain enough.”

“Looks to me like six of one and half a dozen of the other,” said Nugent thoughtfully. “That lame chap must be the man who was firing at him in the boat.”

“Phew! Of course.”

“They must be old enemies, I suppose,” said Hazeldene. “But why are they here? What have they got to do with Uncle Hugh?”

“That’s a blessed mystery.”

“Let’s go back,” said Marjorie.

“Yes, do,” said Miss Clara, with a shiver. “It—It is horrible.” Even Miss Clara’s insouciance was quite gone for the time.

They walked slowly back towards Black Rock. Billy Bunter’s face was a study. Even the obtuse mind of the fat junior could not fail to see the truth now, and he knew why the South American had made him write that note to the lame man; it was to lure him upon the ledge path into a death-trap.

“Stop!” said Harry.

Bunter stopped, blinking inquiringly at the juniors.

“What’s the row?” he asked.

“You’ve got to explain yourself, that’s all,” said Harry Wharton. “There’s enough mystery going on in this show, without your adding to it. That South American villain came very near committing a murder tonight.”

"I—I didn't know!"

"You knew that lame chap was going up the cliff path," said Harry. "You know something about the matter. You got a quid from somebody today. It looks to me as if you have been used in some way in the matter. You're going to explain, anyway."

"I—I——"

"Will you explain?"

"You see, I—I——"

"Collar him and duck him in the sea," said Harry. Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh seized the fat junior. Billy Bunter struggled in their muscular grip.

"Hold on—"

"Duck him!"

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on! I—I don't mind explaining. In—in fact, I was just going to explain you know. I really meant to confide in you chaps all along."

"Then you'd better begin," said Harry grimly. "Mind, the truth, and nothing but the truth. You'll get a ducking at the first lie!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, if you doubt my word—"

"No rot! Get on!"

Bunter blinked at the juniors uneasily. Their faces were very grim. He looked at the sea, rolling cold and shining in the moonlight. The idea of a ducking in the chilly water made him shudder.

"Get on—do you hear?"

"All right!" gasped Bunter, in a hurry.

And he explained. The juniors listened with amazement to the story. The scorn in their faces did not trouble Billy Bunter.

"So that's how you got the money," said Harry contemptuously. "You spied for one man and then betrayed him to the other."

"Oh, really, Wharton, that's a rotten way to put it. I—I thought—"

"Where's the quid?"

"In my pocket."

"Take it out."

"What for?"

"Take it out!" roared Wharton.

Billy Bunter jumped and obeyed. He took out the Treasury note, looking decidedly uneasy.

"Roll it up and throw it into the sea," commanded Wharton.

"What!" yelled Bunter, unable to believe his ears. "W-w-what!"

"You heard what I said!"

"You—you must be dotty," gasped Bunter. "It's—it's a real quid—a good one. I'm not such an ass as to waste it."

"You're not going to keep that villain's money."

"Look here, Wharton—"

"You young rascal! Do you understand that it's blood- money?" exclaimed Harry Wharton fiercely.

"Throw it away at once!"

"Well, suppose you give me another for it," said Bunter, "then you can chuck it away as fast as you like."

"I'll give you a thick ear, if you don't do as I tell you!"

"Oh, really—"

"Nuff said. Throw that note into the sea, or we'll throw you in!" exclaimed Harry.

Bunter reluctantly rolled the note into a ball and tossed it into the sea. It disappeared from sight.

Bunter gave a groan.

"Look here, you jolly well owe me a quid, Wharton!"

"I owe you a licking," said Harry, frowning. "And you'll jolly well get it if you play any more of these mean, dirty tricks!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Get on, you—you toad! And mind, we're going to keep an eye on you in the future!" said Harry angrily.

And Billy Bunter, almost bursting with indignation, rolled on ahead, followed by the frowning juniors of Greyfriars.

CHAPTER 26

Bunter Gets His Due!

Billy Bunter made several attempts during the remainder of the evening to get out of the house unobserved. The fact that the lame man had followed the path to the cave showed that he must have taken the note from the sundial, and in that case he had doubtless left the promised reward behind him. And having been deprived of the South American's twenty-shilling note, Billy Bunter was extremely anxious to get hold of the five shillings.

But whenever Bunter made a movement to go out, one or another of the juniors quietly but determinedly followed him, and the fat Removite found it impossible to elude them.

"I—I feel sleepy," he remarked presently. "I think I'll go up and lie down till supper's ready."

And he went upstairs.

Bob Cherry saw him safely upstairs, and then returned to the piano, where Marjorie was playing accompaniments again.

"He's gone up," said Bob, in answer to Harry Wharton's look. "He's all right this time."

But Bob did not guess the scheme that was in the fat junior's mind. He went into the bedroom, and closed the door, and scowled at it, and then crossed to the window.

He opened the lower sash, and looked out into the garden. It was too far for a drop, and there was nothing to climb down by; but Billy Bunter was not to be beaten.

He twisted some of the sheets from the beds into a rope, tied it to the leg of the nearest bedstead, and let it fall out of the window. He tried it carefully by tugging on it—the bedstead did not move.

Then he clambered out upon the sill, and in a very gingerly way allowed his weight to swing on the rope.

There was a sudden creak from within, as the bedstead moved. Bunter gave a gasp of horror, and clung to the rope.

"Oh!" he gurgled.

The fat junior sank lower as the bed slid towards the window. There it stopped, and the junior, hanging on to the rope, found himself only about six feet above the ground. He slid down, and landed upon terra-firma with a gasp of relief.

"That's done!" he muttered.

Leaving the rope of sheets swinging there, Billy Bunter scuttled off through the garden, taking care to avoid the lighted window of the room from which the music proceeded.

The moon was streaming down light upon the garden, and Bunter was not long in reaching the sundial. He blinked eagerly at the old stone.

There was a little heap of silver on it, glistening in the moon-rays, and Bunter uttered an exclamation of satisfaction as he saw it.

"Jolly good!"

He scooped in the silver, and as he did so there was a step in the bushes, and the lame man stood before him. Bunter shrank back a little.

Halkett eyed him grimly.

"I—I—I'm glad to see you!" stammered Bunter.

"Yes—you look glad."

"I—I'm glad that rock didn't fall on you," went on Bunter, very much flurried. "It—it would have been rotten. I—I——"

"How did Pedro Ijurra know that I should be on that path?" said Halkett grimly.

"I—I suppose he guessed," stuttered Bunter.

He was told.

"I—I——"

"You betrayed me!" said the lame man. "You young scoundrel—you took my pay, and betrayed me—nearly to death. I guess you're going to pay for it!"

Bunter made a spring to escape.

But Halkett's grip was upon him, and he was swung back. The lame man had a stick in his right hand. It fell across Bunter's shoulders with a terrific thwack.

Billy Bunter gave a wild yell.

"Ow!"

"Take that, you young hound—and that!"

Thwack! Thwack!

"Ow! Ow!"

Thwack!

Billy Bunter struggled wildly. The five shillings shot from his hand, and went scattering over the ground. The lame man held the fat junior in a grip of iron, and thrashed him with all the force of a very

powerful arm.

"Help!" yelled Bunter, hopping and jumping in wild endeavours to escape the stick. "Help! Murder! Fire Police! Yow!"

"Take that—and that!"

"Help! Murder!"

A door was flung open at the end of the garden, and a light streamed out.

"It's Bunter's voice!"

"Where are you, Billy?"

"Billy! Bunter!"

"Help! Murder!"

Bunter's cries had alarmed the house. Harry Wharton & Co. came down the garden. The lame man bestowed a last cut upon the portly form of the Owl of the Remove, and hurled him away. Then he disappeared into the shadows, and was gone long before Harry and his chums arrived upon the spot. Bunter lay where he had been thrown, groaning heavily.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Mark Linley.

The Lancashire lad was the first to reach Bunter. He stooped and raised the fat junior's head. Bunter groaned.

"Billy! Where are you hurt?"

"Oh!"

"Are you wounded?"

"Ow!"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton sharply. He knew Billy of old; hurt or not, he was certain to make the most of it. "Bunter! What has happened?"

"O-o-oh!"

"Have you been attacked?"

"Ow—yes! Ow, that lame beast!"

"Where are you hurt?"

"Ow! All over! I've got an ache in every bone!" groaned Bunter. "I—I think my backbone's broken, and my neck sprained I"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you heartless beasts!" gasped Bunter. "I—I think I'm dying!"

"I can't see a wound of any sort," said Mark Linley.

"Oh, he's not hurt!" said Bob Cherry contemptuously. "He always howls out before he's hurt. It's Bunter's little way."

"Ow!"

"What are you doing out here, anyway?" asked Wharton. "Oh, I remember! You expected to find some money here, on the sundial, eh?"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! And you got a licking instead, and serve you jolly well right!" roared Bob Cherry.

"You'd better carry me in!" moaned Bunter. "I—I can't get up!"

"I'll get some cold water and bathe his face," said Hazeldene. "A good pailful swamped over his chivvy will revive him!"

Bunter sat up suddenly.

"Ow! It's all right—I feel better now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I can get up. You might lend a chap a hand, Bob Cherry."

"I'll lend you two," said Bob at once; and he took hold of the fat junior's ears, and assisted him to rise.

"Ow! Oh! Ow! Leggo!"

"Well, you asked for it."

"Yarooh! I—I—I can get up alone!"

CHAPTER 27

An Alarm in the Night!

After supper the juniors bade Marjorie and Clara good-night, and they went to bed. Billy Bunter went up very slowly; but he did not ask to be carried up this time. Bob Cherry was ready to carry him, in the same way as before; and, indeed, he made the offer, which Bunter declined with an ungrateful sniff. The fat junior was still aching from the castigation he had received in the garden, and he went to bed

almost without a word. In spite of his aches, however, he was very soon sleeping quite soundly, and his unmusical snore was audible before the others were fairly in bed.

Bob Cherry gave a portentous yawn as he drew the bedclothes about him.

"Well, I'm tired," he remarked.

"Same here," said Mark Linley. "We've had a good day. I wonder—" He paused, without finishing the sentence.

"You wonder what? Whether Bunter will ever leave off snoring?"

"No," said Mark, laughing. "I was thinking of Ijurra. I wonder whether we shall see anything more of him."

"Most likely."

"I was thinking of him, too," said Harry Wharton quietly. "And I was wondering if we should see anything of him during the night."

"Well, the mastiff's loose in the garden," said Nugent drowsily. "It would be bad for Ijurra if Duke were to get hold of him."

"Yes, rather."

"All the same, I think he might come."

"If one only knew what the villain wanted," said Hazeldene restlessly. "My uncle has not said a word on that subject."

The juniors went to bed. Wharton blew out the candle, and darkness reigned in the room. It was broken only by the gleams of moonlight through the curtained window.

From the cove the juniors could hear faintly the wash of the sea through the stillness, and nearer at hand they could distinguish the sounds made by the great mastiff as he roamed the garden.

That Captain Cunliffe was uneasy was proved by the fact that he let the great mastiff loose at night. It was quite possible that the South American would come; though what his object was the juniors did not yet know—except that it was an evil one, and meant harm to their host.

Wharton found it difficult to sleep.

The swarthy, evil face of the South American, as he hurled the rock from the upper ledge, was always before his eyes.

The hours passed slowly, and still sleep did not visit his eyelids. He stirred at last, and sat up in bed.

"You fellows asleep?" he asked.

"I'm awake," came Mark Linley's quiet tones.

"And I," said Hazeldene.

There was no other voice.

"Blessed if I can go to sleep," said Hazeldene, sitting up. "I suppose it was seeing that villain this afternoon that's got on my nerves. I can't help feeling that there's danger in the air."

"That's how I feel."

"I'm jolly well going to see!" he exclaimed. "May as well take a turn in the garden as lie here awake."

"Just as well," said Mark, getting up.

Hazeldene turned out, too, and began to dress quickly. "Don't wake any of the others," said Harry, as he pulled on a pair of rubber boots. "We can call them if they're wanted. We can drop Out of the window."

"Good!"

Wharton quietly opened the window. It creaked a little, and the night was so still that even a faint creak sounded loudly. Wharton looked out and measured the distance with his eye.

"I'll go first," he muttered.

"I say, you fellows!" It was a squeaky voice from the gloom—Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed, blinking towards them. "I say——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Where are you going?"

"Only to have a look up and down the garden, to see that all's safe."

Bunter grunted.

"Look here, you fellows, you can leave me my share here. I don't want to get up."

"Eh? Your share of what?"

"The feed."

"Feed! What feed?"

"Oh, no gammon!" said Bunter. "I know you're going to have a feed, of course. A chap wouldn't be idiot enough to get up in the middle of the night except for an important purpose. What have you got?"

"Shut up, and go to sleep!"

"I'm jolly well going to get up and come with you," said Bunter. "You can lower me out of the window on a rope, and——"

"If you come after us I'll pulverise you!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Ring off!"

Harry swung himself out of the window, and dropped. Mark followed, and then Hazeldene.

"What about Bunter?" said Mark anxiously.

"Oh, that's all right! He couldn't make that drop, anyway. Come on!"

And with that, the three juniors crept quietly away.

CHAPTER 28

Billy Bunter Takes Cover!

Billy Bunter did not go to sleep again after the three juniors disappeared from the window. The fat Removite was quite convinced that Harry Wharton and his comrades were going to enjoy a surreptitious feast; he could imagine no other adequate reason for getting out of bed in the middle of the night. And if there was a feed on, Billy Bunter did not mean to be left out of it. He was hungry again by this time, and the thought of a midnight feed was very attractive to him.

He whipped out of bed, bundled on his clothes as quickly as he could, adjusted his big spectacles, and went to the door. He passed out on to the landing, and closed the bedroom door softly behind him.

Then he descended the stairs on tiptoe.

His idea was to get out of the house by the French windows of the dining-room, which should have been quite easy; and which would allow him to follow the three juniors without them being aware of the fact.

Bunter was too short-sighted and too excited to notice that there was a light under the door of the dining-room. He took it for granted that at that hour, nearly one o'clock in the morning, the captain had gone to bed.

He opened the door, and a blaze of light struck his eyes.

The fire was glowing in the grate, and the lamps were still alight. Billy Bunter stopped in the doorway, blinking, quite taken by surprise.

He was trying to think of some excuse to mumble out, for he realised now that the captain could not be gone to bed, when he became aware that the room was empty.

The French window stood open on one side, letting in the cool breeze from the sea, which made the lamps flicker.

There was no one in the room.

Bunter's heart had been thumping hard, but he calmed down a little as he saw that he was as yet undiscovered.

"Jolly lucky," he murmured, closing the door behind him. "I shall be able to nip out into the garden now."

He crossed the room towards the open window.

But before reaching it he paused. Although his mind was occupied with thoughts of the supposed feed, it struck him as peculiar that the lights should be burning, the room empty, and the window open.

Where was the captain?

Had there been an alarm, and had he gone out to seek for an intruder in the grounds?

The thought of the South American flashed into Billy Bunter's mind. He trembled, and drew back from the window. Ijurra's murderous nature had been only too clearly revealed that afternoon, and Bunter would as soon have met Halkett again as the man from South America.

There was a soft footstep outside.

Bunter started.

Was it the captain coming in, or—

The fat junior did not wait to see. He gave a helpless glance towards the door in the hall, but there was no time to reach it undiscovered. Acting rather upon instinct than upon thought, he darted behind a screen that stood in the corner near the window.

He was barely out of sight when the soft footstep stopped at the window. Bunter stood shaking behind the screen, his heart thumping violently.

Who was it at the window? Why did he not enter? The screen was made partly of open work, and Bunter could see through the little openings; and he kept his glance glued upon the window.

A face appeared there, and a pair of glittering black eyes swept the room. Bunter popped down immediately; he did not want to see any more. It was the swarthy face of the South American. The man, quiet and watchful as a cat, remained for several seconds in the open window, scanning the interior of the room. Then he entered with a stealthy footstep. His eyes were gleaming with satisfaction, and there was a curious grin upon his face. He stepped noiselessly into the room, and crossed it to the other side. There he sank on one knee, so that the great back of the captain's armchair hid him from view from the window. No one entering from the garden could have seen him. There he waited, silent. Bunter was hardly breathing. What the South American's purpose was he did not know; and he was too scared to think. His only thought was to keep his own presence secret and to avoid attracting the attention of the swarthy ruffian. His knees knocked together as he waited with thumping heart. Where was the captain? Ijurra was evidently waiting for him. A heavy tread sounded at last at the French windows. The powerful form of Captain Cunliffe appeared there, and he came in. Bunter saw him through the slits in the screen. The captain looked weary, and there was a revolver in his hand. Had he been seeking for the enemy—the man who was now hidden within six paces of him? Captain Cunliffe closed the French windows and drew down the blind. He threw himself into the chair, and laid the revolver upon the table. The South American drew a deep breath. He rose silently to his feet behind the chair in which the captain sat, and reached his hand towards the revolver on the table. The captain caught sight of the hand, and sat petrified for a second. Then he made a wild grasp towards the revolver. But it was too late. The dusky fingers were grasping it, and it was snatched away, and as the captain leaped to his feet his own weapon was levelled at his heart. Over the levelled barrel the swarthy face of the South American looked at him with a mocking sneer. "Stand back, capitano, or you are a dead man!"

CHAPTER 29

Face to Face!

Captain Cunliffe stared blankly at the South American. The revolver in Pedro Ijurra's grip never wavered. It needed but the pressure of the dusky forefinger to send a bullet crashing through the Englishman's heart, and the expression on the swarthy face showed that Ijurra was ready to do it. The captain's hands were at his sides, his fingers clenching and unclenching convulsively. He was taken at a hopeless disadvantage, and he was now unarmed. "Ijurra!" he said at last, and his voice was husky and broken. The South American laughed. "Si, senor." "You—here?" "As you see." The captain clenched his hands hard. "I—I knew you had come when I found the mastiff dead," he muttered, in a choked voice. "I have been seeking you. I—I thought you had gone again as I could not find you." "I was not gone, amigo—I am here, as you see, ready to settle the old account." And the South American touched with his left hand the livid scar upon his forehead. "That was a narrow escape for me, senor, and this—this will be the payment for it." "I wish the bullet had gone through your brain." "As you intended." "No," said the captain, "I did not intend it. I wanted to drop you, that was all. I did not intend to take your life." Ijurra gave a sneering laugh. "A lie will not save you now, senor."

The captain flushed red through his bronzed skin.

"A lie! You cowardly dago hound, do you think I would lie to you to save a thousand lives? Bah!"

The South American grinned over the levelled pistol.

"I have followed you far," he said. "How long is it since you sailed from the Argentine? Five years, is it not so?"

The captain nodded.

"And all the time you knew that I was seeking you?"

"I knew it."

"And you fled—you fled always! You call me a coward—and it was you that fled!" said Ijurra sneeringly.

"And you are a coward!" said Captain Cunliffe quietly. "A brave man may fly from an assassin—no courage can guard against a shot in the back—but I am sorry I fled now. I should have met you on your own ground, and finished with you in the true South American way, and left your bones on the pampas for the coyotes to pick."

"It is too late now, señor."

"You are not in the Argentine now," said the captain; "you are in a civilised country, where murderers are punished. Take care."

"Your English laws will not touch me. I am here tonight, gone tomorrow. When my work is done I shall vanish."

"The law has a long arm."

"It will not reach to the Argentine. But on conditions I may spare your life, mi capitano."

The captain looked at him steadily. There was a deep silence in the room, broken only by the ticking of the clock.

Behind the screen Billy Bunter was trembling like a leaf.

To the horrified mind of the fat junior it was clear that the South American was meditating a terrible crime, but Bunter was too frozen by terror to think or dream of interfering in any way. His voice was dead in his throat—he could not even cry for help. The revolver in the hand of the South American was ready to turn upon a second victim, and Bunter felt that he was in as great danger as the skipper if he betrayed his presence.

And that he did not mean to do, but it was quite possible that in his terror he would make some sound or movement that would betray him inadvertently.

"What rascal business have you to propose now?" exclaimed the captain at last. "I will enter into no compact with you. I have always regretted my folly in once doing so—in leaguering myself with two scoundrels, neither of whom kept faith with me."

"And with whom you did not keep faith," sneered the South American.

"It is false! I kept faith, or would have done so, but—"

"So you told me on the pampas, and I did not believe you. Listen! You and Halkett and I discovered the nuggets in the Argentine sierras, and as soon as we had found them we determined each to keep the whole of the treasure."

"I did not—"

"Bah! Why lie about it now?" sneered Ijurra. "The same night Halkett fell into a ravine, where we believed he had gone to his death—"

The captain clenched his hands.

"Wretch! It was you who hurled him there—that I suspected from the first, and I was sure of it when you attacked me."

The South American shrugged his shoulders. "You played a better game than I did when I attacked you," he said coolly. "You shot me—I lay unconscious for many hours there in the pampas grass, and dead as you believed."

"I——"

"When I came to myself you were gone, and the nuggets. I have hunted you down, to return the favour you paid me"—the man touched the scar again—"and to recover the gold! Listen! Give it to me and I will leave you as you are, unharmed. It is the gold I want."

"I tell you I have none of it. I told you on the pampas that Halkett had taken it, that he was fleeing with it when you hurled him into the ravine, and that in doing so you had thrown away a fortune."

"I did not believe you."

"It was true."

"It is not true!" cried the South American fiercely. "Besides, if it were, Halkett is not dead—"

"Not dead?"

"No. I have seen him."

"He lives!" said the captain dazed. "I believed—"

"You pretend you did not know, when he is here—when he has twice tried to kill me within sight of your house!" exclaimed the South American fiercely.

The captain looked dazed.

"I did not know."

"I do not believe you. He is alive—lame now, from the injury he received in falling into the ravine—it was his leg he broke instead of his neck, and how he escaped alive, I know not. But he is alive, and here, and you must know it."

"I did not know."

"Come," said Ijurra, "what is the use of wasting words. You know why I have sought you so long, and all the time Halkett was trailing me like a bloodhound. My life is in danger as great as yours. I do not desire to linger here. Give me the gold and I will go."

"I cannot give you what I do not possess."

"Bah! How are you living here? You have left the sea, and you have money—you are rich."

"I have what I have earned and saved in forty years at sea," said the captain sternly, "and not a shilling of it will ever touch your hands, Pedro Ijurra."

The South American gritted his teeth.

"I shall begin to believe you at last," he exclaimed. "It may be that Halkett has the gold, and that is why he is so determined to take my life. Let it be so; but if I can get nothing else here I can get my revenge. For the last time, have you the nuggets, capitano?"

"No."

"Then—"

The South American's eyes blazed along the levelled barrel. Billy Bunter's nerves could stand it no longer.

With a wild shriek he rolled against the screen and sent it crashing to the floor.

The South American started back convulsively, the revolver lowering to his side, and with lightning swiftness the English captain seized his opportunity.

He leaped forward like a bloodhound, and hurled himself upon the South American.

His left hand grasped the right wrist of the swarthy ruffian, forcing the pistol still lower, till the muzzle was pointed at the floor.

Then, with a twist of the wrist that brought a shriek of pain from the South American, he forced Ijurra to drop the weapon.

The revolver fell upon the floor.

"Carambo!"

"Man to man now!" cried Captain Cunliffe. "You scoundrel, look out for yourself!"

And the two men closed in desperate combat.

The South American was struggling with desperation now—not for victory, but for freedom.

The captain's grasp was like iron on the swarthy ruffian. Ijurra was making desperate efforts to get at the knife hidden in his breast, but he could not reach it.

CHAPTER 30

The Tragedy of the Cliff

There was a sound at the open French window.

"Look out!" yelled Billy Bunter suddenly, and he made a wild dive to get behind the big armchair.

"Halkett!"

But there was no reply.

The South American was taking advantage of the captain's consternation. The hold upon him had relaxed.

With a wrench he tore himself loose, and sprang to his feet.

Captain Cunliffe seized the revolver.

Ijurra made a savage spring for the window, and in a moment was gone. The lithe form vanished into the garden. The captain rushed after him. He was gone!

Wharton snapped his teeth.

"He has escaped!"

"Gone!"

Crack! Crack!

Two sharp shots rang out from the darkness, two flashes lit up for an instant the gloom. Who was firing there? They did not need telling. It was the lame man. Ijurra had escaped capture only to encounter a

deadlier danger in the darkness of the garden.

There was a yell, a crash of footsteps, and another ringing shot. Then silence.

The captain's bronzed face was pale.

"Good heaven!" he muttered.

He gazed from the window.

The moon was hidden behind a cloud; in the gloom nothing was to be seen. The juniors crowded out into the garden, with beating hearts. Villain as the South American certainly was, there was something terrible in this relentless pursuit by the lame adventurer, and they sincerely hoped that Ijurra would escape.

But would he?

Another crack from the distance, in the direction of the cliffs. The whole house was alarmed now.

From the darkness in the direction of the cliffs came a terrible cry. It rang and echoed through the night, and died away sobbing among the crannies of the cliffs. It was followed by silence—a silence still more terrible.

Marjorie and Clara shuddered.

The moon emerged from behind the mass of clouds—bright, silver, sailing high and round and fair.

The light streamed upon the shining cliffs. On the rocky ledge was seen the figure of the lame man, gazing downward towards the beach.

He raised his head, and the juniors saw him make a gesture, and then he limped on over the cliff and disappeared. It was the last time they ever saw him.

What had he been looking at on the beach, from the height of the rocky path? The juniors asked themselves that question with a shudder. The moon sank out of view again in the bosom of the clouds.

"Go in, my lads," said Captain Cunliffe, in a hoarse, strained voice, "go in!"

The Greyfriars juniors went in quietly.

"It's awful!" muttered Bob Cherry, at last.

"I'm afraid there's not much doubt what has happened," said Wharton, in a shaken voice. "The South American must have fled by the path up the cliff—the path where he hurled the rock upon the lame man yesterday—"

"It looks like it. And he fell—"

"He fell, or was thrown, down to the beach," said Harry. "It is terrible, but don't let us think about it."

But it was not so easy to dismiss the matter from their minds. The morning broke over the bay and wide Atlantic, and found them still awake.

The captain was about to leave the house when the juniors came down.

He glanced at them questioningly. His bronzed face was haggard in its expression. It was plain that he had not slept, either.

"Good-morning, lads!" he said, in a husky voice.

"You are going to—to look for him?"

"Yes."

"May we come?"

"As you like."

They left the house together.

Captain Cunliffe led the way in silence to the beach, under the shadow of the great towering cliffs. If the South American had fallen there, his death must have been instantaneous when he touched the rocky earth. He would have had time only for that wild cry as he fell.

"Ha!"

Captain Cunliffe uttered the exclamation as he halted. The juniors caught a glimpse of the huddled form on the rocks.

The captain waved his hand.

"Go back—go back!"

"It is Ijurra?"

"Ay, ay!"

"And he is—is—"

"Dead!"

The juniors went back. They had no desire to see more. The captain followed them after a few moments. His face was very pale.

"I must go to the village and give information of what has happened," he said. "It is terrible. I shall see you again."

And the captain strode away down the rocky path towards Wynne. Marjorie was down when the juniors came in; she greeted Harry with a questioning glance.

He nodded quietly.

“It is all over,” he said. “It was Ijurra, and we shall not see him again. Don’t think about it, Marjorie.” Marjorie shivered a little. But the subject was dropped, and was not mentioned again.

* * * *

The tragic occurrence at Black Rock had certainly broken up the holiday. After what had happened, the youngsters could hardly make a pretence of enjoying themselves on the scene of the tragedy, and Hazeldene’s proposition that they should finish the vacation at his father’s house was received with relief. With them to Hazeldene’s home went Captain Cunliffe, so that for the rest of the holiday the juniors had the company of the old sailorman. And, terrible as had been the end of the South American, there was no doubt that it had lifted a weight from the mind of Captain Cunliffe. The shadow of Ijurra’s relentless pursuit was gone from his life now, and he was able to breathe more easily.

And the relief was apparent in his looks and manner. In a change of scene, the dark happenings of the beginning of the vacation faded from the minds of the juniors, and they spent a very enjoyable holiday after all, and were sorry enough when the time came for them to part with their kind friends and return to Greyfriars.

Marjorie and Clara travelled with them as far as Friardale, and the juniors saw them safe to Cliff House, after which they went on to Greyfriars.

“Well, the holiday’s over,” Bob Cherry remarked. “But we’ll have a jolly time this term—eh?”

“Yes, rather!” said Harry emphatically. “What-ho!”

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