

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada Ebook ***

This ebook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please check with an FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **If the book is under copyright in your country, do not download or redistribute this file.**

Title: Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang, The Magical Car. Adventure Number One.

Author: Fleming, Ian [Ian Lancaster] (1908-1964)

Date of first publication: 1964

Edition used as base for this ebook: London: Jonathan Cape, 1964 [first edition]

Date first posted: 18 October 2015

Date last updated: January 8, 2016

Faded Page ebook#20160106

This ebook was produced by Al Haines

Publisher's Note:

As part of the conversion of the book to its new digital format, we have made certain minor adjustments in its layout.

Because of copyright considerations, the illustrations by John Burningham (b. 1936) have been omitted from this etext.

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang The Magical Car Adventure Number One

Also in this series

Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang: Adventure Number Two
Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang: Adventure Number Three

Other books by Ian Fleming

The Diamond Smugglers
Thrilling Cities

The Adventures of James Bond

Casino Royale
Live and Let Die
Moonraker
Diamonds are Forever
From Russia With Love
Doctor No
Goldfinger
For Your Eyes Only
Thunderball
The Spy Who Loved Me
On Her Majesty's Secret Service
You Only Live Twice

First published by Jonathan Cape Ltd 1964

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Jarrold and Sons Ltd, Norwich

Dedication

These stories are affectionately dedicated to the memory of the original CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG, built in 1920 by Count Zborowski on his estate near Canterbury.

She had a pre-1914 War, chain-drive, 75 horse-power Mercedes chassis, in which was installed a six-cylinder Zeppelin-Maybach aeroplane engine—the military type used by the Germans in their Gotha bombers.

Four vertical overhead valves per cylinder were operated by exposed push-rods and rockers from a cam-shaft on each side of the crank-case, and two Zenith carburettors were attached, one at each end of a long induction-pipe.

She had a grey, torpedo-shaped four-seater body built by Blythe Brothers of Canterbury.

In 1921 she won the Hundred M.P.H. Short Handicap at Brooklands at 101 miles per hour, and in 1922, again at Brooklands, the Lightning Short Handicap. But in that year she was involved in an accident^[1] and never raced again.

I.F.

^[1] This is a polite way of putting it. In fact CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG suddenly went mad with rage about something, and with the Count at the wheel, got out of control and charged through the timing-hut, very fast, backwards!

Adventure Number One

Most motor-cars are conglomerations (this is a long word for bundles) of steel and wire and rubber and plastic, and electricity and oil and petrol and water, and the toffee papers you pushed down the crack in the back seat last Sunday. Smoke comes out of the back of them and horn-squawks out of the front, and they have white lights like big eyes in front, and red lights behind. And that is about that—just motor-cars, tin boxes on wheels for running about in.

But some motor-cars—mine, for instance, and perhaps yours—are different. If you get to like them and understand them, if you are kind to them and don't scratch their paint or bang their doors, if you fill them up and top them up and pump them up when they need it, if you keep them clean and polished and out of the rain and snow as much as possible, you will find, you may find, that they become almost like persons—more than just ordinary persons: **MAGICAL PERSONS!**

You don't believe me? All right then! You just read about this car I'm going to tell you about! I believe you can guess its name already—her name, I should say. And then see if you don't agree with me. *All* motor-cars aren't just conglomerations of machinery and fuel. Some are.

Once upon a time there was a family called Pott. There was the father, who had been in the Royal Navy, Commander Caractacus Pott. (You may think that Caractacus sounds quite a funny name, but in fact the original Caractacus was the British chieftain who was a sort of Robin Hood in A.D. 48 and led an English army against the Roman invaders. I expect since then there have been plenty of other Caractacuses, but I don't know anything about them.) Then there was the mother, Mimsie Pott, and a pair of eight-year-old twins—Jeremy, who was a black-haired boy, and Jemima, who was a golden-haired girl—and they lived in a wood beside a big lake with an island in the middle. On the other side of the lake, M. 20, the big motorway on the Dover road, swept away towards the sea. So they had the best of both worlds—lovely woods for catching beetles and finding birds' eggs, with a lake for newts and tadpoles, and a fine big motor road close by so that they could go off and see the world if they wanted to.

Well, almost, that is. But the truth of the matter was that they hadn't got enough money between them to buy a car. All the money they had went on necessities—food and heat and light and clothes and all those boring things that one doesn't really notice but families have to have. There was only a little left over for birthday and Easter and Christmas presents and occasional surprise outings—the things that *really* matter.

But the Potts were a happy family who all enjoyed their lives and since they weren't in the least sorry for

themselves, or sorry that they hadn't got a motor-car to go whirling about in, we needn't be sorry for them either.

Now Commander Caractacus Pott was an explorer and an inventor, and that may have been the reason why the Pott family was not very rich. Exploring places and inventing things can be very exciting indeed, but it is only very seldom that, in your explorations, you discover a really rare butterfly or animal or insect or mineral or plant that people will pay money to see, and practically never that you discover real treasure, like in books—gold bars and diamonds and jewels in an old oak chest.

As for inventions, much the same troubles apply. People all over the world, in America, Russia, China, Japan, let alone England and Scotland and Wales and Ireland, are inventing or trying to invent things all the time—every kind of thing from rockets that fly to the moon to ways of making indiarubber balls bounce higher. Everything, everything, everything is being invented or improved all the time by somebody somewhere—whether by teams of scientists in huge factories and laboratories, or by lonely men sitting and just thinking in tiny workshops without many tools.

Just such a solitary inventor was Commander Caractacus Pott, and I am ashamed to say that because he was always dreaming of impossible inventions and adventures and explorations in the remotest parts of the earth, he was generally known in the neighbourhood as Commander Crackpott! You may think that's cheek, and so it is, but Commander Pott was a humorous man and he knew his own shortcomings very well, so when he heard that that was his nickname in the neighbourhood he was not at all cross. He just roared with laughter and said, "I'll show 'em!" and disappeared into his workshop and didn't come out for a whole day and a night.

During that time smoke came out of the workshop chimney and there were a lot of delicious smells, and when the children put their ears to the locked door they could hear mysterious bubblings and cooking-poppings, if you know what I mean; but nothing else at all.

When Commander Pott came out, he was so hungry that first of all he ate four fried eggs and bacon and drank a huge pot of coffee, and then he asked Mimsie to call Jeremy and Jemima, who were getting in an awful mess digging out a water-rat's hole on the bank of the lake. (They never caught the water-rat. He dug down faster than they did.)

The twins came and stood side by side looking at their father, wondering what his invention had been this time. (Commander Pott's inventions were sometimes dull things like collapsible coat-hangers, sometimes useless things like edible gramophone records, and sometimes clever things that just, only just, wouldn't work, like cubical potatoes—easy to slice and pack and peel but expensive to grow each in its little iron box—and so on.) Commander Pott, looking very mysterious, dug in his pockets and produced a handful of what looked like round, coloured, sugar sweets, each a bit bigger than a marble, wrapped in paper. And, still looking mysterious, he chose a red one for Jeremy and a green one for Jemima and handed them over.

Well, sweets are always sweets, thought the children, even though they don't look very exciting, so they unwrapped them and were just about to pop them in their mouths when Commander Pott cried, "Wait! Look at them first—very, very carefully!"

The children looked at the sweets and Commander Pott said, "What do you see? What's different about them?"

And Jeremy and Jemima said with one voice, or almost, "They've got two small holes drilled through the middle of them."

Commander Pott nodded solemnly. "Now suck them."

So Jeremy and Jemima popped the sweets into their mouths and sucked busily away, looking at each other with raised eyebrows, as much as to say, "What do you notice? And what do you taste? Mine tastes of strawberry. Mine tastes of peppermint." And both pairs of eyes seemed to say, "They're just sweets, round boiled sweets, and our tongues can feel the holes in them. Otherwise they're just like any other sweets."

But Commander Pott, who could easily see what they were thinking, suddenly held up his hand. "Now stop sucking, both of you. Twiddle the sweets round with your tongues until they're held between your teeth, with the twin holes pointing outwards, open your lips and BLOW!"

Well, of course, the children laughed so much watching each other's faces that they nearly swallowed the sweets, but finally, by turning their backs on each other, they managed to compose themselves and fix the sweets between their teeth.

And then they BLEW!

And do you know what? A wonderful shrill whistle came out, almost like a toy steam-engine. The children were so excited that they went on whistling until Commander Pott sternly told them to stop. He held up his hand. "Now go on sucking until I tell you to whistle again," and he took out his watch and carefully observed the minute hand.

"Now!"

This time Jeremy and Jemima didn't laugh so much, but managed to get their sweets, which of course were much smaller than before, between their teeth, and they BLEW like billy-ho.

This time, because their sucking had hollowed out the holes still more, the whistle was a deep one, like one of the new diesel trains going into a tunnel, and they found that they could play all sorts of tricks, like changing the tone by blocking up one hole with their tongues and half closing their lips so as to make a buzzing whistle, and lots of other variations.

But then, what with their sucking and their blowing, the bit between the two holes collapsed and the sweets made one last deep hoot and then crunched, as all sweets do in the end, into little bits.

Jeremy and Jemima both jumped up and down with excitement at Commander Pott's invention and begged for more. Then Commander Pott gave them each a little bag full of the sweets and told them to go out into the garden and practise every whistling tune they could think up, as after lunch he was going to take them to Skrumshus Limited, the big sweet people at their local town, to give a demonstration to Lord Skrumshus, who owned the factory. And as they ran out into the garden Commander Pott called after them, "They're called 'Crackpots—Crackpot Whistling Sweets'. And you know what, my chickabiddies? They're going to buy us a motor-car!"

But the children were already dancing away into the woods making every kind of whistle you can think of, at the same time sucking like mad at their delicious sweets. There really seemed to be something special about Commander Pott's invention—just a little touch of genius.

Well, anyway, I can tell you this, Lord Skrumshus thought so. After he had heard Jeremy and Jemima whistling in his office, he sent them out into the factory and they danced around among the workers, sucking and whistling and handing out sweets from their packets, so that very soon they had all the workers in the factory sucking and whistling, and everyone laughed so much that all the Skrumshus sweet-machines came to a stop. Lord Skrumshus had to call Jeremy and Jemima away before they brought the whole production of Skrumshus sweets and chocolates to a grinding halt.

So Jeremy and Jemima went back into Lord Skrumshus's grand office, and there was their father being paid One Thousand Pounds by the Skrumshus Company Treasurer, and signing a paper which said he would get an additional One Shilling on every thousand Crackpot Whistling Sweets sold by Skrumshus Limited. Jeremy and Jemima didn't think that sounded very much, but when I let you into a secret and tell you that Skrumshus Limited sell Five Million every year of just one of their sweets called Chock-a-Hoop, you can work out for yourself that perhaps, just PERHAPS, Commander Caractacus Pott wasn't making such a bad bargain after all.

So then everyone shook hands and Lord Skrumshus gave Jeremy and Jemima each a big free box of samples of all the sweets he made. The three of them hurried off back to Mimsie to tell her the good news, and straight away the whole family hired a taxi and went to the bank to deposit the cheque for a thousand pounds and then—and then they all went off together to *buy a car!*

Now I don't know if you've got it into your heads yet, but the Pott family wasn't a very conventional family—that is, they were all rather out of the ordinary. Even Mimsie must have been rather an adventurous sort of mother, or she wouldn't have married an explorer and inventor like Commander Caractacus Pott, R.N. (Retired), who had, as they say, no visible means of support—meaning he was someone who doesn't do regular work that brings in regular money, but

depends on occasional windfalls from lucky explorations or inventions.

So when it came to buying a car, they were all determined that it shouldn't be just any car, but something a bit different from everyone else's—not one of those black-beetle saloon cars that look much the same back and front so that, in the distance, you don't know if they're coming or going, but something rather special, something rather adventurous.

Well, they hunted all that afternoon and all the next day. They looked at brand-new cars and they visited the second-hand showrooms, where smart salesmen offered Commander and Mrs Pott cigarettes and Jeremy and Jemima sweets just to try and tempt them to buy. But Commander Pott knew pretty well all there is to know about cars, having been an engineer officer in the Navy and being an inventor as well, and one look under the bonnet and one trial, listening carefully to the sound of the engine, was generally enough for him—even if he didn't notice that the speedometer had been disconnected or that the chassis was bent because of some crash whose scratches and dents the salesman had carefully painted over. (You have to be very cautious buying *anything* second-hand. You never know how careful the last owner has been. And anyway, whatever the thing is, if it is in good order, why does the person want to get rid of it?)

And then at the end of the second day, they came to a broken-down little garage run by a once famous racing-driver. It was really only a big tin shed with a couple of grimy petrol pumps outside, and inside, the concrete floor was slippery with oil and everywhere there were bits and pieces of old cars that the garage man had been tinkering with, really, as far as one could see, just for the fun of it.

But he was the sort of enthusiast Commander Pott always had a warm corner in his heart for. The two of them went on talking for a long time while Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima, who were pretty tired by then, grew more and more impatient.

Suddenly they were surprised to see Commander Pott follow the garage man round to the back of his shed, where there was a long, low object hidden under a tarpaulin. The garage man looked Commander Pott and the family, each one, carefully up and down, and then he went to one end of the tarpaulin and slowly rolled it back.

Well, I can't tell you how disappointed Mimsie and the children were. From the way the garage man had behaved, they thought there must be some splendid treasure of a car under the tarpaulin. But what did they see? A wreck—that's all. Just the remains, rusty and broken and bent, of a very long, low, four-seater, open motor-car without a hood and with the green paint peeling off in strips.

"Well, there she is," said the garage man sadly. "She once knew every racing-track in Europe. In the old days there wasn't a famous driver in Britain who hadn't driven her at one time or another. She's still wearing England's racing green as you can see—that was from early in the 'thirties. She's a twelve-cylinder, eight-litre, supercharged Paragon Panther. They only made one of them and then the firm went broke. This is the only one in the world. Doesn't look much, does she? I'm afraid she's due for the scrap-heap. Can't afford to go on giving her living space. They're coming to tow her away next week, as a matter of fact—take her to the dump, pick her up in a big grab and drop her between one of those giant hydraulic presses. One crunch and it just squashes them into a sort of square metal biscuit. Then she'll go to a smelting works to be melted down just for the raw metal. Seems a shame, doesn't it? You can almost see from her eyes—those big Marchal racing headlights—that she knows what's in store for her. But there it is. You can see the shape she's in and it would need hundreds of pounds to get her on the road again—even supposing there was someone nowadays who could afford to run her."

Commander Pott was looking curiously excited. "Mind if I look her over?"

"Go ahead." The garage man shook his head sadly. "She'd appreciate a last look-over by someone like you who knows what real quality used to be."

The whole family picked their way over and through the patches of oily ground. While Commander Pott looked under the bonnet, Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima prodded the once-beautiful soft leather upholstery (moths flew out!) and looked under the carpets, front and back (beetles scuttled about!), and examined the knobs and switches and dials on the dashboard (there were dozens of them, all rusty and mildewed) and tried the big old boa-constrictor horn that worked with an indiarubber bulb. But nothing happened except that a lot of dust blew out of the end into Commander

Pott's face as he bent over the engine, peering and tinkering. The children looked at Mimsie and Mimsie looked back at them, and do you know what? They didn't just dolefully shake their heads at each other. They all had the same look in their eyes. The look said, "This must once have been the most beautiful car in the world. If the engine's more or less all right and if we all set to and scrubbed and painted and mended and polished, do you suppose we could put her back as she used to be? It wouldn't be like having just one of those black-beetles that the factories turn out in hundreds and thousands and that all look alike. We'd have a real jewel of a car, something to love and cherish and look after as if it was one of the family!"

Commander Pott took his face out from under the bonnet. He looked at them and they looked back at him, and he just turned to the garage man and said, "I'll buy her. We all love her and we'll make her as good as new. How much to you want for her?"

"Fifty pounds," said the garage man. "She wouldn't fetch much as scrap."

Commander Pott counted out the notes there and then, and said, "Thank you, and will you please have her towed along to my workshop just as soon as you can."

And do you know? There were almost tears of happiness in the garage man's eyes as he shook them all by the hand. As they climbed into their taxi to go off home he said seriously, "Commander Pott, Mrs Pott, Master Pott and Miss Pott, you will never regret buying that car. She's going to give you the time of your lives. You've saved her from the scrap-heap, and I'll eat my hat—if I had a hat to eat—if she doesn't repay you for what you've done today." He was still waving happily after them when they drove out of sight.

As they bowled along in their taxi, Jemima whispered to Jeremy in the front seat next to the driver, "Jeremy, did you notice something very mysterious about the old registration number that was hanging from the back of our car?"

"There was nothing mysterious about it," said Jeremy scornfully, "it was GEN ELEVEN."

"Yes," said Jemima excitedly. "GEN II. Don't you realize what that spells? 'Genii'—like magical people, sort of spirits, like that story about the Bottle Imp by Robert Louis Stevenson that Mimsie read to us once."

"Hum!" said Jeremy thoughtfully. "Hum! Hum! Hum!" And they sat silently, thinking this odd coincidence over, until they got home.

Well, the next day Jeremy and Jemima had to go off to boarding-school, so they never saw the arrival of the new car, or rather of the ruins of it, as it came bumping and crashing down the lane behind the breakdown lorry, but Mimsie wrote and told them of how it disappeared at once into Commander Pott's workshop and how their father then locked himself inside with it and only emerged to eat and sleep.

For three months, the whole of the summer term, he worked and worked secretly on the wreck of the old Paragon, and Mimsie said that much smoke came out of the chimney and often lights shone all night through the windows, and mysterious packages arrived from engineering factories all over England and disappeared into the workshop through the locked doors. Mimsie wrote that their father went through periods of gloom and impatience and frenzy and triumph and dejection and delight and unhappiness and nightmares and loss of appetite, but that gradually, with the passing weeks, he became calmer and happier until, as the holidays came nearer, he was smiling and rubbing his hands. Then at last came the great day when they fetched Jeremy and Jemima from school and the whole family assembled outside the workshop while Commander Pott solemnly unlocked the doors and they all trooped in to where the twelve-cylinder, eight-litre, supercharged Paragon Panther stood under the bright lights.

Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima stood and stared and stared and stared until Jemima broke the silence and said, "But she's the most beautiful car in the world!" Mimsie and Jeremy just nodded their agreement and looked at the Paragon with round and shining eyes.

And she *was* beautiful! Every single little thing had been put right and every detail gleamed and glistened with new paint and polished chromium, down to the snarling mouth of the big boa-constrictor horn.

Slowly they walked round her and examined her inch by inch, from the rows and rows of gleaming knobs on the dashboard to the brand-new, dark-red leather upholstery, from the cream-coloured, collapsible roof to the fine new tyres, from the glistening silver of the huge exhaust pipes, snaking away from holes in the bright green bonnet, to the glittering number-plates that said GEN II.

And silently they climbed in through the low doors that opened and shut with the most delicious clicks, and Commander Caractacus Pott sat behind the huge driving-wheel with Mimsie beside him in her own bucket-seat with an arm-rest, and Jeremy and Jemima got in the back and sank down amongst the big, soft, red-leather cushions and rested their arms on their own arm-rest between them.

Then, without saying anything, Commander Pott leant forward and pressed the big black knob of the self-starter. At first nothing happened. There was just the soft grinding from the starter motor. Jeremy and Jemima looked at each other with round eyes. Wasn't she going to work after all?

But then Commander Pott pulled out the silver knob of the choke, to feed more petrol into the carburettor, and pressed the starter again. And out of the exhaust-pipes there came just these four noises—very loud—

CHITTY CHITTY

BANG BANG

And there was a distinct pause after each noise, and it was like two big sneezes and two small explosions. And then there was silence.

Again Jeremy and Jemima looked at each other, now really rather worried. Had something gone wrong?

But Commander Pott just said, "She's a bit cold. Now then!" He pressed the starter again. And this time, after the first two CHITTY sneezes and the two soft BANGS, the BANGS ran on and into each other so as to make a delicious purring rumble such as neither Mimsie nor Jeremy nor Jemima had ever heard before from a piece of machinery. Commander Pott put the big car into gear, and slowly they rumbled and roared out of the workshop into the sunshine and up the lane towards the motorway, and the springs were soft as silk and always this delicious rumble came out behind from the huge fish-tail exhausts.

When they got to the side road that joined the motor-way, Commander Pott pressed the big bulb of the boaconstrictor horn and it let out a deep, polite, but rather threatening roar, and then, because he wanted to show everything to the children, Commander Pott pressed the electric-horn button in the middle of the wheel and the klaxon horn fired off a terrific blast of warning: "GA-GOOOO-GA!" Then he steered out on to the motorway and they were off on their first practice run.

Well, I can only tell you that the huge, long, gleaming, green car almost flew. With a click of the big central gear-lever, Commander Pott got out of first gear into second at forty miles per hour, with another click at seventy miles per hour he was in third, and as they touched *one hundred miles an hour*, he put the huge car into top gear and there they were passing the other black-beetle cars almost as if they were standing still.

"GA-GOOOO-GA!" went the klaxon again and again as they swept down the big safe double-lane highway, and the drivers of the little family saloons looked in their rear mirrors and saw the great gleaming monster whistling towards them and drew in to the left-hand side to let her go by, and all the drivers said, "Cooer! See that! What is she? Smashing!" And then the green car was past and away, and they caught the hurricane howl of the big exhausts and made a note of the number, GEN II, and not one of the drivers noticed what the number really spelt, they just thought it was a nice short number to have and easy to remember.

So CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG came to the end of the motorway and Commander Pott carefully swung the big car into the other lane and roared off back towards home, and Jeremy and Jemima clutched their arm-rest with excitement and looked over at the glittering dashboard and watched the needle of the speedometer creep back up to a hundred and stay there until they came to the turning-off for home. And Commander Pott clamped on the powerful

hydraulic brakes until the car was only creeping along, and they turned off the motorway and bumped back down their narrow lane and back in under the bright lights of the workshop. And when Commander Pott switched off the engine, it gave one last "CHITTY-CHITTY", let out a deep sigh of contentment and was silent.

They all climbed out and Commander Pott turned to them with a gleam of triumph in his eye. "Well? What do you think of her?"

And Mimsie said, "Terrific!"

And Jeremy said, "Smashing!"

And Jemima said, "Adorable!"

And Commander Caractacus Pott said mysteriously, "Well, that's good. But I'm warning you. There's something odd about this car. I've put all I know into her, every invention and improvement I could think of, and quite a lot of the thousand pounds we got from the Skrumshus people, but there's more to it than that. She's got some ideas of her own."

"How do you mean?" they all chorused.

"Well," said Commander Pott carefully, "I can't exactly say, but sometimes, in the morning when I came back to get to work again, I'd find that certain modifications, certain changes, had, so to speak, taken place all by themselves during the night, when I wasn't there. Certain—what shall I say?—rather revolutionary and extraordinary adaptations. I can't say more than that, and I haven't really got to the bottom of it all, but I suspect that this motor-car has thought out, all by herself, certain improvements, certain very extraordinary mechanical devices, just as if she had a mind of her own, just as if she was grateful to us for saving her life, so to speak, and wanted to repay all the loving care we've given her. And there's another thing. You see all those rows and rows of knobs and buttons and levers and little lights on the dashboard? Well, to tell you the truth, I just haven't been able to discover what they're all for. I know the obvious ones, of course, but there are some of those gadgets that seem to be secret gadgets. We'll find out what they're for in time, I suppose, but for now I'll admit there are quite a lot of them that have got me really puzzled. She just won't let me find out."

"What do you mean?" asked Jemima excitedly. "Is it a she?"

"Well," said Commander Pott, "that's how I've come to call her. It's funny, but all bits of machinery that people love are made into females. All ships are 'she'. Racing drivers call their cars 'she'. Same thing with aeroplanes. Don't know about rockets or sputniks—somehow they don't seem very feminine to me—but I bet the rocketeers and sputnicators, or whatever they call the sputnik experts, I bet they call their space ships and things 'she'. Odd, isn't it? I used to serve in a battleship. Gigantic great ship stuffed with guns and radar and so on. Called the *George V*. But we called her 'she'."

Jeremy said excitedly, "We've got to have a name for her. And I know what we ought to call her. What she called herself."

"What do you mean?"

"What was that?"

"When did she?" they all cried together.

Jeremy said slowly, "She said it when she started—CHITTY-CHITTY, like sneezes, and then BANG-BANG! So we'll call her that, her own invented name."

And the others looked at each other and slowly they all smiled and Commander Caractacus Pott patted the green and silver car on her nose and said in a loud and solemn voice, "Now hear me, twelve-cylinder, eight-litre super-charged Paragon Panther. We hereby christen you..." and they all chorused: "CHITTY—CHITTY—BANG—BANG!" Then they trooped out of the workshop and went happily about all the things they'd forgotten to do for the whole of that exciting afternoon.

The next day was a Saturday and the month was August and the sun positively streamed down. It was a roaster of a day, and at breakfast Commander Pott made an announcement. "Today," he said, "is going to be a roaster, a scorcher. There's only one thing to do, and that's for us to take a delicious picnic and climb into CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG and dash off down the Dover road to the sea."

Of course everyone was delighted with the idea and while Commander Pott and Jeremy and Jemima went to get CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG ready, fill her up with petrol, check the water in the radiator, verify the oil in the sump, test the tyre pressures, clean yesterday's squashed flies off the wind-screen, dust down the body and polish up the chromium until it shone like silver, Mimsie filled a hamper with hard-boiled eggs, cold sausages, bread-and-butter sandwiches, jam puffs (with, of course, like all good jam puffs, more jam than puff) and bottles and bottles of the best fizzy lemonade and orange squash.

Then they all piled into the car, with the hood down of course, and, with CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG'S usual two sneezes and two small explosions, they were off up the lane to the motor-way that led towards Dover and to the sea some twenty miles away.

But, but, but! And once again but!!

Twenty-two thousand, six hundred and fifty-four other motor-cars full of families (that was the number announced by the Automobile Association the next day) had also decided to drive down the Dover road to the sea on that beautiful Saturday morning, and there was an endless stream of cars going the same way as the Pott family in CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG.

Well, Commander Pott drove as cleverly as he could, overtaking when it was safe, weaving like a snake in and out of the traffic, and taking short cuts and side roads to dodge really bad queues of cars, but they made terribly slow progress, in spite of much polite mooing of the boa-constrictor horn and, I'm sorry to say, an occasional furious "GA-GOOOO-GA" on the klaxon when some booby in a black-beetle insisted on hogging it down the middle of the road and not leaving room for CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG to get by. As for doing a hundred miles an hour, there just wasn't any question of it, and they crawled along at a miserable twenty. All of them, Commander Pott, Mimsie, Jeremy and Jemima, were getting more and more hot and impatient, and even CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG began steaming angrily out of the top of her radiator, on which (I'd forgotten to tell you this) there was a silver mascot of a small aeroplane whose propeller went round and round in the wind, faster or slower according to their speed.

And, although they couldn't see them, CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG'S big headlamp eyes, that had been so gleaming with happiness and enthusiasm ever since the day before, began to get angrier and angrier and more and more impatient, so that the people who had gazed in admiration at her through the back windows of their cars became more and more nervous of this gleaming green monster behind them, beginning to look as if she wanted to eat up, with the silver jaws of her radiator, all the line upon line of black-beetle cars that were getting in her way and keeping her family from their picnic by the sea.

But all the same, they were making steady though very slow progress until, outside Canterbury, they came upon a solid jam of cars that must have reached for at least a mile. And there they were—stuck at the back of the queue; it really looked as if they couldn't possibly get down to the sands and the sea in time for their picnic, let alone have a wonderful bathe before it.

Suddenly Commander Pott happened to glance at the dashboard, over on the left, opposite Mimsie, and he said excitedly, "I say, all of you, look at that!"

And Mimsie looked and Jeremy and Jemima peered over the back of the seat, and amongst all the knobs and instruments a light on top of a small knob was flashing pale pink! And it was showing a word, and the word said "PULL"!

"Good heavens!" said Commander Pott. "I wondered what that knob was for, but it's one of the ones I haven't had time to tinker with. What can it be for?"

"Look!" cried Mimsie. "The light's turning red!"

And sure enough it was, and now another word was showing! And do you know what the other word said? It said "IDIOT"! So now the angry red knob read "PULL IDIOT"! And Commander Pott laughed out loud and said, "Well I never! That's pretty good cheek! Here's CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG taking control and calling me an idiot into the bargain! Oh, well! Here goes!" And he reached over and pulled down the little silver lever.

The children, in fact the whole family, sat on the tips of their behinds, if you see what I mean, and waited excitedly to see what would happen.

And a kind of soft humming noise began. It seemed to come from all over the car—from the front axle and from the back axle and from underneath the bonnet. And then the most extraordinary transmogrifications (which is just a long word for "changes") began to occur. The big front mudguards swivelled outwards so that they stuck out like wings, sharply swept back, and the smaller back mud-guards did the same (it was lucky the road was wide and there was single-lane traffic, or a neighbouring car or a telegraph-pole might have been sliced in half by the sharp green wings!). The wings locked into position with a click and at the same time, though the family couldn't see it from behind, the big radiator grill slid open like a sliding door, and the big propeller of the fan belt, together with the fly-wheel underneath that runs the petrol pump and the electric generator, slowly slid forward until they were sticking right out in front of the bonnet of the car.

And then, on the dashboard, beside another little lever a *green* light started to blink and this light said "PULL DOWN", and Commander Pott, rather nervously but this time obediently, reached over and gingerly pulled the lever very, very slowly down.

And then, in heaven's name, what do you think happened?

Yes, you're right, absolutely right. The wings slowly tilted, and as Commander Pott, at last realizing what CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG was up to, pressed down the accelerator pedal, the big green car, which was now what I might call an aerocar, tilted up her shining green and silver nose and took off! Yes! She took off like an aeroplane and soared up over the car in front, just missing her roof, and roared away over the long line of stationary cars in the queue, while all the people stared out of their car windows in absolute astonishment and Commander Pott called out, "Hang on, everyone. For heaven's sake hang on!" Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima clutched the arm-rests beside them and just sat, stiff with excitement and with their eyes and their mouths wide open, thinking, Heavens above! What is going to happen next?

Well, what happened next was that there came a shrill whine of machinery and a thump, thump, thump, thump from under the car, and automatically the four wheels retracted up into the body-work, so as to be out of the way and let the aerocar go faster without the wind resistance of the wheels to slow her down.

Commander Pott sat gripping the wheel and chuckling with excitement and delight. "I told you so!" he shouted against the roar of the wind. "She's got ideas of her own. She's a magical car. Don't worry! She'll look after us!"

He carefully turned the wheel to see what would happen. And sure enough, the bonnet of the car followed what he did, and after curving about a bit to get the feel of the steering, Commander Pott made straight for the tall tower of Canterbury Cathedral in the distance, soaring over the long line of cars in which the poor people were roasting in the sunshine and sniffing up the disgusting petrol fumes of the cars in front.

Gradually, as they got confidence, Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima sat back more comfortably in their seats, and Jemima's golden hair streamed out in the wind like a golden flag behind the car and Jeremy's black mop blew about like a golliwog in a hurricane.

Over the solid line of cars they flew—altitude five hundred feet, air speed one hundred miles per hour, engine temperature one hundred and twenty degrees, outside temperature seventy degrees, revolutions of propeller three thousand per minute, visibility five miles—over the river that runs through Canterbury down to the coast, over the houses and over the fields where the cows and the horses and the sheep stampeded about at the roaring noise of this big green

dragon they had never seen before, and the shadow of CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG chased after them over the ground.

Over Canterbury, Commander Pott insisted on circling the tall tower of the cathedral, so that the jackdaws and pigeons flew out of their nooks and crannies squawking and cooing with fright and excitement, and then they headed on over the trees and woods, taking a short cut away from the crowded Dover road, towards the distant majesty of Dover Castle, with its Union Jack flying from the topmost tower.

And of course, at that speed, in minutes they were over the castle, and again Commander Pott insisted on circling round so that the family (and CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG for the matter of that) could have a good look, and all the soldiers drilling on the square inside the castle walls looked up, much to the rage of their sergeant-major, and the sentries too, and between you and me, I think CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG was lucky to get away without being shot at by the soldiers, because after all she had no proper aircraft markings, only her GEN II registration plates, and for all the soldiers knew she might have been some new kind of foreign aeroplane come to attack the castle, or even a flying bomb, which was really quite what she looked like.

But all went well, and they flew on up the coast looking for a place to land to have their picnic beside the sparkling blue sea. But everywhere—St Margaret's Bay, Walmer, Deal, Sandwich, Ramsgate—all the beaches were crowded with families who had had the same idea as the Pott family, and CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG'S passengers became more and more gloomy as they saw the beautiful sands with their bathers and paddlers and shrimpers, and the rock-pools that were certainly crawling with exciting crabs and eels and valuable shells, all crowded with rival holiday-makers. And they all longed for a bathe and to unpack the bulging picnic basket full of Mimsie's delicious goodies.

Then a curious thing happened. The steering wheel twisted, actually twisted in Commander Pott's hands, as if CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG realized their disappointment and was taking control herself, and do you know what? CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG turned away from the coast and soared away over the English Channel *straight out to sea*.

The family held their breath with excitement and Commander Pott wrestled with the wheel and began to look rather nervous. But then the green light started to blink on the dashboard, and now instead of saying "PULL DOWN" as it had said before, it said "PUSH UP". And gently Commander Pott pushed up the little silver lever and gently CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG began to lose height and plane softly downwards.

"Heavens!" cried Mimsie. "She's going to drop us in the sea! Now we really are in a mess! Get ready to swim, everyone. The cushions will float! Each one hang on to a cushion! The Deal lifeboat will see us and if we keep afloat we'll be all right!"

"Don't worry, Mimsie darling," shouted Commander Pott against the roar of the wind. "It'll be all right. I think I know what CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG has got in mind. Look there where we're heading for. Those are the Goodwin Sands—acres of beautiful sand that get uncovered during a low tide like this. Why, in summer they even have a football match on the sands. Dover and Deal play each other and get the game over before the tide comes in. Then they row away in boats. And there's the famous South Goodwin Lightship. It's got one of the loudest fog-horns in the world and a great revolving light to warn ships away. See the masts of the sunken wrecks sticking up all along the edge of the sands? Probably more ships have been sunk on those sands—from Roman times on—than on any other dangerous rock or reef or sands or shoals in the world. All through the ages, it's been a regular graveyard for ships."

"Any chance of finding treasure?" asked Jeremy excitedly.

"I'm afraid there's not a hope," said Commander Pott sadly. "Whenever there's a shipwreck on the Goodwins, particularly on dark or foggy nights, when of course most of the wrecks happen, wreck-burglars—they have been known as 'wreckers' since olden times—swarm out from the coast in their sailing-boats (they don't use motor-boats, so as to be as silent as possible and not warn the men on the lightship, who might otherwise radio for a Royal Navy cutter or M.T.B. to come out from Dover and arrest the wreckers and put a guard on board the wreck). These wreckers come slipping softly out and steal everything they can find—they just simply strip the wrecked ship of all its cargo and everything movable and then silently steal away before dawn. So then, when the official salvage-craft and tugs put out from Dover

in the morning to save what they can and perhaps even try and pull the ship off the sands, they find an empty house, so to speak. The wreckers—the sea-burglars—have stripped her as clean as a plucked chicken, and of course when the police go hunting along the coast for the wreckers, no one knows anything about it, and there isn't a sign of the loot because it's all been rushed off inland to hide-outs by the wreckers' lorries that have been called up secretly. That's how it goes. Just the same as in the bad old days when the wreckers used to shift buoys and warning-lights at night to guide ships on to shoals and rocks. That was centuries ago—but the rascals are still at it. Dangerous work, of course, putting out from the coast in a sloop or a cutter in a thick fog or a storm, but these wreck-burglars are tough, bad men and they're ready to take a chance in exchange for a fat cargo of fine meat and butter from Denmark, or radios and television sets from Germany, or even sometimes bars of gold being shipped over to an English bank."

While Commander Pott had been telling these exciting things, CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG had been planing gently down towards the big expanse of beautiful golden sand lapped by the soft blue ripples of the English Channel and fringed by the masts and the half-sunken hulls of the wrecks that show up at low tide. The crew of the bright, red-painted lightship came up on deck and waved excitedly to them as they soared low overhead, and then, as the green light on the dashboard went on winking and Commander Pott gently took his foot off the accelerator, the wheels automatically lowered themselves into position again and they came in to land on the hard, flat, golden surface. The aerocar ran a little way on the sand and then, as Commander Pott put on the brakes, CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG came to a gentle stop at the edge of the sea. At once the red light on the dashboard showed again, and now it said "PUSH UP" (no "IDIOT" this time).

Commander Pott pushed up the little silver lever, and there came the same low hum as the front and back wings slowly folded back to become mudguards again, and the big propeller and generator out front slipped back until the two halves of the radiator closed over them. CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG gave a last two big sneezes and two soft bangs, then Commander Pott switched off the engine and there was a perfectly good, gleaming, green car sitting quietly on the huge sandbank in the middle of the sea.

The whole family let out a big "*Pouff*" of relief and excitement and piled out of the magical car on to the warm sand.

Then, even before they got into their bathing things and began exploring, all the family, of one accord, went up and patted CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG'S warm silver bonnet, just as if she'd been alive, and they all said, "Thank you, dear CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG, you're a real marvel!"

And do you know, CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG seemed to let out a long sort of metallic sigh of contentment, which I expect was really only a little steam escaping from the hot radiator, and her big gleaming headlights seemed to dip slightly in modesty and shyness, just as Jemima's eyes do when she's complimented on doing particularly well at her lessons, or her dancing-class, or at singing a song, or Jeremy's when he wins a prize for lessons or games.

Then the whole family made a dash to change into their bathing things. And after they had all swum about like dolphins and clambered about among the wrecks, where Jeremy found some quite interesting bits of machinery and Jemima discovered an old compass that Commander Pott said he could easily clean up and repair, they sat down round Mimsie's hamper in the middle of the sands and between them they ate up every single hard-boiled egg, every single cold sausage, and every single strawberry jam puff. Then, happy and contented, they all lay down in the sunshine and, drowsy and full of good things and really quite exhausted with all the excitements of the day, one by one they dozed off for a little rest before doing some more swimming and hunting for treasures.

BUT—

BUT—

BUT—

No one noticed that the tide was creeping in over the sands.

No one noticed that the masts of the wrecks were getting lower in the water.

No one heard the glug-glug-glug as the sea quietly, softly, flowed into the half-sunken hulls of the wrecked ships.

And no one—not one of the dozing family—noticed that the wheels of CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG were slowly, inch by inch, being submerged by the incoming tide, and no one realized that soon, very very soon, the whole family, Commander Pott, Mimsie, Jeremy and Jemima—and CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG, who by now was really a member of the family too—would be marooned out in the middle of the sea—*threatened with mortal danger!*

But for what happened next I'm afraid you must wait for

CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG'S
Adventure Number Two

[End of *Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang, Adventure Number One*, by Ian Fleming]