

THE GIRLS DO VERY WELL

'Good gracious!' said Granny, surprised. '*Interview me?* What about?'

'About a gardener you once had, called Georgie Grim,' said Pam, taking out her notebook. 'You see, Granny, the Secret Seven is on to a mystery again, and we're interested in Grim because we think he's got something to do with the mystery.'

'You and your mysteries!' said Granny, laughing. 'You really amuse me. Well, well, if it's Peter's orders, you must do as you're told. Now, what do you want to know?'

'Was Grim honest, Granny, when he was with you?' asked Pam.

'Absolutely,' said Granny, and Pam wrote that down, wondering if she was spelling it right. 'Abslootly honest,' she wrote.

'Er – did he ever have to look after the house when you went away?' asked Pam.

'Yes. During the year that he worked for me, he and his wife came and lived in the house for a month,

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while we were away,' said Granny. 'And the wife kept the place spotlessly clean. She was a thin, pale woman, with a cough, I remember.'

'Wait a bit, you're going too quickly,' said Pam, writing down all this at top speed. 'How do you spell "spotlessly"? Oh, it's all right – I know.'

'Any more questions?' said Granny, amused. 'I feel as if you were a policeman questioning me, Pamela!'

Pam laughed. She was quite enjoying this, and couldn't help feeling that she was doing it very well. She bit the end of her pencil and wondered what to ask next.

'Er – did you miss anything from the house when you came back?' she said.

'Not a thing!' said Granny. 'And what was more, Mrs Grim had made a lot of jam for us, and bottled a great deal of fruit, and wouldn't take a penny for it, because she said she had enjoyed staying in the house so much. I must say the little woman looked a good deal better for the month she spent here. Dear me,

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am I going too fast for you, darling? Let *me* write it all down for you.'

'Oh, *no*,' said Pam at once. 'This is *my* job, Granny. Just say it all again slowly, and I'll soon get it down. Are there two Ts in "bottle", do you suppose?'

'There are usually,' said Granny. 'Well, well, I must say that I admire you Secret Seven. You certainly go into things thoroughly. *Do* stay to tea.'

'I wish I could, but Peter wants this information this afternoon,' said Pam. 'Well, thanks awfully, Granny. You've given me some surprising news. We all suspected Grim might be doing something he'd no right to do.'

'And what was that?' said Granny, quite overcome with curiosity.

'Oh, it's a secret,' said Pam. 'We're never supposed to talk about our mysteries while we're solving them. Goodbye, Granny, and thank you very much.'

She skipped off happily, her notebook safely in her pocket. Pam was not often entrusted with

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important things by Peter, and she felt rather proud of the way she had written down Granny's answers to her questions. In fact, she thought herself quite clever!

Peter and the three boys were in the shed with Scamper when Pam arrived. 'Lollipops!' she said, as she knocked at the door. There was no answer.

'Let me in!' called Pam. 'I said the password.'

'You didn't, whoever you are,' called Peter's voice.

'I'm Pam, and you *know* it's me!' said Pam indignantly. 'I've got a lot of news. Let me.'

'Password, please,' said Peter.

'But I've already s—' began Pam, and then she suddenly remembered the *new* password. 'Oh, sorry, Peter – Grim, Grim, GRIM!'

'Once is quite enough,' said Peter, and opened the door. 'Well, did you see your granny?'

'Yes,' said Pam, and beamed round happily. 'Here are my notes, with my questions and Granny's answers. I wrote everything down.'

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Peter took the notes and read them out aloud, much to Pam's delight. He shut the little notebook and nodded at Pam.

'Very good, Pam. A very nice piece of work. Well, it seems as if Grim is honest enough, and his wife too. In fact the wife sounds really nice. It's rather surprising, really, because I couldn't help feeling that bad-tempered old Grim was the one who had broken into Bartlett Lodge somehow. Now it seems as if somebody *else* must be there, someone that Grim knows nothing about, for if he did he would certainly report it, as your granny says he's absolutely honest.'

'It's funny, isn't it?' said George. 'Well, we'll certainly have to find out who it is.'

'Yes, we must keep a watch on the kitchen-door, as I said,' decided Peter. 'Hallo, here comes Janet and Barbara. They've been to find out about Mrs Grim. I wonder if they'll remember the new password!'

A knock came at the door. 'Grim,' said Janet's voice, and then came a giggle. '*Mr Grim.*'

'And *Mrs* Grim!' said Barbara. Peter opened the door, grinning.

'Come in, idiots,' he said, 'and tell us your news!'

The two girls came in and sat down. Scamper gave them an enormous welcome.

'Hallo, Pam!' said Janet. 'What did your granny say about Grim?'

'Oh, she says he's absolutely honest,' said Pam. 'Here are my notes about it. I wrote them down.'

Janet and Barbara were impressed with the notes. 'You didn't spell the word "absolutely" the right way,' pointed out Barbara. 'Oh, Peter, *we* didn't make notes. We only just asked questions and remembered the answers.'

'That's all right,' said Peter. 'Janet, what happened? Make your report, please.'

'Well, we went down to where Grim lives,' said Janet. 'I found out from the postman; it was quite easy. Oh, Peter, it's a *dreadful* little cottage. Really dreadful.'

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'Why? What's it like?' asked Peter.

'It's near the canal, and built so low that it's on a level with the water,' said Janet. 'And you know we've had a lot of rain this year, so the canal water has risen quite a bit, and it has overflowed into the little cottage garden...'

'And the ground floor of the cottage must be TERRIBLY damp,' said Barbara. 'And do you know, we even saw fungus growing all the way up one wall! It's really horrible.'

'It's in very bad repair too,' said Janet. 'Daddy would never let *his* cottages get like that, Peter. Our farm-men's cottages are palaces compared with Grim's. I can't think how he stands it. There's quite a big hole in the roof, where some tiles have fallen off.'

'No wonder they were so happy when they looked after my granny's house one summer,' said Pam. 'And no wonder Granny said Mrs Grim looked thin and ill. Anyone would, if they lived in that damp, smelly cottage down by the canal!'

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'I wonder they don't move,' said Jack.

'Well, it's hard to get a cottage these days,' said George, 'especially at a low rent. Did you find out anything about Mrs Grim, Janet? Did you see her?'

'No, we didn't,' said Janet, 'but we talked to the woman next door. Her cottage is built much higher than the Grims', and it's quite dry. She saw us looking round the Grims' place, and called out to know what we wanted.'

'And we just said we were looking at the quaint old cottage!' said Barbara. 'Which was perfectly true, of course. And we asked her who lived there, though *we* knew it was Grim's cottage.'

'You did well,' said Peter, approvingly. 'Go on. What did the woman tell you?'

'Well, she told us what we already knew – that Grim has a daily job, keeping that big garden going at Bartlett Lodge, and that he comes home about six o'clock each night. And that his wife isn't well, so he does all the shopping in his dinner-hour, and cooks a

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meal at night. And she said that Mrs Grim was a nice little woman . . .

'And she's very fond of Grim,' said Barbara, anxious not to be left out. 'Gosh! Fancy anyone being fond of surly old *Grim*.'

'Mrs Grim must be quite ill,' said Janet. 'Her neighbour says she hasn't been out to hang her washing up for a whole week. Grim even does that, too!'

'Well, *I* think he sounds rather a nice old boy, even though he's so bad-tempered with us,' said Peter, rather astonished at all this news. 'Pam's granny says he's quite *honest*, and if he does all that for his wife, he must be kind as well.'

'I expect it's living in that dreadful damp cottage that makes him surly,' said Barbara, who really had been shocked to think of anyone living in such a horrid little hole. 'Peter, you wouldn't even let one of your *pigs* live in a place like that.'

'I should think not!' said Peter. '*Our* pigs have wonderful sties, and they're cleaned out twice a day.'