

# BAD LUCK for BILLY BUNTER

by  
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## CHAPTER 1

### ROUGH ON COKER!

“Oh!” roared Billy Bunter.

Bunter was hurt. No fellow could be suddenly grabbed by a large and sinewy hand by the ear without feeling hurt. And Billy Bunter's fat ear was extensive in size. There was quite a lot of it to sustain damage and gave a good hold.

So, when Coker of the Fifth grabbed that fat and extensive ear, Billy Bunter roared: and the Bull of Bashan, famed in ancient times for his roaring, had nothing on Bunter at that moment.

Bunter's roar awoke every echo of the study landing. It echoed and re-echoed up the Remove passage. It caused Harry Wharton and Co. to emerge from No. 1 Study, wondering what on earth was happening at Greyfriars School.

Horace Coker did not heed.

Coker of the Fifth, as he often told his pals, Potter and Greene, had a short way with fags. His way with William George Bunter was very short and very sharp.

Having obtained a good grip on Bunter's fat ear, Coker proceeded to twist the same between a sinewy finger and thumb.

"You fat villain!!" said Coker.

"Yoo-hoop!" roared Bunter. "Leggo! It wasn't me! I didn't—I never wasn't—I mean, I wasn't didn't—oh, crikey! Leggo!"

"Where's my cake?"

"Yaroo! I say, you fellows." Billy Bunter's eyes, and spectacles, fell on the Famous Five, staring out of the Remove passage. "I say! Make him leggo!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Chuck that, Coker! You can't pull Remove ears, fathead."

"Don't you fags butt in!" snapped Coker. "That fat villain's snooped a cake from my study——"

"I haven't!" yelled Bunter. "I've never been near his study, you fellows! Will you make him leggo my ear?"

Harry Wharton and Co. paused. They knew their Bunter: and they were aware that if a cake was missing from any study at Greyfriars, it was extremely probable that W. G. Bunter knew what had become of it. Horace Coker was a lofty youth: altogether too lofty: and Remove ears were not to be pulled with impunity. Nevertheless, if Bunter had snooped his cake——

"Did you see Bunter bag the cake, Coker?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Think he'd let me see him?" snorted Coker. "I'd have burst him all over my study if I'd seen him."

"Then how do you know——" asked Frank Nugent.

"Well, I do know!" said Coker. "Now shut up!"

"The knowfulness cannot be terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Coker," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, mildly.

"I said shut up!" Coker pointed out.

And he gave a fat ear another vigorous twist, eliciting a fearful yell from its suffering owner.

"Stop that, Coker!" said Harry Wharton.

"I've already told you fags to shut up," said Coker. "If you want your own ear pulled, after Bunter's, young Wharton, you won't have to ask twice."

That did it!

"Come on!" said the captain of the Remove.

And the Famous Five, as one man, rushed at Coker of the Fifth. It was reasonable to suspect Billy Bunter if a cake was missing: still, it seemed that there was no evidence, and Coker was not entitled to act as judge, jury, and executioner all rolled into one. Still less could he evolve the bright idea of pulling the ear of the captain of the Remove without trouble to accrue.

Coker of the Fifth was big and hefty. Nature had been a little stingy with Coker in the matter of brains, but had made it up in brawn. But big and hefty as he was, Coker of the Fifth went over like a ninepin under the rush of the Famous Five.

He was strewn headlong on the study landing, roaring even more vociferously than the Owl of the Remove.

"Bump him!" said Bob Cherry.

"Hear, hear!"

"He, he, he!" cachinnated Billy Bunter, as the brawny Horace was grasped in five pairs of hands, swept off the landing, and bumped thereon with a terrific bump.

Bunter was rubbing a fat ear, which had a rather severe pain in it. But he seemed consoled when Horace Coker thumped on the landing. He grinned from his damaged ear to his undamaged one.

"I say, you fellows, go it!" gasped Bunter. "Give him jip! Give him beans! Making out that I had his cake, the beast! Jump on him! You jump on him, Bob—you've got the biggest feet."

"Oooogh!" spluttered Coker. "You cheeky fags—woogh! I'll smash you—I'll spiflicate you—I'll—I'll—oooooogh!"

Coker exerted his tremendous strength in vain. He could have dealt with one, two, or perhaps three juniors. But five were too many for him. In spite of his frantic struggles he was bumped again on the landing and yet again.

"Go it!" yelled Bunter, almost dancing in his excitement. "Bump him! Squash him! Jump on the beast! Making out I had his cake! I don't believe he had a cake at all—I certainly never saw it in his study——"

"Eh! what?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Then you've been in Coker's study?"

"Oh! No! Nowhere near it!" said Bunter, hastily. "I've just come up from the Rag—I mean, I've just come down from the dorm. I say, you fellows, give him another bump! As if I'd touch his cake. I get all the cakes I want from Bunter Court, as you fellows know! Rotten measly cake, too—hardly a plum in it——"

"What?" yelled Johnny Bull.

It began to look as if Billy Bunter did know something about that cake!

"That fat villain had it!" said Bob Cherry. "Let's bump Bunter next——"

"Beast!" ejaculated Bunter.

"Collar him!" exclaimed Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter did not wait to be collared. He shot away into the Remove passage like an arrow from a bow.

But the Famous Five had no time to think of Bunter. Horace Coker rallied, breathless and dishevelled, but full of beans. He hurled himself at Bunter's rescuers, and for several hectic minutes they had their hands full with Horace Coker. Five sturdy juniors and a big senior rolled on the landing in a breathless heap that seemed to be chiefly composed of arms and legs and tousled heads.

Herbert Vernon-Smith came up the staircase. He paused to look on with an amused grin.

"You fellows seem to be enjoying life," he remarked. "But you'd better chuck it—you can be heard all over the House. Prout's comin' up."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob. "Hook it, you chaps."

They released Coker. It was not very easy to release Coker, for he clung to them, and grabbed at them, and hung on to them: catching Coker was rather like catching a Tartar. But the news that Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth Form, was coming up made it necessary to finish with Coker. So, with a final combined effort, Harry Wharton and Co. flattened Horace out on the landing: and leaving him for dead as it were rushed back to their own quarters.

Coker remained where he was, sprawling, breathless, winded, his collar and tie gone, his clothes wildly rumpled, his hair a mop, spluttering as he sprawled. Thus he met the majestic view of Mr. Prout, as that ponderous and majestic gentleman arrived on the landing.

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated Prout. He stared at the sprawling Coker as if he could hardly believe his eyes. "Is—is that Coker? Is that a boy of my Form? Is that a senior boy of Greyfriars? Coker! How dare you, Coker? Are you out of your senses? How dare you sprawl on the floor in that ridiculous manner and in such a disgraceful state of untidiness? Answer, Coker!"

"Urrrgh!" spluttered Coker. He sat up dizzily and blinked at his form-master. "Wurrgh! I—I—ooogh! Those fags—gooooogh!"

"You have been indulging in horseplay with Lower boys!" boomed Prout. "Disgraceful! Have you no sense of decorum, Coker—no sense of the dignity of a senior Form?"

"I—I—I——" stuttered Coker.

Prout waved a plump hand at him.

"Enough! I will listen to no excuses, Coker! You are a disgrace to your form. I am ashamed of you, Coker! Horseplay on a landing with Lower boys—you, a senior of the Fifth Form—my form——"

"I wasn't!" spluttered Coker. "I didn't—I—I—irrrrgh!"

"Go away at once and make yourself tidy, Coker," said Mr. Prout, sternly. "Then go to your study and write out five hundred lines of the *Æneid*. If you were not a senior boy, Coker, I should cane you for this unparalleled rowdiness. Go!"

"I—I——"

"Go!" thundered Prout. "Another word and I shall cane you, Coker, senior boy as you are! You will hand me the lines tomorrow morning in the form-room. Now go!"

Coker staggered to his feet. He did not utter another word. With difficulty he suppressed his feelings and tottered breathlessly away off the landing. Prout watched him with a stern brow as he went, and then, with an angry snort, rolled away down the stairs again.

Coker, in his study, breathed fury. Five hundred lines and a threatened caning—just as if he were an ordinary mortal and not Horace Coker at all! No wonder Coker breathed fury!

## CHAPTER 2

### GO TO IT!

“He, he, he!”

That unmusical cackle announced the arrival of Billy Bunter in No. 1 Study.

There were six fellows in that study—the Famous Five and Lord Mauleverer. Mauly had dropped in to tea: and now that tea was over, his lordship had stayed for a chat, or partly for a chat, and partly because he was too lazy to detach himself from the armchair in which he was now comfortably stretched. Harry Wharton and Co. were talking Soccer, and Mauly was listening-in with more or less attention, probably rather less than more. Then Bunter happened.

“He, he, he!” cachinnated Bunter.

“Who’s letting off that alarm-clock?” asked Bob Cherry, glancing round.

“Oh, really, Cherry——”

“I think I’ll be pushin’ along, you men,” murmured Lord Mauleverer. A minute ago, Mauly had seemed a lazy fixture. But the arrival of William George Bunter seemed to have inspired him with a spot of energy.

“I say, you fellows, look out!” chuckled Bunter. “I say, Coker’s coming to see you. He, he, he!”

“Coker coming here?” asked Harry.

“He, he, he! I heard him telling Potter and Greene! I say, you fellows, Prout gave him five hundred lines. He says he won’t do them.”

“Nothing to do with us, I suppose,” grunted Johnny Bull.

“That’s all you know,” grinned Bunter. “He told Potter and Greene that it was through a crew of measly fags—that’s you, you know—that he got the lines, and that you’ve got to do them for him.”

“What!” yelled the Famous Five with one voice.

“He, he, he! That’s the idea—I heard him tell Potter and Greene,” chuckled the fat Owl. “He’s coming here to see that you do it.”

“The seefulness will not be terrific,” remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

“Well, that beats it!” said Bob Cherry. “Coker’s the biggest size in idiots that ever was: but if he thinks he can make us do his lines——”

“I can sort of see us doing them!” chuckled Frank Nugent.

“Sort of!” said Bob, laughing. “Poor old Coker! He’s dreaming dreams—but we’ll wake him up all right if he comes here.”

“The wakefulness will be——”

“Terrific and preposterous!” chuckled Bob.

“I say, you fellows, Potter and Greene were fairly begging him to do the lines,” said Bunter. “They said Prout would fly off the handle if he didn’t. Coker said

he wouldn't at any price. He said it was unjust and he'd be sacked first! I say, you fellows, don't you do them for him! Jolly good thing if Coker was sacked, you know. He said he would make the measly fags do the lines, and if they satisfied Prout, all right—if not, Prout could lump it! He, he, he."

And Billy Bunter, still cachinnating, rolled away from the doorway of No. 1 Study, leaving the Famous Five making a few hasty preparations for war.

If Coker of the Fifth fancied that he could make them do his lines, a surprise was awaiting Horace James Coker. Coker's last state was likely to be worse than his first when he was through in No. 1 Study.

Bob Cherry put a fives bat handy on the table. Frank Nugent refilled the ink-pot. Johnny Bull pushed back his cuffs. Hurree Singh picked up a ruler and Harry Wharton a Latin dictionary. They were soon ready for Coker of the Fifth.

Only Lord Mauleverer did not join in the warlike preparations. Bob glanced round at him.

"Better cut, Mauly," he said. "The fur will be flying here soon. You don't want to be mixed up in a shindy with that Fifth-form fathead."

"Oh, I'll join up if it comes to a shindy," yawned Lord Mauleverer. "I'll keep the poker handy. Coker's a big idiot and every little helps. But—look here, why row with Coker?"

"He's coming here specially to row," said Harry, staring. "We can't very well help ourselves, can we?"

"Yaas."

"Well, how?" demanded Johnny Bull. "You don't think we'd better write his lines for Prout, do you?"

"Yaas."

"What?" roared the Famous Five. They stared blankly at Lord Mauleverer. Giving in to Coker and bowing their heads to his lofty dictation was about the last idea that would ever have occurred to the heroes of the Remove.

"Why not?" asked Lord Mauleverer, placidly. "I'll help if you will. Many hands make light work. Coker's a blitherin' idiot! But he ain't really a bad chap! He can't help bein' a fool—it stands to reason that he wouldn't be, if he could help it. He's just the obstinate, pig-headed, silly ass to refuse to do his lines and get into a fearful row. Prout might whop him, or take him to the Head—goodness knows what. Well, what about seein' him through?"

"Look here——" roared Johnny Bull.

"Let Coker order us about?" said Bob. "Gone batchy, Mauly?"

"What's the odds?" said Mauly. "Coker can't make juniors do his lines—we can chuck him out on his neck, if you like."

"And we're going to!" said Nugent, warmly.

"Oh, all right!" sighed his lordship. "But if we gave him his head, it would keep him out of a fearful row with Prout: and it would be rather amusin' to pull his leg, too."

Harry Wharton and Co. exchanged glances. They were good-natured and kind-hearted fellows. They would have lent a helping hand to friend or foe at any time. But to let Coker of the Fifth throw his weight about in No. 1 Study and fancy that he could give them orders for the sole purpose of keeping Coker out of a fearful row with his beak, was a very novel idea.

"If you're serious, Mauly——" said the captain of the Remove, at last.

"Sober as a judge, old scout."

"Rot!" said Johnny Bull, emphatically.

"The rotfulness is terrific."

"Oh, I don't know," said Bob. His eyes glimmered. "It would be rather funny to give old Horace his head, and let him fancy that he can rip. Mauly's rather too good for Greyfriars, and a bit too good for this world altogether, but why not?"

"After all, Bunter did have his cake," said Nugent, "and we did rather handle him on the landing this afternoon."

"We did—rather!" chuckled Bob. "And Prout's come down very heavy. Look here, let old Mauly have his way. Let's jump if Coker says jump! It will be funny to watch him swelling and swelling."

"Here he comes, I think," said Nugent, as there was a heavy tread in the Remove passage, approaching from the landing.

"It's a go?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"It's a go!" agreed the chums of the Remove.

A few moments later, the door was pitched open, and the burly figure and rugged features of Horace James Coker loomed in the doorway.

Coker of the Fifth had a sheaf of impot paper in one hand. He had a cricket stump in the other. And his brow was dark with grim menace.

"Oh, here you are," said Coker, grimly, stepping into the study. "I'm glad I've found you all here. I've something for you fags to do."

Bob gave his chums a wink.

"What's the orders, boss?" he asked.

Coker stared a little. He had come to No. 1 in the Remove with a fixed resolve. Those fags had caused his lines: those fags were going to write his lines: otherwise, Coker was determined they never should be written, Prout or no Prout. But they would be written all right, because Coker was prepared to wallop the fags all round with that cricket stump if they raised objections. His experience on the landing that afternoon had not taught Coker that the Famous Five were rather too tough a proposition for him to handle. Experience is said to make fools wise. But it had never had that effect on Coker of the Fifth. Still, determined as he was, Coker was a little surprised to find the way so easy. He had expected objections, if not resistance. He was ready to deal with both. But apparently No. 1 Study was in a lamblike mood—quite a new mood for that study—and the cricket stump was not needed.

"Just give your orders, Coker," said Frank Nugent, solemnly.

"The hearfulness is the obeyfulness, my esteemed and preposterous Coker!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Give it a name, Coker," said Harry Wharton, mildly.

"Yaas: go it!" murmured Mauly.

Coker's grim brow relaxed. He laid the sheaf of impot paper on the table and put the cricket stump under his arm.

"Well, this is how it is," he said. "You fags kicked up a row on the landing. I'm not going to thrash you for it——"

"That's jolly good of you, Coker," said Bob.

"But you're going to do the lines I've got from Prout," said Coker. "I think that's fair, as you landed me with the lines. I may as well mention that I shall wallop you all round if you don't."

Johnny Bull opened his lips—but closed them again. It was rather a joke on Coker to let him go ahead throwing his weight about, and fancying himself monarch of all he surveyed, instead of pitching him out of the study on his neck. And after all, why not do old Horace a good turn.

"Here's the paper," said Coker. "Whack it out all round, and it won't really be a lot. I suppose you've got a Virgil here. Mind, you'll have to make your writing rather like mine. Prout never looks at a fellow's lines, really, but we may as well be careful. I've written a few lines for you to copy."

"That's jolly kind of you, Coker," said Bob.

"Well, you'll find me kind, if you come to that, so long as you behave yourselves," said Coker, almost genially. "I've a short way with fags—but if you toe the line and do as I tell you, all right."

"We can get your fist all right," said Harry, thoughtfully. "Something like a spider crawling over the paper after swimming in the inkpot, what?"

"I don't want any cheek, Wharton," said Coker, darkly. "I want those lines done. Now, go to it!"

Coker took up a strategic position by the door, stump in hand. Lord Mauleverer made an effort, detached himself from the armchair and joined his friends round the table. And the six juniors dipped pens in ink, propped Virgil up against the inkstand, and went to it!

### CHAPTER 3

#### CANE FOR COKER!

MR. PROUT frowned.

It was in the Fifth-form room the following morning.

Prout was generally genial. He had a genial and expansive nature really, and



he usually took the "more-a-friend-than-a-schoolmaster" line. Often he would chat with his boys, and was listened to with the greatest respect and attention—wily fellows like Price of the Fifth knowing how to make him run on and on, with a leading remark or two, thus using up quite a lot of time that would otherwise have gone in lessons. Most of the Fifth agreed that even Prout's chats were better than work.

But Prout was neither genial nor chatty on this particular morning. Coker had annoyed him; also, he suspected rebelliousness in Coker. He was not at all sure that Coker had done the impositions imposed on him. If he had, and if it was reasonably satisfactory, well and good. If he hadn't, or if it was not reasonably satisfactory, the thunder was scheduled to roll in the Fifth-form room that morning.

He frowned at Coker and did not at all like the independent expression on Coker's rugged face. Coker saw no reason why he should wilt under his form-master's frown: and Coker did not wilt. Prout breathed hard.

"Coker!" he boomed.

"Yes, sir!"

"Where are your lines?"

"Here, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Prout, rather taken aback. He had doubted whether those lines were written at all. But if Coker had them there, it was all right. "Very well, Coker! You may bring them to me."

Coker came out of the form and laid his lines on the form-master's desk. His friends, Potter and Greene, exchanged a glance. They knew, though Mr. Prout did not, that those lines had been written in a junior study by many hands. How and why Harry Wharton and Co. had done it, instead of scragging Coker, Potter and Greene did not know: but they knew that Horace Coker himself had not written more than five or six lines out of the five hundred and they were a little anxious for Coker.

Still, it was well known in the Fifth that Prout hardly looked at a fellow's impot. As Prout often said in Common-Room, he trusted his boys, and they trusted him! Perhaps that trustful system came easier than careful and meticulous attention to detail. Anyhow, Prout never gave a fellow's lines more than a cursory glance. So it looked all right for Coker.

But Prout was not in his usual mood that morning.

In point of fact, Prout, passing the games-study the previous evening, had heard Coker's loud voice echoing therefrom, making the interesting announcement that he was dashed if he would do those lines for Prout!

Prout was not the man to take official notice of words not intended for his ears. But he had not forgotten, and he was in a very unusually sharp and observant frame of mind that morning.

Instead of merely glancing at Coker's impot, and then passing on to the order of the day, Prout picked up the sheaf of paper and scanned it.

Potter and Greene exchanged another uneasy glance. Coker felt a rather uncomfortable jump at his heart.

Even Coker realised that it would be rather serious if 'Old Pompous' tumbled! True, he had set the juniors a model of his 'fist.' Equally true, a fellow only had to scrawl like a very backward fag in the Second Form to make his writing like Coker's. By throwing in as many mistakes in spelling as possible, he could make the resemblance to Coker's work a very good likeness indeed.

Still, there are many ways of scrawling: and though many hands make light work, there might be a lot of dissimilarities among so many hands, if a keen eye looked for them. That morning, unfortunately, Prout's eye was keen.

He examined that impot carefully. Thunder grew in his brow as he proceeded.

"He's spotted it!" Potter whispered to Greene.

Greene nodded.

"Poor old Coker!" he murmured. "Ain't he the man to ask for it?"

"Coker!" boomed Prout.

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Coker, uneasily.

"Did you write these lines with your own hand?"

Silence.

"I have examined your lines, Coker. The hand-writing is bad—as bad as yours. The spelling is worse. Such carelessness, with the copy under your eyes, is very like you, Coker. But——" Prout paused. "But, Coker I have an impression—in fact it is obvious—that these sheets were written by different hands. You have obtained the help of others in writing out this imposition, Coker."

No reply.

"Coker! Answer me! Did you, or did you not, write out these five hundred lines of Virgil with your own hand, unaided?"

That left Coker no choice. Not for worlds would old Horace have told a lie on the subject. Certainly he had hoped to palm off those lines as if he had written them himself. Fellows often did that. But to tell the lie direct on the subject was a very different matter. A fellow like Price would have done it: Hilton might have done it: but it was far outside Coker's limit.

"No, sir!" said Coker.

Prout laid down the impot.

"I thought not," he said. He paused. "Coker, I hardly know how to deal with you. I gave you an imposition and you have not written it—you have attempted to delude me with lines written by other hands. Much as I regret the use of the cane in this form-room—repugnant as it is to me to cane a senior boy like a junior—you have left me no choice, Coker. I shall cane you."

There was something like a sensation in the Fifth.

The cane lay on Mr. Prout's desk, certainly. But it was never used. Senior men were not caned. Prout had too much sense of the dignity of the Fifth, and of his own dignity, to handle the cane as Mr. Quelch handled it in the Remove room.

Second and Third, Remove and Fourth, even the Shell, bent over under the cane—but never the Fifth! Still, if a fellow asked for it, in fact begged for it, there it was! Prout picked it up.

Coker gasped for breath.

He was not only a Fifth-form man. He was the most important man in the Fifth, at least in his own esteem. He almost wondered whether Prout had gone mad!

"Coker! You will bend over that desk!" said Mr. Prout.

Coker gazed at him.

"I can't be caned, sir!" he pointed out.

"What?" boomed Prout.

"We're not caned in the Fifth!" said Coker. "I'm not a fag!"

"If you act like an irresponsible junior, Coker, I have no choice but to treat you like an irresponsible junior. I have said that I shall cane you, Coker. You will immediately bend over that desk."

Prout flourished the cane.

Coker did not stir.

He couldn't do it. Caning was all very well for Lower boys. Indeed, Coker heartily approved of it—for Lower boys. He thought that it did them good. But caning for Coker of the Fifth—it was wildly impossible. Coker stood like a rock, and did not bend over.

The Fifth Form watched, breathless. Prout waited—but he waited in vain. His portly countenance became gradually purple.

"Do you hear me, Coker?" he boomed.

"Yes, sir! But——"

"Bend over that desk."

Coker did not move.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Prout, in a gasping voice. "Coker! Do you venture to disobey your form-master?"

Coker did not answer. But still he did not stir. Potter and Greene gave him almost imploring looks. Price winked at Hilton. Every other fellow looked very grave. It was realised that this was a crisis. Prout, obviously, could not retreat. His authority, his prestige, were at stake. But neither, it seemed, was Coker going to retreat. There was an awful pause.

"Very well," said Mr. Prout, breaking the dreadful silence at last. "Very well indeed! You refuse to obey your form-master, Coker! Very well! I shall place the matter before your headmaster, and you will leave Greyfriars this morning. You may now leave the form-room. Wait in your study till you are sent for to receive the sentence of expulsion from Dr. Locke."

Prout pointed to the door with his cane.

Coker looked at the door, and looked at Prout.

Coker had a brain of the densest solidity. But even into Coker's solid brain there crept a realisation that he couldn't get by with this. A fellow who defied his beak

was sacked—sacked on the spot. Coker, if he refused to obey Prout, couldn't carry on in the Fifth-form room like Ajax defying the lightning, but had to get out and go.

As this awful truth penetrated Coker's solid brain, he woke up to realities.

"If—if you please, sir——" gasped Coker.

"Enough, Coker!"

"I—I'll be caned, sir!" stuttered Coker.

He bent over the desk.

Prout paused. He was so intensely exasperated with Coker that for the moment he would have preferred, perhaps, for that obstreperous member of his form to be turfed out of Greyfriars School. But he was, after all, placable—neither did he want an expulsion in his form if he could help it.

"Very well, Coker," said Mr. Prout, at last. "I am glad that you have come to your senses. I shall cane you."

Prout handed out six—and he put all his beef into them.

Coker intended to go through the infliction, since it could not be helped, with all the dignity possible in the painful circumstances. Not a sound was going to escape his lips under the swiping cane.

But as the swipes came down Coker forgot this, and roared. He roared, indeed, as loudly as Billy Bunter had roared on the landing the previous day. His roars woke echoes far beyond the form-room.

Swipe! swipe! swipe!

"Oh! Ow! wow! Oh! ow! Yaroooh!" roared Coker.

Swipe! swipe!

"Ooooooooooooooooooh!" bellowed Coker.

**SWIPE!**

Prout put terrific energy into the final swipe. It fairly crashed on Coker's trousers. Coker roared like a mad bull.

"Now go to your place, Coker." Prout, breathing rather hard after his uncommon exertions, laid the cane on his desk. "Go!"

Coker almost crawled to his place, doubled up. And lessons, at last, started in the Fifth-form room—one member of the form wriggling and wriggling, like an eel, as if the form he sat upon had become red-hot.

#### CHAPTER 4

#### BEASTLY FOR BUNTER!

"BUNTER?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"You are not giving me attention!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I heard everything you were saying, sir!" gasped Billy Bunter, in alarm.

Several fellows in the Remove form-room had noticed that Billy Bunter was in a very thoughtful mood: thinking, but obviously not of his lessons. There was a deep wrinkle in his fat brow which showed that his plump brain was hard at work.

There was only one subject upon which William George Bunter ever did any really deep and serious thinking. That was food. So fellows who noticed that the Owl of the Remove was wrapped in thought naturally supposed that he was thinking either of dinner or of something at the tuck-shop in break.

Whatever the subject of his deep reflections Bunter had no attention to waste on Quelch. Unluckily, Mr. Quelch noticed it: and he was not a master to be patient under inattention from his form. Quelch believed that fellows came to Greyfriars to learn things—a view that was not wholly shared by his form, least of all by Billy Bunter.

Called to order by his form-master's sharp voice, Billy Bunter sat up and took notice. Quelch's gimlet-eye glinted at him.

"You heard everything I was saying, Bunter," he repeated.

"Oh, yes, sir! Every word."

"Very good!" said Mr. Quelch, grimly. "Then you will tell me, Bunter, what was the description given by Tacitus of the Roman method of restoring order in a subject province."

"Oh, lor'!" gasped Bunter.

His fat mind had been far away from the Remove form-room. It had been dwelling, as a matter of fact, on a parcel that had been recently deposited in a certain study in the Fifth. Bunter could easily guess what that parcel contained, as it was sent to Horace Coker by his affectionate Aunt Judy. All sorts of schemes and plans for annexing that parcel had been simmering in Bunter's fat mind—to the utter exclusion of what was going on in his own form-room. Bunter did not even know that Quelch was telling his form about Tacitus. He did not, indeed, know who Tacitus was, and did not want to know. He realised that Quelch must have been talking about Tacitus and Roman manners and customs. But, as he had not heard a word, how was he to repeat what the beast had said? Quite plainly, he couldn't.

"Well, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "You will repeat the words of Tacitus, which I spoke only a minute ago."

"Oh! Yes, sir! I—I know what he said," stammered Bunter. "I—I heard you quite plainly, sir! He—he said—he said, 'Kiss me, Hardy!'"

Even Bunter would hardly have made such a shot in the dark, had he not been hopelessly confused and alarmed under Quelch's penetrating eye.

"Oh, gum!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at Mr. Quelch through his big spectacles. The expression

on Quelch's face apprised him that he hadn't got the right answer. Before the Remove master could speak, Bunter hurried on with another shot in the dark.

"I—I—I mean, he—he didn't say 'Kiss me, Hardy!'" gasped Bunter. "He—he said, 'Had I but served Pontius Pilate as I have served Julius Cæsar——'"

"Bunter! Silence! Boys, kindly do not indulge in absurd merriment at this foolish boy's unexampled stupidity. Bunter, I shall repeat the words of Tacitus, and you will write them out a hundred times."

"Oh, crikey!"

"Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant!" said Mr. Quelch. "Which means, Bunter, 'They make a solitude, and call it peace.' You will write out both the sentence and its translation a hundred times, after class. And now, Bunter, unless you attend to the lesson, I shall cane you."

After which, Billy Bunter gave his form-master all the attention he could. It was tough on a fellow who wanted to think out ways and means of saving Coker the trouble of dealing with Aunt Judy's parcel. But there was no help for it. A form-master, like a troublesome horse, had to be given his head. Bunter tried to dismiss Coker's parcel from his mind and gave Mr. Quelch his head.

But he was very glad when the Remove came out in break.

While the other fellows streamed out into the fresh morning air the Owl of the Remove negotiated the stairs. On a fine morning, hardly a man was to be found in the studies in break. Bunter hoped to find the coast clear in the Fifth-form studies. But he was uneasy—Coker had been very swift on his track the previous day in the matter of the cake. Bunter did not want to be seen anywhere in the neighbourhood of Coker's study.

But there was nobody in the Fifth-form passage and he almost tiptoed to Coker's door. The door was shut: but all was silent, and the fat Owl ventured to open it and blink in through his big spectacles.

His first blink spotted the parcel, standing on Coker's study table—still unopened. It was amazing, to Bunter, that any fellow could leave a parcel of tuck unopened even for a minute. But there it was—just as it had arrived, and as Bunter had seen Trotter taking it up to the study. That was satisfactory—but Bunter's second blink alighted on a frowning rugged face. He jumped.

Coker was in his study.

Coker was by no means an indoors man. He was almost the last man at Greyfriars School to think of spending the precious minutes of morning break sitting in an armchair in his study. Yet there he was.

He did not, for the moment, observe the fat face peering in at the door.

Coker was in a dark mood.

He had been caned. He was still feeling the twinges of the whopping. But it had worn off a good deal, and Coker was no longer worrying about that. It was the hurt to his dignity that was worrying Coker. That was why he had withdrawn to his study, far from the madding crowd, as it were.

To Coker himself, it seemed almost time for the skies to fall. He, Horace James Coker, had been caned—caned on his trousers, like a fag of the Fourth or the Remove. Of course, he was not going to endure this great wrong patiently. That was unthinkable. But what could a fellow do?

With all that on his mind, it was no wonder that Coker did not join the cheery mob out of doors—no wonder that he passed Aunt Judy's parcel by like the idle wind which he regarded not. He was in no mood for company, and tuck could not heal the damage to his dignity. He sat glooming, too deeply wrapped in dark reflections to heed, for the moment, the fact that his door had opened and that a fat face and a large pair of spectacles glimmered there.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Coker looked up.

"I—I say, Coker! I—I——" stammered Bunter.

Coker did not get out of the chair. He merely reached out for a book—Dr. Smith's Smaller Latin Dictionary was at hand. He buzzed it at Bunter.

Crash!

It was rather fortunate for Bunter that it was not Dr. Smith's Larger Latin Dictionary. It crashed on a fat chin, and Billy Bunter went over backwards into the passage and sat down quite suddenly with a roar.

"Whooooop! Beast!" roared Bunter.

He was up in a moment, however, and scudding down the passage to the study landing. This, evidently, was no moment for the annexation of Coker's parcel. He fully expected Coker to follow up the dictionary in person: and he did the staircase two at a time in frantic haste.

But the guilty flee when no man pursueth! Coker did not follow Bunter. He did not even field the dictionary. He remained where he was, in deep and gloomy thought—forgetting the unimportant existence of the Owl of the Remove, concentrating on his wrongs, and on his growing determination to get even with Prout.

When a fellow at school thinks of 'getting even' with a beak, it a matter that requires a lot of thought! Coker realised that. He gave it a lot of thought—and Billy Bunter escaped with nothing worse than a pain in a fat chin: and Aunt Judy's parcel remained on the study table, unopened and unheeded.

## CHAPTER 5

### WANTED—A CATSPAW!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

After class that day, Billy Bunter looked for the Famous Five. He found them strolling on the Elm Walk, under the spreading branches, talking football. A Soccer

fixture was coming along, which was a matter of deep interest to Harry Wharton and Co., if not to Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows——" squeaked Bunter. "I say, that ass Coker——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What about Coker?" asked Bob. "I hear that his beak gave him six on the bags this morning. Prout doesn't often whop in the Fifth."

"He's got a parcel in his study——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! I've seen it," explained Bunter, "and I heard that ass Coker tell Potter that it was only a cargo of home-made jam from his aunt—he hasn't even opened it! Jam, you know! Only jam! He actually said only jam! Do you fellows think Coker's mad?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, there it is," said Bunter. "Mind, I wouldn't think of bagging Coker's jam, just for jam. I'm not a fellow to snoop tuck, I hope."

"What a hopeful nature!"

"But look at it," said Bunter. "Coker pulled my ear yesterday. He's a beast all round. My idea is that it would serve him right to bag that parcel. Just to punish him, you know—not because of the jam. I'm not thinking of the jam. All the same, it's jolly good jam—I know Aunt Judy's jam! Luscious! Scrumptious! And it's quite a big parcel! Well, what about it?"

"Nothing about it, you fat cormorant," answered Harry Wharton. "And you'd better steer clear of Coker—he won't be in a good temper, after six whacks on the bags."

"That's what I was thinking of," said Bunter. "He chucked a dictionary at my head just for looking into his study in break. Ten minutes ago he kicked me—just because he saw me in the Fifth-form passage. I dare say he fancied I had an eye on his study—suspicious beast, you know. Now, my idea is this—suppose you fellows start a rag with Coker——"

"Suppose again!" suggested Nugent.

"Do let a fellow speak! You start a rag with Coker—scrag him on the landing like you did yesterday, or catch him in the quad and sit on him, anything you like, so long as you keep him busy while I nip into his study, see? Of course I'll whack out the jam, fair whacks all round. How's that?"

"We're to rag Coker, so that you can pinch his jam?" asked Johnny Bull, staring at the fat junior.

"Well, that's rather a rotten way of putting it," said Bunter. "My idea is to pay him out—the jam's nothing, simply nothing. I hear that he bullied you fellows into doing his lines yesterday——"

"Something wrong with your ears, then," said Bob. "Better give them a wash, if the sudden change wouldn't upset you too much. We did Coker's lines to do him a good turn."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter.



"So you don't believe that," said Bob. "Now then, you men, all kick him together. Lift him right along the Elm Walk."

"I—I mean, of course I believe it, old chap," said Bunter, hastily. "I believe every word of it, though I know it ain't true, of course."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But never mind that," said Bunter. "You fellows owe Coker one. He said you were an obstreperous hooligan, Bob."

"Did he?" gasped Bob.

"Yes, and he said you were a growling bear, Bull."

"Did he?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Yes, and he said you were a milksop, Nugent."

"Did he?" grinned Nugent.

"Yes, and he said you were a black nigger, Inky."

"Did he?" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Yes, and he said you were a stuck-up swanking fathead, Wharton."

"Did he?" ejaculated the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, and more," said Bunter. "More than I'd like to repeat, really! Now, after all that, you want to pay Coker out, don't you?"

"Well," said Bob Cherry, thoughtfully. "I think we ought to make an example of a fellow who says all those things about us."

"That's just it," said Bunter, eagerly. "Pay him out, you know! I'd forgotten to mention that he said you were a clumsy bargee, Bob, with feet as big as an elephant's. You ought not to take that quietly, old chap."

"I'm not going to," said Bob. He glanced round at his friends, who were all grinning. "You fellows think that a fellow who talks about us like that ought to be jolly well scragged?"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

"Then scrag him!" said Bob. "You agree, Bunter."

"What-ho!" said Bunter. "Scrag him bald-headed, you fellows! Make an example of him! Collar him, and—yaroooooooooh! Leggo! Wharrer you grabbing me for, I'd like to know? Leggo!"

"But we're going to scrag the fellow who said all those nice things about us," explained Bob. "Go ahead, you men."

"Whoooooop!" roared Billy Bunter, as the Famous Five went ahead. "I say, you fellows, chuck it! It's Coker you've got to scrag, you silly asses! Stop, you fatheads! I say——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!"

"Now boot him the length of the Walk," said Bob. "Right up as far as master's gate and back again. Don't go, Bunter! We've hardly started yet."

But Billy Bunter did go. He went as if he were discharged from a rifle. He fairly flew. A roar of laughter followed him as he vanished into space.

About ten minutes later Peter Todd, coming out of the House, discovered William George Bunter leaning on an ancient stone buttress and gasping for breath. Peter paused, staring at him.

"Been running a couple of yards?" he asked. "You look quite winded."

"Beast!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, hold on a minute, Toddy, old chap! I say, Toddy, you and Dutton could handle Coker of the Fifth—at least you could hold him for a few minutes—and you could get Smithy to help—Smithy's always ready for a rag."

"And what are we to handle Coker for?" asked Peter, staring.

"It's nothing to do with his parcel," explained Bunter. "So far as I know, Coker hasn't had a parcel at all, and it's not got jam in it. I'll tell you why, Toddy—Coker said you were a skinny freak, with a nose like a door-knocker and a face like a bath broom."

"Did he?" gasped Toddy.

"Yes, old chap. I was awfully indignant, you being my pal. What about scragging Coker, Toddy? Get three or four fellows to help—Dutton, and Smithy, and Ogilvy, and Bolsover major—I say, he said that your face would stop a clock, Toddy."

Peter Todd gave his fat study-mate a fixed look. Then he suddenly reached out, grasped a fat neck, and banged a fat head against the buttress.

Bang!

"Yoo-hooop!" roared Bunter. "You silly ass! Wharrer you banging my head for?" Bunter had not expected that. Really, he might have, after his recent experience with Harry Wharton and Co. But he hadn't! "Ow! Leggo! Leave off banging my head, you bony beast! Yaroooooh!"

Bang! Bang!

"Oh, crikey! Oh, scissors! Help!"

Peter released the fat neck, and walked on, leaving Billy Bunter rubbing the fat head and glaring after him, his very spectacles gleaming with wrath.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

And he rolled away in search of another catspaw.

"I say, Smithy——" He found the Bounder in the quad and caught him by the sleeve. "I say, Smithy, old chap, I think I ought to tell you what Coker said——"

"Bother Coker, and blow what he said," answered Vernon-Smith, "and don't grab my sleeve with your sticky paw."

"Oh, really, Smithy! I say, Coker said you were a regular young blackguard, and that it would serve you right if the pre's copped you out of bounds——"

"What?" gasped Smithy.

"And he said the sooner you were sacked from Greyfriars the better, old chap! I say, what about scragging Coker, Smithy? He said—yaroooooooh!"

Why Smithy kicked him Bunter did not know. But he knew that Smithy did kick him. On that point no room was left for doubt. Smithy dribbled him quite a distance before the yelling fat Owl escaped.

After that, even Billy Bunter realised that catspaws were not easy to find, and he gave it up. The parcel of jam was still in Coker's study, haunting Bunter's fat thoughts. Bunter simply had to have that jam. But it was borne upon his fat mind that nobody was going to scrag Coker while he annexed the jam, and that somehow he had to solve this knotty problem entirely on his own. And with that problem on his mind, naturally Bunter had no time to write out "*Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*" a hundred times for Quelch.

## CHAPTER 6

### CUT AND DRIED!

"PREP!" said Coker, bitterly.

Potter and Greene glanced at him.

Prep had to be done. Coker spoke of it as if it were the merest triviality: something like Nero fiddling while Rome was burning. Coker showed no sign of bothering about prep.

Seated in the armchair, with his lengthy legs stretched out and a gloomy frown on his brow, Coker regarded his study mates as they got out their books with a scornful and sardonic eye.

"Prep!" he repeated.

"Well, we've got to do it, old chap," said Potter, mildly. "We don't want bother with Prout in the morning."

"Who's Prout?" said Coker.

Really, there was no answering that. Prout was form-master in the Fifth. Coker's question seemed to imply that he was nobody at all, less than nobody, if possible.

"Still feeling it?" asked Greene. He was alluding to the six in the form-room that morning.

"After all, you did get Prout's rag out!" said Potter. "I should forget all about it, if I were you, Coker."

"You might!" said Coker. "I'm not likely to. If Prout whopped you before all the fellows it wouldn't matter a lot so far as I can see. It's a bit different with me, George Potter."

"Oh! Is it?" said Potter, rather warmly.

"I've been whopped," said Coker. "Whopped like a scrubby fag in the Remove. Prout whopped me just as Quelch might whop Bunter. Me! Well, I was whopped

when I was in the Remove, and I dare say it did me good—I believe in whopping juniors. But I can't be whopped in the Fifth. A beak can't whop a senior man without something to follow, at any rate. Prout's asked for it."

Potter and Greene sat down to prep. Coker remained in the armchair, his eye still sardonic. It was only too plain that Potter and Greene were quite unaware that the whopping of Horace Coker marked a crisis in the history of Greyfriars School. They seemed to think it quite an ordinary sort of thing, unusual in the Fifth, no doubt, but nothing to do a song and dance about. It was only too clear that the superlative importance of Horace Coker did not impress them as it impressed Coker himself.

"Prout's asked for it!" repeated Coker, distinctly.

"Not for your impot?" asked Green. "That's washed out by the licking, isn't it?"

"I'm not talking about my impot, Greene. Do you think that Prout can bang his cane on my trousers in the form-room, and nothing happen afterwards?" Coker's lip curled in a sneer. "Well, I'm not the man to take it lying down."

"But you didn't have to take it lying down, you took it bending over," Greene pointed out.

"If you're going to be funny, Greene——"

"Leave it to you, partner," said Greene, affably.

Coker breathed hard.

"What about prep., Coker?" put in Potter, hastily. "You don't want any more trouble with Prout, do you?"

"Yes!" answered Coker.

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene, together.

"If you fellows can leave those rotten books alone for a minute, I'll tell you what I'm going to do," said Coker, scornfully. "You'll have to know anyway, as you're going to help."

"Are we?" murmured Greene.

"Prout's asked for it," said Coker. "Now you know as well as I do, that a man can't walk into his form-master's study and smack his head. That would meet the case, but it can't be done at school."

"Oh, my only summer bonnet!" gasped Potter. "No, old chap, it can't—there's no doubt about that—it just can't."

"But there are other ways," said Coker. "A fellow can hit back in lots of ways, without giving himself away. He can keep it dark, see. Of course, I don't like the idea of being superstitious in any way——"

"Superstitious!" repeated Potter, blankly. "Oh! You mean surreptitious."

"I mean what I say, and I'll thank you not to try to teach me," said Coker. "As I said, a fellow doesn't want to be superstitious: but if Prout knew that I had bunged a bucket of tar over his head he would get me sacked. So I shall have to keep it dark."

Potter and Greene forgot even prep. They just sat and gazed at Horace James Coker in horror.

"A bucket of—of tar!" said Potter, faintly.

"Over Prout's head!" moaned Greene.

"That's what I've been thinking out," said Coker, with a nod. "Prout will be sorry for himself, I think. But it's rather important not to let him know that it came from me. You see that?"

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Potter. "I—I should think that rather important—if you did it. Thank goodness you can't and won't."

"I can—and will!" said Coker, calmly. "It's up to me to let Prout know where he gets off. I've got it all cut and dried. You know that Prout ambles out into the quad every evening for a trot on the Elm Walk. He's as regular as clock-work, you could set your watch by the time Prout rolls out. Well, it's dark under the elms at night——"

"Dark in lots of places at night!" said Potter, blandly.

"I've noticed that," agreed Greene.



"Now boot him the length of the Walk," said Bob.

Coker gave a suspicious look. But their faces were quite serious, so he passed over these frivolous remarks unheeded.

"Well, Prout's not a cat to see in the dark," he said. "He gets the tar. I know where to get Gosling's bucket that he's been using on the wood-shed roof. That's easy. I parked it on the spot all ready. We drop out on the quiet while Prout's doing his roll on the Elm Walk. You fellows keep cave to make all safe. I handle the bucket and let Prout have the tar. All you two have to do is to keep watch and tip me if anybody blows along. Even you have sense enough for that."

Potter and Greene gazed at him.

Coker evidently meant this. That whopping had deprived him of what little judgment he had—if he had any at all. The iron had entered into his soul, as it were. He was in deadly earnest. Having escaped the 'sack' by taking the caning, he was now going to ask for the sack so emphatically that it couldn't be denied him!

But his friends were not disposed to ask for the same. They could not quite see themselves taking a hand in tarring Prout. Not quite!

"Simple enough, what?" said Coker. "I've thought it out. I'm rather a man for strategy. You fellows could never have thought this out, I fancy."

"Right in one!" gasped Potter. "We couldn't!"

"Hardly!" said Greene.

"Well, it's up to me to do the thinking in this study, having the brains for it," said Coker. "I've thought out the whole thing. It's booked for tomorrow night—if it happened tonight Prout might think of me, after that whopping——"

"He might!" agreed Potter, with a private wink at Greene.

"So I'm leaving it till tomorrow," said Coker. "After prep., tomorrow night, we go down quietly to the form-room, one at a time. I get there first and you fellows join me soon afterwards, making sure you're not spotted. We drop from the window, and after the show's over, get back the same way. We're back in the games-study, with a crowd of fellows by the time Prout staggers in smothered with tar. Rather neatly planned, I think—what?"

"Oh, gum!" said Greene. "Coker, old man, if you tar Prout, you'll be bunked——"

"How will he know? I'm not going to whisper in his ear that it's me doing it when I tip the tar bucket over his napper," said Coker, sarcastically. "Don't argue about it, Greeney. It's settled—all cut and dried. All you fellows have to do is to turn up on time tomorrow night."

"But——" gasped Potter.

"That will do," said Coker. "Don't jaw any more!" Coker heaved himself out of the armchair. "I'd better take a squint at prep.," he added, bitterly. "Prout may put me on con. in the morning! He's capable of it. He would make it an excuse to rag me, if I couldn't translate—he's capable of that, too! I don't know how I stand Prout, really! But he's got it coming."

"But——" gasped Potter, again.

"I said don't jaw any more!" pointed out Coker.

Potter and Greene exchanged a glance and did not jaw any more. They were, in fact, relieved that Coker was apparently not going to jaw any more: prep. had to be done. The three settled down to prep., Coker every now and then indulging in a sardonic chuckle, no doubt thinking of what was coming to Prout.

But when prep. was over, and Potter and Greene went along to the games-study, they exchanged a few words.

"Are we going to ask to be bunked tomorrow night, Greeney?" murmured Potter.

Greene smiled.

"Not a whole lot," he said.

"Can we stop that ass somehow?" asked Potter. "No good talking sense to him, I suppose?"

"Though you bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him," quoted Greene, with a shake of the head.

"But we can't let him do it."

"Not if we can help it."

"We shall have to think this out!" said Potter.

Coker had thought it out, and regarded it as settled and fixed and done with, unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. But Potter and Greene had some thinking to do, too. They had to think out how to save Coker from himself if they could: how to keep the great Horace from making an unexampled ass of himself. And with a fellow like Coker, that required some hard thinking.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE TORTURES OF TANTALUS!

BILLY BUNTER smiled genially.

Bunter was pleased.

It was the following day: Wednesday, which was half-holiday at Greyfriars. It was fine weather and most fellows were likely to spend that half-holiday out of doors.

Harry Wharton and Co. were playing a visiting team in Little Side. Bunter was not interested in Soccer, except in so far as it kept interfering fellows occupied, those who might otherwise have barged in between Bunter and jam. A senior Form match was on, too, Fifth against Sixth: and Bunter had rather hoped that Coker might be in the Fifth-form team. But there was no earthly chance of that, Coker's Soccer being of a kind for which his form-captain had absolutely no

use whatever. But Potter and Greene were playing for the Fifth: and now, adorning the doorway with his fat person, Billy Bunter had the satisfaction of seeing Horace Coker stalk out of the House.

He had dreaded that Coker might remain in his study or hang about the Fifth-form quarters somewhere. And there was Coker—stalking out. Bunter's eyes and spectacles lingered on him as he went.

He hoped that Coker was going out of the gates. That would have seen him safely off the scene. But Coker did not head for the gates: he went round the school buildings and disappeared from sight.

Where Coker was going, and what he was up to, Bunter did not know; and did not care so long as it kept Horace away from his study.

Coker had not even glanced at the fat junior as he went out. He was not aware that Bunter had designs on Aunt Judy's jam. Indeed, so inconsiderable a microbe as Billy Bunter was not likely to linger in Coker's thoughts now—thoughts fully occupied with his masterly campaign against Prout. Coker was going round to give Gosling's wood-shed the once-over, to make sure that that bucket of tar was available when wanted. He was quite oblivious of both Bunter and jam.

Billy Bunter revolved on his axis and rolled towards the stairs.

The coast was clear now—Potter and Greene at football, Coker gone off somewhere on his own. Nobody in Coker's study—but a huge jar of jam in the study cupboard. And at Bunter's mercy.

Very likely Coker and Co. had sampled the jam already. But they couldn't have got very deep into it yet. There would be plenty for Bunter. No wonder Billy Bunter smiled a genial smile.

But alas! The hapless Owl of the Remove had reckoned without his host—in the shape of an angular gentleman whose gimlet-eye fell upon him.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir." Bunter spun round, and blinked at his form-master. He wondered what Quelch wanted now.

"You have not brought me your lines, Bunter."

"My—my lines!" stammered Bunter. He had forgotten his lines. And there were a hundred of them!

How could a fellow remember such utter rot as 'Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellat,' when he was thinking wholly and solely of jam! Obviously a fellow couldn't. Bunter had quite forgotten the words of that famous historian, Tacitus: indeed, he had forgotten that there ever was such a beast as Tacitus at all. Unluckily, his form-master had a better memory.

"Have you done your lines, Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir! No, sir! I mean——"

"You have not done your lines, Bunter!"

"I—I was just going to, sir——" stammered Bunter.

"Very good, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, grimly. "If you were just going to do



your lines, you may proceed to do them. If they are not handed to me by four o'clock you will be caned."

"Yes, sir!" groaned Bunter.

He rolled away up the stairs, heading, not for Coker's study, but his own. He wanted jam, but he did not want to be caned.

But in No. 7 in the Remove, Bunter did not immediately sit down to lines. He had to do those lines, and he had to hand them in by four o'clock. But the lure of the jam in Coker's study was too irresistible. And the coast might not be clear again in a hurry. Thinking of Quelch's cane, Bunter was moved to write his lines without delay. Thinking of Coker's jam, he was stirred to take immediate action in the direction of Coker's study cupboard. For a minute or two, Quelch's cane and Coker's jam jostled one another as it were in Bunter's fat mind—it was a struggle between the two. But the jam won. Billy Bunter rolled out of his study, rolled down the passage to the landing, and rolled across to the Fifth-form passage.

"Bunter!"

The fat Owl fairly jumped at that sharp voice.

How could a fellow guess that Quelch, whom he had left a few minutes ago downstairs, would be up on the study landing talking to Mr. Prout?

Bunter hadn't guessed that one!

But there was Quelch: and his gimlet-eye fairly gleamed at the dismayed fat Owl as he came to a sudden dismayed halt.

"Where are you going, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Nowhere, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I—I wasn't going to the Fifth studies, sir. I—I—I was—was just walking about, sir."

"You should be writing your lines, Bunter."

"Oh! Yes, sir! I—I'm just going to——"

"Go to your study at once, Bunter, and do not leave it again till you have written your imposition."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" moaned Bunter.

It was a dispirited and infuriated fat Owl that rolled back to No. 7. Coker's jam had faded out of the picture once more: it had gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream.

This time Bunter settled down to lines. There was no help for it—he dared not risk running into Quelch again with these lines unwritten. Slowly, sadly, the fat Owl sat down to write *'Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant,'* with the translation thereof, a hundred times.

Bunter was not a quick worker. He was quick at some things—had he got going on Coker's jam, for instance, an arrow in flight would have had nothing on Bunter for speed. But in most things Bunter was slow, and at lines slowest of all. Four o'clock had sounded from the Greyfriars clock-tower before Bunter had finished.

It was a weary fat Owl that trailed down to Quelch's study with the lines, a quarter of an hour late after all his efforts.

Quelch glanced at the lines, expressed his opinion of Bunter's hand-writing with a snort, and, greatly to Bunter's relief, dismissed him.

After such a loss of time the fat Owl could hardly hope to find the coast still clear. And it wasn't. The football match was not yet over: most of the Fifth were still out of the House. But as Bunter tiptoed to the door of Coker's study he heard sounds within, revealing that Horace was at home.

There was a sound of tramping feet, as if Coker were walking up and down his study: and Bunter heard a muttering voice.

"Let him wait! Let him just wait! He will get it all right! Ha, ha!"

It was a laugh—one of those sardonic laughs.

Why Horace James Coker was walking about his study, mumbling and chuckling, Bunter did not know, and he wasn't interested. But he knew that Coker was there, and he rolled away sadly.

After which, all that Billy Bunter could do was to wait on the study landing, hoping that Coker would go down—instead of which Potter and Greene came up, the Form match being over. And Bunter, guessing that there would be tea in Coker's study, with Aunt Judy's jam featured in the programme, just groaned.

It was not Billy Bunter's happy afternoon. Tantalus, of old, was tortured by the sight of good things for ever just out of his reach. Billy Bunter was feeling like Tantalus, only more so. Never, indeed, had a fellow yearning for jam been so tantalised. Bunter rolled away in search of a tea in a Remove study in the lowest spirits.

## CHAPTER 8

### BUNTER KNOWS HOW!

"OH!" gasped Billy Bunter.

His little round eyes danced behind his big round spectacles. Bunter was standing at the open door of a study cupboard, gazing at—jam!

It was sheer luck for Bunter.

After so many disappointments, he had hardly dared expect it. Now it had happened—for there he was, in Coker's study, feasting his eyes on Coker's jam.

It was nearly time for prep. Bunter had been hanging about the study landing. He had seen Potter and Greene go into the games study, at the end of the Fifth-form passage, and shut the door after them. But Coker was not with them—that inexpressible beast, it seemed, was lingering in his own quarters. Then, to his boundless delight, Coker came along and went downstairs.

Blinking over the banisters, Bunter saw him go out of the House. It was not yet lock-up but the dusk was falling quickly, and it did not seem likely that Coker

would be gone long. He was likely, if Bunter had only known it, to be gone just long enough to abstract Gosling's tar-bucket from the wood-shed, get it round to the Elm Walk, and park it there out of sight—ready for the performance booked for later in the evening. That could not be done in broad daylight with a lot of fellows about, so Coker had left it till the latest possible moment before lock-up. But whether Coker's absence was long or short, Bunter had time to whip into his study while he was gone—and he whipped!

Now he stood gloating over Aunt Judy's jam.

As he had suspected, Coker and Co. had sampled that jam. But Miss Judith Coker had sent her beloved nephew Horace a very large supply—many samples might have been taken almost without being missed. It was, in fact, a huge seven-pound jar that stood in the study cupboard. And it was lovely jam. It was home-made jam, and Aunt Judy followed old-fashioned methods in jam-making—she knew nothing of modern scientific discoveries, and made strawberry jam with strawberries, in the old-fashioned way!

Bunter's eyes almost popped through his spectacles at the sight of that vast quantity of gorgeous, scrumptious jam.

Yet even now there were difficulties. He had to get away with his plunder, quickly. Coker might come in any minute. Even strawberry jam would not have consoled Bunter for what would happen if Coker found him there. But how was a fellow to walk off with a seven-pound jar under his arm? Bunter had not thought of that. His fat thoughts had been concentrated on jam, not on transport. But he had to think of it now. Any Fifth-form man might see him leave the study, and if he saw him leaving it with a seven-pound jar under his fat arm—— Bunter realised that that would not do.

Gladly he would have sat down in Coker's armchair, with the jar on his knees, and a tablespoon in his hand. Life would have become one grand sweet song—if only there had been time! But there wasn't!

How was he to get that jar away?

There was a bag in the bottom of the cupboard. Bunter grabbed it and packed the jar of jam in it. The actual jar was out of sight in the bag, and he wondered whether any fellow would notice the bag especially, if he was seen taking it away. He could not help feeling that any fellow would! And he knew there were fellows about—he could hear Hilton and Price talking at the doorway of the next study.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Billy Bunter's fat brain did not often work quickly, but it had to work quickly now. A way had to be found, and he found it. It was the sight of a ball of string among the other things in the study cupboard that set his fat wits going.

He grabbed that ball of string. He tied the end to the handle of the bag. Then he rolled to the window with the bag and pushed up the lower sash.

He blinked out with an anxious blink. But nothing was to be seen but falling dusk.

Somewhere out there in the dusk was Coker of the Fifth. But he might come in any minute and Bunter dared not lose a moment. He heaved the bag to the window-sill, slid it over and paid out the string.

A slackening of the string told him when the bag had landed on solid earth. He dropped the ball of string after it.

Then he shut the window.

His prize was safe now. All he had to do was to get away. He rolled across to the door, opened it an inch, and listened.

Hilton and Price were still talking in their doorway. But to his relief, in a few moments, he heard them go into their study and the door closed.

He stepped out into the passage, closed Coker's door, and rolled away towards the landing as casually as he could.

Blundell, the captain of the Fifth, was standing in the doorway of the games-study, talking to Bland, Fitzgerald, Potter, Greene, Smith major, and other Fifth-form men in the room. Bunter felt a spasm of trepidation as he passed, but his fat hands were empty. Some of the seniors glanced at him, but with no more interest than Fifth-form seniors naturally felt in so insignificant a person as a Remove junior. Had Bunter been loaded with Coker's jam, no doubt the matter would have been different. As it was, he passed scarcely heeded.

He breathed more freely when he was safe on the study landing.

Coker, very likely, would make a fuss when he missed that huge jar of jam. Very likely he would suspect Bunter—he was suspicious beast enough! But if he learned that Bunter had been seen in the Fifth-form quarters, he would learn also that Bunter certainly hadn't been carrying a huge jar of jam or anything at all. That was all right!

The fat Owl rolled away down the staircase.

"Lock-up in a minute or two, fathead," called out Peter Todd, who was in the junior lobby when Bunter rolled in there and across to the door.

The fat Owl blinked at him.

"Oh! I ain't going out, Toddy—I mean, I'm only going out for a minute. I left a jam—I mean a book—in the quad—I've got to fetch it in. I can't do my prep. without a dick."

"You left your dick in the quad!" ejaculated Peter. "What the thump were you doing with a dictionary in the quad?"

"Oh! Nothing! I mean, I was reading it—rather like reading a Latin dictionary, you know—it's jolly interesting, Peter."

"Oh, scissors!" said Peter.

Bunter rolled out and disappeared, leaving Peter Todd staring. Why Bunter was fibbing, Peter didn't know, unless it was from force of habit. Still, he wasn't interested, and the fat Owl was left to his own devices.

Billy Bunter shot away in the dusk, and in less than a minute, he was grabbing up the bag that had been landed below Coker's study window.

It couldn't be left there obviously. There were several windows near at hand, and when they were lighted, that bag would be plainly revealed to any eye, and masters often walked in the quad in the evening. But Bunter's plans were made. He detached the string, and crammed it into a pocket. Then he grabbed up the bag and rolled away with it.

Minutes were precious: any moment now he might hear the lock-up bell. But that bag, with its precious contents, had to be safely concealed. The fat Owl could not walk it into the House under a sea of eyes and carry it up to the Remove. There were safer ways.

The jammy feast had to be left until after prep. But after prep., Bunter was going to let down the string from the window of No. 7 in the Remove, after his study-mates were off the scene. Then he would slip surreptitiously out of the House, field the bag, and attach it to the string. Then, in No. 7 Study once more, he would pull it up. After which, he would revel in jam.

In the meantime, that bag had to be parked in some safe spot where no eye could fall on it.

That was an easy one. Bag in hand, Bunter rolled across to the shadowy old elms.

"Oh, crikey!" he breathed, suddenly.

A burly figure—dim and shadowy, but recognisable as Coker's, emerged from the dimness of the Elm Walk and stalked away to the House.

Luckily, Coker did not glance in Bunter's direction. The fat Owl blinked after him, almost giddy with his narrow escape. He had almost run into Coker, with Coker's jam in Coker's bag in his fat hand!

Why Coker had been lurking under the elms Bunter had no idea. He was thankful that Coker was gone now, at any rate.

He rolled into the Elm Walk. It was dusky in the open quad, quite dark under the spreading branches over the Walk. A safer spot could not have been found within the precincts of Greyfriars School as a parking-place.

Billy Bunter deposited the bag behind a gnarled old trunk. There it was safe till he came out for it after prep. It cost him a pang to leave the jam there. But that could not be helped. Leaving the bag completely blotted from sight under the old elms, the fat junior hurried back to the House.

He was just in time for calling-over.

"Well, did you find your dick?" asked Peter Todd, as a breathless fat Owl joined the ranks of the Remove in hall.

"Eh! What dick?" asked Bunter. Billy Bunter belonged to the class of persons who proverbially ought to have good memories. But, unfortunately for him, he had a bad one.

"Didn't you go out after your dick?" grinned Peter.

"Eh! Oh! Yes! No! I couldn't find it," said Bunter, hastily, "I—I looked everywhere, and—and then came in. Come to think of it, I—I think I left the

jam in my study—I mean the dick—I think I left the dick in my study, Peter, after all, I——”

“Silence!” called out Wingate of the Sixth.

And Mr. Hacker proceeded to call the names. Billy Bunter blinked across at Coker, among the Fifth-form men. Prout was in hall, and Bunter noticed that Coker was looking at the portly Prout, with quite a peculiar expression on his face. Coker seemed interested in his form-master, which did not matter a bean, so long as he was not interested in Bunter!

When the Remove went up to prep., Billy Bunter paused to speak to the Famous Five on the Remove landing.

“I say, you fellows! If Coker blows in——”

“We’re not expecting another visit from Coker,” said Harry Wharton. “Coker won’t blow in.”

“Well, he might,” said Bunter. “You know Coker—suspicious beast! Look how he jumped on me the other day about a cake, making out that I knew something about it. He might make out I knew something about the jam——”

“You’ve been scoffing Coker’s jam, you fat villain?” exclaimed Bob Cherry.

“Oh, really, Cherry! So far as I know, Coker never had any jam—if he had, I never saw it in his study. Besides, I haven’t been to his study. But if he missed it he might blow in and kick up a shindy—you know Coker! So—so if he blows in, you fellows boot him out, will you? Don’t listen to a word he says, just boot him out. You can take my word for it that I never touched his jam, if he had any jam, which I don’t believe. You just boot him out, and look here, you keep Coker off, and I’ll let you have some of the jam. See!”

And Billy Bunter rolled off to his study, leaving the chums of the Remove staring.

## CHAPTER 9

### SAFETY FIRST!

“COKER, old man——”

“Coker, old chap——”

Potter and Greene spoke in anxious tones, after prep. that evening in their study in the Fifth.

They were worried. They hoped against hope, as it were, that Coker had thought better of that wild scheme for getting even with Prout. But it was a very faint hope. Any fellow with a single spot of sense would have thought better of it, while there was yet time. But had Horace James Coker a single spot of sense? Long acquaintance with Coker had convinced them that he hadn’t.

Coker gave his pals a cold, grim look.

"Are you going to argue?" he asked.

"Well, you see——" murmured Potter.

"You see, old fellow——" urged Greene.

"Don't jaw," said Coker. "Didn't I tell you that I had it all cut and dried? Am I a fellow to change my mind? You may as well understand, first as last, that when I decide a thing, it's settled, fixed, like the laws of the Swedes and Nasturtiums. So no more jaw on the subject."

Only too evidently, Coker hadn't the necessary single spot of sense!

"All you fellows have got to do," resumed Coker, "is to carry out instructions. Even you fellows can do that. You're not very bright: but you can do that much. I've got the whole bag of tricks ready. I trickled out just before lock-up to bag Gosling's tar-bucket, and I got it and parked it under the elms all ready. It's there when I want it."

"Oh, dear," murmured Greene.

"Now I'm going down," said Coker. "I shall dodge quietly into the form-room, and wait for you fellows to join me there. Come one at a time, and take care that you're not noticed. You five minutes after me, Potter, you five minutes after Potter, Greene. Got that?"

"But——" said Potter and Greene together.

"I said don't jaw!" Horace Coker rose. "I'll be pushing along! Don't forget what I've told you. Better be careful, it's bunking for tarring a beak, if you're not jolly careful. Now I'm off."

Coker strolled out of the study.

Potter and Greene gave one another a sort of hopeless look.

"That fathead means business, Greeney," said Potter.

"So do we," said Greene.

"Well, yes! We're not exactly keeping cave for Coker while he gets himself sacked and us after him," remarked Potter. "Think he'll go without us, if we don't join up?"

"Sure to! Coker's a sticker!"

Potter wrinkled his brows in thought. Neither he nor Greene had the remotest intention of joining Coker in the dark form-room, dropping from the window with him, and keeping 'cave' while he tarred Prout. There was no question of that: the question was, what would Coker do when they didn't join up?

If he came back to look for them, that was all right, they could keep out of sight and the wild escapade would be off, for that night at least. But Potter shook his head. He knew that Greene was right: Coker was a sticker. If his pals did not join up he would sally forth on his own, and carry on without Potter and Greene to keep 'cave.' They would be out of it: but Coker would be in it, in it right up to the neck.

"Better get that clear," said Greene. "Coker's going. That's a cert. We're not, but Coker is. But we can't let him get Prout."

Potter shuddered at the idea.

"Well, we can stop him," said Greene. "Prout's as regular as clockwork taking that trot of his, but a clock can be stopped, you know. We've got to stop Prout taking his trot this evening. Coker can wait under the elms with his jolly old tar-bucket till he gets tired and comes in. Perhaps he'll catch a cold, which will keep him out of mischief for awhile," added Greene, hopefully.

Potter nodded.

"Got the key all right?" he asked.

"You bet!" Greene drew a key from his trousers-pocket. It was a study-door key, to be precise, the key of Mr. Prout's study. Quite unknown to Coker, his pals also had been making plans: they could be as tragic as old Horace.

"Nobody saw you prig it?" asked Potter, uneasily.

"Of course not—easy enough while the beaks were jawing their heads off in Common Room."

"It's frightfully risky, locking a beak in his study."

"Not so risky as letting that mad ass swamp him with tar."

"No!" agreed Potter.

"It's doing Prout a good turn," argued Greene. "He will be wild when he finds his study door locked on him, but he would be jolly glad, if he knew that a pail of tar was waiting to go over his napper. Somebody will pick up the key and let him out later, but getting the tar off his nob would be a longer job. We can't do anything else, Potter, we just can't let Prout go out and collect that tar."

"We can't!" agreed Potter.

They left the study and went downstairs. Greene left Potter at the foot of the staircase and strolled away in a casual manner. With an air of unconcern, he drifted into Masters' passage.

From the corner, he glanced down that passage, and was a little dismayed to see Monsieur Charpentier, the French master, tap at Prout's door and enter. In ten minutes or so more, according to his usual schedule, Prout would be going out for his accustomed trot. The French master, apparently, had dropped in for a few minutes chat with Prout.

"Blow!" murmured William Greene.

He had to lock Prout's door, to save Prout. He did not want to lock Mossoo in also, Mossoo was in no danger from Coker. But it could not be helped. At any price, Prout had to be saved from the tar and Coker from the consequences. Greene made up his mind to it.

Quietly, but quickly, he walked up Masters' passage. It was the work of hardly more than a moment to slip the key into the outside of the lock on Prout's door, turn it, jerk it out, and walk on. As he walked on Greene heard Prout's boom:

"What is that? What?" Prout must have noticed the click of the lock.

"Mon Dieu!" came Monsieur Charpentier's squeak.

Greene did not stop to listen. He vanished into space.



A minute or two later, he was going with Potter into the Fifth-form games-study. Potter whispered:

"O.K.?"

"Right as rain."

"What about the key?"

"Dropped it at the corner. Somebody will find it later."

"Prout's safe."

"Safe as houses."

That was all. In the games-study, Potter and Greene joined in cheery talk with other Fifth-form men. When a sound of banging on a door was heard echoing from the distance below, some of the Fifth-formers went down to see what was up, but Potter and Greene did not go. They weren't interested. They were interested only in saving Coker from himself.

Prout was safe! Coker, waiting in the darkness on the Elm Walk for the beak who was not coming, was safe too. 'Safety first' was the idea, and Potter and Greene were pleased to think that they had secured safety for everybody all round. They felt quite cheerful and satisfied. Coker, waiting out in the cold and darkness under the elms, was very likely neither cheerful nor satisfied, but that could not be helped!

## CHAPTER 10

### AT LAST

"Look here, Toddy!"

Billy Bunter, in No. 7 Study, blinked at Peter Todd in great exasperation.

Prep. was over. Tom Dutton had gone down to the Rag. But Peter, instead of going down as usual, had dipped his pen in the ink again and started writing a letter. It was intensely annoying to Bunter.

He wanted the study to himself. He had to let the string down from the window, to be attached to the bag containing the jar of jam. He couldn't do that under Peter's eye. Toddy would want to know what on earth he was up to. Billy Bunter knew what to expect if Toddy discovered the facts. There would be swipes from a fives bat for the grub-raider of the Remove: and, still more serious, the jam would go back to its owner! Bunter could not run that awful risk. He just couldn't begin till Toddy went, and there was Toddy sitting at the study table, writing a long letter home! It was unforeseen and annoying.

"Look here, Toddy, you can write that letter in the Rag," said Bunter.

"Why should I?" asked Peter. "Too much row in the Rag. Roll away and don't jaw while I'm writing."

"I think Wharton wants to speak to you about the football, Toddy. He will expect to see you in the Rag."

Peter looked at his fat study-mate.

"What do you want me to go down for?" he asked.

"Eh! Oh! I—I don't, of course," said Bunter, hastily. "I haven't got anything to do here after you're gone, Toddy, or—or anything. But I don't think you ought to keep Wharton waiting to speak to you about the jam——"

"The what?"

"I—I mean the football. I wasn't thinking about jam—I—I wonder what made me say jam! Hadn't you better go down, Toddy?"

"No," said Toddy, "I hadn't! And if you're wandering in your mind, go and wander in the passage instead."

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"Shut up, anyhow!" said Peter, and he resumed writing his letter.

Billy Bunter bestowed an exasperated glare on the top of his bent head. But it was clear that Toddy was not going down, which meant that the fat Owl couldn't carry on in his own study. So he rolled out of No. 7, and rolled away to No. 1. Other fellows would be gone down, if Toddy wasn't: and the Owl of the Remove only needed an unoccupied study.

But Wharton and Nugent were still in No. 1 Study when the anxious fat Owl blinked in at the doorway. They glanced at him.

"I say, you fellows, aren't you going down?" asked Bunter.

"Not till Bob comes along," answered Harry.

"Why not go up the passage and call for him?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"There isn't a spot of grub in the cupboard here," he answered. "So you needn't worry about us going down, Bunter."

"Think I'm after your grub?" hooted Bunter.

"What else are you after?"

"What on earth are you going to do with that ball of string, Bunter?" asked Nugent.

"Eh! Oh! Nothing! I wasn't going to let it down from the window."

"What?"

"Why should I!" said Bunter. "Nothing of the sort, of course. I—I'm going to lend it to Smithy to tie up a parcel. Know if Smithy's gone down?"

"He passed this door a minute or two ago," said Harry.

"Oh, good!" said Bunter.

He rolled up the passage again, to No. 4 Study, which belonged to Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing. But though Smithy had gone down, Redwing was still in the study, and he gave Bunter an inquiring stare as he blinked in.

"Want anything?" he asked.

"Beast!" answered Bunter, morosely: and he rolled on again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's cheery roar greeted the fat Owl, as he blinked into No. 13 Study. "Pray enter. Come to lend me a hand with my lines, Bunter?"

"Eh! No! I say, Bob, old chap, Wharton's waiting for you——"

"Is he? Tell him I'm coming along when I've finished my lines for Quelch."

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep. Really, it began to look as if he never would find an empty study. He rolled along to No. 2: but did not need to blink in, the squeaking of Tom Brown's radio could be heard from the passage.

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

But in No. 3 Study the harassed fat Owl had luck at last: Ogilvy and Russell had gone down after prep, and the study was vacant.

Greatly relieved in his fat mind, Billy Bunter rolled into No. 3 and shut the door. The study was dark, but he did not venture to turn on the light. He rolled across the room to the window and bumped into the table in the dark. The table rocked and there was a sound of an inkpot rolling off and falling to the floor.

But that trifle did not worry Bunter. It was not his study, so it did not matter if ink streamed over the carpet.

He reached the window and pushed up the lower sash. Outside, all was dark and quiet. He attached the end of the string to a chair-back and let the ball fall from the sill. It dropped downward, unwinding as it went, and the listening fat Owl heard a faint 'plop' far below as it landed.

He closed the window and trod quietly back to the door. A moment more and he was in the passage, grinning.

All was clear now. All he had to do was to slip out of the House unseen, field the bag that he had left hidden under the elms and tie it to the string. Then, once more in No. 3 study, all he had to do was to pull it up. And then Bunter's eyes danced behind his spectacles as he thought of what would follow—unlimited jam! His fat face was quite merry and bright as he rolled away down the stairs. He had lost a good deal of time owing to that beast Toddy sticking in the study: but there was still ample time before dorm.

But he had to be careful. A fellow getting out of House bounds after prep. had to be very careful indeed. Beaks were very particular about such things. But Bunter was in luck again. Some sort of a row was going on in Masters' passage, and a good many fellows were heading in that direction—nobody had any attention to waste on Billy Bunter.

But for the pressing matter on his mind, Bunter would have rolled off to Masters' passage to see what was going on there. It was evidently something very unusual. But he had no time to bother about it now. Not a fellow was anywhere near the junior lobby when Bunter rolled in and blinked round him: and it was an easy matter to unlock and unbolt the door, slip out, and shut it after him: and he grinned cheerfully when he found himself out in the quad.

It was all plain sailing now!

A couple of minutes to roll across to the elms and secure that bag, another couple of minutes to carry it round under the Remove window and tie it to the string from the window of No. 3 Study, then he would be back in the House again, and not a soul the wiser. And then a great and glorious feast, a feast that made his mouth water just to think of it. Coker and Co. had sampled that jam, but five or six pounds remained in the jar; strawberry jam made of real strawberries, Aunt Judy's very best! It was a dream of delight, and it was a happy fat Owl that rolled away in the dark, and groped into the Elm Walk under the black, shadowy, spreading branches. And then——

What happened next Billy Bunter did not know. It was so very unexpected, and so very surprising! Life is full of surprises, of one sort or another, and no doubt Billy Bunter had had his share of them. But never in his fat life had he been so utterly taken by surprise as he was when he rolled under the dark branches of the Elm Walk.

## CHAPTER 11

### COKER'S CATCH!

HORACE COKER gave a little start, and listened intently.

Coker was getting impatient.

Indeed, he was beginning to wonder whether Prout was ever coming, or whether perhaps he was changing his usual manners and customs for once. That evening trot on the Elm Walk was as regular as a clock, but even a clock may go wrong sometimes. It was exceedingly exasperating to think that Prout had gone wrong, so to speak, on this particular night of all nights, when that member of his form was waiting for him in the dark with a bucket of tar.

Coker was irritated already, before arriving at his ambush. Potter and Greene had failed to join him in the form-room as per schedule. Coker had waited some time before it dawned on his powerful brain that Potter and Greene weren't coming. Then he was tempted to go in search of them and bang their heads together, as they richly deserved. But that meant cutting out the tar for Prout, and the tar for Prout was the first consideration. So giving up Potter and Greene, Coker had scrambled down from the form-room window on his lonely own and headed for the dark elms and ambush.

How long he had been waiting since he did not know—it seemed like hours. The minutes passed very slowly, lurking in black darkness, with a cold wind on the back of his neck.

But Coker, as his pals knew, was a stickler. He had rooted out the bucket of tar from the spot where he had parked it. He had it in his large and sinewy hands,

as he waited, standing in the middle of the shadowy Walk, waiting and watching. He had to wait, but watching was not of much use, for Coker was no cat to see in the dark—and it was very dark. But if he could not see, he could hear, and he used his ears, which were large and reliable. Even if he did not hear Prout, he couldn't miss him when he came, for he stood in the middle of the shadowy path and Prout would walk right into him, when he came.

But was he coming? Had something happened to stop him? It seemed unlikely, but why did he not come? Coker couldn't wait for ever, he had to be back in the House before supper, or he would be missed. It was frightfully annoying to think that, after such careful planning, Prout was going to let him down simply by not turning up.

Then, suddenly, he heard footsteps coming under the dark branches that over-vaulted and darkened the Elm Walk. They were heavy footsteps, and Prout had a heavy tread: certainly the unseen person approaching in the dark was a plump and heavy person, and Coker heard, too, a grunt. Prout often grunted, being a little short of wind when he was in a state of locomotion. There were others at Greyfriars liable to grunt in similar circumstances, such as Billy Bunter of the Remove: but Coker, of course, was not thinking about Bunter of the Remove. He was thinking about Prout: and his eyes gleamed, as he heard that lumbering tread and that fat little grunt.

Up went Coker's hands with the bucket of tar.

Did Coker, at that awful moment, hesitate, or feel a spot of doubt, even a spot of dread? It was not likely. Prout had whopped him—on the trousers—before a staring form! Whopped Coker of the Fifth, just as Quelch might have whopped a Remove junior, or Wiggins a Third-Form fag. A beak who did that deserved tar on the napper, in fact, had asked for tar on the napper, sat up and begged for it. Tar on the napper was indeed a mild reprisal; something lingering, with boiling oil in it, might have been more suitable. Anyhow, Prout was going to get the tar on the napper: and that was that.

Swoooooosh!

Coker could not see his victim, beyond a dark shadow in darkness, so some credit was due to him for the neat way he handled the situation. The tar-bucket up-ended over an unsuspecting head, it came down with a swoosh of tar and it landed on the head like a bonnet. Prout was not a tall gentleman, Coker in fact was taller than his form-master: but it seemed to Coker that Prout seemed shorter than usual, somehow: anyhow the tar-bucket descended quite easily and neatly on the unseen head, and fitted nicely on the plump shoulders below. Tar streamed out, amid horrible and hideous gurgles from the astounded victim.

Coker gave a gasping, triumphant chuckle.

But he did not linger.

He was not interested in his unhappy victim's frantic asphyxiated gurgles and guggles. He was interested in getting off the scene just as fast as he possibly

could, and showing up as soon as possible in the House, just to make it clear that he hadn't been out. Even Coker realised that the tarring of a form-master would cause a most tremendous row, and that it behoved him to remain unsuspected, unless he wanted to depart suddenly from Greyfriars School, which he did not in the least.

Coker's long legs fairly whisked as he ran back to the House.

Hardly a minute after the tar-bucket had bonneted the hapless victim under the dark trees, Coker was clambering in at the form-room window and dropping breathless within.

Panting, he closed and fastened the window. He paused for a minute or so to recover his breath: then he slipped out of the form-room and lost no time in getting to the games-study. He expected to find a mob of the Fifth there as usual: but, to his surprise, only two Fifth-form men were in the games-study: Potter and Greene.

They stared at him. Everybody else had gone down to see what on earth was up among the beaks. Perhaps it was just as well: for Potter and Greene noticed at once what has escaped Coker, that the signs of guilt were thick on the happy Horace. Even a handy fellow requires to be careful in handling tar, and Coker was not a handy fellow: he was probably the clumsiest fellow at Greyfriars School or anywhere else.

There was tar on Coker's large hands, a spot of tar on his aggressive chin, patches of tar on his sleeves and the knees of his trousers. Certainly the most casual eye, falling on Horace Coker, would have noticed that he had recently been at close quarters with a tar-bucket.

"Chucked it, Coker?" asked Greene. They had no doubt that Coker had tired of waiting in the dark for the beak who did not come, and had 'chucked' the enterprise for that night. They rather expected signs of wrath from Coker, both from his disappointment in failing to get Prout and from his resentment of their desertion. But Coker was not wrathful. He was grinning.

"You bet!" said Coker. "I chucked it all right, bucket and all."

"Not on Prout?" ejaculated Potter.

"Who else?" grinned Coker.

"But—but Prout never went out after all——"

"Didn't he?" chuckled Coker. "That's all you know. He kept me waiting a long time, but I got him."

"You got Prout!" gasped Greene.

"Right on the cokernut," said Coker. "Bucket and all—fitted him like a new hat! I left him gurgling."

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Potter.

They gazed at Coker in utter horror. They had done their best, they had stopped Prout from going out, they had banked on the locked door keeping Prout in too long for him to take his usual trot. Certainly it had delayed him, they knew that.

But, from what Coker told them, it seemed that Prout had gone out after all, later than usual: but he had gone, and had got the tar! It was not a case of better late than never! It was awful, it was terrible, it was frightful! How Coker could grin so cheerily, when obviously he was going to be sacked from the school, was quite a mystery to Potter and Greene.

"You—you—you really did it!" moaned Greene, faintly.

"Didn't I say I would?"

"Oh! You idiot!" groaned Potter. "It's the sack! You frightful idiot!"

"Don't be a goat," said Coker. "I'm all right! Wait till you see Prout stagger in—tar from head to foot—ha, ha!"

"You'll be sacked!" hissed Greene.

"Forget it," jeered Coker. "Who's to know?"

"Oh, you dummy!" moaned Potter. "Think they won't go over Greyfriars with a small comb, combing out any man that's got a spot of tar on him, after a beak's been tarred?"

"That's all right," said Coker, cheerily. "I was jolly careful with the tar. I'm no fool!"

"Look at yourself!" shrieked Greene. "Any man who saw you now would know you'd done it, like a shot."

"Eh?"

"You're all tarry!" hooted Potter.

"Oh!"

Coker gave an eye to detail at last. He discerned spots and smears of tar that had hitherto escaped his attention. Coker's rugged face became very grave. It was only too certain that, after a beak had been tarred by a lawless hand, the search for any fellow with a spot of tar about him would be rigorous. And Coker had almost as many spots as a leopard.

"Oh!" repeated Coker.

"You dummy—you chump—you mad ass!" breathed Potter. "You're for it now! You may as well go to the Head and own up."

"I—I'll get a wash—I—I'd better change—oh, crikey!" gasped Coker. Even Coker's solid brain realised the danger. "I shall have to shove these clothes out of sight somewhere—I shall have to get a jolly good scrub—oh, holy mackerel!"

Coker rushed out of the games-study. At any moment the hunt might be up: and a single spot of tar would be enough to get him sacked from Greyfriars. Coker lost no time. He fairly bounded into a bath-room and got going with soap and hot water and a scrubbing-brush.

Potter and Greene exchanged hopeless looks.

"He's done it!" said Greene.

"Done it brown!" said Potter. "They'd know anyway, but in case they didn't he had to spot himself all over with tar. They'll get him, scrubbing off tar! Poor old Coker! Well, we did our best!"

"We did!" said Greene. "Fellows couldn't do more."

That was all the consolation Potter and Greene had for the coming loss of Horace Coker. For that Coker of the Fifth was going to be 'bunked' from Greyfriars School for his exploit in tarring a beak, there could not be the slightest doubt.

Even in Horace Coker's own mind there was little doubt, unless he got that tar off in time. And tar was extremely difficult to get off. But it had to come off, and Coker, in a cloud of steam, rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed, with almost frantic energy, to get rid of those tell-tale clues. And as he rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed, till he felt that the skin was coming off if not the tar, his triumphant glee quite faded out: and Coker wished from the bottom of his heart that he hadn't tarred Prout!

Luckily—if Coker had only known it—he hadn't!

## CHAPTER 12

### MERELY BUNTER

"HALLO! hallo! hallo!"

"Something's up!"

"The upfulness seems to be terrific."

"What on earth——"

Herbert Vernon-Smith opened the window of the Rag. Fellows crowded round him at the window, staring into the deeply dusky quadrangle. Strange, weird, eerie sounds came out of the deep dusk: how and why and what they meant, were hard to guess. But it was clear that something was 'up.'

"Something's happened to somebody," said Johnny Bull. "Who's out of the House?"

"Goodness knows."

"Sounds like somebody suffocating," said Bob Cherry, in wonder. "What the dickens is going on out there?"

The juniors stared blankly into the dusk. The strange sounds from the night had reached other ears, many ears. There was a sudden flood of illumination in the dark quad, as the House door was flung open and the light streamed out. Mr. Quelch was seen to step out. After him stepped Hacker, master of the Shell, and Wingate of the Sixth.

"Amazing!" said Mr. Quelch. His voice reached the crowd of curious juniors packed at the window of the Rag.

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Hacker. "Some animal——"

"Whoever or whatever it is, it is under the elms," said the Remove master. "Mr. Prout, I believe, generally takes a walk there about this time——"



"Can't be Mr. Prout, sir," said Wingate. "Mr. Prout's in his study. Somebody's locked the door on the outside and taken away the key."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a sudden roar from the window of the Rag. "Look! What's that? What on earth's that?"

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch.

A figure appeared in sight, in the light from the open doorway and windows, a strange and startling figure, tottering from the direction of the dark trees. It was the most startling figure on which any eyes at Greyfriars School had ever fallen.

Who it was, nobody could guess. It was disguised in tar. Black tar streamed over it, masking the face, trickling round the ears and down the neck. It was somebody—there was no doubt about that—but who, was a mystery. Every eye was fixed on it in wonder and astonishment. It uttered strange sounds as it came—indicating apparently that some of the tar had got into its mouth. It gurgled, it gasped, it moaned and it spluttered.

"Ooooooh! Urrrrrrgh! Gurrrrggh!"

"Who—what——" gasped Mr. Quelch.



Every eye was fixed on it in wonder and astonishment.

"Who the dooce——" stuttered Wingate.

"Some boy——" articulated Mr. Hacker. "It is covered with—with—I think it is tar! Yes, it is tar! Amazing."

"Grooooooooooogh! Oooooch!"

A crowd from the House streamed out round the two masters. Among them came Potter and Greene of the Fifth. Who and what that strange figure was, Potter and Greene knew only too well, or fancied they did. This was Coker's work, this was Coker's victim, and Coker, frantically scrubbing off tar in the bath-room, was going to be sacked for this!

"Prout!" breathed Potter.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Greene.

"Who can it be?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Boy! Come here! Who are you? What does this mean? Speak?"

"Oooooooooooooogh!"

"It is a boy," said Mr. Capper, joining the staring crowd. "A junior boy, I should think, but who——"

Potter gave quite a jump, and clutched Greene's arm. As the weird figure came clearer in the light, it was impossible to recognise, but its height could be seen. Sideways, the figure was not unlike Prout's portly form: but Prout, though not a tall gentleman, was taller than this, considerably taller. This dread figure was not a master at all—it was not even a senior boy, it was a junior!

"Greeney, old man," breathed Potter. "Look! That ain't—it can't be——"

"Not Prout!" breathed Greene. He touched the captain of Greyfriars on the elbow. "Know where Prout is?"

"In his study," answered Wingate. "Some idiot's locked him in."

"Oh!" gasped Potter and Greene.

Their scheme had been a success after all. Prout, locked in his study, was still there, safe and sound. It was an immense relief.

Coker had not got Prout! But, clearly, he had got somebody. This was Coker's work, there was no doubt about that. Coker had bucketed somebody in the dark with Gosling's tar-bucket, though not his form-master.

"That ass——" muttered Potter.

"That idiot——" agreed Greene.

"But thank goodness——"

"Yes, rather," said Greene, fervently.

Who it was, they did not know. But it was not Prout. Who else it was did not really matter very much, except to the person who had got the tar, of course. So long as it wasn't Prout, it was all right. And it wasn't Prout.

"Boy!" almost shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Will you speak? Answer me! Who are you, and how came you in this shocking state? Speak!"

"Gurrrrrrrggh!"

"Oh crikey!" came a sudden yell from the Rag window, as Bob Cherry

suddenly discerned the shape of a large pair of spectacles, thick with tar and almost hidden by it. "It's Bunter!"

"Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Bunter!" gasped the Bounder.

"What on earth was Bunter doing out of the House after prep?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Collecting tar!" grinned Smithy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrh! Groooogh! I'm smothered." The weird figure seemed to find its voice at last, "Ooooooogh!"

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Is—is—is that Bunter? Is that Bunter, of my Form?"

"Grooooooogh!"

"Bunter!" Quelch almost roared. "What does this mean, Bunter? Speak!"

"Wooooogh! Ooogh! I'm chuck-chick-choking! Grooogh! It's got into my mum-mum-mum-mouth! Ooogh! It's tar! Wooooch!" gurgled the fat junior. "Ooooch! I can't see—it's on my specs—oooooogh!"

Mr. Quelch raised his hand to grasp that boy of his form by the shoulder. But he withdrew it hastily. Bunter was not nice to touch.

"This boy must have got out of the House to play some prank with a bucket of tar," said Mr. Hacker. "He must have upset it over himself."

"Oh, crikey!" moaned Bunter. He pushed up the tarry spectacles and blinked at the staring crowd. "Oh, crumbs! I'm all sticky! It came down on my head—ooogh! I got it off, but the filthy tar was all over me—oooogh."

"What were you doing out of the House, Bunter?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! I—I—I wasn't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I never! I—I—I mean—I—I went out for a—a—a walk, sir. It was nothing to do with jam."

"Jam!" repeated Mr. Quelch, blankly.

"Nothing at all, sir," gasped Bunter. "There isn't a bag hidden behind the trees there, sir, that I know of, and there's certainly no jam in it. I never went out after it, sir. Oooogh!"

"This wretched boy," said Mr. Hacker, "left the House to smuggle in food."

"I—I didn't," gasped Bunter. "I never left the House at all—I—I mean, I—I never went after the jam, there isn't any jam, sir, that I know of, and it's certainly not Coker's—"

"I understand!" said Mr. Quelch. "But how did you get into this disgusting and revolting state, Bunter?"

"I—I don't know!" groaned Bunter. "Oh, lor'! I—I was just going into the Elm Walk after the jam—I mean, there isn't any jam there, that I know of, and then a pail or something came down whop on my head, and it was full of tar, and—and—ooooooch! I—I'm smothered—grooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the window of the Rag.

"I'm all sticky!" moaned Bunter. "I don't know who did it, sir, I expect he was after the jam—I mean, there wasn't any jam. I expect the beast did it to keep me from getting that bag, I mean, there wasn't a bag, oh, crikey! Oooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch glared round at a window packed with laughing faces.

"This is not a matter of merriment!" he hooted. "Shut that window at once."

"Isn't it?" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The window of the Rag was shut. But the crowd of juniors evidently thought that it was a matter for merriment, in spite of Mr. Quelch's opinion: for the Rag echoed with laughter.

The Remove master fixed an almost ferocious glare on Bunter.

"Go in by the lobby door, Bunter! You are in a disgusting state. Take care that you do not smother everything with tar. After you have cleaned yourself I will deal with you. Pah!"

"Ooooooooooggh!"

A few minutes later, Coker of the Fifth was not the only fellow who was rubbing and scrubbing at tar. Billy Bunter of the Remove was also rubbing and scrubbing at tar, and he had a much more extensive task than Coker's. Coker was spotted with tar, but Bunter was smothered with it, thick with it, reeking with it, he lived, and moved and had his being, in tar, he was of the tar, tarry! He even forgot the jam, still reposing in the bag under the elm as he laboured and laboured wearily at tar. Tar was sticky and hard to get rid of, and Billy Bunter's weary labours did not get rid of it all, only transforming him from a completely black Bunter into a piebald one! It was likely to be a long, long time, before Bunter saw the last of that tar—or forgot it either!

## CHAPTER 13

### NO JAM FOR BUNTER!

"HA, ha, ha!"

"But who did it?"

"And why?"

"Tarry all over! But who tarred him?"

"The tarfulness was terrific."

Horace Coker felt a qualm. Coker, newly swept and garnished as it were, was coming downstairs: hoping that no signs of tar were left about him to betray who had tarred Prout! There was a laughing crowd below, everybody seemed to be amused about something, and the words he caught, as he came down, apprised

Coker that it was the incident of the tar that had evoked the general merriment. To his surprise he saw Wingate, and Loder, and several other prefects laughing—he would hardly have expected Sixth-Form prefects to regard the tarring of a form-master as funny! It did not seem funny—to Coker! He had changed, and crammed away tarry clothes in a remote corner, but he could not help feeling that danger was in the air, the tarring of a member of the Staff would cause so searching a quest for the culprit that the clues would very likely come to light.

And Coker, realising that the 'sack' impended over his fat head, realised also that he had played the goat and wished fervently that he hadn't. But he assumed as casual a manner as he could, it was his cue to know nothing about anybody having been tarred.

"Anything happened?" he asked, carelessly.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Bob Cherry. "Didn't you see him? Ha, ha! Black as the ace of spades——"

"Black, but not comely!" grinned the Bounder.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But who on earth can have done it?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Goodness knows! Somebody must have bagged Gosling's tar-bucket, but why——"

"Where's Prout now?" asked Coker.

"Prout! In his study, I think," said Bob. "I believe he's still locked in——"

"Locked in!"

"Yes: somebody locked him in; Mossoo too, they've been shouting and banging on the door." Bob was not interested in Prout. Billy Bunter was the topic now. "If you haven't seen Bunter, Coker, you've missed something! Smothered with tar——"

Coker jumped.

"Bunter—smothered with tar!" he ejaculated.

"Caked with it, clothed with it as with a jolly old garment," said Bob. "Somebody got him in the quad with Gosling's tar-bucket, under the elms."

"Eh?"

"Goodness knows why, but you should have seen him."

Coker felt his head turning round.

"S-s-somebody got Bib-bub-Bunter with a bib-bob-bucket of tar!" he stuttered. "As—as well as Pip-pop-Prout?"

"Prout!" repeated Bob. "Nothing's happened to Prout, that I know of, except that he's locked in his study and shouting through the keyhole for somebody to find the key and let him out. But Bunter——"

"Poor old Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker wondered dizzily whether he was dreaming. Prout was in his study, and nothing had happened to him, and Bunter had been smothered with tar in the quad!

Had Prout stayed in, and Bunter gone out, or what? Had there been a mistake in the dark! Coker spun round at the sound of a booming voice. It was Prout's.

"I shall lay the matter before the Head! It is scandalous, amazing, unparalleled! My study door locked on me! Thank you, Greene, for finding the key, I am very much obliged to you, Greene——"

"Not at all sir," said Greene.

Coker gazed at Prout. There was no sign of tar about Prout. He was not black, he was red, red with wrath. Prout had been locked in his study: but nothing else had happened to Prout. And Bunter—that fat little ass, Bunter of the Remove——

"Oh, crikey!" breathed Coker.

He almost tottered away.

"O.K., old man," Potter and Greene joined him, grinning. "You never got old Pompous after all——"

"I can't make it out!" gasped Coker.

"You got Bunter of the Remove. Goodness knows why he was there, but you got him! Got him a treat, to judge by his looks. I suppose you never saw him, in the dark——"

"Of course I didn't! But——"

"You got the wrong man! Thank goodness you did!"

"After all, Coker would get the wrong man!" remarked Greene.

"Naturally!" assented Potter.

"I—I'm rather glad!" said Coker. "There'd have been a fearful row, they'd have spotted my clobber, I expect, but a dashed fag doesn't matter, there won't be a song and dance over a fag getting tarred. Serve him right for butting in, the fat little idiot! I've a jolly good mind to kick him. Still, it's rather lucky he got it instead of Prout. I—I'm not going to tar Prout, you fellows—I—I think I shall wash out the whole idea. To tell the truth," added Coker, candidly, "I'm rather glad some japing ass locked him in his study, and he never came out and got it. It was lucky it happened. Queer coincidence that it should have happened this very evening, though, ain't it?"

"Very!" said Potter.

"Oh, quite!" agreed Greene.

And they left it at that.

\* \* \*

Nobody ever knew who had tarred Billy Bunter, excepting three fellows in the Fifth who kept their own counsel.

It was tough on Bunter. The tar was bad enough, remnants of it clung lovingly to Bunter for days and days. During those days Billy Bunter did an unusual amount of washing, a thing he had never really liked. But worse even than the tar was what happened to the jam. For Coker, revisiting the scene of the crime, as it were, when

he came out, the next morning, was astonished to spot a bag under the elms which he recognised as his own, and still further astonished to find a huge jar of jam, also his own, inside it! After which it slowly dawned on Coker's powerful brain why Bunter had come there the previous night: but generously considering that the Owl of the Remove had had enough, in the way of tar, he refrained from looking for Bunter and kicking him. A little later—Billy Bunter never was an early bird—the fat Owl visited the same spot, and blinked sadly through still rather tarry spectacles at the empty spot where the jam had been parked.

There were several mysteries at Greyfriars that morning. Nobody knew who had tarred Bunter, nobody knew who had locked Prout in, nobody knew who had knocked over an inkpot in Ogilvy's study and left a string dangling from the window. Those mysteries remained unsolved. But there was one happy outcome. Coker, having realised how near he had been to the 'sack,' quite gave up the idea of 'getting even' with Prout, and Mr. Prout, without being aware that he had ever been in danger at all, was no longer in danger from Coker. Which was good luck for Horace Coker: though it had been Bad Luck for Billy Bunter.

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