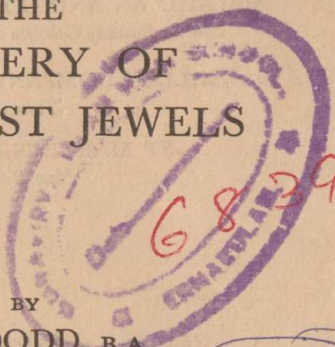


M.I.H.S

THE
MYSTERY OF
THE LOST JEWELS

BY

E. F. DODD, B.A.



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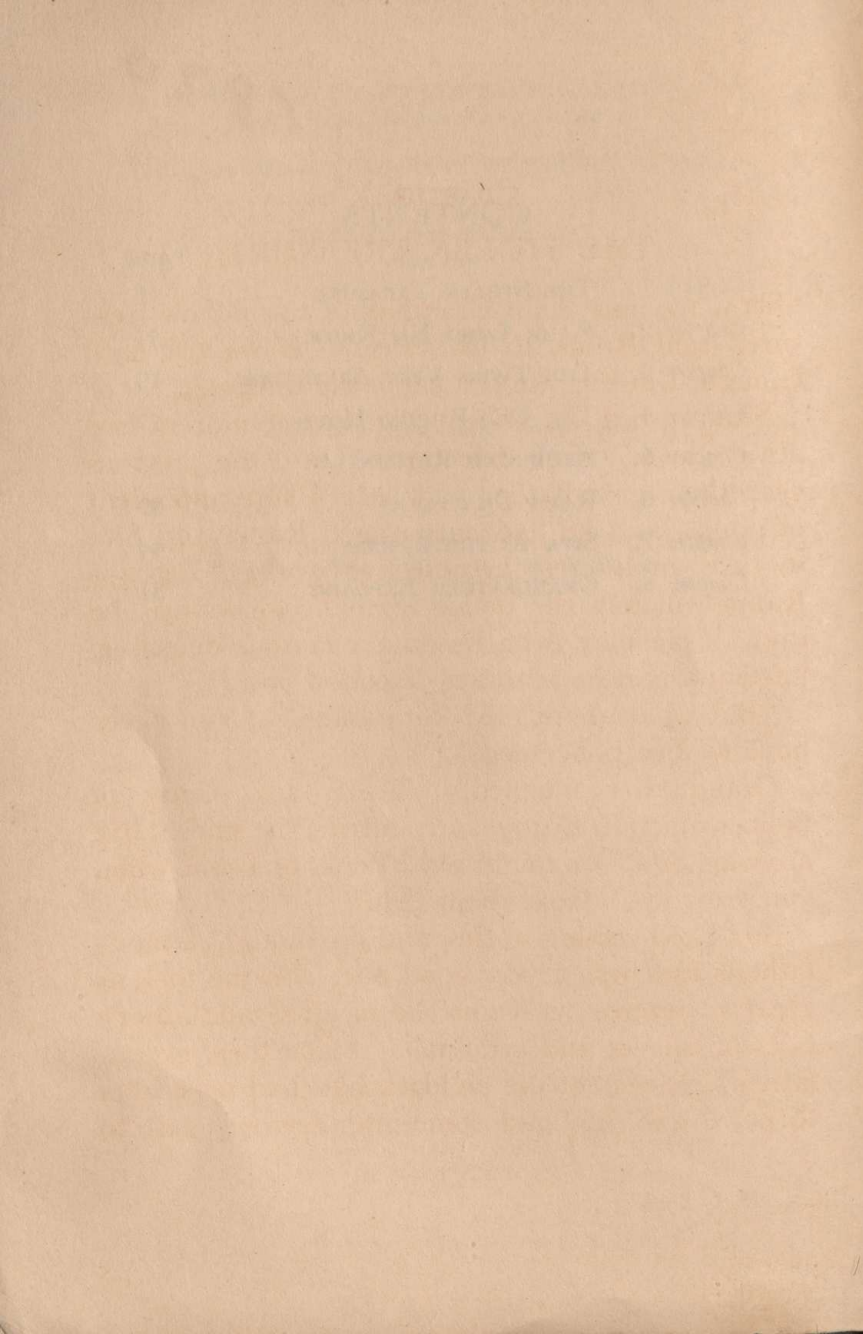
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CHAPTER 1

THE STOLEN TREASURE

‘SITA, we must help Grandfather to find his treasure,’ said Rama to his sister. ‘If we try hard enough, I’m sure we can catch the thieves.’

Sita agreed at once. The two children had always loved crime detection. Until the previous year their grandfather had been a superintendent of police, and he had encouraged Rama and Sita to take an interest in detective work. ‘Perhaps Rama will join the police when he grows up,’ he said. ‘He may even become a famous detective, particularly if he practises detection now.’

‘But what about me?’ Sita asked. ‘You never have women policemen.’

Grandfather laughed. ‘There are plenty of policewomen in European countries,’ he said. ‘But anyway, Sita, you might write books on crime when you grow up. How about that?’

Sita liked writing stories, and she thought Grandfather’s idea was a very good one. So she took as great an interest as Rama did in all Grandfather’s tales of thieves and criminals. Since their grandfather’s retirement the children had had no crimes to solve and life had sometimes seemed dull to

them during the past year. But now they had a real thief of their own to find. It was very exciting!

The two children had lived with their grandfather for six years, ever since their parents had been killed in a railway accident when the children were seven years old. Rama and Sita were twins, and they were so alike that their grandmother often said: 'It's lucky you're not both boys. If Sita had short hair like Rama's, we should never know the difference between you.'

Grandfather had plenty of money, but he had some strange ideas and he always refused to keep his savings in a Bank. 'What if there were a fire and the Bank was burned down?' he said. 'Then I should lose all my money.' Even after he retired from his police work he still refused to use a Bank. 'No!' he said. 'I prefer to keep my treasure near me in my own house. Surely a retired Police Superintendent should be able to guard his own money!'

So he kept a great strong box under his bed. It was made of iron and brass and was fitted with a special key. All his silver rupees and the precious family jewels were locked inside the box, and Grandfather kept the key on a gold chain round his neck. Kasi, his old servant, sometimes said that Grandfather put the key in his mouth at night, but Kasi was always joking. The twins didn't really believe him, but they laughed at the thought of Grand-

father lying on his back in bed, with the large iron key sticking straight out of his mouth.

And now the treasure had gone! No one could understand how it had happened. Kasi always slept on a mat at his master's feet, and Grandmother was in the next room with the door open. The dog, Chinnai, was a good watchdog. Why didn't he wake up when the thieves came in? They had quietly taken the key-chain from Grandfather's neck, cut the rope, unlocked the box, and taken away all the treasure. When Kasi got up in the morning, he had found the box wide open, with the key still in the lock, and Grandfather peacefully sleeping. No one had heard a sound.

Of course Grandfather had sent for his friends the police, and they had asked a hundred questions. They had called all the servants: the old *ayah*, Arumugam the gardener, Anand the waterman, and Kasi's son, Muthu, who helped his father with the housework. But nobody could give any help, and the thieves had left no trace. The police went away again, promising to do all they could. 'The thieves will not be able to sell the jewels easily,' they said. 'We have a description of all the pieces, and we'll warn all the jewellers in the town.'

So now Rama and Sita were sitting in the garden in the September sunshine, watching two birds flying high above their heads and wondering what they could do to find Grandfather's treasure again.

‘It would be so heavy,’ Rama said. ‘I can’t think that the thieves could carry it far away. Do you think they buried some of it in the garden? They might do that, and come back later to collect it.’

The two children wandered round the garden, looking carefully at the ground for any signs that the soil had been recently dug up. In the vegetable garden they found a newly dug square of earth and began to dig it themselves with sticks. They had made quite a big hole when Arumugam the gardener came round the corner and shouted at them angrily. ‘You useless children!’ he cried. ‘What are you doing in my vegetable garden?’



‘You useless children!’ he cried

Yesterday I planted seeds—tomatoes, carrots, chillies—and today you dig them all up again. It will not be my fault if you have no vegetables for your curry this year.’ And the old man took their sticks from them and carefully smoothed the earth again.

Rama and Sita left the gardener talking angrily to himself, and went to the well at the bottom of the garden. Rama picked up a stone and dropped it into the well, and the two children leaned over the edge, waiting for it to reach the bottom. The well was very deep, but at last they heard the *plop!* of the stone as it hit the water, and saw the widening circle of water spread to the darkness at the edge.

‘The well would be a good place to hide the treasure,’ said Rama slowly, ‘but I suppose it would be too difficult to get it out again, unless it was put into a big bag.’

‘Yes, they could tie a long rope to the bag, and fasten the rope to the side of the well,’ Sita suggested with excitement. ‘Let us look carefully. Don’t you remember when Mr. Murugesan’s typewriter was stolen two years ago? Grandfather told a constable to look in the well in Mr. Murugesan’s garden, and he found the typewriter pushed into a hole in the wall?’

But although they examined the well on all sides, they could see no signs of a rope.

‘It’s no good!’ said Rama. ‘The thieves are too clever for us. Perhaps the police will be more successful.’

The twins walked up the garden towards the house, carefully avoiding Arumugam, who was still sitting beside his vegetable garden, shaking his head and talking to himself. When they reached the house they saw old Kasi’s son, Muthu, who was sitting on the back verandah, cutting himself a whistle from a piece of wood. He was using Rama’s best knife, and Rama wasn’t very pleased about it.

‘Muthu, that’s my knife. Where did you get it?’ he asked, and Muthu laughed and went on cutting.

‘You shouldn’t leave your possessions in the wrong places, little master,’ he said. ‘You’ll be losing it, as your grandfather lost his treasure.’ He got up lazily and gave Rama the knife. ‘I found it under your grandfather’s bed,’ he explained. ‘It must have been used for cutting the rope round his box.’

Rama was puzzled. He couldn’t quite remember when he had last used the knife, but he was sure that he had put it away in a drawer in his own room. How had the thieves found it? Had they gone into his room, too, the night before? It was all very strange, and rather frightening. Why had everyone in the house slept so deeply last night? Kasi usually woke up at the smallest sound, and

so did the dog, Chinnai. Grandmother, too, was often awake during the night. Had they all been given something to make them sleep? Something in their evening coffee, perhaps, and in Chinnai's bowl of rice? But if so, who could have done it, apart from someone actually living in the house?

'Sita, I don't like this puzzle,' Rama said quietly to his sister as they went upstairs to put his knife back in his drawer. 'I don't think the police will solve it. We shall have to find the solution ourselves.'

CHAPTER 2

RAMA LOSES HIS KNIFE

RAMA slept badly that night. He woke up half a dozen times, and each time he had the feeling that something had wakened him. Once he thought he heard a door closing softly, and he sat up and listened. But the sound was not repeated and he decided it must have been his imagination. There was no reason why anyone should want to break into the house a second time, because there was nothing left to steal. 'How shall we live?' thought Rama anxiously. 'I must leave school at once and try to earn some money. There must be plenty of people who would be glad to have a strong, thirteen-year-old boy to work for them.'

And so the anxious boy woke, and slept, and woke again, puzzling over his problem, and in the morning he went to his grandfather's room and said: 'Grandfather, I'm not going to school today.'

Grandfather was reading his newspaper, and he looked over his spectacles at the solemn face before him. 'Why not, my son?' he asked.

'Because I must work, now that you have lost all your money,' the boy replied.

'What work will you do, Rama?' Grandfather said.

'I don't know,' Rama said. 'I'm not very clever at school—Sita always gets better marks than I do—but I'm strong and healthy and I'm sure I could earn a living somehow.'

Grandfather put out his arm and took Rama's hand in his. 'Don't worry, child,' he said kindly. 'I expect we shall solve this mystery. Surely I haven't trained you and Sita as detectives for nothing? You must try to catch the thieves for me—it will be excellent practice for you.' He smiled. 'In any case, things are not as bad as you fear,' he went on. 'I have my government pension, you know. That comes regularly every month and it is enough for us to live on.'

'Then you haven't lost *all* your money?' Rama said.

‘No, not all,’ Grandfather answered. ‘My savings were certainly in the box, but your old grandfather is not so foolish as you think!’

‘Oh, Grandfather, I don’t think you’re foolish at all!’ Rama cried. ‘You’re the wisest old man in the world.’

‘Well, now—I wouldn’t say that,’ said Grandfather. ‘I think, if you looked far enough, you might find one or two old men who are wiser than I am!’ He paused for a moment. ‘Or quite as wise, anyway,’ he continued solemnly. ‘But, although I am certainly not a complete fool, I have learned a new lesson, Rama. If I ever recover my savings, I shall put them in a bank.’

He nodded his head wisely. ‘So you see I still have a little sense, my son!’ he finished.

‘Yes, Grandfather,’ Rama agreed solemnly. He was never quite certain when his grandfather was joking and when he was speaking seriously. Grown-up people were very puzzling sometimes. But two things were certain: first, that they could stay on in this lovely house, and secondly that the treasure must be found.

‘Now, you run along to school, young man,’ said Grandfather, ‘and don’t worry any more about this little theft.’ Rama looked at him in surprise. Grandfather called it a *little* theft! The old man nodded his head again. ‘Yes, this little theft,’ he repeated. ‘You must not trouble yourself, my

boy.' And pushing his spectacles more firmly on his nose, Grandfather once more turned his attention to his newspaper.

Rama slowly left the room and saw Muthu, 'old Kasi's son, busily polishing a brass pot outside the door. Muthu looked up and smiled at him, and Rama said: 'Did you hear what Grandfather said, Muthu? He called the loss of the family jewels a *little* theft. I don't understand him.'

'He was trying to stop you from worrying, Rama,' Muthu said kindly. 'You run along to school now. Sita has already gone and you will be late.'

'Everyone tells me to run along to school,' said Rama crossly, 'and all I want to do is to hunt for the lost treasure.'

Muthu laughed. 'I'll help you to hunt for it this evening,' he promised. 'You get on with your work now and I'll get on with mine.'

Rama ran off to school, but he didn't work very hard that day. His mind was full of plans for finding his grandfather's treasure, and his teacher accused him twice of not paying attention to his lessons. 'Rama, you are half asleep—you're dreaming all the time,' said the teacher. Rama wanted to say that he never dreamed when he was only half asleep, but he kept silent. It wasn't wise to argue with your teacher. So he just said: 'Sorry, sir,' and turned his attention to his arithmetic. 'But

what is the use of these silly little sums of money?' Rama thought to himself. 'What use is a sum adding up to thirty-three rupees when Grandfather may have lost thirty-three thousand?' Rama forgot his sums again and began to wonder how much money Grandfather really *had* lost. Thirty-three thousand, or thirty-three lakhs? Or perhaps only three thousand three hundred, because he had called it a *little* theft. 'But no matter how small it is, I am going to find the thief,' thought Rama, and turned to his next sum.

That evening when the children got home from school, they found Muthu waiting for them. 'Come—we'll go and look for the treasure,' he said.

'Do you think it is hidden near the house?' Sita asked.

'Yes, I do,' replied Muthu. 'It may even be inside the house itself. Where shall we start to look?'

Rama and Sita looked down the garden towards Arumugam's new vegetable bed. 'Where's Arumugam?' they both asked at the same moment.

'He has gone to his village. His wife is sick,' Muthu answered. 'Why do you want to know?'

The twins told him about Arumugam's annoyance when he found them digging in the garden. 'Do you think he has buried the treasure there?' they asked.

Muthu laughed. 'I doubt it,' he answered. 'I myself saw him sowing seeds there, early yesterday morning.'

'Yes, but he probably buried the treasure the night before,' Rama argued, 'and then planted the seeds to explain the newly-dug soil.'

'In that case, he probably dug up the treasure again last night, and took it with him to his village,' Muthu said. 'He wouldn't go away and leave it here. I think we must wait for a week and see if his seeds come up. That will prove whether he planted them or not.'

The twins were disappointed, but there were plenty of other places to search. Rama suggested the well, and they went down the garden again to look into the cool dark depths. Muthu climbed over the edge, and felt carefully with his hands and feet, to see if he could find any suitable hiding-place. But the bricks were all firm and there was no sign of a hole anywhere. At last he climbed out again and shook his head.

'There's nothing here,' he said. 'I think we should search inside the house. Let us go and look in your bedroom, little master.'

'In *my* room?' said Rama in surprise. 'Why?'

'They took your knife,' Muthu explained. 'Therefore they came into your room once. Why shouldn't they have come in a second time, and hidden the treasure there?'



He felt carefully with his hands and feet to see if he could find any suitable hiding-place

‘All right, let’s go and look,’ the twins agreed, and they ran upstairs with Muthu.

They made a careful search of the bedroom, and Muthu looked everywhere, knocking on the walls and floor to see if there were any hollow places where the treasure could be hidden. Sita looked under the bed and in the cupboard, and Rama opened the drawers and examined the contents carefully. Suddenly he said: ‘Muthu, my knife has gone again!’

Muthu was examining the walls inside the cupboard and didn't seem very interested. 'I expect you left it downstairs yesterday,' he said, without looking round.

'I didn't, I *didn't!* I know I didn't,' Rama answered. 'I brought it upstairs after you gave it to me, Muthu. Don't you remember, Sita?'

His sister came across the room and looked into the drawer. 'Yes, I remember,' she said. 'You put it in this drawer, Rama—I remember seeing your coloured pencils and your rubber ball. You put the knife just here,' she pointed to an empty space in the drawer.

Muthu, having decided that there was no hollow space behind the cupboard, came and stood beside the children. He, too, looked into the drawer, and shook his head doubtfully. 'It is strange,' he said, 'very strange. That was a very sharp knife, Rama. I don't like to think that someone has taken it.'

Rama began to feel very annoyed. How dare these thieves come in and out of his room as if they owned it? 'First they take Grandfather's treasure, and now my knife!' he said angrily. 'Well—they needn't think they'll escape capture. I'll find them some time. Yes, *I shall find them!*'

CHAPTER 3

THE TWINS VISIT ARUMUGAM

IT was too late that evening to continue their search. The sun had already set and it was growing dark. Grandmother called the children and said it was time for their evening meal, and when they asked if they might go out again afterwards she shook her head. 'No,' she said. 'It is too late now. I don't want you to wander outside after sunset.' She looked anxious, and Rama wondered why. Grandmother was not usually so strict with him, although Sita was never allowed to go out by herself after dark. Did Grandmother think, as they did, that the thieves had hidden the treasure somewhere nearby, and that they planned to return to get it? If so, why didn't she tell the police, so that they could guard the house and garden?

'I'm glad the police aren't here, however,' thought Rama. 'I want to catch these thieves myself, especially now that they've stolen my knife.'

At nine o'clock the twins went to bed, and Rama made up his mind to stay awake far into the night and try to solve the puzzle. But he was very tired, and he fell asleep almost at once and only woke up when the early morning sun was shining in at his window. It was Saturday so there was no school, and he and Sita went out into the garden after breakfast. As they walked past the vegetable

bed they looked carefully for any signs of seedlings, but the soil was bare except for a few weeds.

‘How long do chillie seeds take to grow?’ Rama asked, and Sita shook her head.

‘I don’t know,’ she answered, ‘but probably they take several days. I think perhaps we ought to wait a few days before we tell the police about Arumugam.’

‘Muthu only laughed at our idea,’ Rama said thoughtfully. ‘I don’t see why he should think it was so funny. I’m sure someone in the house took the jewels.’

‘But Arumugam doesn’t live in the house,’ Sita argued.

‘No, but he lives in the godown,’ Rama replied. ‘He knows the house very well and could easily get in. After all, Sita, there are not many people living here, apart from ourselves. There’s Kasi and Muthu and *ayah* who sleep in the house, and Arumugam and Anand in the godown.’ Anand was the new waterman, and the children didn’t like him very much. He was bad-tempered and lazy, and never brought enough water for their baths; but bad temper and laziness didn’t make him a criminal, and the twins decided that Arumugam was a far more likely suspect. ‘After all, we *saw* Arumugam doing something suspicious,’ Rama said. ‘He behaved very strangely about that vegetable bed, and now he has gone to his

village, which is stranger still. I've never known him go to his village before: I didn't even know he was married.'

'Perhaps he isn't. Perhaps it is all an excuse to take the treasure away,' Sita said. 'Oh, Rama, don't you think we should tell the police?'

They had reached the well at the bottom of the garden, and Rama threw a stone into the dark water before he replied. At last he said: 'No, I think we'll visit Arumugam in his village. Anand will know where he has gone.'

Quickly the twins returned to the house and went in search of Anand. The waterman was sitting behind the godown smoking a *beedi*, and he did not look very pleased to see them. 'What do you want?' he grumbled. 'You cannot possibly want a bath at this time of day.'

Rama said: 'Anand, where is Arumugam's village?' And the waterman replied: 'He lives at Perianagar. It isn't far away.'

'How do you get there?' Rama asked.

'There are buses every half hour,' Anand answered. 'I am going to see him myself this afternoon, so now I want to rest.' The twins left him and ran into the house. It was ten minutes to ten by the clock in the sitting-room. 'Quick, you go and ask Grandmother if we can go for a bus ride,' Rama said to his sister, 'and I'll run upstairs for my purse.'

Grandmother gave her permission, but made Sita promise to be home by twelve o'clock. The twins ran out into the street just in time to catch the ten o'clock bus to Perianagar.

'What shall we do when we get there?' Sita said to her brother. She had to shout in order to be heard. The driver seemed to be in a great hurry to reach the end of the journey, and the ancient bus bumped and rattled along the road, while the driver blew the horn furiously and shouted at anyone who got in his way. Some miserable-looking chickens ran across the road, and their frightened squawks added to the noise and confusion. Sita looked anxiously behind her, thinking that the bus had run over at least one unhappy chicken, but there was nothing on the road except a cloud of dust. She turned to Rama and said again: 'What shall we do when we get there?'

'I don't quite know,' Rama shouted back. 'We must try to find Arumugam's house.'

An old man who was sitting behind them leaned forward and said: 'Which Arumugam are you looking for?'

Rama turned round and answered politely: 'He is a gardener. I don't know his father's name.'

'Ah!' the old man said. 'That will be K. V. Arumugam. He is a gardener, and works for a rich man in the city. The garden is a huge one.'

Rama smiled. It sounded as if Arumugam had been boasting! 'Well,' he said, 'it isn't so very big, but I expect Arumugam finds plenty of work in it. He has come home now for a little holiday, to visit his wife. I believe she is ill.'

'In that case it must be a different person,' said the old man, shaking his head. 'K. V. Arumugam is unmarried.'

Rama and Sita looked at each other. They seemed to be right in their suspicions! 'What does he look like?' Rama asked the old man.

'He is short and thin, and he has a scar on his left cheek,' was the answer, and Rama nodded his head.

'Yes, it must be the same man,' he said. 'Our Arumugam fell and cut his cheek badly with his gardening knife, several years ago. The scar is still there.'

'In that case, I'll take you to his house,' the old man said. 'See, here we are at Perianagar. The bus is stopping now.'

He got up and left the bus and the children followed him. They walked slowly down a narrow street and at last the old man said: 'Here is Arumugam's house. I hope you will find him at home.'

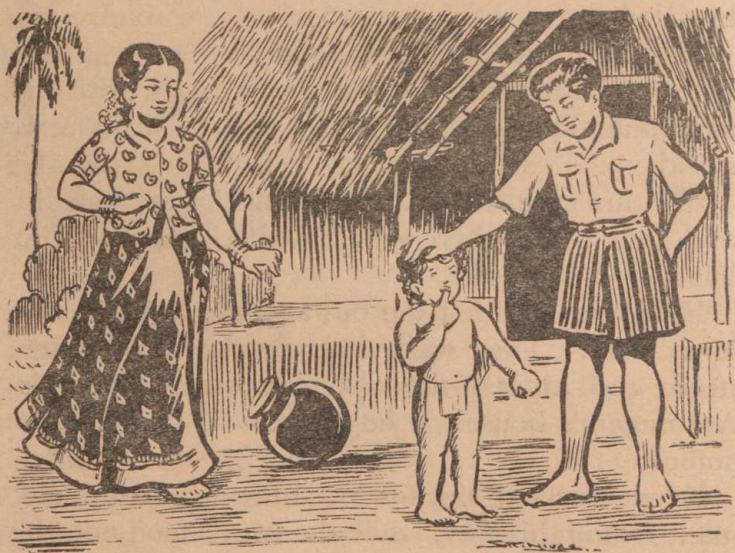
Rama thanked him for his kindness and the old man went on his way, while the twins stood outside the house wondering what to do next. They could

hear voices inside the room. A woman scolded a child angrily; there was the sound of a smack, and a minute later the child came running out of the house, crying loudly. When he saw Rama and Sita, he stopped crying as suddenly as he had begun, and stood looking at them stupidly, his finger in his mouth.

‘Hello, *thumbi*,’ said Rama. ‘Does Arumugam live here?’

The child took his finger out of his mouth. He said: ‘Eh?’ and then put his finger back again.

Sita took a sweet out of her pocket. ‘Look,’



‘Hello, *thumbi*,’ said Rama. ‘Does Arumugam live here?’

she said, 'would you like this?' The child put out his hand hopefully. 'Then tell us,' Sita went on. 'Does Arumugam live here?'

'Yes,' said the child. He snatched the sweet from Sita's hand and ran off down the street, shouting for his friends at the top of his voice.

'Well, he can talk loudly enough when he wants to,' said Rama, laughing. 'Come on, Sita. We'll see if it is the right Arumugam.'

They went to the door and called the gardener's name. In a moment a woman came out and said angrily: 'What do you want? I'm busy. I've no time to talk to children.'

'I'm sorry,' said Rama politely. 'We've just come for a bus ride, and as we were in Perianagar we thought we'd come to see our gardener. I think he lives here.'

The woman looked at them closely. 'Are you Rama and Sita?' she asked.

'Yes,' answered Rama. 'Are you Arumugam's wife?'

The woman laughed, but she sounded more angry than amused. 'No, I'm not,' she said shortly. 'And there's no Arumugam here, so you're wasting your time.'

'Oh, I'm sorry,' Rama said, puzzled by her manner. 'Well, we won't bother you any more, then. Goodbye.' The twins turned to go away, and as they did so a voice called from inside the

house: 'Who is it, Madhavi? Be quick, I want my coffee.'

The woman shut the door quickly, and they heard her arguing with the man inside.

Sita looked at Rama with round, astonished eyes. 'That was Arumugam's voice,' she whispered.

Rama nodded his head. 'I know it was,' he answered. 'There's something strange about all this. First the old man tells us that Arumugam isn't married, then the child says this is his house, and finally the woman says it isn't. What is the answer to it all?'

'I don't know,' said Sita. 'But let's go home, Rama, and let the police deal with it. I feel rather frightened.'

Rama looked hopefully at the house. 'I *should* like to find out the explanation,' he said slowly. 'Perhaps if we go round to the back of the house we shall hear them talking.'

'Oh, Rama, please come away!' Sita begged him. 'If Arumugam really has a guilty secret he'll be very angry with us for spying on him. He might even take us prisoner or something. And look at the time!' She pointed to the watch on Rama's wrist. 'I promised Grandmother that we would be back by twelve o'clock. It's already past eleven and we shall be late if we stay here any longer.'

'All right,' Rama said. 'We'd better go. I'll tell Muthu all about it and see what he says.'

And together the twins walked down the village street to catch the bus.

CHAPTER 4

THE OLD RUINED HOUSE

MUTHU was interested in the children's story, but he advised them not to tell the police about Arumugam. 'I'll go out to Perianagar myself this afternoon,' he said. 'Perhaps I shall have more luck than you.'

'Anand's going there this afternoon,' Sita said.

'Is he?' Muthu asked in surprise. After a short pause he went on: 'Then perhaps I'll go later.' But when the twins asked him why he didn't want to go with Anand, he would give no real explanation. He just said: 'Well, we can't all be away from the house together. Somebody must be here to help my father with the work.'

There was never much work to do in the afternoons, and the servants always went away between two o'clock and four, so Rama thought this was a strange excuse, but he said no more. He and Sita decided to go for a walk, and leave Muthu to do what he pleased.

'Let's go to the old ruined house on the hill,' Sita suggested. 'We haven't been there for months, and it's a nice place to play.'

The children ran down the garden and along the road which led out of the town. But it was too hot for running, and they soon slowed down to a walking pace.

‘Last time we went to the old house we found the remains of a fire. Do you remember?’ Sita said. ‘Someone had been cooking a meal.’

‘Yes,’ answered her brother. ‘I expect beggars and wanderers often sleep there and cook their rice. So far as I know, the house doesn’t belong to anyone now. Even if there *is* an owner, he doesn’t seem to want the house, and I don’t suppose he cares how many beggars sleep there.’

‘It would be fun to sleep there ourselves one night,’ said Sita, ‘but I don’t suppose that Grandmother would ever give us permission.’

‘No, I’m sure she wouldn’t,’ Rama answered, laughing. ‘She would think that snakes or wild animals would eat us up!’

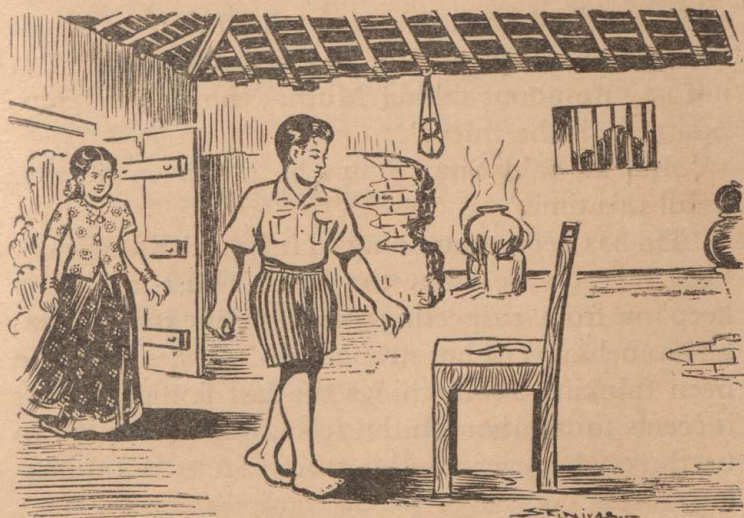
In a few minutes the children arrived at the old house. The front door was broken, and someone had, long ago, used most of it to make a fire. The dust was thick everywhere, and the twins could see clear marks of footprints across the floor of the front room. Someone had walked there fairly recently, in bare feet. They followed the footsteps through another door into the kitchen, and saw at once that the owner of the footprints must have been there that very morning. A fire was still

burning in the fireplace and a pot of rice and vegetables stood beside it. There was an old wooden chair in the middle of the room, and lying on the seat was Rama's knife.

'My knife!' cried Rama, running forward to pick it up. 'How did it get here?'

'Oh, Rama, don't you see?' said Sita. 'The thieves must be living here. We know they stole your knife from your room.'

Rama's eyes shone with excitement. 'Then if we stay here we can catch them,' he exclaimed. 'Where can we hide?'



'My knife!' cried Rama

‘ Oh, Rama, don’t be so silly!’ cried Sita. ‘ What can two children do against a lot of desperate thieves? We don’t know how many of them there are. They would just take us prisoner. They might even kill us, now that we have found out their hiding-place.’ She looked so anxious that Rama put his arm around her.

‘ Cheer up, Sita,’ he said. ‘ We won’t stay here if you don’t want to. We’ll go home and tell the police, and they can come and catch the thieves.’ But he looked very disappointed and Sita at once began to comfort *him*.

‘ We needn’t tell the police,’ she said. ‘ We should be all right if we had a grown-up person with us. Let’s go home and tell Muthu all about it.’ To her surprise Rama looked doubtful. ‘ I’m not so sure about telling Muthu,’ he said. ‘ Supposing he is the thief?’

‘ *Muthu!*’ said Sita. ‘ But he has been helping us all this time.’

‘ He has been pretending to help us,’ Rama said, ‘ but how do we know that it isn’t just a trick to keep us from suspecting him? You know, Sita, he has behaved rather strangely sometimes. I have been thinking about things the last few days, and it seems to me that Muthu has always managed to be there whenever anything important is happening.’

‘ What do you mean?’ his sister asked.

‘ Well—first of all, he had my knife on the morning after the jewels were stolen. How did he get it?’

‘ He found it under Grandfather’s bed,’ Sita said.

‘ He *said* that he found it there,’ Rama corrected her. ‘ But how do we know if he was speaking the truth? What was he doing in Grandfather’s room? You know that Grandfather doesn’t like anyone to go into his room except old Kasi.’ Sita nodded her head in silence and Rama went on: ‘ And then, the next morning when I was talking to Grandfather, Muthu was listening outside the door.’

‘ How do you know that?’ asked Sita.

‘ He was polishing a brass pot outside the door,’ Rama explained. ‘ But why was *he* polishing it? Anand usually cleans all the brass in the house.’

It certainly did seem very strange, and Sita was beginning to agree with Rama that Muthu might be the thief, after all. ‘ Were you saying anything important to Grandfather?’ she asked.

‘ No, not really,’ Rama said slowly. ‘ It was all rather puzzling because Grandfather didn’t seem to be very worried about his jewels. But you know what Grandfather is like. I never quite know whether he is being serious or not.’

Sita laughed. ‘ Grown-up people’s jokes are often hard to understand,’ she said. ‘ When I grow up, I shall always tell my children when I am being funny. It will make things much easier for

them. But go on, Rama—what else makes you suspect Muthu?’

‘Well—he was very anxious to search my room, wasn’t he? And it was *he* who climbed over the edge of the well to examine it. He might have insisted on doing that because he didn’t want *me* to find the place where the jewels were hidden.’

Sita didn’t agree with this. ‘He was responsible for us,’ she argued. ‘If you had climbed over and fallen into the well, Grandfather would have been very angry with Muthu.’

‘All right. But he hasn’t been with us very long, has he? Don’t you think it is possible that he was sent to work for us by the thieves, so that he could find out the best way to steal the treasure?’

‘But he’s Kasi’s son,’ Sita said. ‘Isn’t it natural that he should want to come and work in the same house as his father?’

‘No, I don’t think so,’ Rama said. ‘I remember Kasi once told me, a long time ago, that his son was not going to be a servant. He was training to be something else, I forget what.’

‘Oh, well, he may have changed his mind,’ said Sita.

‘And why didn’t he want to go to Perianagar with Anand?’ Rama continued. ‘If Arumugam happened to be the thief, it would have been useful for Muthu to have Anand with him as a witness. But if Arumugam *and* Muthu are both thieves,

Muthu wouldn't want Anand to be there when he was discussing things with Arumugam.'

'Yes, I think you must be right,' said Sita; but before she could say any more, the twins heard the sound of footsteps coming up the path to the front door. Someone coughed loudly, and then stopped at the door to remove his sandals.

Rama took Sita's hand in his and pointed to the back door. 'Quick! We must go out this way,' he whispered, and the two children ran silently out and across the garden just as the man entered the front of the house. They ran nearly all the way home, frightened and out of breath, and it was not until they reached their own front gate that Rama looked down at the knife in his hand. He had forgotten to put it back on the chair in the kitchen of the ruined house; now, the thieves would know that someone had taken the knife, and that their hiding-place had been discovered.

CHAPTER 5

ARUMUGAM RETURNS

'Oh, dear! You ought to have put the knife back on the chair, Rama,' Sita said.

'Well, it can't be helped now,' Rama said. 'The man may not notice at once that it has gone. We shall have to act quickly, that's all.'

‘But what are we going to *do*?’ Sita asked anxiously. ‘If you don’t want to tell Muthu, hadn’t we better tell Grandfather? He could ask the police to go to the ruined house at once, and catch the man who is there.’

‘I don’t want to tell anyone,’ said Rama obstinately. ‘I want to solve this mystery myself. We’ve never before had a mystery of our own. It is much more fun than helping Grandfather with his police detection.’

The twins walked slowly up the garden, discussing what they should do. When they reached the vegetable bed, they stopped to see if any of Arumugam’s vegetable seeds had come up. To their surprise, they saw dozens of little green shoots coming through the soil.

‘Those aren’t weeds,’ Rama said, examining them closely. ‘They must be Arumugam’s chillies! Perhaps we have judged him wrongly, after all.’

‘Perhaps we have,’ Sita agreed. ‘But that woman behaved very strangely at Perianagar, and I’m sure we heard Arumugam’s voice inside the house.’

‘I expect he’ll come back soon,’ said her brother, ‘and then we may know the explanation.’

They learned the explanation even sooner than they expected. When they entered the house, they found Anand looking for them. He looked at the

knife in Rama's hand and asked him where he had found it.

'I picked it up when we were out for a walk,' Rama answered him, and Anand showed no more interest in the knife.

'Your grandfather wants to see you in his room,' he said. 'He sent me to look for you ten minutes ago, but I couldn't find you.'

The children ran quickly to their grandfather's room. They found him sitting by the window, and to their surprise Arumugam was with him. The gardener looked very ashamed and sorry for himself.

'You have behaved very foolishly, Arumugam,' Grandfather was saying. 'You don't really deserve my help.'

Arumugam looked as if he was going to cry. 'I know, sir,' he said unhappily. 'I am a foolish old man, but I have learned my lesson.'

Grandfather turned to the twins. 'I hear you went to Perianagar this morning, to visit Arumugam,' he said.

'Well, we went to Perianagar, but we didn't see Arumugam,' Rama replied. 'Were you there, Arumugam?'

The old gardener shook his head sadly. 'Yes, little master, I was there,' he said. 'But I didn't know, until after you had gone, that you had come to see me. I feel very ashamed, as I should have

liked to offer you some coffee. It was that useless daughter-in-law of mine—it was all her fault.'

'*Daughter-in-law?*' said Rama in surprise. 'We thought it was your wife.'

The old man shook his head again. 'No, I am not married now,' he said. 'My wife died many years ago. That woman was my son's wife.'

'But didn't you go to your village because your wife was sick?' asked Sita, and she saw Grandfather smile behind his hand.

Arumugam looked apologetically at his master. 'That is the reason I gave,' he admitted, 'but it was not the true one. I was afraid that I would not be given leave if I gave the real reason.'

'You are quite right,' said Grandfather. 'It was a very foolish reason, and I should never have allowed you to go. You see now what trouble it has caused you. Also—' he smiled at his grandchildren, 'it has made these two young detectives suspect you of stealing my jewels!'

'You thought *I* was the thief?' cried Arumugam in great distress. 'Why did you think that?'

Rama felt a little embarrassed. It seemed silly, now, to have suspected honest old Arumugam of the theft. 'Well,' he said slowly, 'we thought you had hidden it in the vegetable patch.'

The gardener laughed. 'So that was why you were digging up all my seeds!' he said. 'No, no,

little master—I promise you that there are real vegetables growing there, and nothing else!

‘Yes, we know that, now,’ Rama answered. ‘We’ve just seen some of them.’

‘What! Are they coming up already?’ asked the old man in delight. He moved towards the door, and Grandfather said:

‘All right, Arumugam, you may go and water your seedlings! Come and see me later, and I will give you the money you need.’

The gardener thanked him and *salaamed* gratefully. After he had left the room the twins turned eagerly to their grandfather. ‘What is all this, Grandfather?’ they asked. ‘Please tell us!’

‘The poor old man has been deceived by his son and daughter-in-law,’ Grandfather explained. ‘They pretended that they knew of a sure way to help him to double his savings, and they persuaded him to go home and give the money to them. As soon as they got the money, they laughed at him for his foolishness and went away from the village. He does not know where they have gone, and he hasn’t even enough money to buy his food this month.’

‘What a cruel trick!’ cried Rama. ‘So that was why his daughter-in-law didn’t want us to see him. She was afraid that he might tell us all about the plan, and that we should tell you so that you could warn him in time.’

‘Yes, I expect that was the reason,’ said Grandfather. ‘I should like to catch that son of his and give him the punishment he deserves. He always has been a bad son, and has never been anything but a trouble to his old father. I don’t know why Arumugam was so foolish as to believe his story this time.’ He shook his head sadly. ‘I am very lucky to have such good and loving grandchildren,’ he went on. ‘Now, tell me what you have been doing today. Have you found the treasure yet?’

Sita was just going to tell Grandfather about the ruined house, but she remembered that Rama wanted to solve the mystery without any grown-up help, so she said: ‘No, we haven’t found it yet. We just went for a walk this afternoon.’

‘I see you have found your knife, Rama,’ Grandfather said. ‘Muthu told me you had lost it again. You had better show it to him and tell him where you found it. Now, run along, like good children, and tell your grandmother that you have come back. She was beginning to feel worried about you.’

For the first time the twins noticed that it was getting dark: they had not realised that it was so late. They said goodnight to their grandfather and ran downstairs. ‘We can’t do any more tonight, Rama,’ Sita said. ‘You know Grandmother will never let me go out after dark.’

Rama gave a little smile. ‘It’s a pity that you

aren't a boy,' he said. 'Grandmother isn't so strict with me.'

'What do you mean?' Sita asked, but Rama did not explain.

'Go and tell Grandmother that we've come home,' he said, 'and say that I've gone to bed. I have a headache and I don't want any supper.'

CHAPTER 6

RAMA DISAPPEARS

SITA did not really believe that Rama was going to bed, but she went along to their grandmother and gave her Rama's message.

'It will do him no harm to go to bed early,' Grandmother said. 'Is he all right, Sita?'

'Yes, I'm sure he is,' Sita answered. If Rama really had some plan, he would not want Grandmother going to his room with a hot drink and a dose of medicine. 'I think he's a little tired, that's all.'

'Well, have your supper and go to bed, too,' Grandmother said. 'You have both had an exciting time lately.'

So Sita went to call the *ayah* and ask her to bring her supper. As she reached the kitchen door, she heard Anand and Muthu shouting at each other in the back garden. They both sounded very angry.

‘It is none of your business what I was doing at Perianagar,’ Anand shouted loudly, and Muthu answered: ‘You said you were going to see Arumugam, but he says he never saw you there.’

‘Nevertheless I went to his house!’ answered Anand, with an angry laugh, and then he turned round and saw Sita looking at him from the kitchen door. He turned and went into the godown, banging the door behind him. Muthu came across to Sita and asked her what she wanted.

‘I want my supper,’ Sita answered. ‘I’m looking for *ayah*.’

‘I’ll call her,’ Muthu said, and Sita went back into the house. She wanted very much to tell Rama about the quarrel between Muthu and the waterman, and she went upstairs to her brother’s room. She looked inside, and—as she had suspected—Rama was not there. ‘He has gone out without me,’ Sita thought sadly. ‘How very unkind of him!’

She went downstairs again and ate her supper, puzzling all the time about Rama. If he had gone back to the ruined house he might be in danger and need help; Sita wondered whether she ought to tell her grandfather, so that he could send for the police. ‘But Rama would be so angry with me if the police arrived and he didn’t need their help,’ she thought. ‘It would spoil all his fun,

and he does want to catch these thieves himself. Oh, how I wish that I wasn't a girl!

And then she had an idea. Boys often wandered about outside after dark, so why shouldn't she pretend she was a boy? If any of the servants saw her dressed in Rama's clothes, they would think that she was Rama, and not worry about her at all. Sita, her eyes shining with excitement, said good-night to her grandmother, told the *ayah* she did not need her any more, and ran quickly up to Rama's room. She opened his cupboard and took out one of his shirts and a pair of shorts. When she had put them on, she looked at herself in the mirror. Yes! She might be Rama himself, except for her long hair. 'What can I do about my hair?' She wondered. At first she thought of getting the scissors and cutting it off, but she knew that her grandmother would never forgive her; so in the end she fastened it tightly round her head and tied a scarf round it like a turban. Now she really looked like a boy!

Sita went downstairs again and ran out by the back door. No one saw her go, but as she was turning the corner of the house she noticed that Muthu was walking down the garden towards the gate, and she waited quietly by the vegetable bed until he was out of sight. She wondered where he was going at this time in the evening. Soon Grandfather and Grandmother would be wanting their

supper, and Muthu ought to be in the house helping Kasi to get it ready.

‘I wonder if Muthu knows that we have found Rama’s knife?’ Sita thought to herself. She knew that Rama had not told him, but their grandfather might have done so, or even Anand. If so, and Muthu was the thief, he might have guessed that Rama had gone back to the ruined house, and he was now following him. Or he might not know that Rama had gone out. Perhaps he thought that the twins had really gone to bed, and he was now going to warn the other thieves to get away from the old house before Rama told the police about their hiding-place. Sita was very worried. Whether Muthu knew that Rama had gone out or whether he didn’t know, he would be sure to find her brother at the ruined house, and what would happen then? The thieves might take Rama prisoner, and keep him hidden somewhere until they had removed the jewels to a safe hiding-place and managed to get away themselves. It seemed too late, now, to go and tell the police. By the time they had been warned and went to the old house, the thieves might be many miles away, having taken Rama with them. ‘I shall have to go by myself,’ Sita thought anxiously, ‘and see if I can manage to rescue Rama.’

So the brave girl set off down the road leading out of the town. She ran as fast as she could,

hoping that she would catch up with Muthu and be able to follow him quietly, but she saw no signs of him. She hoped that he had not taken some shorter way to the ruined house. She noticed a footpath leading away from the road, and decided to go along it; possibly it was a short cut. But when she had wasted ten precious minutes in walking along the footpath, she realised that she had been mistaken and that it only led to a small group of houses. It wasn't the way to the old house at all. Sita turned round and ran back to the road. She was tired and out of breath, and she wished that she had kept to the road all the time.

She ran wearily on. She met no one, except an old man who was walking towards the town with his two goats. Sita did not see the goats in the dark and nearly fell over them. They ran off in different directions, and the old man was so upset that Sita had to stay and help him to catch them again. 'You're in a great hurry, *thumbi*,' the old man said, as Sita said goodbye to him. 'Where are you going at this time of night? You ought to be at home and asleep.'

Sita didn't stop to explain. She just smiled and said goodbye again, and ran on. In the dark it seemed an awful long way to the ruined house, and the road was very lonely. Sita began to feel frightened. 'It was silly of me to think that I can rescue Rama,' she thought. 'What can one young

girl do against a lot of grown-up thieves? Oh dear—I wish I had told Grandfather! I wish the police were here!’ But it was no use wishing. She had wasted enough time already, in going down the footpath and chasing the old man’s goats. It was no use going back home now. She must go on alone, and hope that the good god Krishna would protect her and help her to save Rama.

At last she reached the gate of the ruined house. She stood still and looked towards the old building. There was no light to be seen in the front room, but there was evidently a fire in the kitchen. Sita saw a thin line of smoke curling into the starlit sky, and she could smell a faint scent of burning wood. She walked quietly round to the back of the house. From here she could see the kitchen door: it was open, and there was the glow of a lamp inside. Sita could hear men’s voices, and she moved softly closer. Suddenly she heard Muthu’s voice speaking more loudly than the others.

‘*Where have you put the boy?*’ Muthu was saying.

CHAPTER 7

SITA TO THE RESCUE

SITA wanted to cry. Although Rama had almost convinced her of Muthu’s guilt, she had not really wanted to believe it. She had always liked Muthu,

and had hoped all the time that he had nothing to do with the thefts. But now it seemed as if Rama's suspicions were right, and Sita thought sadly about old Kasi. He would be terribly distressed by his son's wickedness. She realised that Muthu was speaking again, and she listened intently.

'I know the boy came out this evening,' Muthu said, 'and I am sure he was planning to come back to this house. The children must have been here this afternoon, because their grandfather told me that they had found Rama's knife.'

'How do you know the knife was here?' asked another strange voice, and Muthu answered: 'Anand told me.'

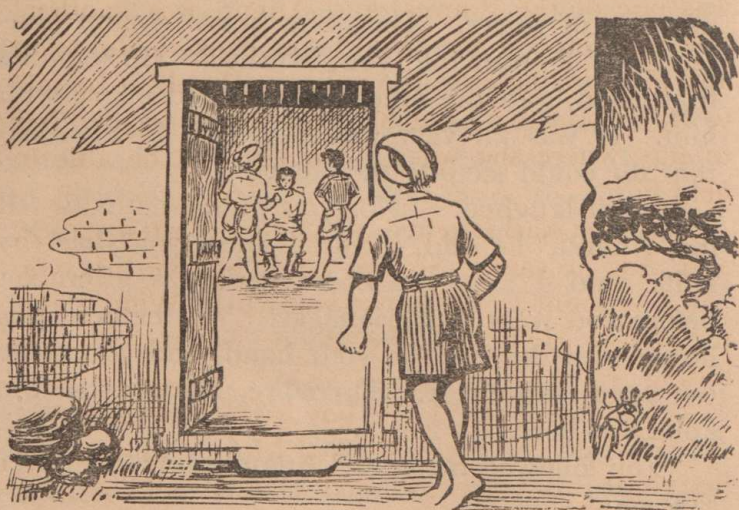
'*Anand!*' someone cried, and there was an angry murmur of voices. Then Sita heard Anand himself cry: 'I never told you, Muthu!' He sounded frightened, and the other men seemed angry with him. It was all very puzzling, and Sita wished that she could see into the kitchen.

Muthu laughed. 'No, you didn't actually tell me, Anand,' he said. 'But I know you stole the knife, and I saw you come here this afternoon before you went to Perianagar. You entered this house with the knife in your hand, and you came out again without it. Therefore, I knew that the knife was here.'

'You followed me here?' Anand said. 'I never saw you.'

‘Of course you never saw me!’ Muthu said. ‘I am not a policeman for nothing. I’ve been trained to follow people without letting them see me.’

Sita wanted to sing for joy! Muthu was on their side, after all. He was a *policeman*! She nearly ran straight into the kitchen and called his name, but as she reached the door she stopped suddenly and moved back into the shadows. Muthu was sitting on the wooden chair in the middle of the kitchen, but he was not sitting there because he wanted to. His hands were tied behind his back with rope, and his ankles were roped to the legs of the chair. The thieves had taken him prisoner!



Muthu was sitting on the wooden chair in the middle of the kitchen

And so Sita stood quietly listening, waiting for her opportunity.

‘I also followed you to Perianagar,’ Muthu went on. ‘That is why I knew you had not visited Arumugam, but had been to see that worthless son of his.’

One of the thieves stepped forward angrily. ‘I may be worthless,’ he shouted, ‘but I shall soon be rich, and much more powerful than a useless policeman like yourself.’

‘You will soon be in prison,’ Muthu answered calmly, ‘and the money you have stolen from your poor old father will be returned to him.’

Sita listened in surprise. So Arumugam’s son was one of the thieves, and Anand was another! She wondered if she should run back to the town and give this news to the police. Would it be safe to leave Muthu? But his next words decided her to stay where she was: she might still be able to help him.

The men had laughed at Muthu’s last sentence, and now he said: ‘So you don’t believe that you will be caught? Of course you will! What about the boy! He’ll tell the police where you are hiding.’

Anand laughed. ‘The boy is safe!’ he said.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Muthu, and for the first time his voice sounded anxious and a little frightened.

‘ I am not such a fool as you think I am,’ Anand answered. ‘ I saw Rama leaving the house this evening and I followed him. When I realised that he was coming here, I caught him up and spoke to him. He was so certain that *you* were the thief that he didn’t suspect me at all. It was easy to make him believe that you had gone another way. I led him down a side path, and there I tied him up and left him. He will not trouble us tonight!’

‘ You devil!’ cried Muthu. He was very angry. ‘ The boy will be terrified, and he may come to serious harm.’ But Anand only laughed.

Then Arumugam’s son spoke again. He sounded doubtful. ‘ Was this boy dressed in a white shirt and blue shorts?’ he asked Anand, and when Anand answered: ‘ Yes,’ he went on: ‘ It is strange, but I thought I saw him running out of a side path when I was coming here. This morning I saw Rama and Sita, although they did not see me, when they visited my father at Perianagar. I thought this boy tonight looked very like Rama, and he was coming in this direction. Soon afterwards he ran into an old man with two goats, and I passed without his seeing me. He had stopped to help the man catch his goats.’

Sita smiled to herself, in spite of her anxiety. If Rama was tied up down that side path, she would be able to find him on her way home. Meanwhile, it was useful that Arumugam’s son had mistaken

her for her brother. She heard Anand laugh again, and he said: ' Rama is safe. No one will find him tonight. He is lying behind a hedge, gagged and bound. No one except the good god Krishna could help Rama tonight!'

' Krishna helps good people when they are in need,' Muthu said. ' He may help Rama tonight.'

And then Sita ran into the kitchen, shouting at the top of her voice: ' You are right, Muthu. Here I am!'

Five pairs of eyes looked at her in astonishment. They saw a boy, the image of Rama, dressed in a white shirt and blue shorts, with a white scarf tied round his head. The thieves were frightened as well as surprised. Their minds were filled with superstition, and they thought that this was really Rama, helped to escape by Krishna. Therefore Krishna was angry with them and they would be punished.

Before they could recover from their terror and astonishment, Sita seized a knife from Anand's hands and cut the ropes at Muthu's wrists and ankles. ' Come!' she said urgently. ' There is no time to waste.'

Together they ran out of the house and down the garden path. Muthu's legs were stiff and Sita was very tired, but they struggled up the road, listening anxiously for footsteps. Surely the thieves would soon recover from their surprise and follow them?

But there were no following footsteps. The men must have decided that their case was hopeless, and that Fate and the gods were against them. They would leave the ruined house and run away, but sooner or later they would be found by the police and receive the punishment they deserved.

At last Sita cried that she could run no longer, and they slowed their pace to a walk. 'The face is Rama's, but the voice is Sita's!' Muthu said with a smile. 'Is it really you, little mistress?'

Sita explained everything, and added: 'I think I know where Anand left Rama. Have you got a light, Muthu?'

Muthu pulled a flashlight out of his pocket, and when they reached the footpath they walked slowly down it, calling Rama's name and looking in the hedge at each side of the road. Half-way down the path, at the most lonely part of it, they heard a faint sound coming from the other side of the hedge. Muthu climbed over and found Rama lying in a field. He was very frightened; his legs and arms were tied with rope, and there was a piece of cloth fastened round his mouth so that he couldn't speak. Muthu quickly untied the gag and rope, and began to rub the boy's stiff limbs.

'You're all right now, little master,' he said gently. 'We'll soon get you home again.'

Rama's mouth was bruised and stiff, but he managed to say: 'Anand. It was Anand!'

‘Yes, I know,’ Muthu comforted him. ‘Don’t worry any more. The police know all about it, Rama. The thieves will be caught tomorrow. Do you think you can walk now, or shall I carry you?’

‘I can walk,’ said Rama, struggling to his feet. Muthu helped him to climb over the hedge. The moon had risen, and in the soft light Rama saw Sita standing on the footpath. ‘Sita!’ he cried. ‘What are you doing in my clothes? Grandmother will be very angry with you. You know you’re not allowed to come out at night.’

Muthu laughed. ‘I don’t think your grandmother will be angry with Sita,’ he said. ‘I think she will be very proud, and so will your grandfather. Sita is a very brave girl.’

And the three of them set off home, talking as they went.

CHAPTER 8

GRANDFATHER EXPLAINS

WHEN they arrived home, the twins were given a warm drink of milk and sent straight up to bed. ‘There will be plenty of time tomorrow for explanations,’ Grandmother said. ‘If you don’t go to sleep now, you will be ill and not able to hear the whole story for a very long time.’

Rama and Sita were quite sure that they would never go to sleep, but they were so tired that they fell asleep at once, and they slept until ten o'clock the next morning. When at last they woke, Muthu told them that the thieves had all been caught. They had run away from the ruined house, but the police had found them, not many miles away. 'And now your grandfather wants to see you,' Muthu said. 'Come, and we'll go to his room together.'

'Muthu, are you really a policeman?' Sita asked, as they went along to Grandfather's room.

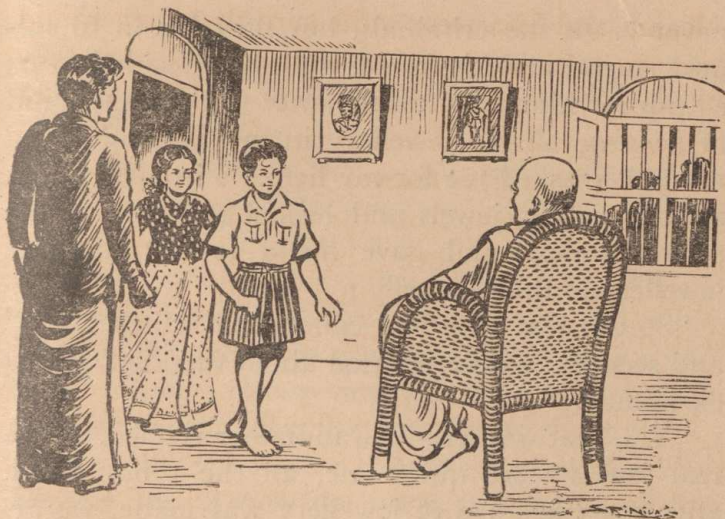
Muthu smiled. 'Yes,' he answered. 'I came to work here so that I could try and catch these criminals. But your grandfather will tell you all about it.'

They found their grandfather sitting at his usual place beside the window. 'Come in, my brave but disobedient children!' he said, smiling, and Sita felt a little guilty.

'I won't ever go out alone at night again, Grandfather,' she said earnestly. 'But it was rather a special occasion, wasn't it?'

'Yes, Sita, I admit that it was,' said Grandfather. 'I don't quite know what Muthu and Rama would have done without you.'

'Oh, Muthu would have managed somehow,' Sita said, looking admiringly at Kasi's son. 'But



They found their grandfather sitting at his usual place beside the window

it serves Rama right for going out without me. He always thinks boys are so much cleverer than girls!

Grandfather laughed. 'Whereas the truth of the matter is,' he said, 'that girls are cleverer, but perhaps less obedient, than boys. Eh, Sita?'

'Well, both boys *and* girls are curious, Grandfather,' said Rama. 'Please will you tell us the whole story? Why did Muthu come here, disguised as a servant?'

'Well, it's a long story, and it goes back several months,' his grandfather explained. 'You will probably know that there have been a lot of thefts of jewellery in this district lately. The police could

never catch the criminals, but they began to suspect Anand and his friends and they decided to set a trap for him. Everyone knew my strange habit of keeping all my jewellery in my bedroom, and the police asked me for my help. First, they took all our family jewels and locked them up at the police station, and gave me a lot of imitation jewellery in their place.'

'So *that* was why you called it a "little theft," and seemed so little worried about the loss!' Rama exclaimed.

'Yes, that was why!' Grandfather replied. 'The real jewels were quite safe, all the time. Well, after the exchange of jewellery was made, we arranged for our old waterman to go on leave, and spread the news that we needed another one. The police guessed that Anand was interested in my jewels, and it was easy for a friend of theirs to suggest to Anand that he applied for the job. At the same time, Muthu came here to work. The police sent Muthu, first because he had been on duty in a different district and so Anand didn't know that he was a policeman, and secondly because he was Kasi's son. It seemed quite natural that a son should come and work in the same house as his father.'

'And now will our old waterman come back to work?' Sita asked. 'I'm glad! I never liked Anand.'

‘Yes, he’ll come back,’ Grandfather said. ‘Anand will go, of course, and spend a nice long time in prison, I hope. But I’m afraid Muthu will go, too. You won’t like that, will you?’

Muthu smiled at Sita. ‘I’ll come and see you as often as I can, little mistress,’ he said. ‘I hope to be on duty in this town now.’

‘That explains most things,’ Rama said. ‘I suppose the thieves hid the jewels in the old ruined house. But why was my knife stolen for a second time? And I’m sure someone was still searching the house, even after the things were stolen.’

‘Yes, that was Anand,’ Muthu explained. ‘You see, the thieves soon discovered that the jewels were not real. Arumugam’s son once worked for a jeweller in the town, and he knows quite a lot about precious stones. Anand stole the money and false jewels out of the box, and then, when it was found that the jewels *were* false, he was sent back to search for the real ones. Yesterday afternoon he visited Arumugam’s son at Perianagar to tell him he had been unsuccessful. I followed him there, and heard all their conversation.’

‘I don’t understand why you didn’t tell us the truth at the beginning, Grandfather,’ Rama said. ‘Then we shouldn’t have wasted time in suspecting Muthu.’

‘It was a test,’ Grandfather replied. ‘I wanted to see if you and Sita had learnt anything from the

many lessons in detection which I have given you. I was interested to find out if you could solve this double mystery without any help from us grown-up people.'

'And we weren't very clever about it,' Sita said sadly. 'I'm afraid we still have a lot to learn before Rama becomes a first-class policeman and I write best-selling novels.'

'But you *were* clever,' Muthu said. 'Don't forget that you rescued me from the ruined house. It was a wonderful idea to dress yourself up as Rama.' The young policeman caught sight of Rama's disappointed face, and went on: 'And if Rama had not been captured first, Sita's arrival, looking like her brother, would not have been such an amazing surprise to the criminals. They let us get away because they thought, in their superstitious terror, that the good god Krishna had rescued Rama and sent him to save me.'

Rama's face brightened into a happy smile. 'So we all helped!' he said, and Muthu nodded his head. 'Yes, everyone helped,' he agreed. 'I certainly could never have managed without you.' And he meant what he said.

THE END

NOTES AND QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

twins : two children born at the same birth.

1. Where did Grandfather keep his treasure? What reason did he give for not putting it in a Bank?
2. Why did the twins' grandmother say to them: 'It is lucky you're not both boys'?
3. Describe what the thieves must have done in order to steal the jewels.
4. Why did the twins dig up the vegetable garden? Why was Arumugam angry with them for doing so?
5. Where had Muthu found Rama's knife?

CHAPTER 2

1. What did Grandfather say to Rama about the treasure at the end of their conversation? Why was Rama surprised by the remark?
2. Why did Arumugam go to his village?
3. Where did Muthu and the twins go to look for the treasure? What did Rama find was missing from his room?

CHAPTER 3

scar : a mark left by a cut or wound.

squawk : the noise that hens make when they are frightened.

smack : to hit with the open hand.

he might even take us prisoner : he might even capture us and keep us as prisoners.

1. Give Rama's reasons for suspecting Arumugam of the theft of the jewels.
2. Why did the old man on the bus say that the Arumugam he knew must be a different person from the twins' gardener?
3. What did the child answer when Sita asked him if Arumugam lived at his house? What did the woman answer when the twins asked her the same question?
4. Why did the children go home without finding out the explanation?

CHAPTER 4

1. How did the twins know that someone had been at the ruined house that morning?
2. What did Rama find on the old wooden chair in the kitchen?
3. Give Rama's reason for suspecting that Muthu was the criminal.
4. What made the twins leave the ruined house in such haste? Why would the thieves know that their hiding-place had been discovered?

CHAPTER 5

1. Who met the twins when they entered their house and told them that their grandfather wanted to see them?
2. Explain shortly the real reason why Arumugam wanted to go to his village? Why had he not given this real reason to Grandfather?
3. What did Rama say to Sita when she said: ' You know Grandmother will never let me go out after dark ' ?

CHAPTER 6

short cut : a shorter way to a place.

1. What did Sita find when she went upstairs to Rama's room to speak to him?
2. What did she do in his room after supper?
3. Give the two reasons why Sita took so long to reach the old house.
4. What did she hear when she walked round to the back of the house? What was Muthu saying?

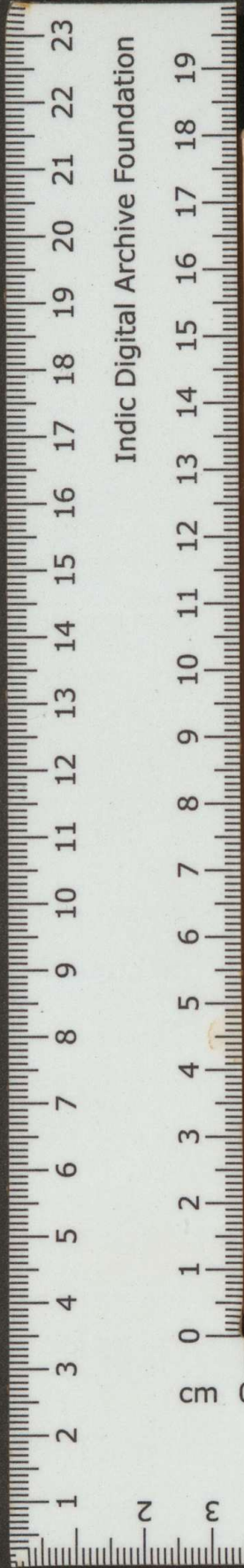
CHAPTER 7

gagged : a *gag* is a piece of cloth tied round the mouth to prevent a person from speaking or shouting for help.

1. What made Sita realise that Muthu was on their side?
2. What did she see when she ran to the kitchen door?
3. There were four thieves all together. Name two of them.
4. What had happened to Rama?
5. Why were the thieves so frightened and astonished when Sita ran into the kitchen?
6. Where did Muthu and Sita find Rama?

CHAPTER 8

1. Why had Muthu come to work for Grandfather? How had they arranged for Anand to come and work at the house?

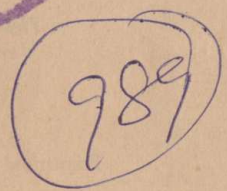
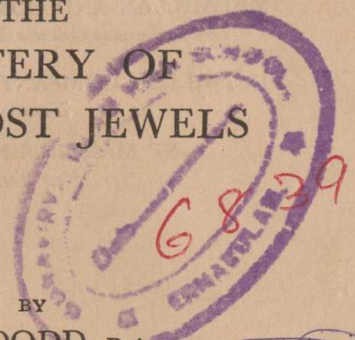


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THE
MYSTERY OF
THE LOST JEWELS

BY
E. F. DODD, B.A.



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