



THE
HIDEY-
HOLE

THE HIDEY-HOLE

by
Enid
Blyton

LOTTERWORTH

Enid Blyton

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THE HIDEY-HOLE

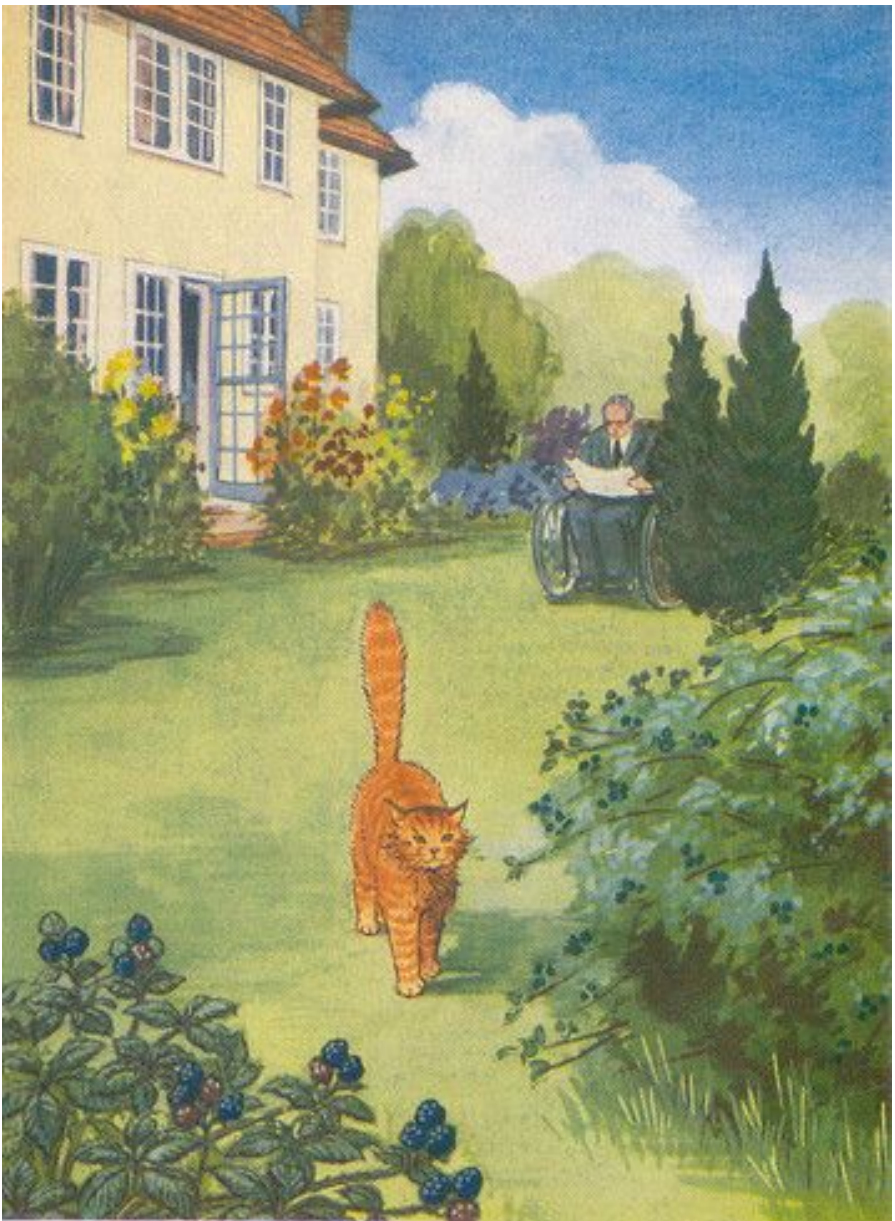
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THE GINGER CAT CAME STALKING UP AGAIN!

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1.

BLACKBERRY TIME

“Bobby! Betty! I say, Bobby, Betty! Where are you?”

Mother looked up from her sewing. “Dear, oh dear, there’s the boy next door shouting again! Well, he can wait till Bob and Bets are home. What a voice he has! Ah—thank goodness, here come the twins!”

Bobby and Betty came in at the back door, each with a bag of shopping. “Hallo, Mother! Haven’t we been quick? I say—is that Jocko yelling for us?”

“Yes, it is,” said Mother, taking the shopping out of the bags. “He’s as bad as a fog-horn! I never in my life heard such yells. For goodness’ sake go down the garden and find out what he wants. I should think he has wakened up all the babies in the district!”

“BOB-BEE, BET-TY!” came Jocko’s voice again.

“Oh, I expect he wants to talk about going blackberrying,” said Betty.

“You know what we told you, Mother,” said Bobby. “Our teacher at school said that there were so many blackberries this year we could pick heaps and sell them, and take the money to school—and it would help to buy a little tricycle for William.”

“That’s the boy who has poor, weak legs,” said Betty. “He’s the little boy belonging to Mrs. Scott, who comes to clean the schoolroom. The doctor

said that if he could have a little tricycle, it would make his legs strong, and he could ride to school each day.”

“Oh yes, you did tell me,” said Mother. “Well, it would be wonderful if you children *could* buy him a little tricycle. But tricycles are very expensive, you know. You would need to pick *hundreds* of blackberries to make enough money to buy one! Poor William, I can’t bear to see his little thin legs. Just look at your straight strong ones, aren’t you lucky!”

“Yes, we are,” said Betty, looking down at her sturdy legs. “Mother, will you buy blackberries from us if we pick a lot?”

“Of course, darling!” said Mother. “And I will pay you for any errands you run for me, or any little jobs you do. Keep a special box for your earnings. It will soon be full! I’ll make you jam with the blackberries, so pick the very biggest, juiciest ones you can find! Now do go and see what Jocko wants!”

“BETTY! BOBBY!” came Jocko’s enormous voice again, “I WANT YOU!” A volley of loud barks followed his shouts, and Mother put her hands over her ears.

“Good gracious—that’s Jiminy barking now! He has an even louder voice than Jocko. For goodness’ sake go down and stop them making that noise!”

“Right!” said Bobby, and he and Betty shot off down the garden at top speed, “COM-ING!” yelled Bobby. “COM-ING!”

Soon the two of them were at the spot where Jocko was yelling for them. He was up a tree that overhung their garden and Jiminy, his rough-haired terrier puppy, was barking his head off just below.



“WHAT AN AGE YOU’VE BEEN!”

“What an age you’ve been!” said Jocko. “I’ve shouted for you for hours.”

“You haven’t,” said Betty. “Make room for us on your branch. Our mother was cross with your shouting. What do you want?”

“It’s about the blackberrying,” said Jocko, sliding further up the branch of the old tree, to make room for Betty and Bobby. “I vote we go after tea. My mother says you can come to tea first, if you like. Then we’ll go up on the common with Jiminy, and take the biggest baskets we can find. I bet we’ll pick enough to buy that tricycle!”

“To buy the *bell*, perhaps, you mean!” said Betty. “We’d have to pick hundreds and thousands and millions to get enough to buy a *tricycle*!”

“Oh well—we’ll just pick as many as we can,” said Jocko. “What shall we do now?”

A bell rang in the distance just then, and at once the children slid down the branch and leapt to the ground. “Tea!” said Jocko. “And Mother’s made the biggest currant buns you ever saw. Come on! You can yell over the fence to tell your mother you’re having tea with us. Look at old Jiminy scurrying up the garden. He runs fast, doesn’t he—and he’s only a pup!”

Jocko was very fond of his puppy, and the little thing adored him. Bobby and Betty thought he was the nicest dog they had ever seen, and the cleverest!

Soon they were all sitting at the tea-table. Certainly Jocko's mother *had* made enormous currant buns that afternoon. "Absolutely *stuffed* with currants too!" said Betty. "I do like your buns, Mrs. Hayes."

"So does Jiminy," said Mrs. Hayes, who was keeping a sharp eye on the puppy, watching to see that Jocko didn't slip one or two buns under the table. "Now, Jocko, if you feed Jiminy at meal-times I shall send him to his kennel!"

"That was only a crumb I dropped, Mother," said Jocko. "Mother, listen—can we have your VERY BIGGEST baskets please, to put hundreds and hundreds of blackberries in? We're going blackberrying after tea."

"Very well," said his mother. "Jiminy will love the walk to the common. I'll buy whatever you pick. I know it's for a tricycle for little William. You can go as soon as you've finished your tea."

And now, there they all go with their baskets. Look, even Jiminy is carrying one, just a little one because he's just a little dog.

Hurry up, Jiminy, or you'll be left behind!

ON GYPSY COMMON

It was a lovely sunny evening when the three children and Jiminy reached Gypsy Common. They all loved the common. It was glorious in the spring when the bluebells and the golden gorse were out, and the birds were singing madly in the bushes. It was lovely in the summer, when the ferns unfolded their curled-up fingers, and the grass was full of tiny bright flowers.

But oh, the joy of autumn-time, when the bushes were crowded with big, juicy blackberries! And sometimes, too, there were mushrooms growing here and there in the shady places, and great toadstools stood in the ditches. There was always something to find and take home to Mother.



“BLACKBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES!” SANG BETTY, AS THEY CAME TO THE COMMON

“Blackberries, blackberries!” sang Betty, as they came to the common. “Dozens of blackberries, hundreds of blackberries, thou . . .”

“*Where* are all these blackberries you’re singing about?” asked Jocko, stopping and looking round. “I can only see a few rather unripe ones on that bush over there.”

“Oh well, there’ll be plenty further on!” said Betty. “Where’s Jiminy? I hope he’s not gone after a rabbit. Call him, Jocko.”

“Jiminy!” yelled Jocko, and Jiminy at once appeared from behind a bush, with a piece of wood in his mouth. He ran straight to Jocko and dropped the wood at his feet. He wagged his tail hard and gave a little bark as if to say, “Well, come on now, throw it for me!”

Jocko groaned. “Oh goodness, don’t say you expect me to throw bits of wood for you all the time, Jiminy. I thought you had grown out of that. Take it away!”

Jiminy’s tail went down at once, and he looked mournfully round to see if anyone would throw his bit of wood for him.

“I’ll throw it for you, Jiminy,” said Betty and picked it up. She threw it—but alas, it went straight into a prickly bush, and Jiminy gave a mournful howl.

“Just like a girl!” said Jocko, in disgust. “I never yet saw a girl who could throw anything straight!”

Betty at once picked up a fallen fir-cone from the ground and hurled it straight at Jocko. It hit him on the nose and he yelled.

The others roared with laughter at Jocko’s surprise. “Good shot, Bets!” cried Bobby. Jocko couldn’t help grinning as he rubbed his nose. Jiminy ran to the fallen fir-cone and picked it up. He went to Betty and dropped it at her feet as if to say, “Do that again!”

“Oh no you don’t!” said Jocko, promptly, and kicked it away. “Come on, let’s look for blackberries. JIMINY, STOP PICKING UP FIR-CONES. What about finding a bush with blackberries on instead.”

They went on into the bushes, looking for blackberries to put into their empty baskets. But oh dear, how few there were! It was most disappointing. There were hardly any, just one black one here and there.

“You can see where plenty have been *picked*,” said Betty, looking at a bush where there were many sturdy briar sprays. “See—here are the bare places where the blackberries grew. Someone has been here before us! We’d better go further on, where the common is wilder and thicker. We might find some then.”

But all they saw were children like themselves, trying to find a few blackberries to put into their baskets. “Are you looking for blackberries too?” they said. “There just aren’t any!”

“Who’s had them all, then?” asked Bobby, puzzled. “There were plenty ripening last time I came here.”

“See—there are gypsy caravans over there in that hollow, sheltered by those trees,” said Jocko, pointing. “Do you think the gypsy children have picked the blackberries?”

“Yes, look! There are people with baskets near the caravans!” said Betty. “Oh dear, we’ve come too late! All the best blackberries will have gone!”

Jocko went over to the caravans. They looked rather exciting. What fun to have a house on wheels, and go wherever you liked! A gypsy boy with a very brown face called to him.



“YOU AFTER BLACKBERRIES? YOU’RE UNLUCKY!”

“You after blackberries? You’re unlucky! I reckon we’ve picked them all since we’ve been here. What a huge crop there was! Look at what *I* picked this morning!”

Jocko looked. The boy’s basket was crammed to the top with big, juicy shining blackberries. They made his mouth water even to look at them!

“You might have left some for us,” he said.

“Well, it’s everyone for himself when the blackberries are ripe!” said the boy. “You should have come sooner. But I tell you what, you can have half ours!”

“Ooooh, thanks!” said Jocko, delighted.

“But only if you pay for them!” said the boy with a grin. “I’d get ten shillings for this lot I’ve picked. I go round the houses and sell them. You give me ten shillings and you can have them!”

“Don’t be silly! I haven’t ten shillings, and anyway we were going to sell what *we* picked,” said Jocko. “We want the blackberries for something special.”

“Ha—a blackberry tart with cream, I suppose!” said the boy. “Well, first come, first served. Good-day to you!”

And he disappeared into the door of the nearest caravan, swinging his full basket.

“We’ll have to go somewhere else and look for blackberries,” said Jocko, going back to the others. “There’s none left here. Come on, let’s go further on! We’ve just got to find some to sell, we’ve only picked about sixpennyworth so far. Come on, everyone!”

3.

A SURPRISE FOR JOCKO

It was a very very disappointing evening. No sooner had they gone a little further and at last found a few big blackberries, than it began to pour with rain.

“Oh blow!” said Bobby, turning up his collar. “Now we’ll have to go back home, with only about thirty wet blackberries for our evening’s work!”

“If only we’d been able to pick hundreds, like that boy did!” said Betty, almost in tears. “I was so looking forward to selling whole basketfuls, and getting a lot of money to give to Miss Allen towards William’s tricycle.”

“I bet all the others will have found plenty,” said Jocko, gloomily. “Miss Allen will think we are pretty feeble. Does anyone know a place where there are usually plenty of blackberries besides on this common?”

“Well—there’s Hilltop Common—but that’s too far,” said Bobby. “Too far to go to now, anyway. Let’s get back home quickly. I’m not going anywhere else this evening. I’m getting soaked!”

It was rather a miserable little company that made its way home as quickly as possible. Rain trickled down their necks, and soaked their socks and shoes. They parted when they came to Jocko’s house. He and Jiminy disappeared through their gate, and Bobby and Betty ran up the drive to their own house. What a horrid ending to a lovely plan!

“Well how many hundreds of blackberries did you pick for me to buy from you?” said Mother, when Bobby and Betty went to find her. “My goodness, how wet you both are!”

“Mother we hardly found any blackberries at all,” said Betty, almost in tears. “Lots of people must have been to the common before us. We were too late.”

“And we saw a gypsy boy who showed us a whole basketful he’d picked,” said Bobby. “I expect the gypsy folk had gone all round the bushes and picked all they saw, and sold them.”

“Well, they have to make what money they can,” said Mother. “It was a pity you didn’t go sooner. Never mind, perhaps you will find another place to go blackberrying.”

“But the blackberries will soon be over!” said Betty. “And we MUST get some money for William’s tricycle.”

“Well, you can do some jobs for me,” said Mother. “And I will pay you.”

“But that isn’t the *same!*” said Betty. “We don’t *like* you to pay us for doing things for you, Mother. We like to do them for love. And picking blackberries would have been such *fun!*”

“Yes, it would,” said Mother. “Well, cheer up. What about a game of snap? I’m longing for one!”

“Are you really, Mother?” said Bobby, cheering up. He liked snap so much. “Well, if you’re *sure* you want a game, I’ll get the cards.”

They quite forgot their disappointment over the blackberries, especially as somehow or other Mother didn’t say “Snap!” as quickly as usual, and the children won easily.

“Very good!” said Mother. “Here’s threepence each for your tricycle fund, for beating me, and winning all my cards.”

“Oh thank you!” said Bobby, and Betty’s eyes shone. Sixpence was better than nothing. It was a beginning anyway! Bobby slipped it into his money-box. “That would probably buy a bit of the steering-wheel,” he said to Betty. “We’ll think of something else to do tomorrow, when we see Jocko.”

They went round to Jocko’s house the next morning. “I don’t know where he is,” said Jocko’s mother. “He and Jiminy have gone off somewhere. I heard Jiminy barking at the top of his doggy voice about twenty minutes ago. Maybe he is somewhere in the garden. Go and look.”

So the two went to look for Jocko, but couldn’t find him anywhere. How queer! They shouted for him, but there was no answer, so at last they went back to their own garden.

Where *was* Jocko? He was having a little adventure all on his own, right at the very bottom of his garden. He had gone down there to see if he could find a trowel in the garden shed—Jiminy beside him as usual. And then Jiminy had begun to bark very loudly indeed and had shot out of the shed and down the path to the hedge at the bottom.

“Jiminy! What’s up?” yelled Jocko, surprised. “Oh JIMINY! You’ve seen that ginger cat again. What’s the *good* of chasing it? You know you can never catch it. COME HERE!”



“COME HERE!”

But Jiminy didn't take any notice at all. How DARED that ginger cat come into HIS garden? Wuff-wuff-WUFF!

The scared cat ran for its life through the hedge at the bottom of the garden, a hedge that divided Jocko's garden from the one beyond, which belonged to a rather fierce and cross old man.

Jiminy came to the hedge and squeezed through it after the cat. Jocko raced after him, shouting. But no Jiminy came back. What had happened to the little rough-haired terrier pup? Jocko pictured him being scratched and mauled by that fierce old ginger cat. How dreadful!

Jocko tried to force his way through the thick hedge, and at last managed to get his head through and peer round. No ginger cat. No Jiminy.

But good gracious, there was something else! Something that made Jocko stare in wonder and delight. There were great briar bushes at the bottom of the next door garden, and they were covered, absolutely COVERED, in the biggest, finest, blackberries he had ever seen. Nobody had picked them. Perhaps nobody had seen them. The old man couldn't have wanted them. Oh, what hundreds and thousands there were there, just WAITING to be picked. What a surprise—oh what a *wonderful* surprise!

4.

HURRAH FOR BLACKBERRIES, BIG AS CAN BE!

Jocko suddenly remembered Jiminy, his puppy. Had he attacked that ginger cat, or had the cat attacked the puppy? He'd better go and find out.

So he cautiously made his way through a thin place in the hedge, and at last stood in the other garden, looking all round.

Nobody was there, nobody at all, not even Jiminy. Jocko walked to the blackberry bushes, which were all tangled up together. He couldn't help tasting two or three of the berries. My goodness, how delicious they were, and what millions there seemed! Were they all going to be wasted? Dare he go and find that old man and ask him? People said he had a very VERY bad temper, and had once thrown a tramp out of his garden, right over the front hedge. Jocko didn't want to be thrown over *his* garden hedge.

He crept through the blackberry bushes, which tried to catch hold of him with their curved thorns. No Jiminy. No ginger cat. No barks, no mews! A pine cone fell from a tall tree nearby and made him jump. His heart began to beat quickly.

And then he saw someone in a cap and apron hanging out some clothes on a line in the distance. That would be the old man's maid. *She* was supposed to be rather a cross person too. Well Jocko simply *had* to find out what had happened to his puppy, so up the garden he went, and the maid suddenly saw him.

"Ha! You've come to look for your puppy-dog, I suppose!" she said, looking rather disagreeable. "Chasing my cat like that! I've locked him up in that shed."

"That cat's not in there too, is it?" said Jocko, anxiously. "She might scratch his eyes out."

"And serve him right too!" said the cross old maid. "He shouldn't come in here, and no more should *you*. How dare you come walking up our garden?"



“HOW DARE YOU COME WALKING UP OUR GARDEN?”

“Er—for two reasons really,” said poor Jocko, wishing he was back at home. “One, to get my dog—and the other thing was to ask you if you’d like me to pick some of those lovely blackberries for you, the ones at the bottom of your garden. I know the bushes are prickly, and I don’t expect you like being scratched by the thorns, but I’d gladly pick you a basketful if you like. I’m sure you haven’t time to pick any.”

“Hoo—*blackberries!* Who wants blackberries, the nasty pippy things?” said the maid. “Not me, and not the master either. Let them wither away on the bushes! I can’t bear the things. Let them go to waste, they’re not worth the bother of picking. You’d better go and get your dog out of the shed. He’s barking loudly now, the master will be after him if he hears that row!”

Jocko went quickly to the shed and opened the door. Jiminy shot out like a bullet from a gun, and threw himself madly on his young master, whining in delight.

“Take him away,” ordered the maid. “What a noisy little creature! Don’t you let him come near Ginger again. He’ll be sorry if he does. Now go home, both of you!”

She went stiffly up the garden with her empty laundry basket, grumbling away to herself. Jocko went quickly in the opposite direction, down to the thick hedge. He looked longingly at the laden blackberry bushes as he passed them. Millions and millions and millions of fat blackberries! Oh dear,

all going to be wasted. Surely it *must* be wrong to waste them? He really must ask his mother about it.

He set off up the garden with Jiminy at his heels, and saw his mother picking flowers from the beds. She called to him. “Bobby and Betty came to see you, but they couldn’t find you anywhere. Have you been blackberry-hunting or something?”

“No,” said Jocko. “Mother, it’s quite all right to go and pick blackberries growing wild anywhere, isn’t it?”

“Of course, dear!” said his mother. “You may pick *anything* wild, bluebells, buttercups, nuts in the hedge, blackberries. Why, is there something you want to pick?”

“Well, I was just thinking,” said Jocko. “I’ve seen heaps and heaps of blackberries, growing quite wild, and nobody wants them. I know they don’t, because I asked. They told me that the blackberries could wither on the bush, *they* weren’t going to pick them. Would it be all right if *I* picked them, and sold them to help to buy William’s tricycle?”

“Of course!” said his mother, gathering up her flowers. “It’s wicked to waste things. I’ve often told you that. If they’re not wanted, then anyone can pick them! Jiminy, come off that flower-bed. There are NO bones buried there!”

Jocko felt so delighted to hear his mother say that it would be wicked to let the unwanted blackberries go to waste that he couldn’t wait to tell the others! He went to peer through the hedge between his garden and Bobby’s and Betty’s, and saw them digging in their sand-pit. He called them.

“Bobby! Betty! Come quickly, I’ve a secret!”

Bobby flung down his spade, and he and Betty raced to the hedge and squeezed through it. A secret. This was exciting.

“Listen!” said Jocko, in a whisper. “I’ve found bushes of blackberries, bushes and bushes COVERED with the BIGGEST blackberries you ever saw. Nobody wants them. They’re going to waste. We could get baskets full as can be!”

“Where?” asked Bobby and Betty, amazed.

“Come and see,” said Jocko, and took them down to the bottom of the garden. He made them look through a space in the hedge, and they saw the great blackberry bushes. “My mother said it would be quite all right to pick them, as nobody wants them,” he said. “What do you think of *that*? We could get pounds and pounds of them!”

Bobby and Betty were so astonished at the wonderful sight they saw through the hedge that at first they couldn’t say a word. Then Betty caught hold of Jocko, her eyes shining brightly.

“We’ll pick some now, this very minute! We’ll sell them to Mother, and give Miss Allen the money to go towards William’s tricycle.”

“And tomorrow we’ll pick some more, and the next day more still!” said Bobby, red with excitement. “It’s like magic, seeing all those great big blackberries just *waiting* to be picked! Did your Mother *really* say it would be all right to pick them? My goodness—what FUN we’re going to have!”

“Wuff!” said Jiminy, joyfully, joining in the excitement. “WUFF!” And then Betty suddenly burst into a funny little song that came into her head at that very moment!

“Hurrah for blackberries, big as big can be,
Hurrah for blackberries, lots for you and me,
Hurrah for William, for very soon he’ll see
A lovely little tricycle, as shiny as can be!”

Yes—hip-hip-hurrah, Betty. You’d better start picking blackberries already. Good gracious, WHAT a lot there are!

A LOVELY JOB!

The three children and Jiminy raced up to Jocko's house. "I know where some baskets are, in the hall cupboard," said Betty. And sure enough, there they were; one very big one, two middle-size, and one small one.

The children took them all except the very big one. "It would take *days* to fill that!" said Betty. "I like a basket I can fill quickly. Oh, what a find, Jocko! All those bushes, cram *full* of blackberries. There are such a lot that we can eat as many as we like, and still fill our baskets full!"

"Wuff!" said Jiminy, dancing round excitedly. He wasn't sure what the excitement was about, but he was quite determined to join in!

"Dear old Jiminy!" said Bobby, happily. "It's a pity you can't pick blackberries too. Just be careful you don't upset our baskets when they're full, or you'll get into trouble!"

"Wherever are you all going?" said Jocko's mother, hearing the commotion in the hall, and coming to see what it was all about.

"To pick blackberries!" shouted Jocko, as he ran out of the door.

"Hundreds of them!" called Betty.

"I'll buy them from you!" said Jocko's mother. "You shall have them stewed, with lots of sugar, and custard!"

But nobody heard her—they were halfway down the garden, longing to get at those wonderful blackberry bushes!

They squeezed through the hedge, and went over to the bushes. Now that they were so close to them they were even more amazed. *What* a crop of blackberries! And what beauties! Fancy that old man and his maid not wanting them!

"The maid with the washing called them 'nasty pippy things!'" said Jocko, popping a big one into his mouth, and biting it so that the sweet juice ran all over his tongue. "Oooh! That was the best blackberry I've ever tasted. I *must* have a few more!"

"Well, don't forget to pick some for us, greedy!" said Betty. "I say, *look* at this one. It's a giant!"

"I think we ought to line our baskets with leaves of some sort," said Bobby, looking down at his basket. "The blackberries are so ripe, they're a bit squishy, and they'll make the baskets messy. Look, let's pick some big leaves off that tree, and line our baskets with them."

“Good idea!” said Betty, and they all picked the big smooth leaves from the nearby tree, and neatly lined the bottoms of their baskets.



IT WAS GREAT FUN PICKING THE BLACK, JUICY FRUIT

It was great fun picking the black, juicy fruit. Their fingers were stained, and their mouths were as purple as the berries. The sun shone down hotly, and Jiminy began to pant. He lay down under a bush, looking up at the children as if to say, "Go on picking, but don't expect *me* to help!"

"My basket's half-full already," said Betty, pleased. "It's a pity today is Saturday, not Monday. I'd have loved to take these baskets to school, as full as can be, to show the others!"

"I bet nobody will find as many berries as we shall," said Bobby. "I wish I'd brought that very *big* basket now. I bet I could have filled it full to the very brim. Do you suppose that would be a whole poundsworth?"

"Good gracious, no!" said Betty. "Blackberries are very cheap in the shops now."

"Listen, I can hear voices!" said Jocko, suddenly. "Someone's coming down the garden. I hope it isn't that cross old man. He just *might* be annoyed with us."

They hid behind the tallest bush and Betty peered through the leaves. "It's all right," she said. "He's stopped to smell a rose or something. He's in a wheel-chair that he can manage himself. He does look a bit fierce."

"He's supposed to be VERY VERY rich," said Bobby. "And I heard my mother say that his house is FULL of beautiful things."

"Worth hundreds and hundreds of pounds," said Betty. "I'd be afraid of burglars, wouldn't you, Jocko?"

"No, because I've always got Jiminy around," said Jocko. "He'd frighten away half-a-dozen burglars, wouldn't you, Jiminy?"

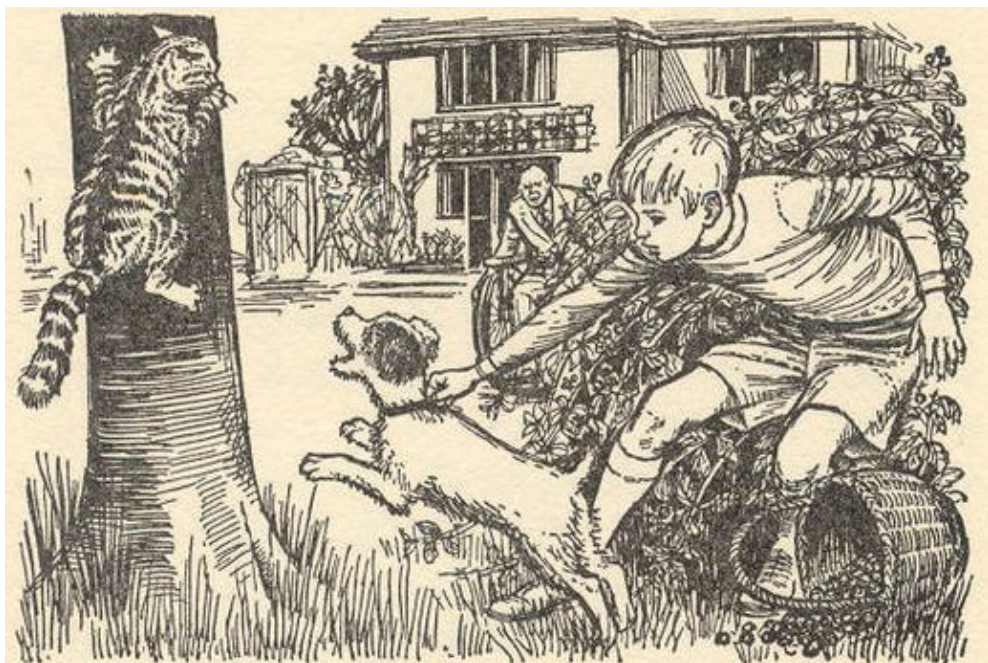
"WUFF!" said Jiminy at once, in a very loud voice, and then growled fiercely.

"Sh! The old man will hear you!" said Jocko. "He *has* heard you! Quick, get back through the hedge, everyone! Blow, I've spilt my blackberries!"

A loud voice came to their ears. "Is anyone there? Who's that down my garden? Is it you, gardener?"

The children felt frightened. Suppose the old man didn't want them to pick his blackberries? Perhaps he *liked* to let them go to waste each year? Oh dear! He might tell their parents and get them into trouble. Bobby and Betty fled to the hedge at once, but Jocko stayed with Jiminy, hoping to have time to pick up his spilt blackberries.

And then, dear me, who should come walking along, tail held straight up in the air, but the big ginger cat! And, of course, Jiminy saw it at once. He gave a great bark, and the cat fled up a tree. Jocko caught hold of Jiminy's collar before he could chase the cat, and dragged him down to the hedge.



“WHO’S THERE? WHAT’S HAPPENING?”

“Who’s there? What’s happening?” shouted the old man, but there was no answer. Jocko was almost through the hedge, hanging on to Jiminy’s collar for all he was worth—and what a pity—he had left his precious spilt blackberries behind!

JIMINY IN TROUBLE

Betty and Bobby went to help Jiminy out of the hedge. He was caught by a prickly branch. Betty was frightened.

"I shan't go blackberrying there again," she said. "I'm scared of that old man. What a loud, cross voice he has! Oh, Jocko, where's your basket of blackberries?"

"I spilt them all," said Jocko, gloomily. "I'll go back and pick them up when I think it's safe. I left the basket there too. Hope the old man doesn't find it. He might keep it, and then Mother would want to know where it had gone."

"He might be on the watch today to see if we go back again," said Bobby. "I do hope it doesn't matter picking his blackberries."

"Well, I *told* you my mother said that if they were growing wild, and nobody wanted them, we could pick them," said Jocko.

"Yes. But you didn't tell her they were in somebody else's garden," said Bobby.

"All right, all right. I just wanted to get as much money as we could for William's tricycle," said Jocko. "And if all those berries were only going to waste, why *shouldn't* we have them?"

"If there's no reason why we shouldn't have them, why didn't you go and ask the old man if we could pick them?" said Betty.

"I'm not going to answer silly questions," said Jocko, crossly. "Are you going to sell your blackberries?"

"Yes. I expect Mother will buy them," said Bobby. "And we shall take the money to Miss Allen on Monday. What about *your* blackberries? Are you going to pick them up, and put them in your basket, and take them to *your* mother? You'd better get them quickly though, they're very ripe, and they'll soon go bad."

This was a horrid thought. All that work of picking, for nothing? Jocko frowned. "I shall go and pick up all my spilt blackberries, put them back in my basket—and pick lots more—and sell them for much more money than either of *you* will!" said Jocko, his nose in the air. "I bet my mother will pay me more for my blackberries, than your mother will pay for *yours*!"

"I bet she won't," said Bobby, at once. "Anyway we're going to take them to my mother now, and ask her if she'd like them. We'll leave you to pick yours up. Hope they won't all be spoilt."

Bobby and Betty went off with their baskets of blackberries. Jocko scowled after them. He didn't at all want to crawl through the hedge, and pick up his spilt blackberries. That old man might be on the watch. And yet it would be a shame to waste those lovely berries, they were real beauties.

He peered through the hedge. The cat seemed to have gone. There was no sign of the old man, either.

"I could slip back now and pick up my blackberries," thought Jocko. "The cat's gone. The old man's disappeared, and the maid isn't there. Yes, I'll slip through the hedge now."

So he crawled through the hedge and once more found himself on the other side. All was quiet. The leaves rustled a little, but that was a nice noise. There came a whine behind him and Jocko frowned.

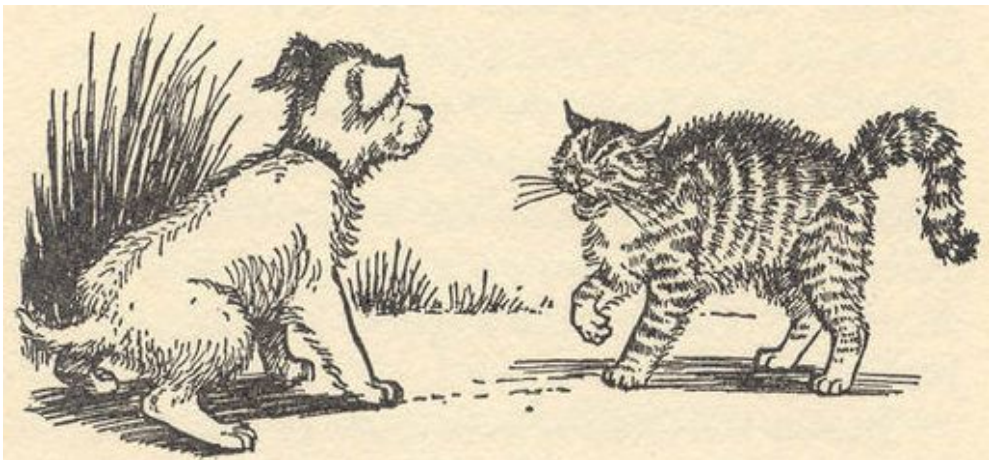
"Jiminy! I didn't *want* you to come. That ginger cat may be prowling about somewhere, and you'll only go after it. Go back home!"

But Jiminy sat himself down firmly, and stared at Jocko. Jocko knew what that meant. Jiminy wasn't going to do anything he didn't want to!

"All right. Just sit there and keep quiet," said Jocko, crossly. "I'm going to pick up my blackberries, and I don't want your help, see? You can give a little growl if you hear anyone coming, but that's all. No whines, no barks! Sit!"

And Jiminy sat without moving. Even his tail was quite still. He stared hard at Jocko as if to say, "Buck up. I'm getting tired of all this!"

And then the ginger cat came stalking up again! Jocko didn't see it; he was too busy picking up his spilt blackberries. But Jiminy saw it at once, and gave a furious growl. THAT CAT AGAIN—GRRRRRRR!



THE CAT WAS VERY RUDE

The cat was very rude. It spat at Jiminy, and then fled under a bush. Jiminy was shocked. He wasn't used to being spat at. He leapt after the ginger cat, barking loudly, and made poor Jocko jump almost out of his skin. The boy dropped all his blackberries again, and gave Jiminy a hard smack.

"Fathead!" hissed Jocko, as Jiminy disappeared under a great blackberry bush. There was a scrabbling noise inside the bush, and then a whine. The cat fled up the garden.

"Jiminy! Where are you?" said Jocko, anxiously, in a low voice. "Are you hurt? Where have you gone? Jiminy! I can't *see* you! Oh dear, you haven't broken a leg or anything, have you? Jiminy!"

A miserable little whine came from somewhere. "Oh Jiminy! I can't see where you *are*!" wailed Jocko. "These bushes are so thick and so prickly. Come out, you silly dog!"

There came some more whines, but no Jiminy. Jocko felt scared. He crawled further under a great bush, and peered about. Another whine came, quite near now.

"Oh, JIMINY! You're down a hole! Good gracious, there's a sort of cave under this big bush. You've fallen into it! Let me get hold of your collar and I'll try and pull you out. Oh dear, dear Jiminy, you're hurt, I know you are! Wait till I get down beside you; I'll help you out, Jiminy. Here I come—here I come!"

THE HIDEY-HOLE

Jocko felt the blackberry bush prickles catching hold of him as he forced his way under the thick bush to poor Jiminy. The puppy was very frightened, and was whining pitifully. Only his head could be seen.

“You’re in some kind of very peculiar hole!” said Jocko, puzzled, as at last he reached the dog. “Hey—don’t struggle so—you’ll sink further down into the hole if you do. There now, you’ve slipped again. Let me get in beside you and I’ll soon push you out.”

But the hole was a much bigger one than Jocko had imagined it to be. In fact, it was a very queer hole indeed. It was quite deep, and quite wide, and the sides were hard, as if they had been flattened by a spade.

“It doesn’t look like an old rubbish pit, somehow,” said Jocko, putting his arm round Jiminy. “Though it might have been, before these enormous bushes grew over it. Where’s my little torch? It’s really dark down here, the bushes are so thick! Let me see if you’re hurt, Jiminy.”

He took his torch from his pocket and switched it on. He examined the puppy. “You’ve a nasty scratch on your nose—done by one of these horrid thorns, I suppose,” said Jocko. “And I *think* you’ve hurt a back leg, though it may only be bruised. Poor, poor Jiminy. My word, this is a bigger hole than I thought. What in the world was it used for, before the bushes grew over it? A sort of hidey-hole, I should think. But what did it hide? Escaped prisoners? Hidden money? Or what?”



A LITTLE CHAIN WITH FOUR KEYS ON IT!

He swung his torch all around. He saw a neat little hole by his head and put his hand into it. Something was there, a little chain with four keys on it! How very very peculiar! Ah—here was another hole, further down—a bigger one. Jocko put his hand in, and felt something hard. He pulled it out and shone his torch on to it.

“A cup! Well, well! Somebody’s been down here at some time and used this hole under the bushes as a hidey-hole. But why? Jiminy, we’ll examine it a bit more closely, shall we, and see what else we can find?”

Two more holes were discovered by Jocko’s torch. An old newspaper was in one, all crumpled up. Jocko put it carefully into one of his pockets. In the other hole was a knife with a very sharp blade indeed. Jocko looked at it and frowned. “Who is it that hides things down here—perhaps sleeps down here—and why? I don’t like it, Jiminy, I’m quite glad you’re with me. I wouldn’t like to be found by the owner, whoever he is, unless I had you with me! I wonder if the cross old man knows anything about this hidey-hole? *He* couldn’t have put these things here, that’s certain!”

Jiminy gave a tired little whine. He didn’t like this hole. He was tired. He wanted to be in his comfortable basket, away from cats and prickly bushes. Jocko put his arm round him. “All right. We’ll get away now. I think it’s quite safe. That ginger cat will have got tired of waiting about for you. Come on, we’ll go. It’s a bit stuffy down here. What an exciting thing to tell

Betty and Bobby, a big hidey-hole under blackberry bushes! What a pity it isn't in *our* garden, Jiminy. We could play smugglers as much as we liked, we might even make a passage from the hole all the way up the garden!"

"Wuff!" said Jiminy, rather dismally. He didn't want to have anything more to do with holes. He just wanted to go back home!

"Now we must be careful!" whispered Jocko, as he began to force himself upwards. "Nobody must hear us or see us. This is a very very secret hidey-hole, and it's *ours* now, Jiminy. I've always wanted a hidey-hole, haven't you? One that nobody else knew about. Don't you tell a single soul, not even the dog across the road! We don't want *him* coming here to hide his smelly old bones!"

The two of them heaved and scraped their way out of the strange hole, and then crawled under the thick blackberry bushes. At last they were in the open air once more. What a mess Jocko looked, his clothes torn, his face scratched, his hair on end. Jiminy hardly knew him!

"Whew!" said Jocko, looking down at himself. "I'd better clean myself up before Mother sees me! You look a bit peculiar too, Jiminy. You're covered in bits and pieces!"

They both looked very peculiar. Jocko brushed himself down as well as he could, and picked some of the biggest pieces of earth off his clothes. Then he remembered his spilt blackberries. Yes, they were still there on the ground. Good! The basket was there too. He began to pick up the blackberries when he thought he heard a noise. He ran to hide, and a cheery voice hailed him.

"Jocko! Where on earth have you been? We've looked everywhere for you. My word, you're in a mess!"



BOBBY HELPED JOCKO TO PICK UP THE SPILT BLACKBERRIES

It was Bobby, peering through the hedge. He scabbled right through and began to help Jocko to pick up the spilt blackberries. “My mother gave me two shillings for my blackberries,” he said. “What a pity you spilt yours, some of them are a bit messy.”

“Bobby,” began Jocko, solemnly. “I’ve got news for you. Exciting news. I’ve discovered a . . .”

“Bobby! Where are you? Mother says come at once because Auntie Eleanor’s here!” someone suddenly cried from the other side of the hedge. It was Betty. “Do buck up. I’ve been looking for you everywhere! BOBBY!”

“I’m telling Bobby something—something secret and important,” said Jocko, crossly. “I’ve discovered a hidey-hole, a very very curious hidey-hole. It’s right under the blackberry bushes. It’s really rather mysterious, and . . .”

“It’ll have to wait till tomorrow!” said Betty. “I bet it isn’t much of a hole, anyway. Bobby, do come!”

Bobby went off with Betty. Jocko was very disappointed. He had so very much wanted to talk about the hidey-hole he had found. They could have such fun with it! They could make shelves in it and put their books there. They could have a little larder. They could sit down there on wet days, perfectly dry, and nobody in the world would know where they were.

And now there was no one to tell. He picked up Jiminy, and hugged him.

“It’s *our* hidey-hole, Jiminy, yours and mine,” he said. “And if the others don’t want to hear about it, all right we won’t tell them. See?”

“Wuff-wuff-wuff!” said Jiminy, quite agreeing, wagging his little tail as fast as he could.

“Right. Now we’ll finish picking up the blackberries and take them to Mother,” said Jocko. “But don’t say a word to her about the Hidey-Hole, will you, Jiminy? NOT—ONE—SINGLE—WORD!”

BURGLARS!

Jocko took his blackberries indoors to his mother. They had been lying on the grass for some time, and didn't look as nice and fresh as they had when they were first picked.

"You could have picked better ones than these, surely, Jocko," said his mother. "These are a bit squishy. I'll give you eightpence for them, and if you like to pick me better ones, I'll make it a shilling."

"I feel a bit tired, Mother," said Jocko. "I've had an awfully exciting time. I'll pick you lots more tomorrow."

"Where have you been to get so tired?" asked his mother. "I heard Betty and Bobby calling for you."

"I've been down at the end of the garden, Mother, over the hedge," said Jocko. He didn't say anything about his hidey-hole. That was his very own secret.

"Would you like to run down to the grocer's for me and fetch some butter?" asked Mother. "That will earn you threepence more to take to Miss Allen. Or are you too tired?"

"Oh, the grocer's isn't far," said Jocko, cheering up. "I really must take something to school for Miss Allen's tricycle fund, mustn't I?"

"Yes. I think you must," said his mother. "I know you really *do* want to help poor William, and how he will LOVE a tricycle!"

"I'll go for the butter now," said Jocko. "Come here, Jiminy, I'll put you on the lead. I'm not going to have you scampering across the busy roads. And just remember this—when I say HEEL, you come to walk just behind me. This is my HEEL, just here, see."

"Wuff!" said Jiminy, and gave Jocko's heel a loving lick. Then he trotted off with him, waving his tail proudly. Ah, it wasn't everyone who had a fine little master like his Jocko!

Quite a lot of the schoolchildren were busy that week-end. Many of them picked blackberries to sell to Miss Allen or to the shops. Some ran errands. Some helped their fathers in the garden. Two girls cleaned out the garden shed for their father, and one boy cleaned his mother's bicycle. There was a nice lot of money being saved up for that little tricycle!

Jocko saw hardly anything of Bobby and Betty—and oh, how he *longed* to take them down to his hidey-hole! But before the week-end was out, there was another excitement for everyone!

“Have you heard?” called Bobby over the fence to Jocko. “That cross old man at the end of the garden had burglars last night! Fancy that! Did your Jiminy bark?”

“Well no, he didn’t,” said Jocko. “You see, the end of our garden is rather far away, and the old man’s house is farther still, right at the top of his garden. You couldn’t expect Jiminy to hear anything, really.”

“One burglar has been caught already!” shouted Betty, over the fence. “But the second one escaped.”

“What did they steal?” asked Jocko, who was now listening eagerly by the fence.

“Oh, lovely things! A pair of big, real silver goblets—a very very old sword belonging to the old man’s father—and a gold clock that chimes—and some silver candlesticks, and . . . oh, lots more things! But the police couldn’t find any of them in the man’s house. And there’s an ENORMOUS reward offered for all the stolen things. Oh, I WISH I could find them, and win the reward, I’d buy a bicycle, and a . . .”

“It’s said that the robbers hid the things somewhere in Whispering Wood,” said Bobby, trying to get a word in. “They were seen there yesterday. Betty and I are going to hunt about in the wood. Fancy winning a *reward*, wouldn’t it be exciting!”

“I think I’ll hunt there too,” said Jocko. “I know where quite a lot of hollow trees are. That’s the kind of place robbers use for hiding-places.”

“Good idea!” said Betty. “We’ll all go together, shall we? You and I and Bobby. What fun!”

And so that afternoon the three of them met together near Whispering Wood, no, four of them, because Jiminy was there, of course, his tail wagging nineteen to the dozen. He was very proud to be with the children, and to go on a robber-hunt. His tail wagged without stopping, and he pranced ahead as if he were the leader of the little party!

“There’s a hollow tree over there, the hole is halfway up the trunk,” said Jocko. “I’ll shin up, if you’ll help me, Bobby.”



THERE WAS NOTHING BUT AN OLD BIRD'S NEST IN THE TREE

But there was nothing but an old bird's nest in the tree. Very disappointing. There was nothing at all in the next hollow tree that Jocko led them to, not even a nest. After that he forgot where the other hollow trees were, and they all wasted a lot of time looking for holes that weren't there!

Jiminy hunted about too, but his holes were rabbit-holes! He went so far down one hole that the children were really scared that he was lost down there forever! But he scabbled back at last, coming tail first, because there wasn't room for him to turn. He was astonished and very pleased at the way the children fussed him when at last he appeared!

"Oh, Jiminy, I thought you'd gone down to the middle of the Earth!" said Betty, almost in tears. "Please don't disappear like that again. Jocko, I'm *tired* of looking for the stolen things. Let's go home to tea."

So off they went, disappointed that they hadn't been able to find the stolen goods and win the reward. Perhaps Jiminy knew best, perhaps they *were* down a rabbit-hole!

DOWN THE HIDEY-HOLE AGAIN—AND A LITTLE SURPRISE!

Jocko hadn't said a single word to anyone about his hidey-hole, but he talked about it quite a lot to Jiminy. Jiminy was a lovely dog to talk to, he sat absolutely still, head on one side, and listened.

"It can be our own private little home, Jiminy," said Jocko. "We'll go there if ever anything horrid happens, when Daddy's cross with us, for instance. We could go and slide down into that hidey-hole and stay there till any trouble was over. Jiminy, shall I take a bone or two down there for you? And I might take a few biscuits, and some peppermints and chocolate for myself. Ha! The others don't know what they're missing! Serve them right being in too much of a hurry to listen to the most exciting news I've ever had!"

"Wuff!" said Jiminy, and cuddled as near to Jocko as he could. He loved Jocko with all his doggy heart. He thought that a hidey-hole for biscuits was a very good idea indeed.

It took Jocko a day or two to save up some biscuits. He bought a bottle of lemonade too to take down to the hidey-hole. "There's a cup already there," he told the listening puppy. "Goodness knows whose it is, it probably belonged to some boy or girl who lived in the old man's house before he came and who found the hidey-hole just like I did. Now don't you dare to tell any of your doggy friends about our hidey-hole!"

Betty and Bobby were cross with Jocko because he wouldn't say a single word to them about his secret.

"No, you wouldn't listen when I *wanted* to tell you, and now I *shan't* tell you!" he said. "It's my secret and Jiminy's, the most exciting secret we've ever had!"

"Well, we know it's a hidey-hole somewhere," said Bobby, "I bet we find it, Betty and I!"

"I bet you don't!" said Jocko. He made up his mind to take the biscuits and the lemonade down to the hidey-hole that evening. Betty and Bobby wouldn't be about then. So, after tea, he and Jiminy went down to the hedge at the bottom of the garden, Jocko carrying the biscuits and lemonade, and Jiminy carrying in his mouth a small bag of his own biscuits. He felt most important.

They squeezed through the hedge, and went through the great blackberry bushes. "Now don't make a sound, Jiminy!" whispered Jocko. "You know

the way, don't you, under that bush just there. Quiet now!"

And soon they had both slipped down into the big, dark hidey-hole, and Jocko had switched on the little torch he always had in his pocket. Good GRACIOUS! What was this big sheet of paper doing, lying on the floor of the hole? He read it quickly. In big letters was written:

“Ha Ha! We found your hidey-hole! Thanks for telling us where it was! We'd like to share it with you. Bobby and Betty.”

Jocko tore up the sheet of paper, feeling cross. Then he grinned. “Oh well, Jiminy, if they know where our hidey-hole is, they might as well share it. It's silly to quarrel, isn't it? Come on, let's go and find them. Hallo, what's this in the corner? It wasn't here last time we were in the hole, Jiminy. A pencil, look—a silver one, too. Bobby must have dropped it. He had one, I know!”

Jocko picked up the neat little pencil and slipped it into his pocket. Then he and Jiminy made their way out of the hidey-hole, crawled under the prickly bushes and were soon through the hedge and into their own garden again.

Jocko ran to the fence that separated his garden from Bobby's and Betty's. He could hear them playing in their own garden. He looked over the fence and called to them.

“Hey! You've been down my hidey-hole! What do you think of it?”

Bobby and Betty ran over to him, glad that he wasn't cross. “It's smashing!” said Bobby. “Big as anything! Let's play smugglers down there.”

“Yes, and take lots to eat and drink and have underground picnics!” said Betty. “Jocko, who do you think used that hole, children who came to stay at that big house, where the old man lives?”

“Well, I never thought of that,” said Jocko frowning. “Yes, I expect that's who used it. Children like us. They left a cup there, a knife, and a newspaper. I've got them all. Goodness, I hope the hole still doesn't belong to them. Perhaps they are the grand-children of that cross old man, and come to stay with him sometimes!”

“We could easily find out,” said Bobby.

“I say, you dropped something in the hole when you were down there, Bobby,” said Jocko, scrabbling in his pocket for the little pencil he had found. “Your silver pencil, look. Jolly careless of you!”



“IT’S NOT MINE!” SAID BOBBY

“It’s not mine!” said Bobby, examining it. “Mine’s here, in my pocket, it’s a bit bigger than the one you found.”

“*Well!* Who’s been down that hidey-hole besides you and Jiminy and me?” said Jocko, amazed. “This pencil wasn’t there the last time *I* was there, I’m sure of that. I’d have seen it. You’re SURE it’s not yours, Bobby?”

“No, here’s mine, look! And anyway the one you found has initials on it that aren’t mine, see P.L.M. P. might stand for Peter, or Paul, or Patrick but it doesn’t stand for Bobby! This belongs to someone who knows that hidey-hole and uses it, Jocko.”

“But—but WHO would use a hidey-hole like that at the bottom of someone’s garden, hidden under big bushes?” said Betty, amazed. “And what for? It’s a mystery and do you know what? WE are going to solve it! Who uses that hidey-hole—and why—and when! I SAY! This is exciting, isn’t it?”

It is, Betty. VERY—VERY—Exciting!

A THRILLING PLAN

The three children were very thrilled about their secret. They decided to visit the Hidey-Hole and talk about it there. Soon they were all down the hole, lighted rather dimly by Jocko's torch.

"We won't tell *anyone!*" said Betty. "This is our own secret, our own mystery, and I vote we try to find out everything ourselves."

"Well, how can we find out who sits down here in this dark hidey-hole, and writes with a silver pencil?" asked Jocko. "Somebody quite mad, I should think. I bet he used my torch!"

"And *when* does he sit here?" said Betty. "He'd be seen going down here, surely?"

"It can't be that poor old man in his wheel-chair," said Jocko. "And I shouldn't think it would be the cross maid-servant. She may be cross, but she always looks very very clean and tidy. I can't see her getting down into this dirty dark hole!"

"Well, nobody *else* lives at that house," said Betty. "Anyway, it's got to be somebody who *knows* there's a hidey-hole under the bushes, and I really shouldn't think many people know about that. Nobody could possibly guess there was a great big hidey-hole here unless he'd scabbled underneath, like we did, and found it. And honestly, nobody but children would do that. Grown-ups would be too careful of their clothes to crawl about like that."

"Do you think it's some boy or girl that's been hiding in the hidey-hole for some reason? Perhaps somebody who ran away from home? Or perhaps a tramp who wanted shelter last night, and left his pencil behind?" said Jocko.

"I vote we take our torches and come down here ourselves tonight, when it's dark, and see if there's anyone in our hidey-hole then," said Betty. "If they had a torch switched on, we'd see a light, and we could challenge them!"

This all sounded very exciting. Jiminy gave a little bark as if to say "Good idea! I'll come too!"

"Well, let's arrange to do that, then," said Jocko. "Can you two creep out without anyone seeing you? I can easily, and anyway I usually take Jiminy out for a run before I go to bed. If there's any news to report, I'll come and tell you!"

“Right!” said Bobby. “You know, this is quite an adventure, this hidey-hole. Let’s have something to eat, shall we? We’ve some sweets, look, and a bar of chocolate. We’ll share. Adventures make you hungry, don’t they?”

“I’ve some lemonade and biscuits and some toffees somewhere,” said Jocko taking a whole mess of things out of his pocket. He picked a sticky bag of toffee from the mess. Jiminy at once sat up and begged.

“No, Jiminy. You know quite well what happens when you have toffee,” said Jocko, handing the others one each.

“What happens?” asked Bobby.

“Oh, his teeth get stuck together, and that frightens him, and he tears round and round trying to open his mouth and he can’t!” said Jocko. “He nearly goes mad. So does Mother, when he acts like that! So we don’t give him toffees any more, but he’d like a bit of chocolate, I expect.”

So Jiminy had a piece of Bobby’s chocolate bar, and swallowed it whole almost at once.

“What a waste!” said Jocko. “I don’t believe he could even have *tasted* it. Now what are our plans?”

“Do let’s creep through the hedge when it’s dark tonight and see if there’s a light shining from the hidey-hole!” said Betty.

“What shall we do if there is?” said Jocko.

“I don’t know. Peep and see who’s there, and then run for our lives!” said Betty, with a giggle. “We’ll have Jiminy with us, won’t we? He’ll scare whoever’s there. Anyway, do let’s come and have a *look*. Though I expect the hole will be dark and empty, except for a few worms and a spider or two!”

“All right. We’ll all creep through the hedge tonight, and have a peep,” said Jocko. “I bet we’ll be scared if we *do* see a light shining out from under the bushes!”

“Is that lemonade in that bottle beside you, Jocko?” said Bobby. “Let’s have some, shall we? I’m awfully thirsty. And you *did* say something about biscuits.”

“Yes, they’re in that hole just behind your head,” said Jocko. “Hand them out. There’s a cup in another hole we can use for the lemonade. I’d love to know who uses those holes! I found that silver pencil on the floor, though, so someone must have dropped it, and never noticed!”



IT FELT VERY EXCITING TO SIT IN SUCH A WONDERFUL HIDEY-HOLE

Soon they were eating biscuits and drinking lemonade. Everything tasted delicious, and it felt very exciting to sit hidden in such a wonderful hidey-hole where nobody, *nobody* could see them!

"It's getting a bit late," said Jocko, at last. "I think we'd better go now, in case our people yell for us. Now listen, it will be easy for me to slip out because, as I said, I always take Jiminy for a run before I go to bed. I'll be out here about half-past seven, see? Will that be all right for you?"

"Yes. We'll manage that," said Bobby. "Or I will, anyway. Betty sometimes has her bath first, if so I'll have to come alone, because she'll go early. Can you hoot like an owl, Jocko?"

"Yes. Listen!" said Jocko, and gave a wonderful imitation of an owl hooting. "When you hear that noise, come and join me. Very quietly, though."

"Right," said Bobby, thrilled to think of going out into the night, when he heard the hoot of an owl from the garden. "Come on Betty, we really **MUST** go! See you later, Jocko. Hope we have an adventure, don't you?"

Oh, you'll have an adventure all right, Bobby! No doubt about that! Hurry back home now with Betty. There is hot toast waiting for you, and strawberry jam, and your mother is getting worried.

So Betty and Bobby went through the hedge into their garden, and raced up to their house. Jocko squeezed through into *his* garden, with Jiminy sniffing at his heels. He couldn't help feeling excited. Suppose he *did* see a light in that hidey-hole? Whatever should he do?

OH, WHAT AN EXCITEMENT!

Jocko felt very excited after he had had his tea. If only it would hurry up and get dark! He was so longing to go down and see if anyone was in their hidey-hole! Jiminy sensed his excitement, and kept whining and pawing at Jocko, as if to say, "Do let's get on with our adventure!"

"You'd better take Jiminy for a run, Jocko," said his mother at last, and Jocko jumped up at once.

"Right, Mother!" he said, and tore out of the room with Jiminy at his heels. Then Jocko caught hold of Jimmy's collar. "Now listen, no more barks or whines. Sh! I'm going to hoot like an owl, to tell Betty and Bobby we're waiting for them!"

And Jiminy was at once quiet, of course. Jocko put his two half-closed hands up to his mouth, and drew in a deep breath. Then making a loud 'Ooooooooooh' sound in his throat, he blew with all his might into his hands—and a loud and lovely owl-hoot came from them! "Ooooooooooh! Ooooh-oooh-oooh-OOOOOOH!"

It was so like an owl's hoot that Jiminy looked round and about for the owl! Jocko waited half a minute and then hooted again. "Ooooooooooh! Ooooh-oooh-oooh-OOOOOOH!"

The two children in the next-door house were on the watch for the hooting, and as soon as they heard it they went quietly to the back door, and slipped out into the half-dark. Over the fence they went and into Jocko's garden, then down to join him. Jiminy gave a small whine of welcome.

"Hallo!" whispered Jocko. "You weren't long in coming. We'll get through the hedge into the old man's garden now, but for goodness' sake don't make any noise just in *case* somebody's in the hidey-hole."

So, very quietly, the four of them crept through the hedge, and went over to the big shadowy blackberry bushes. Jiminy gave a very very small growl. Jocko stopped at once. What had Jiminy heard? He went a step or two further, and then his heart began to beat fast. There was a light shining dimly under the bush where the hidey-hole was—yes, there really *was*!



THERE WAS A LIGHT SHINING DIMLY UNDER THE BUSH

There were quiet voices too, talking down in the hole. Then there came a scabbling noise of somebody trying to climb out of the hole—two people, one with a torch. Jocko crouched behind his bush, hardly daring to breathe. The others kept absolutely still too.

Two men were now crawling out from the hidey-hole under the big prickly bushes, their torch still on. One of them hissed to the other.

“Quiet now! Straight up the garden and out the back way!”

And the two men vanished very quickly indeed up the old man’s garden, hardly making a sound!

As soon as they were safely gone, the three children with Jiminy at their heels, went right up to the hidey-hole. “Let’s wait for a minute,” whispered Jocko. “To make sure those men really have gone! One of them we’ve seen before but the other we haven’t.”

They crouched down, waiting, listening to their fast-beating hearts.

Jocko spoke again, in a low voice. “I think it’s all right now. They must have gone right up the old man’s garden and out by the back way.”

“Whatever were they doing down in our hidey-hole?” said Bobby, half frightened and half thrilled.

“That’s what we’ll find out!” said Jocko. “Jiminy, stay here and guard us while we’re down the hole. Come on, Bobby and Betty!”

By the light of Jocko’s torch they all slithered down into the hole. Jocko shone the torch round as soon as they were safely there.

“WHEW! Look at *that!*” he said, as the light of his torch gleamed brightly on something in a corner. “And *that!*”

“*Candlesticks!* Silver candlesticks! And I say, LOOK at this great old sword! And what are those cup-things, how they shine!”

“Silver goblets,” said Betty, picking one up and nearly dropping it. “Goodness, it’s heavy!”

“Ding-dong-ding-dong—ding-dong-ding-dong!” Good gracious, whatever was making *that* noise?

“It’s that clock over there—do you remember, a chiming clock was stolen too!” said Jocko, picking it up. “What a little beauty! Whatever do we do now?”

“We take *everything* back home, sword and all,” said Bobby. “In case those fellows come back here for anything. As soon as they find anyone who will buy these things, they’ll be back like a shot.”

“It was they who dropped that silver pencil I found, of course,” said Jocko. “And hid that cup, and that newspaper. They must have used this hole as a hiding-place for themselves while they waited for a chance to slip up into the old man’s house and take what they wanted.”

“And then they thought they would use the hole as a hiding-place for the goods they had stolen!” said Bobby. “I suppose they put the things in a shed or under a bush for the time being, this silver goblet has some old leaves inside it, look!”

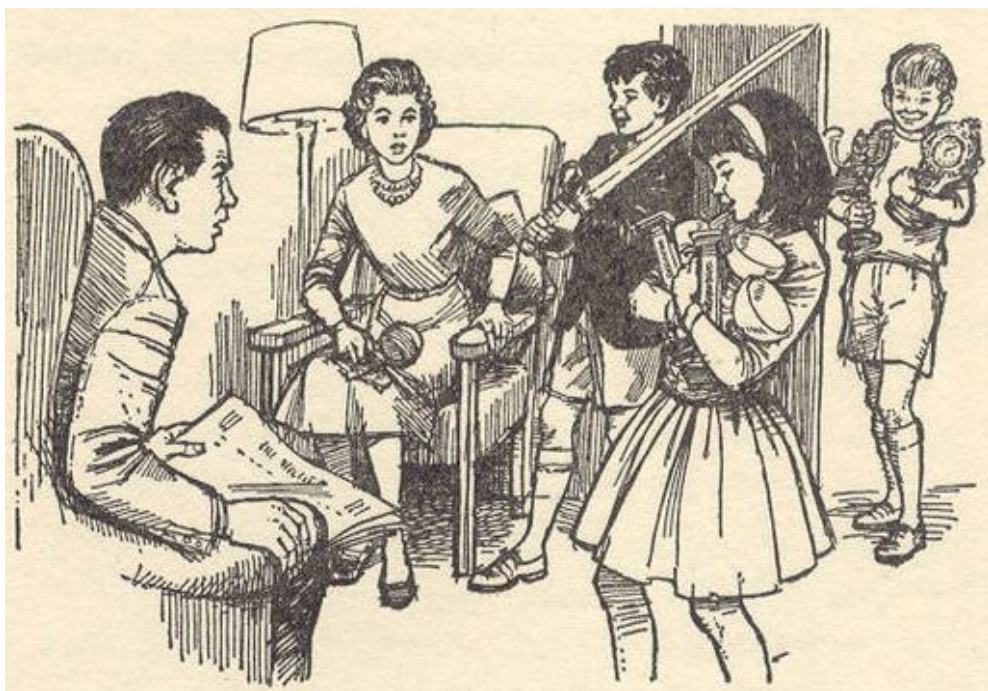
“Let’s not stay here any longer,” said Betty. “Those men might come back! I feel scared. Let’s carry everything back to our house—or your house, Jocko.”

“We can’t possibly carry *everything!*” said Jocko. He lifted up an old cloth lying on the ground. “Look—there are more things here—silver forks and spoons, and . . .”

“We *can* take everything between us!” said Bobby, picking up the two goblets. “Come on. We’ll go to my house. I know my parents are at home. They’ll know exactly what to do.”

So off went the four of them, Bobby, Betty, Jocko and Jiminy, carrying the stolen goods between them. What a weight they were!

And how astounded Bobby’s parents were when the children came staggering in with such a load! They leapt up from their chairs in amazement.



“CHILDREN! WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?”

“Children! What HAVE you got? What in the world is all this?” they cried.

“It’s the things that were stolen from that old man’s house at the bottom of our garden,” panted Bobby. The children put them all down on the floor, and stood beaming at the two astonished grown-ups.

“But children! These are very very valuable, they are the old man’s treasures!” said Bobby’s mother, picking up the clock. “And listen—there’s a big reward offered for anyone who finds them—a very—big—reward—and you’ll get it between you, bless you. Well, well—what an excitement!”

Yes, WHAT an excitement. No wonder Jiminy is almost barking his head off!

A VERY HAPPY ENDING

The next few days were really very exciting indeed. The police came, of course, and examined all the things the children had found in their hidey-hole. They had a list with them, and ticked off the things one by one.

“There is a reward of fifty pounds, Ma’am,” said one of the policemen. “I should reckon that it will be split into three, as these three children found the goods.”

“Now we can buy an absolutely *smashing* tricycle for William!” said Jocko, at once.

“You could have one specially made for him,” said his mother. “One that would help his poor old legs much better than an ordinary tricycle.”

“Well, I vote we do that with the money,” said Betty, and Bobby nodded his head at once. “I only wish we could buy him new *legs*!” he said.

“Don’t *you* want any of the reward?” asked one of the policemen in surprise, looking at the three children.

“Well, if there’s any left after we’ve paid for William’s tricycle to be made, there might be some left for some bones for Jiminy,” said Jocko, patting the little puppy. “He helped too, you know.”

“Oh, we shall see that Jiminy gets his bones, and I shouldn’t be surprised if there’s something for each of you kids too,” said the policeman, smiling. “I’d like to see this hidey-hole of yours. It sounds like a useful thing to have!”

So down the garden they all went. The police didn’t much like scabbling under the blackberry bushes, but they managed to peep into the hidey-hole.



“VERY FINE HIDEY-HOLE INDEED”

“Very fine hidey-hole indeed,” said one. “Good thing you found it, if you hadn’t those thieves would have hidden their goods here in safety until they could fetch them and sell them!”

“Hey, hey, hey, what are you all doing down in my garden!” suddenly cried a very angry voice—and oh dear, there was the cross old man in his wheel-chair, waving his stick at them. HOW surprised he looked to see so many children, *and* two policemen in his garden!

“Good morning, sir,” said one policeman, politely. “We were just coming up to your house with good news for you. These children here found most of your stolen belongings hidden in this hole, and we’ve got them all at their house, ready for you.”

“Well, well, well, what wonderful news!” said the old man beaming all over his face. “But what about the thieves? I hope you’ve caught *them*!”

“Not yet, sir. But we shall,” said the policeman, smiling. “They don’t know that these children found the stolen goods and they’ll come to fetch them, no doubt of that. And when they come stealing back in the night and slide down into the hidey-hole, they’ll find something else instead of the things they stole. They’ll find half a dozen stout policemen waiting for them, hidden in these bushes around. Ha—those thieves will be caught all right, sir!”

That night the children lay in bed and wondered if the police were hiding down in their garden, waiting for the thieves. What an exciting time this was! The children had handed over to the police everything they had found in the hidey-hole, the silver pencil, the cup, the newspaper, the knife—and how delighted the police were!

“Look at this!” said one, handing the newspaper to another. “See that name written at the top—that’s where the paper was delivered to—that’s the address of *one* of the men! And look at the initials on this pencil! P-L-M! It looks as if it might belong to that fellow who came out of prison last month—Peter Leslie Marlow. And as for these keys, they must be the ones stolen last month, when the thieves got into Colonel Johns’ house by unlocking the front door. They fit the description of his keys exactly. He’ll be glad to have them back!”

“Fancy that silver pencil I found being of help to the police!” said Jocko. “I think when I grow up *I’ll* be a policeman. It must be a *very* exciting life!”

“Well, it seems to me that you children have quite an exciting time too!” said the big policeman, with a smile. “Now—we’ll be going. We’ll see that you get the reward safely. Good-bye, and good luck!”

The reward arrived the very next day, addressed to Jocko. He gave the cheque proudly to his father. “Will you change it into money for us, so that we can see about William’s tricycle straightaway?” he said. “Our teacher and William’s father and William, are going to a place that makes special tricycles for children whose legs aren’t strong. But we shall need nearly all the reward to pay for it.”

“Splendid!” said his father. “I’m proud of you all. Don’t forget to take some of the reward for Jiminy. I think he could do with a new collar, as well as a good supply of bones!”

“Wuff!” said Jiminy at once, wagging his tail very fast indeed.

And how I wish you could see Jiminy with his lovely new collar, and William with his magnificent tricycle, which is just the right size for him. You should see his legs too, they are growing as sturdy as Jocko’s. And what did the three children have? Well, the police gave them a fine whistle each—*just* like a police whistle, but smaller.

“To blow when you find any more mysteries that need our help!” said the big policeman who presented the whistles to the delighted children. “Or to lend to your sports’ teachers at football or lacrosse games! They’d be glad of them, I’m sure!”



They certainly are fine whistles. I hear them being blown very loudly indeed when any of the three wants to meet the others down in that exciting hidey-hole. And I think—"Dear me! Have they found *another* mystery to solve?" If they have, I must certainly put it into another story for you!

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.
[The end of *The Hidey-Hole* by Enid Blyton]