

THE
**SECRET
SEVEN**

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

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THE
**SECRET
SEVEN**

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

ILLUSTRATED BY *Tony Ross*


Hodder
Children's
Books

Dedication is to follow

HODDER CHILDREN'S BOOKS

First published in Great Britain in 2018 by Hodder and Stoughton

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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Written by Pamela Butchart. Text © Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 2018
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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 444 94153 1

Typeset in Caslon Twelve by Avon DataSet Ltd, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

The paper and board used in this book are made from wood from responsible sources.



Hodder Children's Books
An imprint of Hachette Children's Group
Part of Hodder and Stoughton
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London, EC4Y 0DZ

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk
www.hachettechildrens.co.uk

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CHAPTER ONE

A NEW MYSTERY

IT HAD been ages since the last Secret Seven meeting. In fact, it had been so long that there was a huge spiderweb right across the door of the shed at the bottom of the garden.

‘We’ll need to get rid of that,’ said Peter. ‘Go on,’ he said, looking at Jack.

Jack looked freaked out. ‘But it’s got big hairy bits stuck to it,’ he mumbled.

That’s when Janet, Peter’s sister, pushed past them and ripped the giant spiderweb in two with her bare hands.

Peter and Jack stared at her.

‘Are you coming in?’ Janet said. ‘Or have you forgotten that this is an emergency meeting? You’re

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

not scared of spiders, are you?’

Peter walked in slowly, very carefully stepping round the remains of the sticky web.

‘We can’t start the meeting until everyone gets here anyway,’ he said.

Just then George arrived and his face was bright red and he was panting. ‘Sorry! Sorry I’m late!’ he puffed, even though he was actually right on time.

Jack began wiping down the chairs and upturned buckets and asking about food because Janet and Peter’s mum always made them snacks when they were having an official meeting.

‘There wasn’t time to wait for my mum to finish making the sandwiches,’ said Peter. ‘This is urgent!’

Jack gasped. There was always time for snacks.

‘But I’m starving!’ he said. ‘I didn’t have breakfast because you came up to my house so early and basically pulled me out of bed, Peter!’

And then he ran out of the shed and up to Peter and Janet’s house before Peter could argue with him.

A NEW MYSTERY

Peter looked at his watch and started pacing backwards and forwards, shaking his head. He had sent out a message saying that the meeting started at 9am sharp and it was now 9:02am.

He was just about to say that he was seriously considering turning the Secret Seven into the Secret Four when Jack appeared back in the doorway with a plate of sandwiches and biscuits and Colin.

That's when Peter shut the shed door right in their faces.

'HEY! There's no need for that!' Jack shouted from the other side of the door.

'What's the password?' asked Peter.

Peter was getting on Jack's nerves.

'ARMPIT!' he shouted.

That made Peter furious because the password definitely wasn't 'armpit' and he knew Jack was just saying that to annoy him because he'd shut the door in his face (and also because he'd probably forgotten the real password like he always did!).

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

But before Peter could say anything about the armpit thing, Colin said, 'Scotland! The password is Scotland.'

Peter opened the door and gave Jack a look. Jack grinned back at him and went and took a seat next to Janet and started eating a jam sandwich.

But the Secret Seven still couldn't start the meeting because Pam and Barbara weren't there yet and everyone knew that they would be at least ten minutes late and that Peter would be raging about it because that's what always happened.

'Come and sit down and tell us what's going on,' said Jack, already munching on his second sandwich.

But Peter was too busy staring out of the peephole in the shed wall and muttering to himself about Pam and Barbara.

Jack rolled his eyes. 'Janet, what's going on?'

But before Janet could answer there was scratching at the shed door and George almost jumped out of his skin because Janet had just finished telling

A NEW MYSTERY

Colin about the whole giant web thing.

Everyone froze and listened to the creepy scratching sound.

‘It’s probably just Scamper,’ said Jack.

Janet shook her head and pointed to the corner of the shed where Scamper was already curled up asleep.

George gulped.

But then they heard giggling and a voice said, ‘*Woooooooooooo!* Let us in or we’ll scratch the door down with our witchy nails!’

Peter rolled his eyes. ‘What’s the password?’

‘*Scooooootland,*’ another voice said. It was Barbara.

Everyone burst out laughing when Pam and Barbara walked in because they were dressed up as witches and Barbara had even drawn warts all over her face with pen.

But Peter wasn’t laughing. He had his arms crossed and looked mega annoyed, and everyone knew that it wasn’t just because Pam and Barbara

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

were late. It was because they were wearing fancy dress to an official Secret Seven meeting.

‘Are you two off to a fancy-dress party?’ asked Janet.

‘No,’ said Barbara. ‘We just felt like being witches today.’

Peter shook his head. ‘You’ll soon stop thinking everything’s so funny when I tell you what I found last night.’

Peter sat down on his chair, got out his official Secret Seven notebook and took a deep breath.

‘I’ve called this meeting of the Secret Seven Society to discuss something seriously weird.’

As soon as Peter said that, Pam and Barbara shut up and stared at him.

That’s when Peter explained that he and Janet had arrived home the night before from staying with their gran for the first fortnight of the summer holidays.

‘When I went up to my room I got a strange

A NEW MYSTERY

feeling the minute I opened the door,' he said. 'I just knew that someone had been in there while I'd been gone.'

Everyone leant forward as Peter took something out of his backpack and placed it on the ground in front of them.

'And then I found this.'

Pam and Barbara gasped, and George actually moved his bucket back a bit.

Jack looked at Peter with wide eyes. 'Peter, is this a joke?'

But Peter didn't even need to answer because this was obviously not a joke.

This was real.

And they all knew that it was up to them to do something right away.

Because it was a *skull!*

CHAPTER TWO

THE PETER SKULL

NO ONE had any idea where the skull could have come from or why it had been in Peter's bedroom!

Colin inspected the skull closely.

'It's only half a skull,' he said. 'I think it looks human. But I can't be sure without the other half.'

Janet leant forward and scrunched up her eyes. 'What's that? There's something written on it.'

She took her torch out of her bag and shone it on the skull.

'There's too much dirt. I can't read it properly.'

'Um, maybe it's, you know, *his* name,' said George, pointing at the skull with a shaky finger.

'Maybe it's not dirt,' said Jack. 'Maybe it's blood!'

Pam gasped and grabbed Barbara's hand.

THE PETER SKULL

Janet wiped the skull with her sleeve. 'I think it says Peter,' she said.

'This is too weird,' said Jack. 'I need a biscuit.'

Jack shoved a whole ginger biscuit in his mouth and then passed the plate to Pam but she said that she didn't want one because the Peter Skull was making her feel a bit sick.

All of a sudden George drew in a huge breath. 'What if it's a warning?'

'What do you mean?' said Peter.

George swallowed the rest of his biscuit with a loud gulp. 'I think someone might have put the skull there as a threat. They might be trying to warn you off something.'

Just then they heard a noise outside.

'Did anyone else hear that?' Jack whispered.

Everyone nodded.

Peter got up and looked out of the peephole. But he couldn't see anyone.

Then there was another sound. It sounded like it

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

was coming from the roof.

‘I don’t like this!’ said Pam. ‘We need to get rid of the skull. It’s probably cursed!’

‘Ssssssh!’ said Janet. ‘I hear something.’

‘That’s it,’ said Peter. ‘I’m going out. If there is someone there, it’s obviously me they’re after!’

Peter opened the shed door and ran outside. But there was no one there.

‘PETER!’ Pam yelled. ‘Come back inside. ‘What if it’s a *headless skeleton*?’

Someone burst out laughing.

Peter looked up at the roof. It was Jack’s annoying little sister Susie and her even *more* annoying friend Binkie.

‘Get down from there, both of you!’ he demanded.

‘JACK!’ yelled Peter. ‘You’d better get out here!’

‘Yes, *Jack*,’ said Susie. ‘You’d better get out here and do *everything* your precious leader tells you to do. That’s a good boy.’

Jack was furious. ‘Get down NOW!’ he said. ‘Or

THE PETER SKULL

I'll tell Mum you were climbing on Peter and Janet's mum's property and you'll be grounded for life!

'Oh, calm your pants,' said Susie, jumping down. 'We're only having a laugh.'

'*Yeab*, Peter! We're only having a *laugh*!' said Binkie.

'Haven't the two of you got anything better to do than sneak about spying on us?' Peter said.

'Oh! We've got plenty of exciting things to do,' said Susie. 'Like looking for that *headless skeleton* that's supposedly running around your farm!'

Binkie burst out laughing. 'The headless skeleton strikes again!' she squealed.

Peter narrowed his eyes at Susie. 'It was you, wasn't it?'

'Don't know what you're talking about, King Peter,' said Susie, folding her arms.

'Did YOU put that skull in Peter's bedroom?' Jack shouted. 'How did you even get in?'

Susie smirked. 'Mum was watering their plants

MYSTERY OF THE SKULL

while they were away. I might have gone along to help.'

'That's it!' said Jack, storming off. 'I'm telling Mum!'

'Wait!' said Susie. 'Don't you want to know where I found old Peter the skull?'

Jack stopped and looked at Peter.

'Ha! I thought that might interest you. It might even be the next big case for the totally *wonderful* Secret Seven!' she said sarcastically. 'THE MYSTERY OF THE SKULL!' she shrieked at the top of her lungs.

Peter rolled his eyes. Why did Jack have to have such an annoying little sister?

'Where did you find it?' asked Peter.

'How much is it worth to you?' said Susie.

Jack marched back over. 'I'll tell you exactly how much it's worth. Either you tell us where you found it *now* or I'll tell Mum you sneaked into Peter's room and left a skull there. I'll also tell her what

THE PETER SKULL

really happened to the Hoover. How about that?’

‘*Fine!*’ said Susie. ‘We found it down near the hotel.’

‘What were you doing down there?’ asked Jack.

‘Just taking a look around,’ said Susie. ‘We wanted to see what the new owners looked like. They’re American.’

‘I said they might be famous film stars!’ said Binkie.

‘And are they?’ asked Peter.

Susie shrugged. ‘We didn’t see anyone except old Peter the skull.’

‘You’d better not be lying to us about where you found it, Susie,’ said Peter.

‘We’re not!’ said Binkie. ‘Someone’s been digging there. Go and see for yourself!’