

MEET THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL INSIDE!

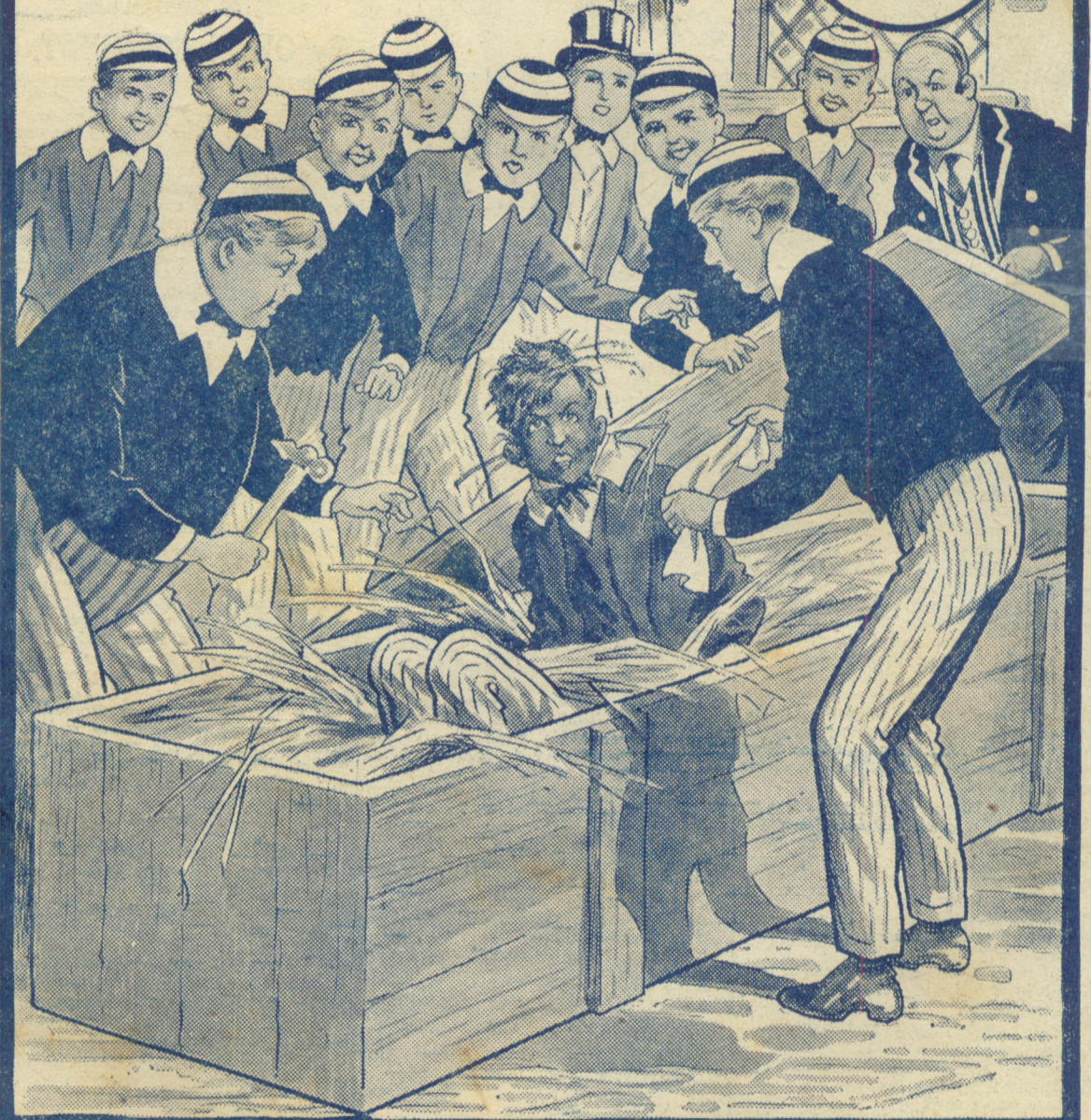
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WHAT THE MYSTERY BOX CONTAINED! WHO IS THE BLACK BOY?

(An Amazing Episode from the Stirring Tale of Rookwood School in this issue.)

GUNNER'S TASK! Gunner of the Fourth tries again to convince Jimmy Silver & Co. that he is a better man than they are—better, in fact, than all Rookwood put together! The result is somewhat startling!

What Happened To Gunner!



A Stirring Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. To the Victor the Spoils!

BAGSHOT Bounders!"
"Oh, bother!" said Jimmy Silver crossly.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were not pleased. Jimmy Silver, and Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, of the Rookwood Fourth, were sitting in a cheery circle in the grass on Coombe Heath. In their midst was a lunch-basket.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, a sunny spring afternoon. A picnic on the heath had seemed an excellent idea to Jimmy Silver & Co. that sunny afternoon. The basket had been duly and carefully packed at Sergeant Kettle's little shop; Tabby Muffin had been successfully dodged, and the chums of the Classical Fourth, after a long ramble, had settled down on a grassy slope to enjoy their spread. And just as they were about to begin, trouble loomed up on the horizon.

The Fistical Four rose to their feet as Pankley & Co. came trotting down the slope, with grinning faces. The Bagshot Bounders were evidently pleased by the unexpected meeting.

"Fancy meeting you, old beans!" said Pankley affably, as he came up. "How did you know we'd been for a walk and got hungry?"

And the Bagshot crowd chortled, and closed in a grinning circle round the Rookwood four.

"Keep off!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

But the heroes of Bagshot School evidently did not intend to keep off. There was a rush.

It was only what the Rookwooders might have expected, for there was war between the Rookwood juniors and the juniors of Bagshot. They seldom or never met without "rags." The Fistical

Four knew what to expect—exactly what they would have handed out, in fact, if the position had been reversed! But though they were only four against eight, they did not intend to yield tamely; and as the Bagshot Bounders attacked, Jimmy Silver & Co. stood on their defence, and there was a terrific scrap raging the next minute.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were great fighting men—especially so was Jimmy Silver. They lived up to their warlike title on this occasion.

But the odds were too heavy. Four Bagshot Bounders were down, but the other four pressed on hard, and in a few seconds the fallen four were up and rushing on again.

Then a dozen fellows mixed up inextricably in a wild and whirling combat. For several minutes it lasted, but the end was inevitable. And at the end, Jimmy Silver & Co. were lying in the grass, with the victorious Bagshot Bounders sitting or standing on them.

Pankley wiped a stream of crimson from his nose, as he sat on Arthur Edward Lovell's neck.

"My hat! Quite warm while it lasted!" he said breathlessly.

"Gerroff my neck!" came in deep, muffled tones from Lovell.

"Is the lunch ours, Silver?"

"Ow! Ooooh! No!"

"Hand me the mustard," said Pankley ominously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"You awful rotters! You can have the lunch! Groooogh!"

"Sure you don't mind?" smiled Pankley. "Dear boy, this is really kind of you. So thoughtful, too, when we're hungry after a long walk. As you're so good, we'll let you off. We'll just tie you leg to leg and let you hop home, and when you get to Rookwood, you can just mention that Bagshot is top school.

"Anything else we can do for you?"

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Jimmy. The Fistical Four began to struggle again. But their struggles were useless—in the grasp of so many hands. With fragments of string, and the neckties of the prisoners, and other odds and ends, the wrists of the Fistical Four were tied behind their backs, and then they were tied leg to leg, in a staggering, gasping row. The Bagshot fellows roared with laughter as they looked at them.

"Now trot, dear boys," said Pankley. "We can't get back to Rookwood like this!" shrieked Newcome.

"You never know what you can do till you try," said Pankley encouragingly. "You can start, anyhow, can't you?"

"No, you rotter!"

"I think you can. For instance, I'm going to land out with my boot until you do—like that—"

"Ow!"

"And like that—"

"Oh crumbs! Ow! Wow!"

The Fistical Four found that they could start. In fact, they were anxious to start.

They scrambled and staggered and swayed away, in a row, followed by a yell of laughter.

"Good-bye, little birds, good-bye!" sang Pankley.

The unhappy four scrambled and hopped away; and Pankley & Co., in great spirits gathered round the lunch-basket. The picnic was coming off after all; only with a different set of picnickers.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Woe to the Conquered!

GREAT pip!"
Gunner of the Fourth fairly gasped.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner, the new boy at Rookwood, was taking a walk on Coombe Heath that afternoon.

The burly Gunner was sauntering along with his hands in his pockets, when all of a sudden a strange and startling sight dawned upon him, and he stopped and stared.

Four juniors, in a row, were coming towards him. Their hands were behind them, and they were walking very close together, in quite an odd way. They seemed to have some difficulty in making progress, which was explained by the fact that each fellow had his right

leg tied to the left leg of the fellow next to him.

Gunner blinked at the Fistical Four. Relations were strained between the four and the new junior. Indeed, Gunner had lately essayed to lick Jimmy Silver—with disastrous results to himself.

By what weird accident or fluke Jimmy had had the better of that encounter, Gunner did not quite know; but he knew that it could only be accounted for on the theory of an accident or a fluke.

"Well, my only aunt Belinda!" ejaculated Gunner, as he stared blankly at the Fistical Four. "What are you fellows got up like that for? Is it a game?"

"Come and let us loose!" howled Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell had never expected to be glad to see Gunner; but he was glad to see him just then.

The prospect of appearing on the public road in their present eclipsed condition was very painful to the heroes of Rookwood. The sight of any Rookwood fellow was welcome just then—even Gunner.

"Let you loose!" repeated Gunner. Gunner's powerful brain was rather slow in the uptake. "I suppose you can let yourselves loose if you've tied yourselves up!"

"You frabjous cuckoo!" hissed Lovell. "Do you think we tied ourselves up like this, you burbling jabberwock?"

"Didn't you?" asked Gunner.

"Fathead!"

"Ass!" said Raby. "Frumptious owl! Dummy!"

"Burlbling chump!" said Newcome. It was not a polite way to request assistance. But the obtuseness of Gunner was irritating at times.

"Let us loose, old scout," said Jimmy Silver. "We've got landed by the Bagshot Bounders, and they've fixed us up like this. Our hands are tied behind."

Gunner understood then. Gunner could always understand if given plenty of time. He burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" shrieked Lovell, in a fury.

"You!" roared Gunner. "Ha, ha, ha! You call yourselves the Fistical Four, don't you? The Funny Four would be better! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Gunner—"

"If I had my hands loose," said Lovell, in concentrated tones, "I'd knock your silly nose half-way through your silly head!"

"But you haven't got 'em loose!" chuckled Gunner. "Oh, my hat! What a sight! Do you fellows know how funny you are?"

"Let us loose!" raved Newcome.

"Call yourselves leaders of the Fourth!" grinned Gunner. "Precious leaders! Why, I came out this afternoon to look for some of the Bagshot Bounders. I want to show them that there's a chap at Rookwood now who can give them the kybosh! What a pity I wasn't with you when they bagged you!"

"You silly owl, you'd have got the same," howled Lovell. "They were two to one."

Gunner shook his head.

"Two to one wouldn't matter much to me," he said airily. "I never count odds. Where did you leave them?"

"Never mind that. Let us loose."

"Have they bagged your picnic?" grinned Gunner.

"You burbling chump, will you let us

loose?" shrieked Lovell, in great exasperation.

"Tell me where you left them?"

"Over the ridge yonder," said Jimmy Silver, jerking his head.

"How long ago?"

"Ten minutes."

"Then they'll still be there," said

Gunner. "I'll tell you what. I've already told you, Jimmy Silver, that you're no good as leader, haven't I?"

"Oh, dry up!"

"I'm going to show you, and all the fellows," said Gunner. "I'm going to see the Bagshot Bounders, and get your lunch-basket back from them. See?"

"You can't, you howling ass."

Gunner laughed.

"Leave it to me," he said. "I can handle them. I dare say I shall be back at Rookwood, with the lunch-basket, by the time you get there—in that state."

"Aren't you going to untie us?" yelled Raby.

"I think not. You see, you fellows want putting down a peg, for your swank," explained Gunner calmly. "It will do you good to hop it into Rookwood in that state. It will show the chaps just what you are worth. Then when I walk in with the lunch-basket, the fellows will be able to see the chap they really want for junior captain. Catch on?"

"Look here, Gunner—"

"Good-bye!" said Gunner.

"You—you—you—" spluttered Lovell.

"Good-bye!" said Gunner.

"You—you—you—" spluttered Lovell.

Peter Cuthbert Gunner walked on cheerily. The Fistical Four looked at one another with feelings too deep for words.

"The—the—the awful rotter!" gasped Lovell. "Don't I wish I had my hands loose! I'd knock some of the stuffing out of him!"

"The Bagshot Bounders will do that, if he drops on them," said Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, that's one comfort."

"Let's get on," groaned Newcome.

The unhappy four progressed slowly and uncomfortably, across the grassy heath. Gunner had failed them, but they nourished a faint hope of meeting some other Rookwooder before they reached the road.

Arriving at the school in such a state was not to be thought of; it would have been too terrible a humiliation for the great chief of the Lower School. But they had reached the road before they sighted a single passer-by. And then they breathed relief as they caught sight of a fat and podgy figure in Etons.

"Muffin!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Muffin! I say, Muffin!" he shouted, with all the strength of his lungs; and the fat Classical blinked round, and then came trotting up.

"He, he, he! Where's the picnic?" chortled Tubby Muffin. "I was looking for you fellows—"

"Cut this dashed string!" hooted Lovell.

"You dodged me," said Tubby Muffin severely. "I was coming to the picnic, and you know it. Where's the grub?"

"The Bagshot Bounders have got it. Cut us loose, Tubby, there's a good chap."

The fat Classical chortled. He seemed in no hurry to release the helpless picknicks.

"Serve you jolly well right!" he said. "I'm jolly hungry, you know. I'll come to tea in the end study, if you like, Jimmy."

"Cut us loose, and we'll stand you a tea with—with pleasure," gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Buck up!" howled Lovell.

"A real decent spread?" asked Tubby. "Yes, yes! Cut us loose!"

"Certainly, old chap. Will there be cake for tea?"

"Bother the cake! Let us loose."

"The cake's rather important. Sergeant Kettle has some new plum cakes that are simply ripping. If there isn't going to be a cake—"

"There will be a cake," said Jimmy Silver. "Do let us loose, Muffin. There's some people coming up the road."

"Wouldn't they cackle to see you like this," grinned Muffin. "Will there be any jam?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"More than one kind?" asked Tubby.

"I—I'll smash you—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, yes, three kinds of jam."

"Honest Injun?" asked Tubby cautiously.

"Honest Injun!" answered Jimmy Silver, in a gasping voice.

"Right-ho! I'll come," said Muffin.

"Shift round and I'll soon cut you loose. Keep still, Lovell."

"Yaroooooh!"

"What's the matter now?"

"You fat villain, you're digging that dashed penknife into my dashed wrists!" wailed Lovell.

"I told you to keep still, didn't I?"

"Oh, dear! I—I—"

"Yarooooop!" came in a wild yell from Raby.

"You ought to keep still," said Tubby. "No good wriggling when a chap's handling a knife."

"Yow-wow-wow!"

"It was only a little jab. If you keep on wriggling you'll very likely get it worse."

"Whoooooop!"

"There. I told you so!"

Arthur Edward Lovell choked with wrath. Tubby Muffin had the cords cut at last, and the Fistical Four wrenched their hands free. Arthur Edward Lovell's first action was to grasp Reginald Muffin by a fat ear. It was Tubby's turn to yell.

"Yaroooooh! You awful beast! Leggo! After I've let you loose! Yarooooop! Woop! Woop! Yooooop!"

"There, you fat rotter!" gasped Lovell. "That'll teach you to vivisect a chap—"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

Jimmy Silver jerked away the penknife, and cut loose his legs and those of his chums. The Fistical Four were free at last. If Tubby Muffin had expected any demonstration of gratitude, Tubby Muffin was booked for a disappointment. The Fistical Four glared at him in a way that expressed many feelings, but gratitude was not among the number.

"We've said we'll stand that fat rotter a spread, and we'll do it," gasped Jimmy Silver. "But we haven't said that we won't kick him all the way to Rookwood. And we'll do that."

"Yaroooooh!"

Tubby Muffin broke into wild flight. After him went the Fistical Four. Tubby Muffin deserved something, but it is much to be feared that he received the deserts of Gunner and the Bagshot Bounders, as well as his own! That run to Rookwood was like a horrid dream to Muffin. The Fistical Four fairly dribbled him all the way to the school.

When the spread came off in the end study—for Jimmy Silver's word was his bond, and the spread was duly stood—Tubby Muffin did not enjoy it so much as he had anticipated. He stood up to it. For reasons best known to himself

the fat Classical had no desire to sit down just then.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
This Side Up with Care!

AFTER tea, Jimmy Silver & Co. remembered the existence of Peter Cuthbert Gunner. He had left them with the declared intention of seeking the Bagshot Bounders, giving them the "kybosh," and recapturing the lunch-basket, which was to be brought home to Rookwood in triumph as an undeniable proof of the amazing prowess of Peter Cuthbert Gunner. The task which had been too much for the Fistical Four was nothing to Peter Cuthbert—in Peter Cuthbert's own estimation. As he had said, he never counted odds.

Quite curious to know what had happened to Gunner, whether he had yet returned to Rookwood, and whether he had returned all in one piece, the Fistical Four went down after tea and inquired for him.

They found that Gunner had not yet returned.

They inquired for him up and down the school and, at last, they received some information from Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth. Tommy Dodd had seen the great Gunner.

"That idiot?" said Tommy, as Jimmy met him at the gates and inquired.

"Oh, yes, I've seen him."

"Still alive?" asked Lovell, with a grin.

"Oh, yes. He was walking with some Bagshot fellows."

"Walking with them?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in astonishment.

"That's it. I saw them coming off the heath," said Tommy Dodd. "As there were eight or nine of the Bounders, I didn't go close to them."

"They can't have chummed," said Raby, puzzled. "What was he walking with them for?"

"Possibly because he couldn't help it," grinned Tommy Dodd. "Pankley and Price had arms through his arms, and I fancy they were holding on. The whole crowd were grinning like a lot of Cheshire cats. Gunner seemed to have amused them somehow. They were walking off towards Bagshot. I dare say he's there by now. I hope they'll keep him, Gunner's superfluous here."

"Well, he asked for it," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "I suppose they'll rag him a little, and send him home in time for calling-over."

"I'd have chipped in if it had been worth while," observed Tommy Dodd. "But, as he's only a Classical, it didn't matter much what became of him, did it?"

After which remark, Tommy Dodd wisely scudded for Mr. Manders' house before the Fistical Four could make a suitable rejoinder.

"Cheeky Modern ass!" growled Lovell. "I say, I wonder what they've done to Gunner. I suppose he just dropped into their paws like a ripe apple."

Jimmy Silver laughed. "Just that!" he said. "I hope they haven't quite slaughtered him. He's a born fool and a cheeky ass, but—"

"Hallo, I hear from Muffin that you fellows had a great time this afternoon," remarked Valentine Mornington, joining the Fistical Four, with a grin on his face.

"Blow Muffin!" growled Lovell. It was not pleasant to the heroes of the Fourth to have their misadventure

talked of up and down Rookwood. It was an indignity they would gladly have forgotten. They walked away without giving Mornington any particulars, leaving the dandy of the Fourth grinning. But Morny was not the only one who had heard the story. Tubby Muffin, perhaps remembering the way he had been dribbled home, was relating it up and down the Lower School to every fellow who would listen, with details and exaggerations of his own. The Fistical Four found themselves subjected to a fire of inquiry and chipping, which did not please them.

They retired to their study, and Peele of the Fourth looked in to inquire whether it was true that Tubby Muffin had seen them on their knees, begging for mercy from the Bagshot Bounders. Tubby was evidently improving the tale every time he related it. The Fistical Four did not answer Cyril Peele's inquiry, but they collared him and jerked him into the study, and the next minute Peele was howling for quarter. When Peele left the end study, it was "on his neck," and he did not return to make any more inquiries.

The chums of the Fourth started their prep unusually early. They did not yearn for the company of their Form-fellows just then. They were deep in prep when a tap came at the door, and Tubby Muffin looked in.

Arthur Edward Lovell reached for a ruler.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Muffin. "Pax, you know! I say, Jimmy, you're wanted."

"Well, what is it?" grunted the captain of the Fourth.

"Something's come for you," said Tubby, his round eyes beaming. "I say, if it's tuck, there's a thumping lot of it. Perhaps it's a new bike, though. Are you people sending you a new bike?"

"Not that I know of," said Jimmy, with a stare.

"It must be tuck, then," said Tubby. "I came up to tell you specially, old chap. The carrier won't leave it till he's been paid, and old Mack's arguing with him now."

"What is it, then?" demanded Jimmy. "A packing-case—a jolly big one," said Tubby impressively. "If there's a hamper in it—"

The Fistical Four jumped up. Jimmy sometimes had hampers from home, and they were always welcome.

"Let's go down," said Lovell. "If it's a hamper it's just in time, after we've had our picnic scoffed. Come on."

"Can't be a hamper if it's in a packing-case," said Jimmy, puzzled. "I did mention to my pater that if I had a new bike for the summer it would come 'n jolly useful. But he hasn't said anything. I wonder—"

"Let's see, anyhow."

Jimmy Silver & Co. hurried out of the end study, without heeding Muffin. They found a dozen fellows gathered round Mack's lodge, outside which the Coombe carrier had deposited a large wooden packing-case.

Jimmy looked at it curiously. It was for Jimmy; there was no doubt about that. The name and address were stencilled on it in large letters:

**"J. SILVER,
ROOKWOOD SCHOOL,
NEAR COOMBE,**

In still larger letters were stencilled: **"PERISHABLE. OPEN AT ONCE.
THIS SIDE UP WITH CARE!"**

"Perishable!" said Jimmy Silver. "It can't be a bike, then."

"Tuck," said Tubby Muffin, who had followed the Fistical Four, in a state of breathless anticipation. "I say, what a cargo! If it's tuck—"

"This 'ere's for you, Master Silver," grunted old Mack. "And Carter says there's five shillings to pay."

"I've got to get on my round," grunted the carrier. "I've been waiting here five minutes."

"Sorry," said Jimmy politely. "Only just heard. Lend me a bob or two, you fellows. I've got only half-a-crown."

Lovell sorted out a shilling, and Raby another, and Newcome a sixpence. Jimmy produced half-a-crown, and the variety of coins of the realm were presented to the carrier. There was nothing left over for a tip, so Jimmy thanked Mr. Carter politely instead of handing out a gratuity. Mr. Carter grunted; it was possible that he would have preferred a gratuity. He returned to his cart and drove away.

"I say, that's a bit odd!" remarked Putty Grace, looking at the packing-case. "Carter must have brought it from the station."

"I suppose so," said Jimmy.

"But there's no railway labels on it." "That's odd," said Jimmy, in surprise. "Unless somebody in Coombe has sent it to me. Blessed if I catch on."

"Open at once, perishable!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin. "It must be tuck. Perhaps the labels came off in the carrier's cart. What does it matter, anyhow? Open it at once. I say, Jimmy, I'll help you. If it's tuck—"

"Oh, dry up!"

Old Mack chimed in. "You'd better open that there case 'ere, Master Silver," he said. "If so be there's pastries and sich in that there packing-case it's my dooty to report it."

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Lend me a hammer, old bean."

Old Mack produced a hammer, and Jimmy Silver started on the wooden case. It was made of closely-fitted rough wood, and he noticed, with some surprise, that there were a number of large holes bored in the wood.

"Can't be white rabbits," he said, in wonder. "They wouldn't send rabbits in a packing-case. But—"

He stopped suddenly. In his astonishment he nearly dropped the hammer. From the interior of the packing-case there came, suddenly, a low, faint sound—a faint, mumbling gurgle! What the mysterious packing-case contained was a mystery. But, whatever it was, it was alive!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Huge Jape!

JIMMY SILVER blinked at the packing-case.

The juniors crowded round in great excitement.

"D-d-d-did you hear that?" gasped Jimmy.

"It—it's alive!" ejaculated Lovell. "Listen! Something grunting! Can't be a pig!"

"Nor white rabbits," said Conroy. "Rabbits don't make a queer sound like that. Sounds sort of suffocated."

"Get it open, Jimmy!" exclaimed Raby breathlessly.

Jimmy Silver recommenced on the packing-case. He cracked fragment after fragment of wood from the top, and straw packing oozed out. Three or four juniors seized hold of the lid

as soon as it was loosened, and jerked it off.

There was a general craning of necks to look into the mysterious case. The excitement was breathless now.

"It's a nigger!" yelled Lovell, in utter amazement.

"A human being—"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, lor'!" spluttered old Mack, as he stared at the weird contents of the packing-case.

On his back in the packing-case lay a human being. His body was hidden by straw packed round him, but the face was uncovered, just under the holes in the lid where the lid had been. The face was as black as the ace of spades, and the eyes were rolling wildly.

"A—a—a blooming nigger!" stammered old Mack. "This 'ere is a lark—sending a nigger to this 'ere school in a packing-case. I know that fellow Carter was on to it. I knowed there was something up. He was so pertickler the case must be opened at once. He knows all about it, that there carrier does!"

"What—what—what on earth does it mean?" babbled Jimmy Silver. "A—a negro! My hat! He—he—he's alive!"

"Can't he speak?" exclaimed Raby.

A faint mumble came from the negro.

"He's dumb!" howled Tubby Muffin.

"Fathead, he's gagged!"

There was a handkerchief tied round the boy's head, passing between his open jaws. He was just able to mumble.

Jimmy Silver, with his brain in a whirl, began to unfasten the handkerchief. The negro sat up suddenly, and there was a loud crack as his head came into violent contact with Jimmy Silver's chin.

"Yow!" roared Jimmy.

"Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's in Etons!" shrieked Raby.

It was true. Now that the boy was sitting up, and the straw packing fell away from him, it could be seen that he was wearing an Eton jacket. His wrists were loosely tied together. In blank amazement, the Rookwood juniors stared at him.

"'Tain't a man!" said Lovell. "It's a boy—a black schoolboy! Can't be a new-kid. We should have heard if there was a nigger coming to the school."

"New boys don't arrive in packing-cases!" chuckled Mornington.

"I say, it's a burglar!" howled Tubby Muffin, in great excitement. "This is a trick to get into the school, you know, and burgle it!"

"He's in disguise!" yelled Lovell.

"What!"

"Look!"

Lovell had been helping Jimmy to remove the gag. He held up his hand, and a smear of black showed on his fingers. Evidently it had come off the boy's complexion.

"He—he's not a nigger!" stammered Jimmy Silver dazedly. "Why, my fingers are all black, too! He's in disguise!"

"He's a burglar!" hooted Tubby Muffin. "I say, stand clear, you fellows, while I hit him on the head with the hammer! Better stun him!"

Jimmy jerked the gag away at last. The prisoner of the packing-case opened his mouth wide, and gasped.

"Ooooooh!"

"Stand aside!" yelled Tubby Muffin, brandishing the hammer. "Lemme get at him! Better stun him—"

"Yaroooh! Keep off!" shrieked the black boy. "Keep that dangerous maniac off!"



A SURPRISE FOR GUNNER! "Great pip!" Gunner fairly gasped as he saw the four juniors, all tied together, coming towards him. He burst into a roar of laughter. "Well, my hat!" he said. "What are you fellows got up like that for? Is it a game?" The Fistical Four glared at him. "Come and let us loose!" howled Lovell. (See Chapter 2.)

Jimmy Silver almost fell down. He knew that voice!

"Gunner!"

"Gunner!" shrieked the Rookwood juniors. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't you untie a fellow?" yelled Gunner. "I've been in this dashed packing-case half an hour! Let a fellow out, can't you, you blithering owls? Untie my paws, you boobies!"

"Gunner!" gasped Jimmy Silver faintly.

He mechanically released the hapless Gunner. Peter Cuthbert—for it certainly was he, though he was quite unrecognisable—rolled out of the packing-case and scrambled to his feet.

Peter Cuthbert was almost foaming with rage.

"Calling me a nigger!" he howled. "You frabjous chumps! Don't you know a Rookwood chap when you see one?"

"Not when he's got a face like that!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "You unspeakable idiot, what do you mean by coming home in a packing-case with your silly face blacked?"

"How could I help it!" raved Gunner. "They collared me, and walked me off, and kept me, and got that dashed packing-case, and shoved soot over my chivvy, and put me in, and tipped that villain Carter five bob to bring me here! Oh dear! I—I've had an awful time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver, comprehending at last. "The Bagshot Bouders, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at!" howled Gunner.

"Wait till you get near a looking-glass, old bean, then you will."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that's how you gave them the kybosh, Gunner!" said Jimmy Silver, wiping his eyes. "You let them black your face and shut you up in a packing-case—this side up with care! Ha, ha, ha!"

"How could I help it?" roared Gunner. "There were eight of them. I could have licked seven; but eight was too many!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here comes Greely!" howled Raby. "You'd better take that face away before it's seen, Gunner!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Gunner sprinted. Mr. Greely had the surprise of his life as an excited-looking negro dashed past him in the Rookwood quadrangle, and vanished before the Fifth Form master could raise a hand to stop him. Jimmy Silver Co. scattered, howling with merriment. It was a Bagshot triumph, and "one up" against Rookwood. But the Rookwooders howled over it—all except Gunner.

The humour of the situation was quite lost on Peter Cuthbert Gunner. For a long time he was busy in a bath-room, removing the complexion the Bagshot Bouders had bestowed upon him, while the Fourth-Formers howled with merriment, and Mr. Greely, in a very surprised and startled frame of mind, was seeking up and down Rookwood for the wild-looking negro who had rushed past him in the quad. Fortunately, Mr. Greely did not find him!

THE END.

(You will enjoy reading, "Gunner's Special Mixture!" next week's splendid long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.)

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