

READING

Elementary

Dears, last week we started to read 'Sherlock Holmes Investigates' by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Here we can continue.

Sherlock Holmes Investigates

The adventure of the speckled band.

"My dear lady," said Sherlock Holmes "I work because I like to work; but you can pay me any money I must spend to help you, but you can pay me when you want to to. But now please tell us everything".

"Oh dear!" said our visitor, "the terrible thing is that I do not know why I am afraid, I worry about small things, and I do not think that other people will think they are very important. Even my special friend, who I want to ask for help and advice thinks that my problem is not important. He does not say that, I know that he thinks this. Mr Holmes you must tell me what to do."

"I will do everything I can," said Holmes.

The young lady was happy because Holmes wanted to help her. Now she told us why she wanted to see us that morning.

Our visitor began her story.

"I am Helen Steiner. I live with my stepfather. He is the last of a very old family, the Royslotts."

Holmes said "I know that name."

"The family was once very rich. It owned many houses and farms. But then some of the children wasted the money, and their children did too. In one hundred years, all the family's money was gone. Nothing was left except some land and the old house. The last squire, my stepfather's father, lived in the old house, and he was very poor. My stepfather decided to change. He borrowed some money and became a doctor. He went to India. Because he was a good doctor, and because he worked very hard, he was successful. But he had a very bad temper. One day he killed a servant, because he thought the servant was a thief. He went to prison for a long time. After many years he came back to England. But he was not a happy person, and he was often angry and upset.

When Dr Roylott was in India he married my mother. My mother was married before, and she had two daughters. They were my sister Julia and I. We were twins, and we were two years old when my mother married again. We went back to England. Eight years ago my mother died. She was quite rich, and her money all went to our stepfather, Dr Roylott. The money was for us too. If we were married, we would have some of the money every year.

When my mother died, my stepfather did not want to be a doctor in London. So we went to the old house of his family in the village of Stoke Moran. We had enough money for everything, and I told my sister "we will be very happy".

But our stepfather changed. He did not make friends with our neighbours, and he did not visit them. But he stayed in the house and did not come out often. When he did come out, he was in a bad temper, and he had terrible fights with everyone he met.



'Last week he threw a man into the river. I gave the man a lot of money, because we did not want any trouble. This happens all the time. My step-father often has trouble with the police. He has no friends, and sometimes he goes away for many weeks. He likes Indian animals very much. He has a cheetah and a baboon. They are allowed to go where they want to, and the people of the village are very scared of them.

You can see that I and my sister Julia were not happy. Because my step-father scared away all the servants, we did all the work in the house. My sister was thirty when she died, but already her hair was becoming white, just like mine is.'

'Is your sister dead?' Holmes asked.

'She died two years ago. That is why I have come to talk to you. My sister and I did not often meet other people. But Julia once went to visit an aunt for Christmas. She met a soldier and he wanted to marry her. Our step-father did not say no, but two weeks before the wedding, a terrible thing happened. My sister, who was my only friend, died.'

TO BE CONTINUED

Source: <http://www.english-online.org.uk/reading/elementread.htm>

Intermediate

Last week you continued reading Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift. I am using the Oxford Bookworms Library Green Series, Adaptations of classic and modern stories for younger readers. In this Library Gulliver's Travels is classified as stage 4 (of the 6 stages), which means approximately 1400 headwords, ideal for intermediate learners. The story is retold by Clare West and is divided into 12 chapters. Today you are going to read the second part of the fifth chapter. After the last chapter you will be given a glossary.

CHAPTER FIVE – PART TWO

A VOYAGE TO BROBDINGNAG

When I returned, to my astonishment, I saw that the sailors were already in the boat. They were rowing as fast as they could towards the ship! I was going to shout to tell them they had forgotten me, when suddenly I saw a huge creature walking after them into the sea. I realized he could not catch them, because they had nearly got to the ship, but I did not wait to see the end of that adventure. I ran away from him as fast as possible, and did not stop until I found myself in some fields. The grass was about seven metres high, and the corn about thirteen metres high. It took me an hour to cross just one field, which had a hedge at least forty metres high. The trees were much taller than that. Just as I was trying to find a hole in the hedge, so that I could get into the next field, I saw another giant coming towards me. He seemed as tall as a mountain, and every one of his steps measured about ten metres.

In fear and astonishment I hid in the corn, and hoped he would not notice me. He shouted in a voice like thunder, and seven other giants appeared. They seemed to be his servants. When he gave the order, they began to cut the corn in the field where I was hiding. As they moved towards me, I moved away, but at last I came to a part of the field where rain had knocked down the corn. There was no longer anywhere for me to hide, and I knew I would be cut to pieces by the giants'



sharp knives. I lay down and prepared to die. I could not stop myself thinking of Lilliput. There, I myself had been a giant, an important person who had become famous for helping the people of that small country. Here, it was the opposite. I was like a Lilliputian in Europe, and I began to understand how a very small creature feels.

Suddenly I noticed that one of the giants was very close to me. As his huge foot rose over my head, I screamed as loudly as I could. He looked around on the ground, and finally saw me. He stared at me for a moment, then very carefully, he picked me up with finger and thumb and looked at me. I was now twenty metres up in the air, and I desperately hoped he would not decide to throw me to the ground. I did not struggle, and spoke politely to him, although I knew he did not understand any of my languages. He took me to the farmer, who soon realized that I was not an animal, but an intelligent being. He carefully put me in his pocket and took me home to show to his wife. When she saw me, she screamed and jumped back in fear, perhaps thinking I was an insect. But in a little while she became used to me, and was very kind to me.

TO BE CONTINUED

Advanced

BLUE GUM TREE

A short story from New Zealand, by Pat Boyle

It was a week night, we were a half dozen guys in our late teens, hanging around 'the flat' - as usual. The flat was sparsely furnished, a few old chairs in the lounge, plenty of chrome and formica in the kitchen, a mattress on the floor of each bedroom. The only thing of any real value in the place was "The Stereo". Like a shrine we would kneel before it, changing records, or adjusting the tone controls. After a time, even this most holy of appliances grew tiresome. We wanted action.

We got in the car - a big white Valiant, big enough for all of us to crowd in to - and off we went, in search of adventure. We soon found ourselves at Blue Gum Corner, a place named after the lone huge old blue gum tree that stood by there, a well-known local landmark. It stands at a minor intersection leading to our town. The trunk is tall and smooth with no handholds for climbing. About six metres from the ground the first branch sticks out over the road.

We parked beneath the huge old tree and discussed what we might do. It was decided that we would use the towrope from the car to try to climb it. I stood upon the roof of the car and threw the rope over the lowest branch, tied it off, and gave it a good tug. One of the guys remarked how the loop at the bottom end of the rope looked like a noose - used for hanging. All at once the young thrill-seekers hatched an idea - we would fake a hanging! I was nominated as 'hangee'.

The plan was absurdly simple. As I stood upon the roof of the car, the rope was threaded down my jacket through my collar and down one leg of my jeans. I put my foot through the loop at the bottom and the car was driven away and hidden down the road. There I hung, motionless. The boys rolled about laughing until, A car, I hear a car! Before they ran to hide, they gave me a good shove so that 'the body' would swing as the car drove by.

To our collective disappointment, the car simply turned off for town without even slowing. The boys came out of their hiding places and we discussed the situation, surely they had seen me, hadn't they? Then we heard another car, the act was repeated, but still without any apparent reaction. We played the game about five or six times, but as no one seemed to notice, we abandoned the prank.



What we did not know was that every car that had passed had definitely seen 'the body' and each one, too scared to stop, had driven directly to the local Police Station. Now at that time of the night, the local constable was well tucked up in his bed, so the first person dispatched to the scene was the traffic officer that happened to be on duty that particular night.

The traffic officer that arrived on the scene that night was typical of his kind; moustached, timid, and not the smartest person in town.

Hearing the siren before we saw the car, we had plenty of time to run and hide in the field beside the tree. I finally felt that familiar mix of fear and excitement we had been striving for all night.

The traffic officer, always the professional, began scanning the area with his spotlight; as soon as the light was off any one of us, we would begin to crawl away. The resulting rustling and scuttling sounds would cause the light to be turned on the spot any noise emanated from, the crawler instantly freezing. As this would happen another would-be Houdini from our group would begin his escape on the other side of the field. The poor traffic officer ended up darting his light back and forth all over the paddock chasing some invisible, suicidal lunatic.

It may be useful for me to elucidate on the thinking of the officer at this time. He had been informed that some person had been killed, by hanging, at Blue Gum Corner. When he arrived, the body was gone! and he was hearing 'unnatural sounds' from the surrounding area. As far as he knew, some crazed monster was lurking around in the field before him, possibly dragging a corpse behind him - and we thought we were scared!

One of the boys, I had no idea which, had made it to a fence. When the spotlight was off him, he had started to climb it. Now when you climb an eight-wire farm fence, the wires tend to create a screeching noise; this caused the cop to just about jump out of his black boots! He fumbled for his torch then ran off down the road towards the sound. He got about half way then slowed and stopped, thinking better of it he ran back to the car calling, Get the dog Kevin, get the d - o - g! We all knew he was completely alone, so this only resulted in a few giggles from the field.

The cop kept looking nervously at his watch, I figured he was probably waiting for back up from the local police officer. Once there were two of them, the chances of getting caught were going to be pretty high, so I figured I had better do my best to get out of there as soon as I could. Another screech from a fence on the far side of the field really upset our friend in the uniform. Once more he yelled, this time, I've got a gun! We well knew that in those days traffic officers were not even issued with a baton.

He went to his radio and made a call that really began to worry us. I lay so close I could hear every word, he called for the armed offender squad and a dog team, better make it two, he had a serious situation at Blue Gum Corner. Then the police officer arrived. After a briefing from the traffic cop he decided not to go into the field until armed squad and dog teams arrived. Now two spotlights were on the field and none of us could move.

By then, Keith had managed to make his way back to his car that was hidden at the gravel pit a few hundred meters away. As we lay in the field we heard his engine start, we heard the sound of gravel beneath his tyres, but the cops did not take their eyes off the field. As we lay in the now damp grass, we all knew it would be a long walk back into town!

As luck would have it, police cars cannot leave their spotlights on all night without flattening their batteries. So, after a time, the two cops began alternating their lighting of the field, allowing us the opportunity to resume our crawl for freedom. One by one, we all managed to slip off and make our



way home. Behind us we left what must have looked like a small city of lights, police cars, roadblocks, barking dogs, armed officers and an old towrope hanging from a tree.

When I think back to that night, to what the drivers of the cars think happened, what police believe happened, and to what happened from my perspective, I am reminded of a simple truth - our eyes perceive darkness and light, colour and movement, our ears detect only vibrations in the air. It is how we interpret these images that shapes our "reality".

WORDS:

gum tree - eucalyptus - hang round: pass the time - lounge: living room - shrine: holy place - holy: sacred - - appliance: machine - towrope: rope used for pulling something behind a car - tug: pull - noose: ring of rope - thrill-seekers: people looking for excitement - fake: imitate - shove: push - prank: game - constable: policeman - on duty: on service - strive: search - crawl! move on hands and knees - rustling and scuttling sounds: soft indistinguishable sounds - paddock: field - elucidate on: clarify - corpse: dead body - fumble: look - giggle: laugh - back up: support - issue with: provide with, give - squad: team - slip off: escape.

WORKSHEET

Blue Gum Tree

Using information: complete the dialogue:

Imagine that on the day following the events narrated in the story, the policeman had come knocking on Pat Boyle's door: Complete the dialogue as appropriate.

Policeman:.....

Pat: Why? I was here, in the flat!

Policeman:.....

Pat: Well, yes, we did go out for a bit!

Policeman:.....

Pat: Yes of course, we drove out of town.

Policeman:.....

Pat: Oh no, nothing at all.

Policeman:.....

Pat: Well no, I dont think so; but now you happen to mention it, I seem to remember that there was something there.

Policeman:.....

Pat: I don't know; but yes, I suppose it could have been.

Policeman:.....

Pat: Well we didn't think about it.

Policeman:.....

Pat: No, we drove right past.

Policeman:.....

Pat: Mine? In the field?..... Oh.... well I suppose it must have fallen out of the car when we stopped. Policeman:.....

Source: <http://linguapress.com/advanced/story-blue-gum-tree.htm>

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Originally published in Spectrum magazine.