

4

This School Is Driving Me Crazy

by Nat Hentoff

Sam, who is about 14 years old, is tired of the school he goes to. He always seems to be in trouble. It doesn't make life any easier that his father is principal (headmaster) of the school.

platform *perron*
 vigorously energetically
 punk "snothvalp"
 in'sert put
 dick (slang) *penis*
 frantically wildly
 mugger *voldsmand*
 swipe blow

The next morning, Sam and Benjy decided to take the subway to school. On the subway platform they were suddenly surrounded by six big kids.

"What school you go to?" one of them said, grinning coldly.

"PS 68," Sam said quickly. Benjy nodded vigorously.

"That's funny," the kid said. "You look like private-school punks with those blue jackets. Or maybe you're twins, huh?"

"Listen, man." Sam inserted the thumb of his left hand in his belt and made a fist in his right pocket.

"What you got in that pocket?" the older boy said as he and his companions moved closer to Sam and Benjy. "Is that a grapefruit or a stiff dick?"

All six of the bigger boys laughed.

"OK," their spokesman said, "hand it over. I want all the money both of you got."

Benjy was frantically digging into his shirt pocket when Sam started yelling, "HELP US KIDS! HELP US KIDS! MUGGERS! MUGGERS! PARENTS - HELP US KIDS!"

Three men, including a subway cop, rushed towards the clump of boys.

"You little bastard," the leader of the gang said as he took a swipe at Sam, who ducked. A woman behind them started bashing the older boy in the face with her handbag.



"POLICE! MURDER! HELP!" she screamed, battering the gang leader harder with each cry. He twisted away and jumped down on to the tracks as the other members of the gang sprinted up the subway stairs.

"You're a pretty generous kid," said Sam, grinning at Benjy. "Don't give the money until you have to."

"You are out of your mind," Benjy said, breathing heavily. "They could have killed us."

"No way," Sam said. "We're too young to die."

"You've got detention for the whole week?" asked Tim Rawlins, a skinny classmate. They had met at the entrance to the school that morning and were walking to their first class. He desperately wanted to tell Sam his own troubles, but thought that first he ought to show some interest in Sam's.

"Yeah," Sam said.

...
Coming along the corridor towards Sam and Rawlins were Fred Brompton, George Howes, and Bill Maguire, all seniors. Sam had never had any trouble with them, but he knew that Brompton, Howes, and Maguire were bullies and were scrimy besides. "Scrimy" was a special word between Sam, Benjy, and Blake. It meant, among other things, someone who smiles when he's about to bash you by surprise or who swears he wishes he could lend you a quarter and later, you see him take a fistful of change out of his pocket. Most of all, scrimy meant someone grown-ups say you ought to act like but who kids wish would fall down the nearest sewer and never come up. Scrimy Brompton, Howes, and Maguire were always like choirboys when a teacher was around, but Sam didn't trust them for a second.

"You just *know* what some people are like," Sam had once said to Benjy and Blake about Brompton, Howes and Maguire. "I bet you could have told right away what kind of kids those three were when they were two years old, in the sandbox. They probably grabbed everybody's pails and then kicked them in the face. That goes for Marty Brompton too, that scrimy Fred's big brother. So he's a big deal in the football team. But I've seen him bully little kids."

As Sam and Rawlins were about to pass the three older boys, the younger Brompton laid his hammy hand on Tim Rawlins' shoulder. "See you soon," he said. "Right?"

Biting his lip, Rawlins nodded.

"What's the matter?" Sam asked him as the three older boys

generous *gavmild*
de'tention *eftersidning*
bully someone who mobs
others
bash (slang) hit
quarter 25 cents
sewer *kloak*
choirboy *kordreng*
pail (sand) *spand*
a big deal important
hammy big and fat



moved down the corridor.

"Nothing." Rawlins bit his lip again.

"Say," Sam stopped. "What the hell is going on?"

There were tears in Rawlins' eyes. "Will you promise not to tell anyone?" he asked. "Not your father, not anyone?"

Sam agreed, although he hated making that kind of promise because, once made, it had to be kept, no matter what. It could be like having a big stone inside your chest. Like when he once promised a kid he hardly knew that he wouldn't tell anyone about his mother. They'd gone to the kid's house after school and found the mother so drunk she fell into a closet on the way to get them some cookies. Since that day, the kid had barely spoken to him, and Sam was still carrying around this thing that had nothing to do with him.

Tim Rawlins blinked, gulped, and his voice came out breaking. "They make me give them money."

"Those three horses' asses?"

Rawlins nodded. "A dollar for each of them twice a week. It's been going on for three weeks now. I got my allowance raised to three dollars, and now I tell my mother I need extra money for notebooks and class trips and things. But she's getting suspicious. And this morning - you swear you won't tell anybody about any of this?"

"Yeah," Sam said, looking around to see if anyone was coming. Damn, it's like *I* have something to hide, he thought, feeling sour inside.

"This morning" - Rawlins brought his teeth together hard to keep the dry heaves down - "I took five dollars from my father's wallet."

"For Christ's sake." Sam exploded. "Turn the bastards in. One thing I know about my father is that he'll kick them out on their asses."

"No," Rawlins said. "They'll beat the hell out of me if I tell."

"Oh, come on," Sam said, "that's a lot of crap. Once they're gone from this school, they're gone."

"No, no." Rawlins looked imploringly at Sam. "They told me that if I tell, then they got nothing to lose and they'll keep watching until I'm alone somewhere and then they'll tear me apart. They mean it, they really do. What am I going to do, Sam?"

"You've got to turn them in," Sam said. "They won't do anything to you once you tell, because that'll get them into a whole lot worse trouble than being expelled. If they tried anything like that, everybody would know who it was."

no matter *uanset*

closet (US) cupboard
(GB)

gulp *synke*

al'lowance pocket money

heave *stønnen, hulken*

turn someone in

anmelde

crap (slang) nonsense

im'plore *bønfalde*

ex'pel throw out of
school



"No," Rawlins said, shaking his head. "I can't take the chance, you don't know how mean they are. Look." Tim lifted his shirt and then his undershirt and Sam saw an ugly red line going across Rawlins' stomach. *shapira*

"A nail file," Tim said, hurriedly tucking in his clothes. "It hurt like hell."

"You can't just let this go on."

"That's why I told *you*," Rawlins said. "You're the one kid here who's not afraid of anything. Think of something, Sam, because I can't."

"I tell you." Sam was getting very annoyed. "All we have to do is go to my father."

"You promised!" Rawlins looked like he was going to cry.

"You promised you wouldn't tell anybody."

"Oh, Jesus," Sam said.

tuck in *proppe tilbage*

an'noyed angry

frankfurter sausage

1. What happens on the subway platform? How do you feel about the behaviour of the different boys? How would you have reacted?
2. When you have read the whole of part I, say why you think this story starts with what happens in the subway.
3. Explain what you understand by "*scrimy*". Why don't grown-ups see the truth – for example about the gang of seniors here?
4. What is Rawlins' story? How does Sam react?
5. Who is right about "turning them in" – Sam or Rawlins?
6. Characterise Sam. Build on to this characterisation as you read on.

II

"Have you any idea what's going on?" the headmaster asked Sam that night as he passed the frankfurters and beans.

"You mean the stealing in our room today?" Sam said.

"Yes, I mean the stealing, and not only in your room. A girl in one of the fifth-grade classes had a ten-dollar bill when she came to school this morning, and some thief has it now. You know I don't ask you questions about ordinary things that go wrong. I don't expect my son to be my eyes and ears in the school. It's *my* responsibility to know what's going on. But stealing is not an ordinary thing, and the suspicion it creates and feeds on is poisonous – in a school or anywhere else."

"Uh-huh," said Sam, who was losing his appetite.



^{shakedown}
"In your own ornery way, Sam," the headmaster said, "you have pride in Alcott, no matter how much you say you hate the school. So I am asking you as an Alcott boy – and that means an honest boy – to tell me anything you know."

Sam sighed. "If I knew anything, I'd tell you, dad, but I don't."

The headmaster kept looking at his son until Sam lowered his eyes. "You haven't the slightest clue?" he persisted.

"No, I really don't," Sam said. "Maybe though" – he reddened slightly – "somebody is making some kids steal things."

"What do you mean by that?" the headmaster asked sharply.

"Nothing. I hear about that sort of thing in other schools once in a while, and I just thought maybe something like that might be going on at Alcott."

"Just like that, the idea came to you, huh?" His father was still staring at him.

Sam thought hard about the terror in Rawlins' eyes when he made Sam promise not to say anything about what Brompton, Howes, and Maguire were doing. If Rawlins could have stolen from his own father, he could have swiped something from a kid's desk. Damn it, Sam sighed again, he knew he shouldn't have made that promise. Still, he had no proof Rawlins was the thief. It *could* have been somebody else. Any way you look at it, Sam thought as he pushed his plate away, that promise had to be kept.

"There's something you know about this that I ought to know." The headmaster spoke very distinctly and very softly.

Sam wished he'd yell. It's a lot easier not to tell somebody what he wants to know when he's yelling at you.

Sam's mother had been looking back and forth between her husband and her son. "I do wish you'd put Sam in another school," she said. "Other boys have a rest from the headmaster when they come home."

^{shakedown}
Yeah, Mom! Sam cheered silently.

"Sam can take it," the headmaster said. "He's a tough boy, right, Sam?"

"I wish you'd lay off," Sam said. "I don't know anything about it."

"I think you do." The headmaster tried to catch Sam's eye again. "I think you were telling me you know something when you said someone might be forcing kids to steal. I think there's a shakedown going on at Alcott."

"What do you mean, 'shakedown'?" Sam was using every bit of strength he had to keep from showing the panic growing in him.

ornery (slang) *stædig*

slightest smallest

clue idea

per'sist carry on asking

swipe steal

dis'tinctly clearly

cheer shout hurrah

shakedown mobbing (for money)





"You know what I mean," the headmaster said, beginning to raise his voice. "Bullies ganging up on a kid to make him give them money."

"No." Sam's mouth felt very dry. "No, I haven't seen anything like that."

"I'll give you something to think about." Sam's father leaned across the table and poked a finger into his son's chest. "If there is something like that going on at Alcott, the probability is that more than one victim is involved. Bullies swell up on other people's fear. So if you know something that you're not telling me, you are helping those bullies victimize God knows how many kids. By your silence, you are an accomplice. I want you to keep that in mind. I want the weight of your responsibility to grow heavier and heavier in your mind until you can't think of anything else."

"Carl," Sam's mother broke in. "That's your son you're doing this to."

"If I'm correct in my assumptions," the headmaster said, "Sam is doing this to himself. A decent boy does not remain

proba'bility
sandsynlighed
victim offer
swell up grow bigger
victimize terrorize
ac'complice medskyldig
as'sumption guess
decent anstændig



silent, for whatever reason, when the safety of others is involved."

Sam loved frankfurters and beans, but he hadn't had a bite. At that moment, even ice cream would have made him want to throw up.

"Can I be excused?" Sam asked.

"No," the headmaster answered. "You know how I feel about good food going to waste."

Sam looked desperately at his mother.

"Please, Carl," Liz Davidson said. "Nothing is going to be gained by making the boy get sick."

"Why should he get sick," the headmaster drummed his fingers on the table, "if he hasn't done anything he finds hard to hold down? And why are you perspiring, dear boy?"

"Damn it," Sam stood up, "I don't know *anything*. Can't you understand that?"

"One. There will be no swearing at this table," the headmaster began. "Two. You will eat everything on that plate."

"If I eat anything on that plate," Sam said, "I will throw up on your plate and all over the table."

The headmaster pulled in his cheeks to keep from smiling. "All right, you may be excused," he said. "But remember, if there is a shakedown gang, *you*, so long as you remain silent, are one of them."

1. Retell the conversation between Sam and his father. Do this in pairs, each taking a role.
2. Describe Sam's problem. What would you have done in that situation?
3. How do you feel about the father's behaviour?
4. What is the mother's role? Why is she like this?



Tim Rawlins was feeling miserable enough without its being dark and cold too. That evening, huddling in the doorway of Max's, the closed candy store around the corner from the school, he looked at the lighted windows in an apartment house across the street. Rawlins envied the kids who were warm and safe inside.

He looked at his watch. They were late. Rawlins shivered in



be ex'cused leave the table

gain get, win

per'spire sweat

huddled sammenkrøbet
envy misunde

the cold. I wonder if they'd take my watch in place of the money I owe them. Owe them? I don't owe them anything, he thought bitterly. If I wasn't such a damn coward, I wouldn't be here. I'd be home having dinner and looking out the window, glad to be inside. Jesus, I forgot. What am I going to tell my parents when I finally do get home?

"This poor little boy is cold." Fred Brompton, followed by Howes and Maguire, moved into the doorway, pushing Rawlins into a corner.

"What did you tell the headmaster this afternoon?" Brompton jammed an elbow into Rawlins' side. "And don't lie. We want to know every word."

"I didn't tell him anything," said Rawlins. His teeth were clattering more from fear now than from the cold. "Nothing, nothing at all."

"And he just patted you on the head and gave you a lollipop, is that what he did?" Brompton elbowed him again.

"No," Rawlins closed his eyes and mumbled, "he said I have to tell him -"

"Louder!" Howes ordered.

"HE SAID I HAVE TO TELL HIM BY HALF PAST EIGHT TOMORROW WHO MADE ME DO IT OR ELSE -"

A woman, passing by, looked sharply at the four boys.

"Lower, keep your voice *lower*," Maguire whispered in Rawlins' ear. Brompton smiled ingratiatingly at the woman who smiled back as she went on her way.

"What makes the headmaster think somebody *made* you steal?" Maguire pushed his face into Rawlins'.

"I - I - I wasn't thinking," Rawlins answered. "I just said that when Mr Kozodoy grabbed me, and he told the headmaster."

"You punk!" Brompton punched Rawlins hard in the stomach.

"What happens if you don't tell him?" Howes asked.

"I'll be expelled." Rawlins' voice was very low.

"Well, we can't have that, can we?" Brompton said. "We wouldn't want to lose you, Rawlins. We've become quite attached to you, haven't we? What are you going to tell the headmaster tomorrow?"

"I don't *know*," Rawlins wailed.

"We know," Brompton said. "You are going to tell the headmaster that this terrible bully, this disgrace to Alcott, this *monster* who made you steal is his crazy son, Sam."

"Sam!" Rawlins shouted in shock and protest.

Maguire clapped a hand over Rawlins' mouth, dug him in the ribs again, and whispered, "Keep your voice *down*, you little

owe *skylde*
jam *støde*
lollipop *slikpind*
in' *gratiatingly*
in'smigrerende
at'tached *glad for,*
afhængig af
dis'grace *skændsel*



bastard. You're going to be talking real soft from now on, right?" Rawlins nodded in agreement, and Maguire removed his hand.

"I *can't* say it was Sam," Rawlins' voice was pleading. "I just can't. He's the only one –"

"You told about us," Brompton finished the sentence. "I *thought* it must have been you."

"He promised not to tell anybody, not even his father," Rawlins wailed.

"I bet he kept his promise," Maguire grinned. "He's a real straight arrow, that one. You picked a real winner when you went to Sam for help."

"OK, Rawlins," Brompton said. "It'll be your word against his, and the headmaster is going to have to bend over backwards to be fair when it comes to deciding whether his own son is a thief. All clear, punk?" He stared at Rawlins.

"I won't! I won't!" Rawlins struggled to get out of the corner of the doorway into which he had been pressed. But the massed bulk of the three older boys would not budge.

"You *will*," Brompton said decisively. "You will. Because otherwise, we will break every one of your fingers. And that's just for a start. Why, what do we have here?" Brompton took Rawlins by the chin and forced his head up. "This young fellow is crying again. I always thought you weren't Alcott material, Rawlins. Alcott boys never cry, right?"

Howes and Maguire nodded agreement in mock solemnity.

"And this young fellow is crying, even though no one's doing a thing to him. We're just having a talk, right?"

Howes and Maguire nodded again.

"Now if somebody ever really *did* anything to him ..."

Brompton said as he grabbed Rawlins by the hand and began to push the smaller boy's index finger back and back. Rawlins gasped, and Brompton stopped. "If somebody ever really *did* anything to him, I'll bet he'd pass out right on the spot. Anybody want to take that bet?"

Howes and Maguire, in unison, shook their heads from side to side.

"Now listen," Brompton commanded looking directly into Rawlins' eyes until Rawlins desperately turned his head away. "Listen good. If you say it was us, you will never be safe again for the rest of your life. You will never know when we're coming, but sooner or later, we'll get you. Right?"

Howes and Maguire nodded vigorously, menacingly.

"If you say it was us," Brompton dug his fingers into the back of Tim's neck, "you will have *had* it. Understand?"

straight arrow lige pil; en ærlig fyr

bend over backwards

do all you can

struggle fight

bulk omfang, masse

budge move

de'cisively afgørende,

med vægt

mock false

so'lemnity alvor

index pege-

on the spot lige på stedet

bet væddemål

in unison together

menacingly truende



"What makes you so sure that the headmaster will believe his own son is a crook?" Maguire said to Brompton.

"What evidence is there that Sam is *not* a crook?" Brompton smiled in anticipation of what was to come. "Here we have this poor young soul" – he patted Rawlins on the head – "finally breaking free of that evil Sam by having the courage to turn him in to his own father."

"I don't know," Maguire rubbed his upper lip.

"Tell me," Brompton demanded, "what's the first thing that comes into your head when you hear the name 'Sam'?"

"Trouble," Maguire answered. "That kid is always getting into trouble. You never know where he's going to screw up next. Even the seniors know his reputation. But trouble's one thing, stealing's another."

"You ever been in trouble?" Brompton asked Rawlins, who had his hands over his head and had sunk almost to his knees in the corner of the doorway.

"No," Rawlins said in a voice that could barely be heard. "Not until now."

"See," Brompton said. "Here's a boy with an unblemished record who has been forced into a life of crime by a known troublemaker. And when that troublemaker – *to save his own skin* – names *us* as the true culprits, who's going to believe him?"

"I won't do it! I won't!" Rawlins' voice was now so hoarse it hurt him to speak.

"Yes, you will," Fred Brompton said, punching him again in the stomach. "When the time comes, you'll think of Number One, just like everybody else does. Come on," Brompton said to Howes and Maguire, "this brave little fellow knows what he has to do."

The three older boys left the doorway. Rawlins was sitting on the ground in a corner of the doorway, his head between his knees. He heard them laughing as they went up the street. He wished that he was dead.

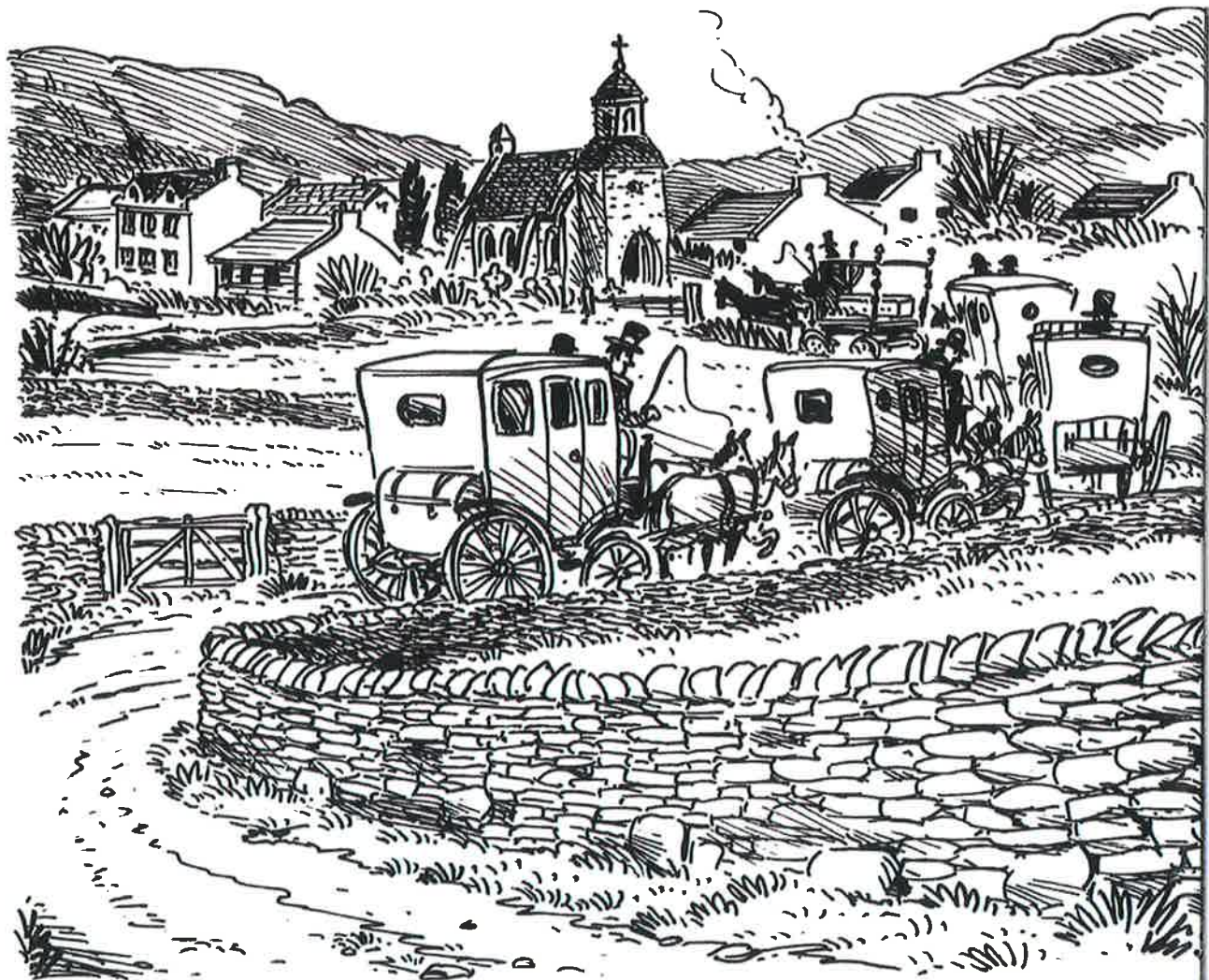
1. Where is Rawlins and what is he doing there?
2. What is Brompton's plan? Why might it work?
3. Why is Rawlins shocked by Brompton's suggestion?
4. Describe the different ways the boys terrorize Rawlins here.
5. Why do boys like Rawlins get mobbed – and why do boys like Brompton do it?

Is there any solution to this?

Is it just a problem in your school-days, do you think?

crook criminal
evidence proof
antici'pation *forventning*
screw up do something
wrong
repu'tation *ry*
un'blemished *pletfri*
culprit *den skyldige*
hoarse *hæs*
Number One *yourself*





4 The Putting Away of Uncle Quaggin

by Nigel Kneale

Ezra Quaggin had lived alone on his farm, working it with hired labour, sending out occasional blasts of hate at the male members of the family. Then one night when he was concealing money in the chimney he was choked by a mouthful of soot, fell, fractured his hip and began a lingering end.

He was visited in hospital by fat Tom-Billy Teare the joiner,

hired labour *lejet arbejdskraft*
oc'casional *lejlighedsvis*
blast *udfald*
con'ceal hide
choked (here) *halvvejs kvalt*
soot *sod*

who had married the old man's niece, and was troubled. But Ezra presently told him he had forgiven the females.

"I've seen to it that your Sallie's all right. Now listen: me will is in a proper black box on top o' the kitchen dresser. They all know I've made one; leave her there till you read her to them. Do the - th'arrangements, y'self, Tom-Billy. Keep it in the family, like. An' then maybe the cost ...?" His niece's husband was an undertaker on occasion.

Teare went away happy, full of his executorship. He told his wife Sallie, and she was content, and stayed in town on market day to buy a black dress.

Five days passed. Then the sad news came from the hospital and she was able to put it on.

After Teare had informed the relatives, carefully pencilling down the expenses, he and his wife shut up their home in the village and moved quickly into the Quaggin Farmhouse to look after it.

They found the flimsy black deed-box in its place on the dresser. Having no lock, it invited a look inside.

Under a layer of old receipts, a backless prayer-book, and letters was the will. A long sky-blue paper. It was in the old man's handwriting, with strange words in places, but clear in their meaning.

Teare hugged his wife delightedly. She had been left the farm itself! A few small bequests disposed of the Quaggins.

"We're made, woman!" he said.

But later he fell into some small dispute with the heiress when she wished to cut down expenses now that there was nobody worth pleasing. He considered a heavy meal would be necessary to keep the family quiet during the will-reading. Particularly this will.

On the day of his funeral, the old man lay clean and tidy in the coffin Teare had made for him, ready for those who came to make sure he was gone.

They arrived earlier and in greater numbers than expected, caused the waiting meat-plates to be recast in more and smaller portions.

Teare received the mourners at the door. Quaggins, most of them, the men short and sandy, sharp-nosed; the women pale-faced. Black clothes, hastily dyed, showed smothered patterns. And expectation showed through the reverence.

The weather was fine, lighting up the dead man's fields for valuation. People went to the windows under pretence of

fracture break
hip hofte
lingering end langsom død
joiner snedker
for'give tilgive
see to it sørge for
all right blive sørget godt
for
me = my
will testamente
dresser dækketøjsskab
her = it
undertaker bedemand
ex'ecutorship hveru som
eksekutor, den ansvarlige
con'tent satisfied
relative slægtning
pencil write
ex'pense cost
flimsy skrøbelig
deed dokument, skøde
re'ceipt kvittering
hug give et knus
de'lightedly very happily
be'quest arv
dis'pose of "klare", sørge
for
made rich
dis'pute discussion
heiress kvindelig arving
con'sider mene
coffin kiste
recast omfordelt
mourners de sørgende
sandy fair hair and light
skin
dyed farvet
smothered skjult,
underliggende
pattern mønster
expec'tation forventning
reverence ærbødighed
valu'ation vurdering
pre'tence foregivende



admiring his industry, and gazed hungrily out.

The mourners' conduct was sober while in the house; sober, too, in the black carriages as they crept in line behind the hearse; sober and musical in the draughty little church. At the graveside they began to cheer up; for the unpleasant part of the day was over.

On the return journey talk in the carriages grew bright. Quaggin the Cruelty, the animals inspector, thrust his red whiskers out of a window to hail a friend. From another vehicle Teare thought he heard something suspiciously like song. He frowned at his wife.

The little procession trotted along the road that ran behind the village, and turned up towards the farm.

A tense excitement filled each group. Eyes were fixed with greed on every field they passed. The barn, the old pigsty, the cows. They rounded the orchard.

Teare's carriage was the first. As it drew in towards the house, he saw a figure moving near the rose-covered porch. As if coming from the side where the dairy was, and the back entrance. Teare had visions of unlocked doors. He scrambled out of the carriage.

"Well, who -?"

"Hallo, there!" called the man. "I missed the poor ould fella, eh?"

Short and sandy, with a sharp nose. A Quaggin, undoubtedly.

"Don't ye remember me, Tom-Billy?"

"Uh - yes. Of course." Teare shook hands dubiously. Now he knew; it was some sort of cousin, a man they called Lawyer Quaggin because he had once worked as an advocate's clerk. Then a signwriter or something.

"Hallo, all!" called Lawyer Quaggin. People were descending from the carriages. "I was just sayin' to Tom-Billy here, business missed a train for me, an' I came too late for to see him under!" The relatives hailed him, crowding round.

Teare hurried in after his wife. He motioned her into the kitchen.

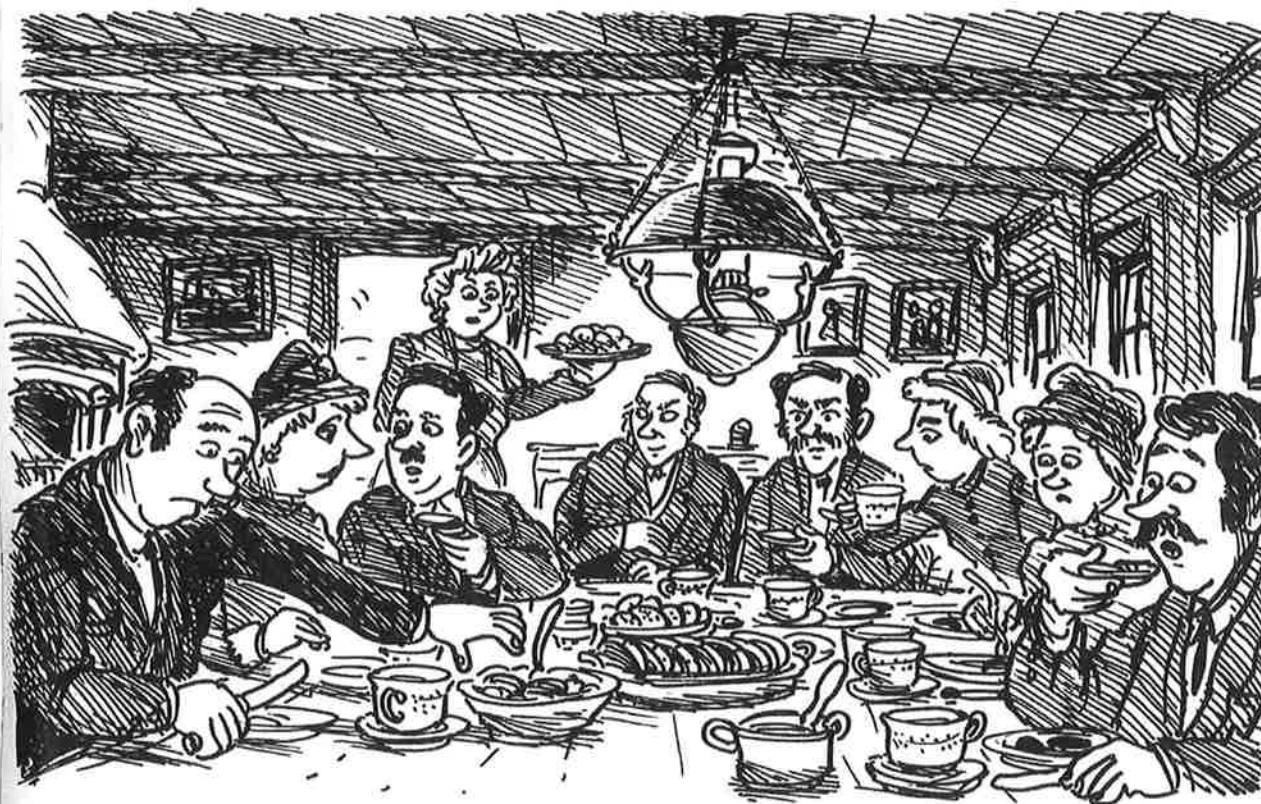
"Sallie, just a minute -"

Outside in the hall they could hear old Mrs. Kneen weeping over "the beautiful internment" and the bass voices of her three sons.

"Well?" said Sallie.

Teare jerked his head and whispered. "Did y'see that Lawyer character? Skulkin' round the house just as we come up. Keep an eye on him - he's fit for anythin', that fella!"

ad'mire *beundre*
industry *hard work*
gaze *stare*
conduct *behaviour*
hearse *ligvogn*
draughty *cold and windy*
cruelty *mishandling; Q.*
the Cruelty *walisisk*
måde at sige "Q.,
dyreværnsmanden"
thrust *støde*
whiskers *skæg*
hail *say hello to*
vehicle *carriage*
sus'piciously
mistænkeligt
frown *skære en grimasse*
trot *trave*
tense *spændt*
orchard *frugthave*
porch *overdækket indgang*
dairy *mejeri, mælkerum*
scramble *hurry*
miss *be too late for*
dubiously *modstræbende,*
tvivlende
lawyer *sagfører*
clerk *kontorassistent*
signwriter *skiltemaler*
de'scend *get down*
business *forretninger*
under = *under the*
ground
relative *slægtning*
motion *vinke*
weep *cry*
in'ternment *begravelse*
skulk *luske*
fit for anything *kan finde*
på hvadsomhelst



The parlour was already seething.

Teare dodged about, fitting people into places for the meal. The three huge Kneen boys were prowling about, comparing the size of the platefuls. A child cried to be taken home. Then somehow a chicken had got into the room, fluttering among the black legs. Women pulled their skirts out of the way.

In desperation Teare grabbed a thin arm that led to a long face. "Mr. Cain, for pity's sake start a hymn or somethin'!"

The thin man struck a fork on a plate and began to sing "Abide with Me" in a grating voice that struck through the uproar. Gradually silence came.

The Quaggins sat, unwillingly, one by one.

"So beautiful," said old Mrs. Kneen in the hush that followed the solo. She added, to the thin man's confusion and anger, "I mean the way the table is laid. Look at it, boys."

Soon Sallie had the tea-urn working.

Then the food went down with a rush.

Quaggin the Cruelty called for a second cup through steaming whiskers. The Kneen boys tore at their cold beef. Pickle glasses emptied. Faces bulged.

Tom-Billy glanced round. Lawyer Quaggin was at the second

parlour stue
seething stopfyldt
dodge smutte
prowl snuse om
flutter flakse
for pity's sake for Guds
skyld
abide dvæle
grating ru, skærende
uproar larm
hush silence
con'fusion forvirring
steaming dampende
beef oksekød
bulge bule

table and it was difficult to see him. He seemed very quiet. Teare shifted back uneasily. The meat was tasteless in his mouth.

"My boys say they're enjoying it ever so much, my dear," called Mrs. Kneen. Her sons chewed on, unnoticed.

Teare whispered to his wife, "Is anybody out watchin' the kitchen?" She shook her head. His face sagged. "Come, come, Mr. Teare! Eat up!" said a neighbour. "Don't let the sad business distress ye too much!" ...

He suddenly stiffened. His wife had nudged him. She whispered, "Look - Lawyer!"

Lawyer Quaggin's place was empty. He was not in the room.

Tom-Billy half rose. He sat again, heart tapping, and whispered, "Did ye see him go?"

"No, I just turned round, and - oh, look, look! Here he is again."

The short sandy man was sliding into his seat, a strange look on his face, it seemed to Tom-Billy. A mixture that might have been innocence and satisfaction. He caught Teare's eye and grinned. A nervous smile that suddenly became too hearty.

Tom-Billy felt his face tighten. He stood up. One or two people looked at him, and his wife's hand touched him warningly.

"Uh - get more bread," he mumbled, and pushed his way between the chair-backs. Once the door was safely shut behind him, he ran the few steps to the kitchen. He pulled a stool up beside the dresser, climbed on to it, and clutched the tin deed-box down from its place.

The heart folded up inside him, and he grasped a shelf for support.

Ezra's will had gone!

He stumbled down, and scattered across the table all the contents of the box. The loose papers, the prayer-book, the letters. He swayed as the empty black bottom of the tin stared back at him.

It was Lawyer all right! He must have found out the will's hiding-place by spying through the kitchen window during the funeral. And now he had stolen it; the guilt was there on his face when he sneaked back into the parlour just now.

Tom-Billy sat trying to control himself and picture the next move.

The other room was full of Quaggins waiting to hear the thing read. If he showed the empty box, they would rend him, the keeper of it. Useless to protest that Sallie had been left

shift *move*
chew *tygge*
un'noticing *uden at ænse*
noget
sag *hænge, "blev*
hekymret"
dis'tress *make unhappy*
nudge *puffe til*
tap *banke*
innocence *uskyld*
hearty *wide, big*
tighten *blive stram*
clutch *take*
shelf *hylde*
stumble *snuble, træde*
tungt
scatter *spread*
spy *look*
guilt *skyldfølelse*
sneak *luske*
parlour *sitting room*
move *træk*
rend *angribe, slå*
keeper *vogter*

*Stood up & ran to the kitchen
he, black
down the stairs
his, black*

everything; each man of them would fancy himself cheated.

Go in there and denounce the thief? No, that was as bad. Lawyer would be ready, knowing the Quaggins distrusted him nearly as much as they did Tom-Billy. He would have the will hidden somewhere. And later, in his own crafty time, he would tell the Quaggins in secret what it said.

Either way, the will would never be seen again. The farm would be divided amongst the whole brood.

Tom-Billy groaned.

Something must be done immediately; he had no idea what.

An earthquake. At least a whirlwind.

Words were dancing in front of his eyes. "All your problems solved," they read. He tried to blink them away, but they persisted. They seemed to be printed on a packet lying by the wall. A little more cold sweat formed on his face.

He rose. He approached the packet.

"Vesuvius Brand Lighters. All your firelighting problems solved!" he read. So he still had his senses.

There was a clumsy little picture of people in long nightshirts running about clutching bundles and boxes, and a flaming mountain in the background. He slowly picked up the smelly packet.

A desperate idea was coming. The most desperate he had ever had.

He pulled the chair into the middle of the room and stacked the firelighters carefully upon it. Five of them the packet held. Quickly he added newspapers, some rags he found in a cupboard, and two sacks. The old stool and table he arranged close to the chair. A jarful of fat completed the preparations.

He replaced the scattered papers in their tin box, and put it exactly where it belonged, up on top of the dresser.

In fearful haste now, dreading that somebody would come to look for him, Tom-Billy struck a match. The flame crept over the problem-solving lighters.

As he closed the kitchen door behind him, he began to count slowly.

One, two, three -

He wiped the sweat from his face. At about a hundred it should be safe to raise the alarm.

Conversation was lively when he re-entered the parlour.

Only the Kneen boys were still eating, urged on by their mother's busy hands.

Foxy Lawyer was sitting without any expression, as if biding his time.

fancy think

de'nounce *afsløre*

dis'trust *mistro*

crafty *snu*

either way *uanset*

brood family

groan *stønne*

earthquake *jordskælv*

solve *løse*

per'sist *vedblive*

ap'proach come nearer

brand (*vare*) *mærke*

lighter *spritblok (til optænding)*

solve *løse*

clutch *klamre sig til*

rag *gammel klud*

jarful *krukke*

dread be afraid

raise the alarm *slå*

alarm

urge on *tilskynde*

foxy *lumsk*

bide wait

Tom-Billy sank into his place beside his wife. He answered nothing to her questioning eyes.

Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three.

He accepted another cake and ate it slowly, as calmly as he could.

Fifty-seven. Fifty-eight.

He was praying that no one would leave the room yet.

Seventy-one. Seventy-two.

The family histories were still being told.

Eighty-three.

A sandy man leaned across the table and winked. "What about the will-readin', Mr. Teare?" he said quietly.

Instantly, it seemed, they were all deathly still; full of fierce attention. "Yis, the time is suitable enough now," said a woman.

There were murmurs of, "The will!"

"He's goin' to read it!"

"Oh, yes, the will! I'd clean forgot about that!"

"Is it you that has charge of it, Tom-Billy?"

Teare was frozen in his chair. Bright eyes were on him from every side. In his head he had counted ninety-one.

"D'ye smell burnin'?" said a voice. There were sniffs.

"Somethin's on fire!"

There was a moment of silent alarm. Then Quaggin the Cruelty dropped his sugar and scrambled towards the door. He pulled at it. A cloud of thin, foul smoke was swept into the room.

There was uproar. People rushed to the narrow hallway, Tom-Billy Teare fighting to be at the head. Behind, there were frightened, coughing cries; a banging at the jammed window. Somebody was roaring, "Save the women!"

When they reached the kitchen the smoke became black and choking. Flames could be seen in it. Men hung back unhappily.

"Come on! Quick!" shouted Teare, and dived inside. His eyes streamed. "Fling everythin' – out of the – the back door here!" He heaved it open as he shouted, and threw a smouldering cushion into the stone yard. Drew breath, then back into the room.

Men were blundering about the sides of the kitchen, eager to save what might become their own property. Mrs. Kneen's voice was raised somewhere, commanding her sons to keep out of danger.

A chair was tossed outside, then a glowing table leg.

The women crowded in the yard, filling buckets at the pump and passing them from hand to hand.

suitable right

have charge of look after

foul bad-smelling

uproar chaos

jammed *der havde sat sig*

fast

choking *kvælende*

hang back *nøle*

stream run with tears

smouldering *ulmende*

blunder about move

blindly

property *ejendom*

bucket *spand*





Watching savagely, Teare was in agony. Through the smoke, faces were hard to recognize. He felt despair; if Lawyer had run away, the whole plan was wasted.

Suddenly he saw the little clerk on the other side of the kitchen, jostled in from the hall by a helper; he looked nervous.

Teare sprang for the dresser and snatched down the black box. Almost in the same movement he had Lawyer held fast in a thick arm, and rushed him strongly through the burning room to the yard door. Into clear earshot of everybody; particularly the women. "Here, take this! An' keep it safe!" he shouted. "Uncle Ezra's will is inside it!"

For a moment their eyes locked. Seeing the fury in Lawyer's, Teare knew he had been right.

There was a pause in the clattering and fuss and water. The word "will" had struck home. Every eye was on the little man clutching the box.

"Watch it close and no monkey business!" Teare yelled after him, with a wink round at the rest.

savagely fiercely, sharply

agony a terrible dilemma

des'pair *fortvivelse*

jostle push

snatch take quickly

earshot *hørevidde*

lock *krydse*

fury *vrede*

clattering *larm*

fuss *forvirring, ståhej*

strike/struck *home*

ramme plet, tiltrække

opmærksomhed

monkey business

narrestreger, snyderi

wink *blink*



Now he had to make sure Lawyer was left alone with it.

"Come on, everybody – one last big slap at it!" With something like cheerfulness, he flung himself at the dying fire. The Quaggins followed.

Tom-Billy busied himself in the yard, finding work for every pair of hands. Except one. Lawyer sat alone in a corner, the box on his knees.

A minute or two later, when Teare turned, the corner was empty. He thought he glimpsed Lawyer, slipping round a corner of the cowhouse.

The idea must be working!

"It's all out now!" called one of the Kneen boys from inside. Water dripped from everything in the kitchen. The ceiling was blackened. Otherwise damage was small, though wives' voices rose when they saw their men's singed suits. Dye had run on splashed dresses.

Tom-Billy pulled a sack over his shoulders and looked round. There must be no waiting.

"Where's – who did I give it to? The will box?" He hoped his frown looked puzzled.

They knew.

"Lawyer!" shouted voices. "Where's Lawyer? I seen him a minute ago!" The cry of hungry, suspicious animals. "Where did he get to? Lawyer! Did you see him go?"

"Lawyer, the fire's out!" shouted Quaggin the Cruelty. "Where the devil have ye put yeself?"

"Lawyer! Lawyer!"

There was a hush.

The little foxy man was coming from the direction of the cowhouse, the box in his hands. His hair seemed a brighter ginger, or his face was whiter. Suspicious eyes were all on the tin.

Without a word, Lawyer handed it to Tom-Billy. This time his eyes told nothing.

"Ah – thanks," Teare said. "We wouldn't have had this lost for the world, eh? Thanks for keepin' it safe, Lawyer."

There was a chorus of approval.

"Good oul' Lawyer! Bad job if the will had gone on fire!"

"Better make sure it's safe."

Tom-Billy's hands trembled as he put the box down.

The black box squeaked open. Tom-Billy's hand went inside and fumbled quickly. A pause.

He drew out a long, sky-blue paper.

"This document," he read shakily, "is the only will of me, Ezra John Quaggin, pig, dairy and poultry farmer –"

slap *kraftanstrengelse*
cheerfulness *munterhed*
glimpse catch sight of
damage *ødelæggelse*
singed *svedet*
splashed wet
ginger orange
ap'proval *billigelse, bifald*
bad job a tragedy
tremble shake
squeak *knirke*
dairy "malkekvæg"
poultry *høns-*



His head sang with relief as he looked round the grimy, eager faces.

"Go on! Go on, Tom-Billy," they cried.

He found the place, cleared his throat, and read again. Soon, he knew, the real fun would begin.

(adapted)

relief *lettelse*

grimy dirty

1. What sort of a man was Ezra Quaggin?
2. How did he die?
3. What sort of picture do you get of Teare from the beginning of this story?
4. Describe the mourners and how they behave at the funeral. How do you think the writer feels about them? Which of them do you notice most?
5. What does Lawyer do, and why does it matter? Describe the thoughts that go through Teare's head when he sees what has happened.
6. What is the desperate plan that comes into his head? What is the idea behind it? Can you think of a better plan?
7. How do the guests react when the fire is discovered? That does Teare do to Lawyer, and why?
8. The story ends "Soon, he knew, the real fun would begin." What does this mean – what is going to happen? You might like to act/record what happens next.
9. Stories about death and funerals are usually serious and sad. This one does not seem so. How would you describe it? What has been the writer's purpose in telling the story like this? Where are your sympathies in the story? (Do you, for example, feel sorry for the dead man? If not, why not?)

2

Small Town Hooligans

by John Grampton

Seventeen-year-old Brian is hitch-hiking to Scotland in his summer holidays.

I found myself in the middle of a small town. I walked through it and it finished with a good bend. I stood past it and waved my thumb at everything that passed. And no one stopped. I walked on a bit and tried again. And still nothing would stop, not a car, motorbike, van, lorry. I must have been there an hour and a half. In the end I was so fed up, and it was dark too, that I walked back into the small town, just for something to do, somewhere to go.

The pubs were just closing, which made me more fed up as I had had the idea of going in for a drink. I was standing outside one of the pubs when some youths came along, talking and laughing loudly. There were about half a dozen of them and they all went past me without seeming to take much notice. Then three of them, at the back of the party, said something to each other and turned round and came back. The others called to them and then walked on.

I knew those three meant trouble by the way they came back towards me and the way they were looking at me. But I couldn't just run. I was too tired and weighted down with my pack. I thought of shouting for help, but would have felt too stupid doing that. After all they might not have meant trouble. So I just stood there trying to look like I wasn't bothered about anything. They were all about the same size as me, but a bit younger, I guessed. Even so I could smell the beer on them when they got close.

"Where are you going to, then?" said one of them.

And before I could say anything another one said, "Yeah, where are you going, shit?"

hooligan *bølle*
 hitch-hike *blaffe*
 bend *sving*
 past on the other side of
 wave *vifte (med)*
 thumb *tommelfinger*
 van *varevogn*
 lorry *lastbil*
 fed up *træt af det*
 youth *young man*
 dozen *dusin*
 take notice *lægge mærke til*
 mean trouble *være ude på ballade*
 weight (vb) *tynge*
 pack *oppakning*
 bothered *bekymret*
 size *størrelse*
 even so *alligevel*; at 16, you are not allowed to drink beer in a pub
 on them (here) coming from them
 shit *skid, lort*



The others sniggered. And the third one said, "You're not going anywhere, are you, shit?"

My mouth went all dry and I could feel my skin twitching, like they were already hitting me. But I tried to sound casual. "I'm on my way to Scotland. Trying to thumb a lift."

"What's the matter, isn't this place good enough for you?" one of them said.

"It's fine," I said, "but I'm just passing through."

Then they came up really close and stood round me. "Well, you'll have to pay your dues first," one of them said.

I was looking round, trying to look cool still, hoping there would be someone to see what was going on. But the few people about were all busy climbing into cars or walking away or chatting loudly to each other.

"What does that mean?" I said, for something to say.

"It means you'll have to have a do with one of us, shit," said the one closest to me, right in front of me.

Scared as I was I also began to feel angry. It was so stupid

snigger grine

twitch bevæge sig i ryk,
dirre

casual ligegyldig,
afslappet

thumb a lift hitch-hike

your dues "hvad du
skylder", "taksten"

chat snakke, sludre

for something to say

just to say something

a do en omgang, en kamp



and unnecessary. These yobs were going to pick on me and hurt me for nothing. I wondered about trying to kick or hit the nearest one, but was too frightened to try it.

"You just come over here a bit and have a do. We'll hold your pack."

"Yeah," said another one, "we'll hold your pack." He seemed to think that a great joke.

"I don't want to, thanks very much," I said. "I've nothing against you and you've nothing against me."

"Oh yes we have. You're some sort of southerner, aren't you? And we don't like southerners, shit."

And then the one in front of me suddenly swung his great boot at me. I suppose he was aiming for my crutch, but his boot caught me knee and I staggered backwards. It hurt, but not enough to make me mad, not enough to overcome my fear. I felt terrible because I was scared and because I did not rush at him and fight back. I just felt sick and silly and wished someone would come and stop it.

That move seemed to set the kicker going, though. He came towards me again. The other two stood where they were and I could tell they weren't going to do much. Not yet, anyway. They were waiting for me to do something. I could see that they couldn't work up the full need to fight till I had had a go at their mate, the kicker. And he too was hesitating because I wasn't doing anything about the kick, except stand there rubbing my knee and watching him. "Come on, shit," he said.

"I don't want to," I said. And I certainly didn't.

But I could see that he had to go on with it or his mates would think he was scared. He came closer and I stood right up and at the same moment he lunged forward with his head, trying to butt me. Because he was not very angry yet he didn't bring his head at me all that hard and my standing up as he did it put him off. His head hit into my cheek, landing right on the cheek-bone and the side of my nose. That hurt all right. I could feel the cheek-bone going numb and then hot.

"You bastard," I said. "What did you want to do that for?" And I clenched my fists and bent forward a bit. But I still couldn't bring myself to go for him. I could feel that I was starting to cry, with the fear and the pain and the wish that it was all over. I said, "You hit me again and I'll smash the living daylights out of you." But I was horribly sure I would just stand there and let him do it.

"Oh yeah," said one of the others. "Go on, Gren, put the boot in."

yob *bisse*

pick on *lade det gå ud over*

for nothing *uden grund*

southerner *person from the south*

boot *støvle*

aim *sigte*

crutch *skridt*

catch (here) *hit*

stagger *vakle*

overcome *overvinde*

fight back *slå igen*

set going *sætte i gang*

need *behov*

have a go at *gå løs på*

mate *kammerat*

hesitate *tøve*

rub *gnide*

lunge *støde frem*

butt *nikke en skalle*

all that hard *so very hard*

put off *forvirre*

cheek-bone *kindben*

all right (here) *skam*

numb *følelsesløs*

bastard *dumme svin*

clench *knytte*

fist *næve*

knock the living

daylights out of *tæve*

sønder og sammen



But at that moment I saw the most welcome sight I had seen in a long time. A small car with a police lamp on top was coming along slowly on the other side of the street, from behind the three of them. I threw up my arm to wave, to attract attention. Gren must have thought I was going to hit him with it because he leaped backwards. Then they all three realised I was looking past them, turned, saw the car and ran off into the pub car park, so that the sound of their boots died quickly away. And the police car didn't stop, either. All the driver saw, probably, was three lads running away from another lad. Nothing much to worry about.

I was shaking with fright and crying and holding my cheek and feeling such a stupid fool. I was ashamed I hadn't hit back at all, ashamed of being scared, ashamed of having let myself be hit. I was angry with myself. I felt a coward, a failure.

But there was nothing I could do. Nowhere I could go. I didn't want the police car to stop and ask me about it, because I would have had to tell the policeman I had let three young lads scare me and one of them butt me.

1. What made the hooligans notice Brian?
2. What did he do when he saw them coming?
3. What else might he have done?
4. What did the boys speak to Brian about? Why?
5. How did he speak to them?
6. What was Brian's reaction when the boy kicked him? Does this surprise you?
7. Can you see what sort of pattern (:mønster) a fight like that usually follows? (What happens first ... what then, etc.? Why do things happen in that order?)
8. Why did the boys want to fight at all?
9. How did Gren react when Brian waved at the police car? Do you draw any conclusions from this?
10. How did Brian feel afterwards?
11. What do you think about Brian's behaviour?
12. What are your feelings about the three hooligans at this moment? What would your reaction be if the door of the classroom opened, and Gren walked in?
13. Can you in any way understand or perhaps explain the behaviour of these hooligans?
14. Have you yourself seen violence of the same kind? Describe what happened, and try to explain why.

put the boot in kick him
 leap jump
 probably sikkert
 lad boy
 coward kryster
 failure fiasko

Talking about Fear

Are you afraid to tell the truth?

They were frightened by a loud crash.

When he saw the elephant, he was terrified

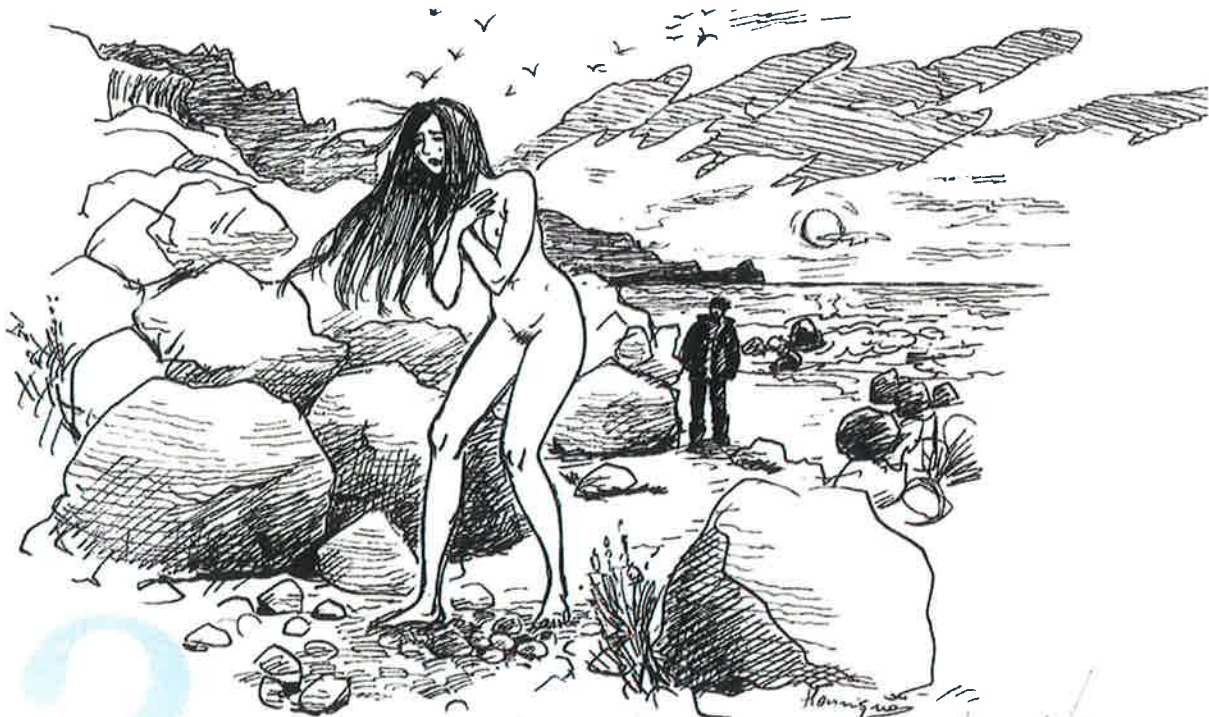
(:rædselsslagen).

You are not a coward, are you?

It gave me quite a shock.

She was trembling (:rystede) with fear.





The Seal Woman

In the North of Scotland and on the islands of Orkney and Shetland, you often find many seals. They lie on the beaches where they are not disturbed by any human beings, as these places are so quiet.

It is said that the seals come out of the waves on the twelfth night after Christmas. Then, under the frosty stars, they put off their seal-skins and rise up on two legs and dance at the edge of the sea. The dance tells of their life beneath the waves, of great storms far out on the wide oceans, and of secret caves and great rocks in far-off seas. When the first sign of day touches the distant horizon, they put on their seal-skins again and take to the water, to return one year later and dance the same dance together.

One year, a lonely fisherman walking along the shore caught sight of the beautiful dancers. He crept closer and saw that there was a little pile of seal-skins lying on the sand. After watching the dance in wonder for a time, and without really knowing why he did it, he bent and took one of the skins. He

distant far away
creep/crept krybe



hurried away quietly to his empty fishing-hut with it. When the day dawned, he went down to the shore and saw the naked figure of a beautiful young woman searching among the rocks and crying as if her heart would break. The fisherman went to her and wrapped her in his coat and took her back to his little house. He told her that if she would stay with him, he would feed her and keep her warm and look after her. She should be his wife.

At once she understood what she had to do, and sadly bowed her head. The years passed, and the lonely cottage slowly filled with children. The fisherman almost forgot how his wife had come to him – but when he was not at home, her eyes always turned to the sea and became deep and dark as the grey-green waves of the cold north.

One year on Twelfth Night, he forgot to lock the drawer in which the seal-skin was hidden. Waking in the night, he could feel that the house was cold and empty: the door hung silently open. He ran down to the shore and caught sight of a group of seals splashing out to sea, swimming around one special one that rolled and dived in the middle of the group.

For a couple of years, the fisherman went long walks along the shore or just sat in his window, staring out to sea, missing his seal woman and the joy she had given him.

One day, a seal hunter came by his cottage and showed him something strange. "The last seal I shot had this golden chain about its neck. Its eyes were really human. It was most extraordinary."

And from that day, the fisherman knew that he had lost his seal woman for ever. At the same time, he realised that he had kept her in chains from the day he stole her skin and put that golden chain around her pretty neck. Sorrow and shame grew in his heart, so that he never went out fishing again and moved far from the sea and the sound of the waves rolling upon the shore.

1. Where do the seals go – and what do they do that is unusual?
2. What does the fisherman do? Why do you think he does this?
3. What is the contract he makes with her? How does she feel about it?
4. What sort of life do you think they have together?
5. How does she "escape" – and how does she feel?
6. What is the story the seal hunter tells the fisherman? How does he react to it?
7. Would it have been better if she had not returned to the sea?
8. This is an old Celtic myth. Can you imagine how it arose (:opstod)? Can it be seen as a symbolic story, in your opinion? Try to explain.



