



## Joby in the Sweetshop

by Stan Barstow

**J**oby put two pennies into Gus's hand and Gus opened the door, setting a bell ringing. The inside of the shop was quiet and cool. There were jars of jam and marmalade and cans of all kinds of things piled high on the shelves against the walls; boxes of sweets and bars of chocolate on the counter and an open sack of potatoes and another of sugar on the floor. They listened for someone coming but there was no sound from anywhere.

jar *krukke*  
jam *syltetøj*  
marmalade always made of  
oranges in English!  
can *dåse*  
shelf (shelves) *hylde*  
bar *plade*  
counter *disk*

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When Gus put his hand into a box of sweets, it was like a signal to Joby. He did the same while Gus, not at all afraid, stretched right over the counter to reach the cigarettes. At the back of Joby's mind as he stuffed handfuls of sweets into his pockets was the thought that the shopkeeper was a very long time coming.

And just then the voice, like a kick to the heart, said, "And what do you think you are doing?"

**T**hey sprang round, their bodies going stiff with fear as they saw that the man was on their side of the counter, between them and the door. Shock robbed them of their voices. They stared at him, saying nothing. The shopkeeper, a thin elderly man, reached out and locked the door, cutting off all hope of escape.

"I asked you what you thought you were doing."

His voice was stiff and cold as iron. Joby, weak with shock and fright, thought he had never heard a voice like it, nor seen a face as hard and fierce as this man's. Oh! but he had feared this from the first. He had known it from the first. He had known it must happen some time. If only they could go back ten minutes and be playing with the ball in the street, and no thought of the shop in their heads!

**G**us managed to speak. "We wanted some chewing-gum, please," he said, as though he didn't understand the man.

"Yes, that's right," Joby heard himself whisper, "just some chewing-gum. He's got the money for it." He gestured towards Gus who opened his hand and showed the two pennies in his palm.

"Chewing-gum, eh? Well, you won't find any in that box of sweets, nor under the counter either."

His eyes looked over the top of his spectacles, grey and hard, as he spoke to them. He waved his hand towards the back of the shop.

"You'd better go through there with me. Go on, now, let's be having you!"

He pushed them before him into his living-room. They stood near the table, not knowing what to do with their hands.

"Are you going to fetch a bobby?" Joby asked.

A sudden view of the trouble to come flashed through his mind. The police at home; the surprise and shock of his parents; everybody knowing; the scene in court; grammar school shut to him because he was a bad character; probably

stretch over put his arm  
over  
reach get to  
stuff stoppe  
robbed them took away  
from them  
e'scapo running away  
fierce barsk  
managed to speak only  
just got the words out  
gesture move one's hand  
palm inside of the hand  
spectacles briller  
let's be having you  
come along  
bobby policeman  
view picture  
to come forestående  
flashed went quickly  
court retten  
grammar school skolen  
der giver adgang til  
universiteterne

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Borstal instead, or somewhere just as bad. He wanted to sit down. The fear was in his legs and they wouldn't hold him up much longer.

The shopkeeper ignored the question. He said, "Now then, empty your pockets."

Quickly, Joby put sweets on the table, searching carefully for any forgotten in the corners of his pockets. Gus produced two packets of cigarettes, as well as the sweets. To these they added all the other pieces of useful rubbish which they had in their pockets.

The shopkeeper looked at it. "Is this all?"

They nodded together. The man pushed his own things to one side and then took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes with his free hand. Joby wanted to look quickly at Gus and receive

**Borstal** school for criminal children  
**search** look  
**pro'duce** take out  
**rubbish** *skrammel*  
**nod** move one's head up and down  
**rub** *gnide*  
**re'ceive** get



some sign of help, but he could only shoot frightened looks at the face of the shopkeeper. He hastily turned his eyes away as the shopkeeper lifted his head up and put back his spectacles.

"**W**hat's your name?" he asked Gus. "Your real name, of course."

Gus told him, and he nodded as though he knew all about him. "And who are you?" he said to Joby.

"Joseph Weston," Joby said. "Everybody calls me Joby."

"What would you think of everybody calling you 'thief'?" the man replied quickly.

"I wouldn't like it," Joby said quietly.

"No... Well, you'd better tell me what made you come into my shop to steal. How long have you been doing this kind of thing? Do you usually do this in every shop you go into?"

Gus answered him and sounded honest and sincere.

"No, we're not thieves, Mister, really. We just thought it would be a bit of fun. The others said we wouldn't dare. And most of our friends have gone on holiday and... We'll never do it again, will we, Joby? This has taught us a lesson."

"Fun, eh? You know where that kind of fun will take you? Into the reform-school. And there's no chocolate there, nor holidays at the sea, either. And when you get out, everybody will know you are thieves and nobody will trust you any more. What sort of a start in life is that? You might think you have all the time in the world, but you will have to think about getting a job before you know it, and you won't get far when everyone knows you are a thief... What school do you go to?"

"Tinsley Road," Gus said.

"I'm going to Cressley Grammar School in September," Joby said.

"Have you passed your exam to get in?" The man looked at Joby as he nodded. "Then why the devil do you want to spoil a chance like that by behaving like this?"

It was the tone of tired anger in which he spoke now that made Joby realize he was not going to report what had happened. He hardly heard the rest of what was said, because he felt so relieved.

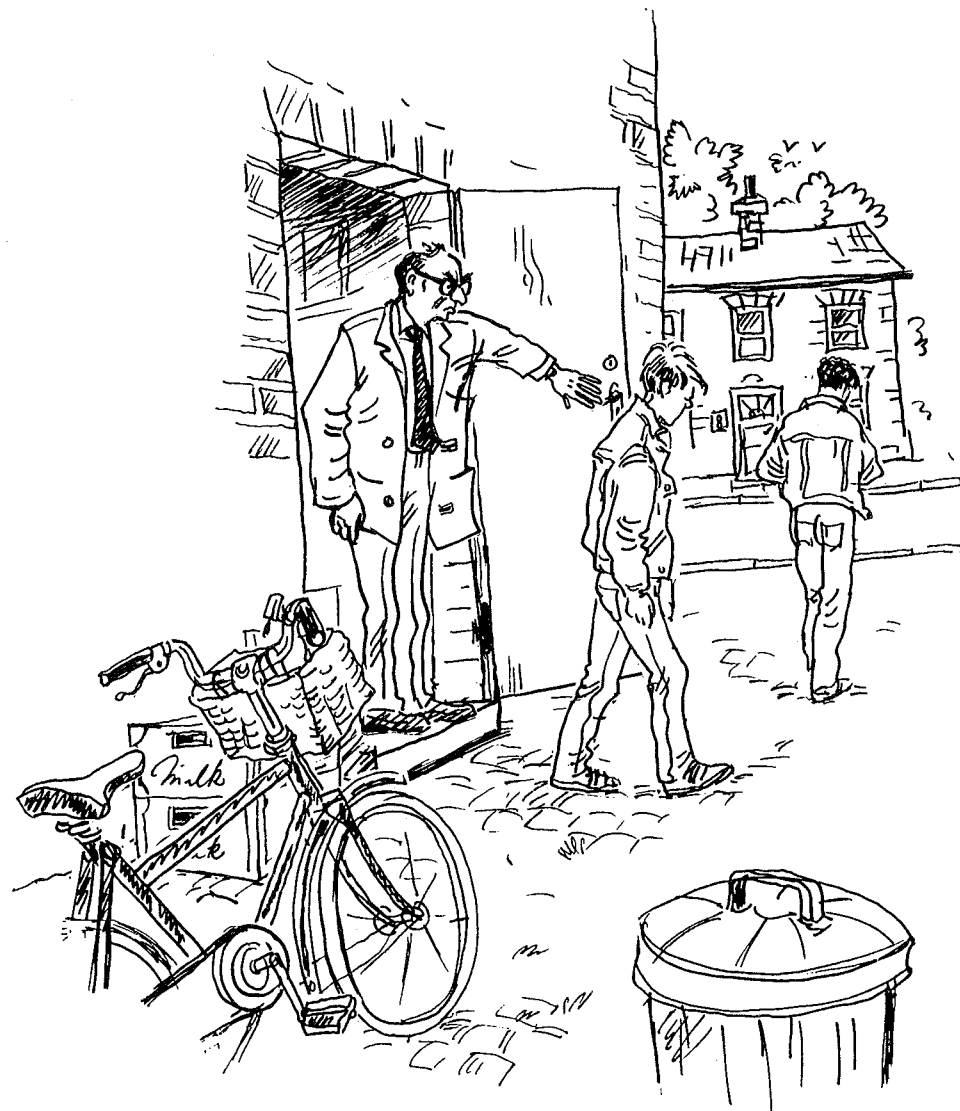
"**P**ick your things up and get along home." The shopkeeper moved away from the fireplace. "And have a good think about what I have told you."

They gathered together their belongings and put them in their pockets before making for the door.

**shoot looks** look very quickly  
**honest** *ærlig*  
**sin'cere** *oprigtig*  
**dare** *turde*  
**re'form-school** school for young criminals  
**trust** *stole på*  
**spoil** *ødelægge*  
**be'have** *opføre sig*  
**realize** understand  
**re'port** *anmelde*  
**re'lieved** *lettet*  
**have a good think** think carefully  
**be'longings** things they owned







"You can go out the back way," the man said and opened the door to let them pass through.

"Are you going to tell our dads?" Gus asked.

"You'd better wait and see about that. But remember this, I know who you are and if I hear of you getting into any more trouble like this, I shall go straight to the police and tell them about today."

"Don't worry, Mister," Gus said thankfully, "we shan't get into trouble again. We've had enough for today."

He stepped out into the yard. Behind him, Joby stopped. He wanted to say something. He felt he should. He felt as though a great weight had been lifted from him.

He looked up at the man and said, "Thanks, Mister. Thanks very much."



The shopkeeper put his hand on Joby's shoulder and pushed him out after Gus. "Get off home. Just think of what I've told you and you'll be all right."

They didn't speak until they had gone some way from the shop, then Gus said, "I thought we were in for it that time!"

"So did I." Joby looked sideways at Gus's face, trying to read his expression. "I think we had better stop now."

"Yes, we'd better. It's not safe now."

**T**hey went into a field and sat down to talk about what had happened. Small clouds of fear still troubled Joby now that he was away from the shop.

"Do you think he will tell our dads?" he asked.

Gus laughed. "No, he won't tell now. He let us off with a good talking-to, didn't he?"

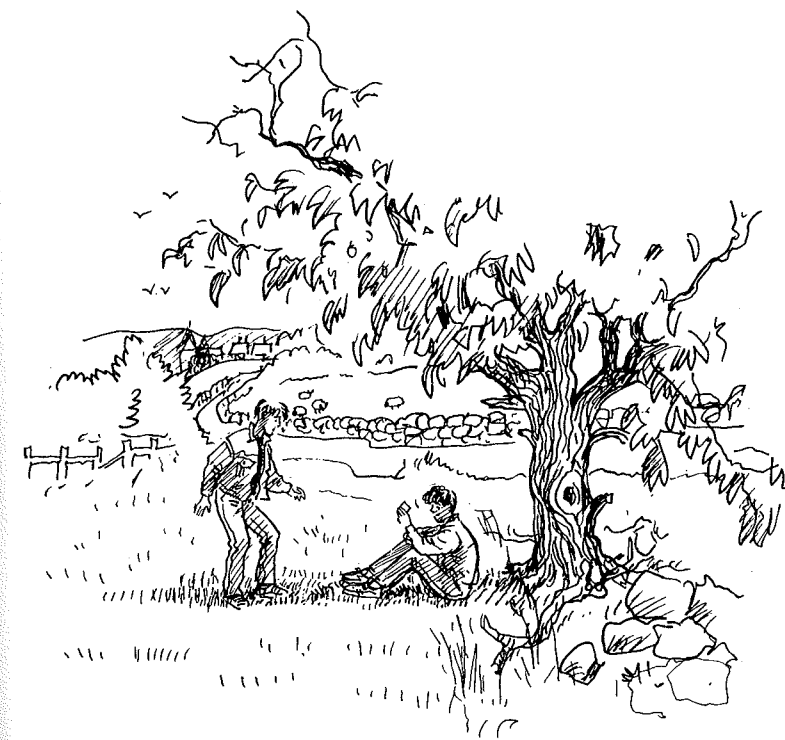
The church clock struck the half-hour.

"What time's that, then?"

"Half past four."

"I shall have to be off home to tea, then," Joby said.

"Oh, there's plenty of time." Gus sat up and looked all around the empty field. "What about having a quick smoke first?" He



we were in for it we  
were going to get into  
bad trouble  
ex'pression the look on  
his face  
trouble bekymre, plage  
a talking-to he scolded  
them





put his hand into his pocket and brought out an unopened packet of cigarettes. Joby stared at it.

"Where did you get them?"

Gus grinned. "Where do you think?"

"But you gave them all back."

"All except these!"

A smile of both admiration and unhappiness forced itself on to Joby's face.

"Honestly, Gus, you are a devil!"

"Well, are we going to have one, then?" Gus said.

"No." Joby got to his feet quickly. "I've got to go. My Mum said I mustn't be late. I'll see you later. So long."

He began to walk away across the rough grass. By the time he reached the edge of the field he was running. He wondered what Gus thought of him, and didn't care. His only interest now was to get as far away from Gus as possible.

1. Why does Joby give Gus some money?
2. What do they do when they get into the shop?
3. How do they feel when they hear the shopkeeper?
4. Where is the shopkeeper – and why?
5. What does Joby wish?
6. Why does he not believe that they wanted to buy chewing-gum?
7. What does Joby see in his mind when they go into his living-room?
8. What do they take out of their pockets (and what is the 'rubbish')?
9. "We did it for a bit of fun." Do you think either of the boys has done this sort of thing before?
10. What does the shop-keeper say happens to thieves?
11. How does Joby know that it is going to be all right?
12. Why does Joby stop before leaving the man's house?
13. How does Joby feel when he sees the packet of cigarettes?
14. Why does he want to get far away from Gus at the end of the story?
15. Why does the shopkeeper let them go? Is it the right thing to do?
16. Do you think either of them will do anything like this again?
17. Most people steal something at one time or another. Does it matter?



ex'cept undtagen  
admi'ration beundring  
honestly ærlig talt  
rough that had not been  
cut  
edge kant

## 'Petronella'

by J. Grenfell-Hill

lawn grass  
jam syltetøj  
currant rosin  
scone rosinbolle  
af'fectionate loving  
dahlia georgine (blomst)  
knickers underpants  
tug pull  
goblin nisse  
saucer underkop  
off day bad day  
sod græstørv  
don't care er ligeglad

'Petronella darling don't play down there,  
Come and have tea with Auntie and me.  
It's nice and sunny here on the lawn  
And there's lots of strawberry jam.  
We'll even let you pick the currants  
And leave the rest of the scone.  
Petra, please, don't kick the cat,  
And do stop picking your nose.

Yes, she's seven this year  
And so affectionate too.  
Don't throw stones at Mummy dear,  
They might go in her eyes.  
Auntie has brought you a present.  
My love, come, kiss her and say  
Hullo – Petra! No, I think the little  
Dear said 'Oh! well.'

Petra don't dig up the dahlias,  
And do give your knickers a tug.  
I don't like you playing down there  
My love, the goblins will catch  
You I'm sure – you'll kill them!  
Well, come and have tea with Auntie and me,  
And we'll let you drink out of the saucer,  
It's one of her off days you know.

Petronella! You've now gone too far,  
You've covered the table with sod.  
I know you don't care, but Auntie  
Is here, and she loves little girls like you.  
Leave the dahlias alone,  
No, we don't want a hole,  
And do stop screaming down there –  
Oh! dear, she's found Uncle George...

1. What is happening at the beginning of the poem?
2. What picture do you get of Petronella?
3. Why do you think she is like this?
4. Try to tell the story of what happened to Uncle George.

