

The Three Investigators in

THE MYSTERY OF THE HITCHCOCK INHERITANCE

Text by Mark Zahn

Based on characters created by Robert Arthur

presented by
www.rocky-beach.com

2 - The Hitchcock Inheritance

ALFRED HITCHCOCK WAS MORE THAN A MENTOR TO THE THREE INVESTIGATORS ---- HE WAS A FRIEND. SO WHEN A FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER ENLISTS THEM TO SOLVE A MYSTERY CONCERNING THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF MR. HITCHCOCK, THE BOYS SPRING INTO ACTION! THEY SIMPLY HAVE TO CRACK THE CLUES AND FIND THE TREASURE ---- BUT DO IT WHILE COMPETING AGAINST BATTLING THIEVES AND A CERTAIN MAID WHO WON'T STAY DEAD!

...

"I would like to point out that this story is purely for entertainment purposes. I hold no copyrights on Alfred Hitchcock or The Three Investigators. However, as a courtesy, I would ask that I be contacted if anyone would like to use this story on a 3I web-site. Thank you ... and enjoy the story!"

Mark Zahn

Copyright © February 2001 by Mark Zahn

rocky-beach.com edition, March 2001
reprinted by kind permission of the author

rocky-beach.com

Contents

An Introduction by Reginald Clarke	4
1. Goodbye to a Friend	6
2. A Challenge from the Grave	9
3. Skip the H2O	13
4. The Three Investigators in England	19
5. Where's the Crate?	24
6. Trapped!	32
7. Hidden Treasures	37
8. Where's Pete?	42
9. Clocks and More Clocks	48
10. The Opened Letter	52
11. The Single Footprint	55
12. Jupiter Has a Plan	60
13. Front Page News	64
14. Race to the Embassy	70
15. The Ghost Strikes Again!	75
16. Bob Makes an Accusation	79
17. Nobody Move!	84
18. The Ghost of Molly Thibidoux	89
19. Reginald Clarke Asks Some Questions	95
A Final Word from Reginald Clarke	100

An Introduction by Reginald Clarke

GREETINGS, FANS OF THE Three Investigators! Today you are in for a rare treat – for what you hold in your hands is a “lost case” of our adroit young detectives! As you know, many the world over were saddened by the death of the great motion picture director, and mentor of The Three Investigators, Alfred Hitchcock. The boys felt like they had lost a close friend at his passing, and, indeed they had. So, when the opportunity arose to solve a mystery involving his last will and testament, they jumped at it!

If you are not at all familiar with Jupiter, Pete and Bob, then let this serve as an introduction for you. If, however, you have already made their acquaintance, feel free to skip ahead to chapter one and commence with the story.

As I had learned from my old friend Hitch, any introduction of The Three Investigators must begin with the slightly overweight Jupiter Jones. Known as Jupe by his friends, the First Investigator is logical of mind, courageous of heart, and positively stubborn when it comes to solving a riddle. The Second Investigator is Pete Crenshaw, whose muscular build and athletic aptitude prove essential to the firm’s success time and again. And no successful sleuthing agency could stay solvent without a thorough and organized Records and Research department. That’s where Bob Andrews comes in. Bob is quick on his feet and quick with the facts. His meticulous notation allows all of us to enjoy the adventures of the young detective team.

The boys reside in the coastal town of Rocky Beach, California, which itself is nestled between the rolling hills of Santa Monica and the glittering lights of Hollywood. Their headquarters consists of a damaged thirty-foot mobile home trailer, which they have buried deep within the bowels of the mighty junk kingdom known as The Jones Salvage Yard – owned and operated by Jupe’s aunt and uncle: Titus and Mathilda Jones.

Their motto is “We Investigate Anything,” and this case most certainly proves it to be true. And now, enough with the
rocky-beach.com

introductions. As my old friend Alfred Hitchcock liked to say . . .
Lights, camera, action!

REGINALD CLARKE

1. Goodbye to a Friend

“I STILL CAN’T BELIEVE IT,” said Pete Crenshaw. The tall boy sat on an orange crate in Jupiter Jones’ workshop, located in a corner of The Jones Salvage Yard. “I didn’t think I could ever feel this sad.”

Bob Andrews sighed and kicked at a small pebble. “It’s hard to believe Mr. Hitchcock is gone,” he said. “I know we just came back from his funeral, but it still hasn’t really sunk in yet.”

Jupiter was seated atop an old printing press that he had rebuilt from spare parts a long time ago. “That’s a common feeling for people who have lost a loved one, Records,” he said, loosening his necktie. “We’ll just have to get along as best we can, although I’m not sure what this means for the future of The Three Investigators.”

Pete rubbed his chin and stared off into space. Earlier that morning he, Jupiter, and Bob had left Rocky Beach with Jupiter’s Uncle Titus and Aunt Mathilda to drive to Hollywood so they could attend the funeral of their old friend, Alfred Hitchcock, the famous motion picture director. They had known Mr. Hitchcock since their very first case, *The Secret of Terror Castle*, and the great director had introduced every case of their’s right up to their last one, *The Secret of Shark Reef*. Now their mentor was gone and the boys felt despondent.

“Jupe,” said Pete, “what’ll we do without Mr. Hitchcock to introduce our cases?”

“I don’t know, Second,” the stocky boy replied. “Right now I’m not sure I could solve a mystery if I tried.”

The other boys nodded in agreement. It had been hard to think clearly ever since they had heard the news. None of them had ever known anyone close to them that had died. Although Jupiter was an orphan who was adopted by his aunt and uncle, he was much too young when his parents died to remember them very clearly.

Hans and Konrad, the two Bavarian brothers who helped out at the salvage yard, appeared at the entrance of the workshop. They twisted their hats in their hands and shuffled their feet. Hans cleared his throat. “Jupe, Pete, Bob. Konrad and I want to

say we feel much sorrow for Mr. Hitchcock.”

“Yes,” said Konrad sincerely, “anything we will do for you if you need it.”

“Thanks Hans, thanks Konrad,” Jupiter said quietly. “We appreciate it.”

“Hokay,” said Hans. “Anything you need, you just give holler.” With that the two blonde brothers walked sadly away, their heads hung low.

Several days later the boys were still feeling very dejected. To help take their minds off the loss of their friend, they had actually volunteered to help Uncle Titus, Hans, and Konrad replace some galvanized sheet metal that ran around the inside perimeter of the salvage yard’s tall fence. The sheet metal served as a roof that protected the yard’s better merchandise from exposure to the sun and rain. They were just going back to the front gates to get the last piece of sheet metal when Bob noticed a blinking red lightbulb in Jupiter’s workshop. “The phone’s ringing in headquarters!” he said. “Maybe it’s a case!”

The three boys forgot about the last piece of roofing and scrambled for the battered trailer.

“Let’s take Door Four since we’re on the far side of headquarters,” said Jupiter.

Door Four was one of the many secret entrances the boys used to get in and out of the hidden trailer. Emergency One, Tunnel Two, and Easy Three were the others. The boys ran through a complex maze of junk and entered headquarters through a side panel. Jupiter snatched up the phone.

“Three Investigators,” he said breathlessly, “Jupiter Jones speaking.”

“Good day, young Jones. My name is Reginald Clarke,” said a voice that was very deep and commanding. “I wonder if I might have a moment of your time.”

Jupiter quickly switched on the loudspeaker he had rigged up for the telephone, which consisted of an old radio and microphone. Now all three boys could hear the conversation at once.

“Reginald Clarke, the movie producer?” he asked in surprise.

“The same,” confirmed Mr. Clarke. “I realize we have never met, but I was a good friend of Alfred Hitchcock ---- you know

we worked on several pictures together. I would like to extend to you my sincere condolences.”

“Thank you sir,” said Jupiter. “That’s very kind of you.”

The deep baritone voice of Reginald Clarke paused for a moment and then continued. “There is a second reason for my call, that is if The Three Investigators are still in operation.”

“Yes, we are,” stated Jupiter. “What can we do for you?”

“The matter is a delicate one,” said Reginald Clarke. “It would probably be best if we did not discuss it over the phone. Can you be at my office at World Studios at nine o’clock tomorrow morning?”

Jupiter looked at Bob and Pete, who both nodded in agreement. “We’ll be there, Mr. Clarke. Nine a.m., sharp!”

“Very good,” boomed the producer. “Goodbye for now.”

“Goodbye, sir,” said Jupiter. He hung up the phone and looked at Bob and Pete. “Golly, I wonder what Mr. Clarke wants to see us about.”

“World Studios,” said Pete, picking up a small marble bust of Alfred Hitchcock that held a place of honor on top of their file cabinet. “I wonder if it has to do with Mr. Hitchcock.”

“I guess we’ll have to wait until tomorrow to find out,” said Bob. “In the meantime, I better get to my job at the library. I’m almost late and Miss Bennett said half the books in the library need to be shelved! I’ll meet you guys at the front gate tomorrow morning.”

“So long, Bob,” said Jupiter and Pete as their chum disappeared down Tunnel Two; a trap door in the floor that lead to a length of pipe running beneath headquarters.

“Come on, Pete,” Jupiter sighed. “Let’s get back to work. Uncle Titus is probably in fits wondering where we’ve disappeared to.”

Pete solemnly returned the bust to the file cabinet and clicked off the light as he left.

2. A Challenge from the Grave

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, the boys stood waiting outside the large iron gates of The Jones Salvage Yard. Each of them had been careful to scrub up extra clean and to wear their best clothes, just as they did any other time they had visited World Studios to see Alfred Hitchcock.

"Here comes Worthington," said Jupiter. Worthington was the perfect English chauffeur that accompanied the gleaming, gold-plated Rolls Royce that Jupiter had won in a contest some time before. Through the generosity of a client named August August, the boys had been granted unlimited use of the magnificent car for as long as they'd like. It made a grand impression whenever they visited World Studios to ask Mr. Hitchcock to introduce a case. Worthington turned around in the driver's seat as the boys climbed in.

"Good morning, sirs," he said. "I feared that the transportation I provided to Mr. Hitchcock's funeral would be my last assignment for you. I'm very pleased to see that is not the case."

"Not a chance, Worthington," said Pete. "As a matter of fact, we're going to World Studios to meet with another motion picture producer."

"Very good, Master Pete," smiled Worthington. "To World Studios it is!"

A short time later, the fantastic black car purred through the gates of the huge studio. Ernie, the guard at the gate, knew the car by sight and waved them through with a friendly smile. Worthington drove the car up to a bungalow that had: R. CLARKE painted on a sign in neat letters.

The boys climbed out and Jupiter rapped on the door, then entered. Sitting at the receptionist's desk was Henrietta Larson, the personal secretary for Mr. Hitchcock before he died. The boys all remembered the trouble they had to go through to get past "Bossy Henrietta" when they first tried to meet Mr. Hitchcock. Now it appeared she would be serving as the secretary for Mr. Clarke.

"Good morning, Henrietta," said Jupiter. "Is Mr. Clarke in?"

We have an appointment to meet with him at nine o'clock."

Henrietta was unpacking some things from a small cardboard box. Jupiter could see she had obviously just moved her personal items from her old desk in Mr. Hitchcock's bungalow. The thought of it left her clearly distressed, and she dabbed at her eyes with a handkerchief. "Yes, of course," she sniffed. "You can go right in."

The boys felt very bad for her. They turned silently and walked to the door.

"Jupiter, Peter, Robert . . ." she said.

The three boys turned to look at her.

"It's good to see you again."

They smiled at her kindness. "It's good to see you too, Henrietta," said Bob. "We're glad that you're working for Mr. Clarke now."

They entered the large office where Reginald Clarke, the famous motion picture producer, sat behind a mammoth mahogany desk. He was on the telephone, so the boys sat themselves quietly and waited for him to finish.

After a moment he hung up the phone and turned to face them. "Good morning, lads. Thank you for meeting with me."

"It's our pleasure, Mr. Clarke," said Jupiter. "What can The Three Investigators do for you?"

"Mmmm," the big man rumbled, "it's not exactly what you can do for me," he said. "It's more like what you can do for Mr. Hitchcock."

The boys looked at him with quizzical expressions and Mr. Clarke chuckled.

"It's not as confusing as you might think ---- at least not yet!" he said. "It's actually Mr. Hitchcock's family that is in need of assistance."

"Anything we can do to help, we're at their service," said Jupiter. "It's the least we can do."

The producer looked at them gravely through bridged fingers and nodded. "I was hoping you would say that," he said finally. "It was a sad day when my great friend Alfred Hitchcock died, but it is he who has had the last laugh ---- from beyond the grave!"

"Gleeps!" said Pete. "I don't like the sound of that!"

Mr. Clarke chuckled again. "You must be Pete," he said. "Although this is the first time we've met, I feel like I know you already. Hitch spoke of you often and was constantly relating to me the adventures you brought to his desk. Well, now I have one final adventure from his desk, if you have the courage to accept it!"

"If it involves Mr. Hitchcock, we'll accept it," said Jupiter stoically. "We owe him that much!"

"Excellent," said Reginald Clarke. "And now here is the mystery. Upon Hitch's death, he had written up a last will and testament that left his family, namely his only daughter Patricia, very well off. To Hitch, family always came first, and now they will never need for anything again. However, Hitch was also a prankster who liked to have fun. Some of that, I think, came from his relationship he shared with you three boys. He loved a good mystery. And the more mysterious the better, I might add! Well, perhaps it was the practical joker in him that led Hitch to add this tiny little paragraph to the last page of his will."

Mr. Clarke pushed a stack of paper across his desk and the boys crowded close to examine them. It was photocopies of Alfred Hitchcock's last will and testament. Mr. Clarke went on talking as the boys looked the legal document over.

"This was provided to me by Hitch's daughter, Patricia. She can make neither heads nor tails of it, and she asked me if I knew how to get in touch with the three young lads that knew her father and liked solving puzzles. Well, here you are, and here is the will. What do you think?"

Jupiter scratched his head and looked somewhat perplexed. "I'm sorry sir," he said slowly. "I'm not exactly sure what we're supposed to be looking at. It appears to be legal jargon that lawyers use."

Reginald Clarke smiled and leaned across his desk. The producer pointed a finger to a very short paragraph near the bottom of the will that they hadn't caught the first time. It read:

Article 33: Skip the H2O and within my estate you'll find the Crate that leads you to the paddy wagon. Follow the clues and pay your dues and the 2nd of 55 will reward you.

“Good grief!” exclaimed Bob. “What is that supposed to mean?”

Jupiter’s eyes lit up as he read the cryptic message. “It’s almost as if he left this just for us!” he cried. “Would you mind if we copied this down, Mr. Clarke?”

“I don’t mind at all,” said the producer with a gleam in his eye. “I have a feeling you’ll be referring to it quite often in the near future.”

Bob quickly pulled a small notebook and pencil from his back pocket and began copying down the strange message. Jupiter was almost beside himself with excitement.

“We can start right away! We obviously have to go to Mr. Hitchcock’s estate, as the first sentence directs us. Do you know where Mr. Hitchcock’s private home was, Mr. Clarke?”

“I do,” the motion picture producer said. “In fact, I’ve already provided Worthington with the directions, and Hitch’s daughter, Patricia, is expecting you at nine-thirty.”

“Golly, that’s in fifteen minutes!” said Pete. “We’d better get hustling!” With that the boys thanked the great producer and hurried out of his office.

Reginald Clarke could only smile. He had a feeling he would be seeing a lot more of The Three Investigators in the near future.

3. Skip the H20

WITH FIVE MINUTES TO SPARE, Worthington drove the Rolls Royce into the brick-lined driveway of a simple, ranch-style home. Well groomed hedges surrounded the modest house, and leafy banana trees and rose bushes grew in the middle of the dainty circular drive.

“Gosh, it’s sure not what I expected,” said Pete. “I had imagined Mr. Hitchcock living in something a little more spooky.”

Jupiter agreed with him. “I’ll admit it isn’t what I had pictured a master of the macabre choosing for a domicile. I guess away from the studio he lived a normal life just like anyone else.”

The Three Investigators climbed out of the car and were soon ringing the bell of Alfred Hitchcock’s old home. The door was answered immediately by a middle-aged woman who was still quite pretty, and, to the boys’ amazement, held an uncanny resemblance to the great director. She wore a simple flower-print dress and a string of pearls, and her bright blue eyes were made even brighter by her carefully styled red hair.

“Miss Hitchcock, I presume?” said Jupiter.

“It’s actually Mrs. O’Connell now,” she smiled warmly. “But you can call me Patricia. And you must be Jupiter, Pete and Bob. Father talked of you often ---- it is so nice to finally meet you. Won’t you please come in?”

The boys thanked her and stepped into a dimly lit foyer so full of pictures they could scarcely see the walls. There were pictures of Alfred Hitchcock on the set of movies, pictures of his family, pictures of himself posing with stars. There was even a picture of Mr. Hitchcock as a very young man shaking hands with Stephen Terrill, an actor from the silent era the boys had met when they discovered the secret of Terror Castle! Most of the framed photographs were signed with warm notes of thanks to the great director.

“Father so loved the movies,” Patricia said fondly. “It was his whole life. He was never more alive than when he was scaring the wits out of people with one of his films.” She looked wistfully at the wall of pictures for a moment and then shook

herself. "It's been very hard on us since he passed. And now with this puzzle that he put in his will ---- well, no one has been able to think too clearly with all of the funeral arrangements. Frankly, I don't know what father was trying to say. I do hope you boys can help."

"We'll certainly try our best, ma'am," Jupiter assured her. "If you don't mind, we'd like to get started right away."

"By all means, boys," she smiled at them. "Do you have a copy of the will?"

Jupiter nodded. "Bob has written down the section we'll be dealing with," he said. "Let's see what it says, Records."

Bob pulled his notebook out from his back pocket and flipped the pages to the cryptic message. They all read it carefully.

Article 33: Skip the H2O and within my estate you'll find the Crate that leads you to the paddy wagon. Follow the clues and pay your dues and the 2nd of 55 will reward you.

"Jumping grasshoppers!" Pete exclaimed. "It seems crazier every time I read it!"

"I think we can safely assume that Mr. Hitchcock was of sound mind at the time of his passing," said Jupiter. "If it was the rambling of an insane man he would have just said it. But to take the trouble to have it drawn up in a will. . . Well, he obviously had some kind of game in mind."

"That would be just like father," said Patricia. She sat down on the sofa and rubbed her forehead as if she had a headache. "This is exactly the kind of stunt I would have expected from him. He must be laughing in his grave to see the fuss we're going to."

"Skip the H2O," Jupiter said to himself. "H2O is water, but I'm not sure how that fits. However, 'within my estate you'll find the Crate' seems clear enough. He means 'in my house you'll find a box.' Although we'll have to wait and see how a paddy wagon fits into the riddle."

"What's a paddy wagon?" asked Pete.

A voice with a distinctly British accent spoke up from the back of the room. "It's an old slang term for an automobile with bars that the police used to carry prisoners in." The boys turned

to see a tall, black-haired boy of about seventeen years of age step into the room.

Patricia rose from her seat and embraced the young man. "Benjamin!" she said. "I'm so glad you're here. Boys, this is my nephew Benjamin Hitchcock. He's come all the way over from England to attend his great uncle's funeral."

"How do you do?" he said politely. "You can call me Ben. Now ---- what's all this then?"

Jupiter stood up straight and looked his most dignified ---- as he always did when he wanted to be taken seriously. "We've been retained by your aunt to unravel a riddle your great uncle left in his will," he explained in his most professional manner.

"Retained?" said Ben. "I'm not sure I quite understand your meaning."

Jupiter whipped out one of the oversized business cards that he had made on the refurbished printing press back at the salvage yard. The boys never went anywhere without them. It read:

THE THREE INVESTIGATORS

"We Investigate Anything"

? ? ?

First Investigator.....Jupiter Jones

Second Investigator.....Peter Crenshaw

Records & Research.....Bob Andrews

Ben Hitchcock studied the card gravely, turning it over in his hands. "Might I inquire what the question marks represent?" he asked.

Pete and Bob grinned at each other. Everyone always asked what the question marks stood for. It was an idea of Juve's to help people remember the name of The Three Investigators.

"They stand for mysteries unsolved, enigmas unanswered, and conundrums of all kinds," Jupiter Jones said, "which we attempt to solve. Therefore, the interrogation mark is our symbol. As you'll see, our motto is 'We Investigate Anything.' At this moment we are investigating a very strange addendum to your great uncle's will. Here it is. . ." He handed Bob's notebook to Ben, who read it with a frown.

“Great scott! What on earth does that mean?” he cried. “It looks like pure gibberish!”

“Perhaps you can help us figure it out, Ben,” said Jupiter. “As I was saying before, the first line seems clear enough ---- other than the ‘Skip the H20’ part. There must be some kind of box or crate hidden here in the house or on the grounds. Possibly one that floats.”

“Gee, Jupe,” said Bob, “that’s not very specific. How will we know it when we find it?”

Jupe pinched his bottom lip between his thumb and index finger – a habit of his that signaled he was putting his brain into overdrive. “My guess is that it will be a very distinct box, something that seems out of place with the rest of the house. Patricia, do you know of any boxes that might fit this part of the riddle?”

“I’m sorry, Jupiter,” she said, shaking her head, “I’m not sure what my father has laying around this house. Perhaps we’ll know it when we see it.”

“I guess so,” he agreed. “At any rate, let’s split up and begin searching. Pete and Ben, you can look on this level. Bob and Patricia, you look downstairs. I’ll look outside and in the garage. If you spot anything that might look like the crate in question, bring it to the living room and put it on the coffee table. We’ll meet back here in an hour.”

With that the search party split up. They looked under pillows, behind pictures, in closets and cupboards. Bob and Patricia pulled books off of shelves and rummaged through desk drawers. Pete and Ben searched every inch of the main level, even looking up the fireplace and in the crawlspace that served as an attic. Finally an hour had passed and the group met back in the living room. Jupiter came in the sliding glass doors looking disheveled and dirty, and clearly annoyed that there were no boxes on the coffee table.

“I looked all over the yard and in the garage,” he panted, collapsing on the sofa. “If there’s a box out there, it’s buried in the ground.” Jupiter wasn’t much for physical exertion. The pudgy boy preferred exercising his mind, rather than his body.

“Gleeps!” cried Pete. “You don’t think Mr. Hitchcock really buried treasure out in the yard, do you, First?”

Jupiter held the notebook with the strange message in front of him and stood up, pacing back and forth. “No,” he said finally, “there doesn’t appear to be a reference to anything being buried.”

“Maybe the ‘Skip the H2O’ part is a clue to where we’ll find the box,” suggested Bob.

“An excellent deduction, Records,” said Jupiter stiffly ---- he was just about to suggest that himself. “I guess we probably should have tackled that first to see where it leads us.”

“Perhaps it means to skip a rock,” offered Ben. “You know, like on a pond.”

“Yeah,” said Pete. “A pond would be H2O! Is there some kind of pond on the property, Patricia?”

“Not that I know of,” she said. “Although behind the house there is a golf course. There might be some kind of water hazard out there – although I never knew father to play golf, or any other sport, so that doesn’t seem very likely.”

Jupiter agreed with her. “No, I’m sure he must have meant some kind of water here on the property.” He began pacing again and the room fell quiet as they each tried to guess what ‘Skip the H2O’ might mean.

Suddenly Jupiter’s eyes lit up and he smacked himself on the forehead with the palm of his hand. “Of course!” he cried. “Patricia, did your father own any other property besides this house? Specifically, did he own a home in a different country?”

Patricia thought for a moment, but then Ben exclaimed. “Great scott! Uncle Alfred has the summer house in England, remember Aunt Patty? It was where he and Aunt Alma sometimes vacationed!”

“Why yes!” she cried. “Ben’s right! Father does have a house just outside of London. I had forgotten all about it!”

“How does that tie in with the riddle, Juve?” asked Bob.

Jupiter looked triumphant. “What does it mean to ‘skip’ something?” he asked.

“To go across ---- or maybe to go over something,” answered Pete.

“And what is H2O?” asked Jupiter smugly.

“Water!” cried Bob. “Go over the water! That’s what the first part of the riddle means! Go over the water – meaning the

ocean – and on my estate you’ll find the crate!”

“Ben, how soon will you be returning to England?” Jupiter asked quickly.

“In two days,” the English boy answered. “Once Aunt Patty’s legal affairs have been put in order.”

“Jupe, are you thinking what I think you’re thinking?” asked Pete.

“What do you have in mind, Jupiter?” asked Patricia Hitchcock O’Connell.

“That The Three Investigators move this investigation across the Atlantic,” the chubby boy replied. “That’s where the treasure is hidden, and that’s where we need to go!”

“But what of your parents?” Patricia said. “Certainly you can’t go off to England by yourselves!”

“We won’t be by ourselves,” said Bob. “We’ll be with Ben! Besides, we’re off on summer break right now. I’m sure our parents will be okay with it if we tell them we’re helping out Mr. Hitchcock’s family!”

Patricia considered this for a moment. “Well, if you can get permission from your parents,” she said, “I will pay for your plane tickets and act as your chaperon while we’re away.”

Jupiter held up his hand and shook his head. “We can’t allow you to do that,” he said. “Plane tickets to England will be much too expensive. With what we have from our savings working at the salvage yard, only one of us can afford to go.”

“I insist!” she said stubbornly. “If this is what father had planned, then all of The Three Investigators are going! Besides, money won’t be an issue with the inheritance he left me.”

Jupiter looked to Ben as if for help, but the tall boy just folded his arms across his chest in agreement with his aunt. Finally the stocky Investigator looked to Bob to Pete and then shrugged his shoulders. “Okay,” he grinned, “let’s go ask our parents!”

The boys and Ben raced for the door and the waiting Rolls Royce. As they climbed into the plush interior, Jupiter spoke up.

“Gosh, Ben,” he said, “when your Aunt Patricia has made up her mind there is certainly no changing it! It’s easy to see that she’s a lot like her father ---- Alfred Hitchcock!”

4. The Three Investigators in England

TWO DAYS LATER, THE Three Investigators' plane was touching down at London's Heathrow Airport. The boys had easily gotten permission from their parents to fly to England, once they had explained that they would be helping out Alfred Hitchcock's daughter. The flight had been an uneventful one, with only mild turbulence from an approaching storm over London that threatened to make Pete sick. Finally, the plane touched down and the group of five climbed into a waiting limousine, chatting with enthusiasm.

Ben Hitchcock was eager to show the boys the historic city and all of its wonders.

"Shall we take a day to see the sights, chaps?" he asked his new friends with excitement.

"I've always wanted to see the Tower of London!" cried Bob.

"I want to see Big Ben!" exclaimed Pete.

"I want to see Mr. Hitchcock's second home just outside of London," said Jupe sternly. "We'll have time to see the sights once we've solved the riddle. We've only got a week here, so we better make good use of our time."

Pete nudged Ben with his elbow. "Get used to being outvoted by Jupe," he said. "It happens to Bob and me all the time!"

"Is that really how a democracy works back in the states?" Ben joked.

The boys and Patricia all laughed as the limousine zoomed off into the chilly London fog.

An hour later the car had left the busy city behind just as the sun was beginning to set in the evening sky. Between flickers of lightning, the boys could see that they had entered a quaint countryside of rolling meadows and simple cottages. Here the roar of city life was left behind for a more picturesque and quiet existence.

"It sure feels weird driving on the wrong side of the road," Pete remarked.

"That's how I felt in your country," said Ben. "Here, the left side of the road is the right side, if you take my meaning."

"Father's summer home is just up this road," said Patricia. "It

won't be long now."

The limousine turned up a narrow gravel lane that was guarded by carefully manicured topiary hedges shaped like lions. As they approached the house, Pete gasped.

"Now that's how I pictured Mr. Hitchcock's house!" he cried.

Jupe and Bob crowded close to Pete's window. The house before them was not really a house at all ---- in fact it looked more like a small castle! The towering walls were of smooth gray stone and covered in thick ivy, the tops mounted with imposing parapets. The windows were a stained glass that looked as if they had been recovered from an ancient church centuries ago. With the sky turning a gloomy shade of purple, and standing in the midst of a rolling fog, it was easy for the boys to imagine all kinds of ghosts and ghouls roaming about the halls of the great house.

"Jupe, Pete, Bob ... Welcome to Hitchcock Manor," grinned Ben.

"I liked his other house better," Pete shivered. "This one gives me the creeps!" Far off in the distance, thunder rumbled as if in agreement with the wary Second Investigator.

Patricia patted Pete on the shoulder as they climbed out of the car. "Father always claimed the house was haunted, but it's really not as bad as it looks," she said reassuringly. "It's actually quite cozy inside. You'll see."

"It 'tis haunted!" a voice with a thick British accent growled in the growing darkness.

"Who's there?" a startled Patricia called out into the gloom. "Winston, is that you?"

From around the corner of the house, a scruffy man of about fifty, with a thick, wild mustache came limping out. He wore a shapeless tweed cap on his head and held a gnarled cane in his right hand. The steely grey-black whiskers on his face came down his cheeks in thick mutton-chops. He pointed his twisted cane at the group.

"The house 'tis haunted! By the ghost of Molly Thibidoux; a maidservant who hanged herself from the great willow tree out on the moors over one hundred years ago," he croaked. "Her fiancé left her for another woman, you see. In her grief, young Molly took her own life. Now her spirit wanders the halls of

Hitchcock Manor, waiting for her fiancé to return to her arms!"

"Jebediah O'Connell!" snapped Patricia. "You will stop with that rubbish immediately. Is that any way to greet our guests?"

"Surely I'll greet your guests," Jebediah O'Connell scoffed, "but 'tis for their own safety that I warn 'em of the ghost! She's a malicious one, aye! What the Germans call a poltergeist!"

Patricia turned to the boys with her hands on her hips. "You'll pay no mind to my cousin, Jeb," she instructed. "He's a grade-A troublemaker and is only trying to put a fright into you ---- he's never been terribly fond of kids."

"I'll say," whispered Ben to Jupiter. "Quite frankly, I don't trust Uncle Jeb. Mark my words – he's up to something fishy!"

"Come on boys," said Patricia, "let's get our bags inside."

"An excellent suggestion," Jupe agreed. "I was hoping to make some progress on your father's riddle before bedtime."

"Aye, funny riddle, that," said Jebediah as he followed the group inside. The strange man closed the massive oak door behind the group with a "boom" that made them all jump. "'Tis best to let the spirit know you're home," he grinned mischievously.

Patricia glared at her cousin. "Enough is enough, Jebediah! You never know when you're pushing things too far."

Jeb shrugged his shoulders, stuffed his hands into his pockets, and sulked up the ornate staircase. "I'll be in my room should ye be awakened by anything," he grumbled. "Living or dead!"

"I'm sorry boys," said Patricia.

"There's no need to apologize, ma'am," Jupiter replied. "We don't believe in ghosts anyway, do we fellows?"

"Jupe's right," said Bob with a smile. "We don't scare that easily ---- isn't that right, Pete?"

"Speak for yourself," said Pete, his voice cracking. "I may not sleep until the plane ride home!"

"Ah, sleep," said Ben dreamily. "I don't know about you chaps, but I'm positively beat."

"Jet-lag," said Jupiter with a yawn. "The changing of time-zones has made our sleep patterns irregular. It's only eight-thirty, but I suppose we'll have to wait until tomorrow to figure out the next line of the riddle," he said reluctantly. "Come on, fellows. Let's hit the sack."

The boys and Ben grabbed their bags and trooped up the enormous, dimly lit staircase. They had just reached the top of the first landing when a man's scream froze them in their tracks.

"That sounded like Jebediah!" cried Ben.

The boys dropped their bags and raced up to the second floor, followed closely by Patricia.

At the landing between the second and third floors, they found Jebediah O'Connell cringing on the floor. A fresh burst of lightning and thunder made him cower like a small child.

"The ghost!" he panted, pointing a shaking finger up the dark stairs that led to the third floor. "Ye gods if I didn't see the ghost right up on the next landing of steps ---- glowing in the darkness with a noose about her neck!"

Patricia looked visibly upset. "Cousin, if this is some kind of joke. . ."

"'Tis not a joke, Cousin Patty!" he gasped, pointing his finger up the steps again. "I saw it plain as day, I did!"

"What's on the third floor, ma'am?" Jupiter asked Patricia.

"My parents didn't use the third floor for living," she explained. "It's only used for storage. It's not even heated anymore." She clicked the lightswitch at the bottom of the stairs, but the great steps remained dark. "Burned out. The bulbs probably haven't been changed in years."

"Do you have any flashlights?" Jupiter asked, advancing a few steps into the darkness.

"I'll get them," volunteered Ben. The older boy raced downstairs. They heard cupboard doors slamming in the kitchen and then footsteps running back upstairs. "I could only find one," he said, handing it to Jupiter. "But here's some candles for the rest of us."

The search party lit their candles, and, with Jupiter in the lead, proceeded up the creaking steps. Outside, the thunder crackled and boomed, making them huddle close together.

A half an hour later, they had made a thorough search of the third floor and found nothing but dusty boxes and cob-webbed steamer trunks. They checked the trunks to make sure no one could be hiding inside, but found all of them to be either locked or filled with clothes.

"If something came up these steps it must still be up here,"

said Bob. "Because there is no way out except for the stairs."

"Unless it was a ghost!" said Pete.

"Aye," agreed Jebediah. "Just as I said!"

"There are no such things as ghosts," said Jupiter stubbornly. "There must be some other way out of here. A secret entrance of some kind. Ben, Patricia, do you know of any secret passageways in this house?"

"I know there are some," said Patricia. "I used to play in them when I was a very little girl. But that was so long ago that I don't even recall where they're at anymore. We would have to ask Julia, father's maid. She has been here for almost thirty years. If there was a secret entrance on this floor, she would know about it."

"We'll ask her first thing in the morning," decided Jupiter. "Now ---- let's go to bed for real this time. I'm beat!"

"Who's sleepy?" said Pete. "I don't think I could sleep even if I wanted to!"

But Pete was wrong. As soon as their heads hit the pillows, they were all fast asleep.

5. Where's the Crate?

THE NEXT MORNING THE boys were awakened by the smell of fried eggs and bacon. They quickly dressed and hurried down to the kitchen where Ben and Patricia were already eating.

“Good morning!” said Ben heartily. “I trust you slept well. No bad dreams, I hope, Pete.”

“Only one where I missed breakfast!” laughed the tall Investigator.

A plump, stern-looking woman in a maid’s uniform set a platter of eggs in front of the boys and poured them tall glasses of orange juice.

“Boys, I’d like you to meet Julia Abernathy,” said Patricia. “She has worked for my father for almost thirty years. Her husband, Winston, is our butler. They were married last year – right here on the estate.”

“Aye,” said Julia bitterly, “’twas a sad day when Mr. Hitchcock passed. Winston didn’t even get to meet the dear man. And now our future in this house is uncertain.” She stood for a moment, clasping her hands, then returned to the stove.

“The house will be put up for sale in a month,” explained Patricia in a low voice. “We’d like to keep the Abernathys on as part of the estate, but we can’t promise them that the new owners won’t already have servants. Julia has lived in the servant’s quarters – a cottage behind the house – since my father purchased the manor.”

Just then a tall man in an immaculate black tuxedo entered the room. He had a long, narrow face with a protruding, hawkish nose. His hair was starting to gray and the dome of his head was completely bald. He bowed to the boys and offered them a warm smile.

“Good morning, sirs,” he said in a crisp British accent. “My name is Winston, and I shall be at your service throughout the duration of your stay here at Hitchcock Manor.”

“Good morning, Winston,” replied Jupiter. “That is very kind of you. Might I ask you a question?”

“Certainly, sir,” replied Winston.

“Do you know of any secret passageways on the third floor of
rocky-beach.com

this house? Possibly any false walls or doors?”

The butler drew himself up straight as if he were preparing to give a lecture that he had memorized and delivered a million times before. “Every floor was built with a hidden room,” he explained. “The design was copied from ancient castles in which the king would have a secret room on each level in case the castle fell under attack. The king wanted to be sure that no matter which level his family was on, they would have a safe haven to retreat to should they need to hide from enemies. However, to my knowledge, there is no secret room on the third floor. The only connection to the other floors besides the stairway would be the dumbwaiter, used to lift food from the kitchen, and the soiled dishes back down.”

“I see,” said Jupiter Jones.

“Anything else, sir?” asked the butler.

“Just one more thing,” said the First Investigator. “Since you’ve worked at Hitchcock Manor, have you ever seen any kind of apparition or ghostly presence here in the house?”

“You must be referring to Molly Thibidoux, the poor French maidservant who hanged herself from a tree,” laughed Winston heartily. “My heavens, no. That is simply an old fright story conjured up to give the house atmosphere, just as Mr. Hitchcock would have done in his movies.”

Jupiter was about to ask Julia if she had ever seen a ghost at Hitchcock Manor, when he was interrupted by a commotion of arguing that soon found its way into the kitchen.

“Dear heavens!” said Patricia. “I had forgotten all about the Fitchhorns!”

“The who?” asked Pete.

“You’ve never met anyone like Timothy and Stella Fitchhorn,” said Ben. “They claim to be some distant relative of Aunt Patty’s, and are here from Scotland to claim their share of the treasure.”

Jupiter, Pete, and Bob stared wide-eyed as the bickering Fitchhorns brought their cat-fight into the kitchen.

Timothy Fitchhorn was a fat, sweaty man with beady eyes and horn-rimmed glasses. He was constantly pushing his stringy black hair into place when it fell in front of his eyes. He wore a gaudy striped blazer that was too tight, and trousers that were too

short.

To the boys, he almost seemed to be the complete opposite of his nagging wife. Stella Fitchhorn wore a striped jacket that was identical to her husband's ---- although it was a better fit. For Stella was a small, birdlike woman who was shorter than the boys and seemed to weigh half as much.

"I never!" she was screeching.

"You're always complaining about the way I drive!" he shouted, oblivious to the boys sitting at the table. "Why they drive on the wrong side of the road in this land is beyond my comprehension."

Stella Fitchhorn seemed ready to lay into her husband with a retort when she noticed the group sitting at the table. "Oh my," she gaped. "Patricia, it's so nice to see you again. And Ben, too!" When she saw The Three Investigators, however, she looked utterly confused. "But who are these boys?"

"Money-grabbers, I'll bet," accused Mr. Fitchhorn. "Well, I'm due my fair share, and I'll see that I get it!" he said matter-of-factly.

Jupiter, seeing that Patricia's temper was ready to boil over, quickly took control of the situation. "I assure you we are not money-grabbers," he said. "In fact, we're friends of Ben here on vacation from the United States. Rocky Beach, California to be exact. I understand you're from Scotland," he went on smoothly, "might I ask from what area?"

"Chestershire," said Timothy Fitchhorn.

"Braxton," said Stella Fitchhorn at the same time. They looked at each other and Stella cleared her throat. "That is to say we lived in Braxton before moving to Chestershire, right dear?"

"Right," her husband agreed. "Well," he said, pushing his oily hair back into place, "I've got a legal right to any fortune found on this property while you boys are here. There's no such thing as finder's keepers in this country."

"You mean there's buried treasure somewhere on this land?" Bob asked innocently. "Golly, we should get digging fellows!"

"Yeah," joined in Pete, trying to hide a smile. "Do you have any shovels, Ben?"

Timothy Fitchhorn looked about ready to explode. He mopped at his brow with a handkerchief and sputtered at the

boys. "Now see here!" he was saying. But the boys weren't listening. They excused themselves from the table and ran out of the kitchen, trying hard not to laugh out loud.

"That was a really cruel joke, Bob," laughed Jupiter, as the boys ran into the great entrance hall.

"But really necessary!" giggled Ben. "We'll have to be careful with our treasure hunt with those two in the house."

"Boy, you aren't kidding!" said Pete. "Say, where do you suppose we should start looking for the treasure, First?" he asked Jupiter.

Jupiter quickly got back to business. He pinched his bottom lip and thought for a moment. "We've already figured that we have to find some kind of crate," he said. "But let's read the clue again anyway so we can start fresh."

Bob pulled his notebook out and flipped to the right page. The boys all crowded around to read the strange paragraph once more.

Article 33: Skip the H20 and within my estate you'll find the Crate that leads you to the paddy wagon. Follow the clues and pay your dues and the 2nd of 55 will reward you.

"You know, I've been thinking," said Bob. "Maybe we're not supposed to find a box at all."

"What do you mean, Records?" asked Jupiter, as he read the paragraph again.

Bob Andrews scratched his head and re-read the clue as well. "Well, I guess what I'm wondering is ---- why is the word 'Crate' spelled with a capital 'C'", he said. "Every other word is spelled correctly, but that word is capitalized as if it were the name of something."

"Maybe we have to find something in the house with the word 'Crate' on it," suggested Pete. "Or someone named 'Crate.'"

Jupiter was pulling his lip again. "If we were to find a specific person, the riddle would have simply said to 'find Crate.' But it doesn't. It says quite clearly to 'find the Crate.'"

"Unless my great uncle put that in there on purpose, just to throw us off track," offered Ben.

"That's a distinct possibility," Jupiter admitted. "Do you or

your Aunt Patricia know any of Mr. Hitchcock's friends named Crate?"

Ben shook his head. "I would have to ask Aunt Patty," he said. "But if it was someone my great uncle knew in the movie business, it would most certainly be in his private office."

"Can we look in there?" asked Pete.

"It's always locked, but I can get the key from Aunt Patty."

The boys followed him as he retrieved the key from his aunt, and then they marched down a narrow hallway to a large oak door that was the private office of Alfred Hitchcock. Ben inserted the key, but before he could turn it, he stiffened.

"What's wrong?" asked Pete. "Do you have the wrong key?"

"No," said Ben slowly. "The door has already been opened ---- look!" He pushed the door with his hand and they watched as it slowly creaked open.

Jupe bent down to inspect the lock. "The lock has been jimmied," he reported. "And not very long ago. There are fresh scratches on the brass key-plate. Someone probably used a bobby-pin or a small screwdriver to turn the catch."

"And boy did they leave a mess!" said Bob, pointing at the large desk in the middle of the room.

Papers were scattered everywhere on the desk, some even falling onto the floor. Folders had been pulled out of filing cabinets and the drawers of the desk had been left half open.

"Someone in this house is obviously trying to beat us to whatever is hidden," said Jupiter.

"The Fitchhorns!" Ben seethed. "Wait'll I tell Aunt Patty! She'll have them out of the house by lunch!"

Jupiter shook his head. "We have no proof of their guilt. It could just as easily have been your Aunt Patricia's cousin Jeb, or Winston and Julia."

"Not Julia," said Ben. "She's been here much too long to do something like this. But I sure wouldn't put it past Jebediah. He's creepy!"

As Ben was talking, Jupiter had moved closer to one of the walls. A hand-carved wooden trim about three feet high ran around the bottom length of the office, but from there on up to the ceiling the walls were covered in picture frames – just like Mr. Hitchcock's home in Hollywood.

“What is it, First?” asked Bob.

“I just remembered something,” said Jupiter quietly. “A film Mr. Hitchcock made many years ago. In it there is a man wrongly accused of murder, and in the big courtroom scene at the climax of the film, the star points out the man who was actually guilty of the crime.”

“What does that have to do with someone breaking into Mr. Hitchcock’s office?” asked Pete.

“Not the office ---- the riddle!” said Jupiter.

“Sure, I remember now,” Bob said excitedly. “That film was ‘The Fine Art of Murder’ and it starred Creighton Duke! Say ---- do you suppose that could be the ‘Crate’ he was talking about?”

Jupiter was scanning the hundreds of pictures that lined the walls of the office. “Spread out!” he commanded. “Look for a photograph of Creighton Duke!”

The boys each took a wall and began studying every photograph minutely. Within minutes Ben cried out in triumph.

“I found it!”

The Three Investigators hurried over to see the black and white picture. It was a still frame from the thrilling climax of “The Fine Art of Murder.” Creighton Duke, playing the part of the wrongfully accused man, stood in a courtroom pointing his finger at the actual killer. The still photo was signed in black ink. It said: “To Hitch – I didn’t do it! Your pal, Crate.”

“That’s got to be the Crate in the riddle,” said Jupiter smugly. “Now let’s see which way Creighton Duke is pointing. It should lead to a picture with a paddy wagon in it!”

The boys followed the actor’s finger. It pointed towards more pictures on the far wall. They looked at every picture between the Creighton Duke picture and the wall, but nothing looked like it had anything resembling a paddy wagon in it.

“It’s gotta be here somewhere!” said Pete. “Let’s look again.”

“Wait a minute,” said Jupiter, holding up his hand. “Let’s think about this logically. Mr. Hitchcock has already shown us that he’s not above using a play on words. This might be another one of his tricks. What else could a paddy wagon be?”

The boys stood quietly in the messy office for a moment, each thinking hard.

“Could it be an ambulance?” offered Pete.

"Or some kind of police car?" said Bob.

"Maybe a fire truck," suggested Ben.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!" cried Jupiter. "I think I've got it, and what an excellent play on words!" he sang. "Ben, your aunt's name is Patricia, right?"

"Correct," the British lad replied.

"But you don't always call her that, do you?" he persisted.

"Sometimes I call her Aunt Patty," he said, "but I fail to see ---- Oh!" Understanding dawned on Ben's face as he realized what Jupe was driving at. "Patty," he cried, "as in paddy wagon!"

"Exactly," Jupe crowed. "Creighton Duke must be pointing to a photograph of your Aunt Patricia, probably one of her as a little girl in a wagon!"

"And here it is!" exclaimed Bob. The boys crowded close to see the picture. In this photograph, a little girl in a frilly white dress sat in a red wagon, holding a dolly. On the side of the wagon, painted in crude white letters, were the words "PATTY'S WAGON."

"That's it!" Ben said excitedly. "That's the paddy wagon from the riddle."

Eagerly, Jupiter grasped the small picture frame and tried to pull it off the wall. As he did so, there was a loud "snick" and a three foot high by two foot wide portion of the decorative mahogany trim opened like a small door.

"The picture was a catch to unlock the secret door," Jupe said with wonder. "Marvelous! Come on ---- let's see where it leads to!"

The hidden passageway was small and narrow at first, but then widened after a few feet so that the boys could nearly stand upright. There were no lights, so they groped along by the light shining in from the little doorway.

"There's steps here," Jupiter reported. "This passageway must lead up to the second floor somewhere."

Just then there was a loud bang from behind them, and the boys were enveloped in complete darkness.

"Someone has shut the door!" Ben cried out in alarm.

"Quick, back the way we came!" Pete ordered.

They scrambled back to the tiny door, but soon found it was

locked tight from the outside.

“There’s no doorknob on this side,” said Bob. “We’re trapped!”

6. Trapped!

“HEY! LET US OUT!” Pete Crenshaw yelled.

“Shhh! Quiet!” hissed Jupe. “Listen . . . I can hear footsteps in the office.”

The boys held their breath. Faintly, they picked up the sound of footsteps slowly receding down the long hallway.

“Did you hear how those footsteps sounded?” asked Jupiter, thinking out loud.

“What do you mean?” whispered Pete in the inky darkness. “They just sounded like ordinary footsteps to me.”

“No,” Jupiter insisted, “there was something strange about them. It almost sounded like one was louder than the other.”

Bob and Pete knew better than to argue with Jupiter Jones when it came to matters of memory – Jupiter’s mind was nearly photographic, and he seldom forgot even the slightest of details.

“That’s right,” said Ben. “It almost sounded like someone was walking with a limp.”

“Or a cane!” said Bob.

“Jehosaphat!” exclaimed Pete. “It was Jebediah that locked us in!”

“Or someone wanting us to think it was Jebediah,” corrected Jupiter. In the darkness, the First Investigator’s mind raced. “Ben, how exactly did Jebediah get that limp?”

Ben thought for a moment. “I believe Aunt Patty said he got it in an automobile accident many years ago. I guess his leg was pretty cracked up. Why do you ask, Jupiter?”

“Because even though Jebediah uses a cane, he still walks fairly quickly. Whoever locked us in here walked away very slowly – almost so we were sure to hear. I’m not entirely convinced that was Jebediah at all!”

“But why would someone pretend to be Cousin Jeb?” asked Ben.

“Most likely to throw suspicion on him,” Jupiter explained, “as well as to misdirect our investigation.”

“I vote we discuss this later,” said Pete impatiently. “I’ll feel much better when I can see my hand in front of my face.”

“I agree with Pete,” said Bob. “The sooner we get out of here

the better.”

“Okay,” Jupiter relented. “There’s probably some kind of mechanism that opens the door from this side, let’s try that first.”

Bob ran his hands over the smooth surface of the door. “I don’t feel a door handle,” he said in a jittery voice. “There might be one, but we’ll never find it in the dark. Let’s head up the stairs and try the door on that end.”

“All right,” said the First Investigator. “Hold on to each other’s belt-loops – just in case.”

“Just in case of what?” Pete asked nervously.

With Jupiter in the lead, the boys carefully ascended the steep staircase. After about twenty steps, the floor leveled out and the ceiling once again became low. Crouching, the four boys approached the secret door at the other end.

“I don’t feel a doorknob on this end, either,” Jupiter said, trying to keep the fear out of his voice. “But I can see light through the cracks in the frame. Perhaps two of us pushing together can force it open.”

“I’ll help,” said Ben. “Let’s give it a shove on the count of three.”

“On three,” Jupiter repeated. “Ready ---- one, two, three!” Together the boys heaved their shoulders into the small door. There was the sound of splintering wood on the other side and then a rush of fresh air as light filled the passageway.

Jupiter and Ben went tumbling to the floor.

“You did it!” Pete and Bob yelled together.

The boys crawled out of the small secret passageway and gazed around them.

The room they were in looked like it was part movie theater, part museum. Props from several of Alfred Hitchcock’s most famous movies filled the room, while at the far end an enormous movie screen covered an entire wall. Row after row of plush theater seats filled the center of the grand room. Velvet ropes hung on brass poles, just like in a real movie theater.

“This is my great uncle’s projection room!” exclaimed Ben. “Aunt Patty has told me about it, but I’ve never actually been inside. The door has always been locked.”

Jupe, who prided himself with his deep knowledge of movies and the theater, gaped at all the props and memorabilia that lined

the room. "Look at this!" he said. "It's a scale model of Mount Rushmore used in 'North By Northwest!' And over here is a mechanical crow used in 'The Birds!' And this jukebox is from 'Diabolical.'"

"What's this?" asked Pete, holding up a wine bottle filled with some sort of sand.

"That's a prop from the movie 'Notorious,'" said Ben with awe. "In the movie the black sand is supposed to be Uranium. It's a swell picture!"

Bob had went to the far side of the room to investigate a shower curtain and a set of knives when something on the floor caught his eye.

"Uh, Ben," he said.

"Yes, Bob, what did you find over there?"

"Did you say this room was always locked?"

"Always," declared Ben. "Why do you ask?"

Bob gulped and pointed at what had caught his attention. Several shards of splintered wood lay on the floor at Bob's feet!

"Someone has beat us again," he said.

Jupiter ran over and examined the door. It was shut, but not locked.

"The door has been pried open ---- probably with a crowbar," the stocky boy reported. "Someone needed to gain access to this room in a hurry. Probably after they locked us in that secret passage!"

"That means they could have already found the treasure by now!" cried Ben.

"Not unless they've solved the last part of the riddle!" declared Jupiter. "Bob, let's see your notebook again."

Once more the boys read the message.

"Article 33: Skip the H2O and within my estate you'll find the Crate that leads you to the paddy wagon. Follow the clues and pay your dues and the 2nd of 55 will reward you."

"Creighton Duke pointed to the picture of your Aunt Patricia," said Jupiter, thinking out loud. "And that photograph led us up here to Mr. Hitchcock's private screening room. Now the puzzle says to 'follow the clues and pay your dues and the second of fifty-five will reward you.'"

"Well, we've certainly followed the clues," said Pete. "But

what could 'pay your dues' mean?"

"Maybe like some kind of membership fee," thought Ben. "Like you have to pay your dues to stay in the club. What of it Jupiter?"

Jupiter was standing quietly, pulling at his bottom lip in deep concentration. His eyes darted about the room, trying to make the connection between the riddle and the movie props. But it was Bob that finally hit upon it.

"Good grief!" he cried. "I think I've got it!" The small Investigator moved back to the small secret door in the wall and crawled inside. He shut the door and opened it again as the others tried to figure out his method.

"I'm not sure I understand, Records," said Jupiter with a frown.

"What's the first thing I see when I open the secret door?" he asked them. "The jukebox! What do you do with a jukebox?"

"You pay it money to make it play!" cried Ben. "That's how you 'pay your dues!'"

Jupiter Jones looked somewhat annoyed that he hadn't figured out that part of the puzzle for himself, but he grudgingly congratulated Bob.

"An excellent deduction, Records," he said.

Bob's face nearly glowed with Juve's praise. It wasn't very often the First Investigator acknowledged that someone beat him to a clue.

"The second of fifty-five must have something to do with the jukebox, then," said Pete. "Mr. Hitchcock must have meant that either the second line or second verse of song number fifty-five is the key to the next clue!"

Jupiter quickly plugged in the machine and punched in number fifty-five on the display. The boys listened eagerly for the song to begin.

Nothing happened.

"Something's not right here," said Jupiter. He punched in fifty-five again and waited.

"Why isn't it playing?" demanded Pete.

Jupiter knelt down and examined the machine. His fingers found the small catch that opened up the front of the jukebox. He undid the metal mechanism and raised the lid, revealing row after

row of antique black records.

“Just what I was afraid of,” said Jupiter grimly. “Number fifty-five is missing!”

7. Hidden Treasures

“HOW ARE WE GOING TO find out what the second of fifty-five is with the record gone?” Pete asked in dismay.

The four boys stood around the jukebox in Alfred Hitchcock’s private projection room, looking in disbelief at the empty record slot.

“It looks like we’ve been beaten, chaps,” Ben said sadly, lowering the lid of the jukebox. “It was a good effort, though. You really are top-notch investigators to have gotten this far. You’re to be commended.”

Any ordinary person might have given up on the case just then. But Jupiter Jones was far from an ordinary person. He scowled furiously at the jukebox, sure that there was something he was overlooking. Something obvious. When it finally struck him, he couldn’t help but crack a smug grin.

“From the look on Juve’s face,” said Bob, noticing Jupiter’s cunning smile “I’d say that The Three Investigator’s are not beaten yet!”

“You’ve found something, Jupiter?” asked Ben hopefully.

“The criminal was not as clever as they thought,” Jupiter declared. “He pilfered the record ---- but failed to take into account the manner in which a jukebox is utilized.”

“In English, First,” complained Pete.

The chubby First Investigator ran his hand along the smooth glass surface of the jukebox, as if the clue should be as obvious to Pete and Bob as it was to him. When they only stood there blankly, he sighed. “The thief had to lift the cover of the jukebox to get at the record,” explained Jupiter patiently. “When he did so, he forgot that the glass cover also holds the playlist of every song ---- and the number it corresponds to!”

“Sure!” said Bob. Clues usually seemed fairly obvious once Jupiter pointed them out. “Without the playlist, you’d be only guessing which song you were playing. Song number fifty-five is right there on the playlist!” The slender, bespectacled youth ran his finger down the list until he found number fifty-five. “Here it is!” he cried. “‘Hidden Treasures’ by a musical group called ‘Denny Lynds & The Gail Force Winds.’”

"We've got to find a copy of that record!" Jupiter ordered. "And fast!"

"Ben, do you know of any record stores around here where we might find that song?" asked Pete.

The British boy thought for a moment. "The nearest one is in Piccadilly Circus," he said finally. "We can take my car into the city!"

Pete looked excited. "At last we'll get to see some of the sights!"

"I'm afraid not," said Jupiter, shaking his head. "You and Bob should stay here."

"Why do you get to have all the fun?" Pete asked, only half serious.

"Because someone needs to keep an eye on Jebediah and the Fitchhorns," Jupiter explained. "Someone has beaten us to every clue ---- but we can't be very far behind or they wouldn't have went to the trouble of locking us in that secret passage."

"Jupe's right," Bob agreed. "But let's all leave together. Then, once we've gotten far enough down the lane, Pete and I can sneak back and watch the house. Maybe the thief will make a move while he thinks we're away."

"A good idea, Records," said Jupiter. "Let's make a production out of the fact that we're going into town to see the sights and won't be back for hours."

The boys left the projection room and marched loudly downstairs, where they were met by Ben's Aunt Patricia.

"I've been looking all over for you boys!" she said. "Any luck with the puzzle?"

"I'm afraid not," Jupiter said loudly, giving Patricia a knowing wink. "We've hit a dead end, so we've decided to go into London to see some of the tourist attractions."

Alfred Hitchcock's daughter understood immediately and returned Jupiter's wink.

"Gosh, that's too bad," she said. "Well, maybe some fresh air will clear your head and you'll be able to make some progress on father's riddle later."

The boys put on their jackets and headed out the door. "We're taking my car, Aunt Patty," Ben called loudly over his shoulder. "We'll try to be back before dinner!"

“Have a good time, boys!” she shouted after them. “And mind the traffic, Benjamin!”

Ben’s automobile was a sleek, Silver Cloud convertible with four seats. Pete whistled as he ran his finger along the glistening hood.

“Are you sure Bob and I can’t come along,” he begged.

Jupiter grinned at his friend. “I’m afraid not. But I promise Ben and I will have enough fun for the both of you.”

“Very funny!” said Pete, rolling his eyes.

“Try to remember that you’re on a case!” added Bob as they climbed into the sportster.

The car roared to life and the boys strapped on their safety belts. “Here we go!” announced Ben. And with a spray of gravel, the fine automobile zipped down the long drive.

When they had gotten well out of sight of Hitchcock Manor, Ben eased the Silver Cloud to the side of the road and parked.

“There’s a horse trail through the woods over there that hunters use during fox season,” he instructed Bob and Pete as they climbed out from the back seat of the car. “Stay to the right and it will lead you to the back of the house. From there you can use the Abernathys’ servant entrance to sneak back inside.”

“One of you keep an eye on Jebediah while the other watches the Fitchhorns,” advised Jupiter. “And be careful,” he added.

“And you fellows try not to have too much fun,” said Pete dryly.

With that the Silver Cloud sped off, leaving the two Investigators by the side of the road.

“Being First Investigator sure has its perks!” complained Pete.

Bob smiled at his buddy and clapped him on the back. “Come on,” he said, “let’s get hiking.”

All was quiet at the house by the time Bob and Pete returned. They carefully surveyed the back yard to make sure the coast was clear.

Pete hissed, “Look!”

Jebediah O’Connell was lurking about the grounds of the estate, poking his cane at some garden stones and looking beneath them. The man with the wooly mustache and crumpled tweed hat put his hand on a crumbling sundial and bent down to examine something on the ground.

"I wonder what he's looking for?" whispered Bob.

"Why don't you stay and find out," said Pete. "I'll go find the Fitchhorns."

"It shouldn't be too hard," Bob grinned. "Just follow the sound of fighting!"

"Thanks for the tip," said Pete under his breath. "I'll see you later." The Second Investigator waited until Jebediah's back was turned and then sprinted toward the servant's entrance at the back of the house.

Bob watched as his friend slipped inside, and then made himself comfortable behind a fallen tree, watching and waiting to see what the cantankerous Jebediah O'Connell would do next.

Inside the house, Pete moved like a shadow. He darted from room to room, every once in awhile stopping to listen.

The house seemed too quiet.

He was beginning to wonder if the Fitchhorns had left for the day when the sound of a door squeaking on its hinges made him catch his breath, and his skin to break out in gooseflesh.

Pete decided the sound had come from the pantry, the small room just off from the kitchen that was used to store dry goods and canned food. He tip-toed over to the kitchen and stole a quick glance around the corner.

The door to the cellar was open!

Pete bit his lip and looked around. Where was Bob when he needed him? The muscular boy hesitated for a moment, and then snuck over to the door and listened again.

He thought he heard someone moving around down there, but couldn't be sure. Taking a deep breath, Pete crept down the cool stone steps. The musty smell of dampness and age oozed up at him, making him wrinkle his nose.

A single lightbulb burned at the foot of the stairs, but the rest of the cavernous cellar was engulfed in deep shadows that made Pete's flesh crawl. Pipes of all sizes ran like a crazy maze all over the ceiling, and old stones and plaster crumbled from the ancient walls. He was considering going back and getting Bob when another sound like a creaking door made him stop in his tracks.

Someone was down there!

Pete Crenshaw summed up all his courage and forced himself to navigate through the dusty shelves that housed jars of pickled

food and the countless wine bottles of Hitchcock Manor. A wooden door, grey with age, stood open at the far end of the menacing cellar. Pete gulped and cautiously approached it on the balls of his feet.

A cobweb brushed against his face and he nearly let out a startled cry. The tall boy then heard a clicking noise and realized it was the sound of his own teeth chattering in his head. He clenched his jaws together and tried to think how Jupiter Jones would act in this situation.

Pete hesitated before the open door, stopping again to listen. A leaky faucet dripped somewhere in the darkness. Squinting his eyes into the murky shadows, he slowly crept through the doorway. He could just barely make out three steps which descended into the small room. Pete stood on the top step and waited – the only sound he heard was the blood rushing in his own ears.

Suddenly, a hand shoved him roughly in the back, and, with a yelp, Pete went sprawling head first into the darkness!

The athletic Second Investigator prided himself on his agility and he carefully broke his fall – landing on the smooth stone tiles while turning his body so he could see who his assailant was.

But what he saw made his skin break out in a fresh case of goose pimples!

Just before the ancient door slammed closed, engulfing him in complete and utter darkness, Pete Crenshaw caught a brief glimpse of a glowing woman in a Victorian dress holding a noose in her hand!

8. Where's Pete?

BOB ANDREWS PULLED HIS jacket over his head and grumbled. What had started out as a fine mist an hour before had eventually turned into a light rain, and now threatened to become a full-fledged downpour.

Still Jebediah O'Connell pattered around the grounds, now with a large umbrella over his head, stopping here and there to look closer at something or poking his cane about. Bob wondered if Pete was having more fun inside. At least he was dry! the studious boy thought to himself.

Bob looked at his watch. It was well past lunch-time, but his growling stomach could have told him that. Bob contemplated calling off the surveillance of Jebediah so he could go inside and dry off and get something to eat. No, Jupe would never stand for that, he thought. Better to keep prowling around the woods, following Cousin Jeb as he walked endlessly in the rain.

The small boy shivered and tried to keep his teeth from chattering. He resigned himself to the fact that he would just have to remain cold, hungry, and generally miserable until Jupe and Ben returned from London.

Luckily for Bob, he had only to wait another hour before he could come in from the cold. From his vantage point in the trees, Bob saw Benjamin Hitchcock's Silver Cloud, now with the top up, come speeding up the circular drive and skid to a halt. Careful not to be seen by Jebediah, he skirted around the side of the house to meet his friends.

"Any luck?" he asked.

Jupe held up a small paper sack in his hand as they raced inside. "They let us listen to it at the store," he said. "But I bought it anyway, just in case."

As the boys stripped off their wet jackets, Patricia O'Connell came into the hallway looking worried.

"I'm so glad you're back, boys," she said.

Ben noticed something was bothering his aunt and he looked alarmed. "What's wrong, Aunt Patty? Has something happened?"

The pretty lady smiled and looked slightly embarrassed. "No,

no, nothing happened,” she said. “It’s just that ---- well, I’ve been hearing things in the house since you’ve been gone.”

“Do you mean the ghost, ma’am?” asked Bob with excitement.

“Oh no!” she said, forcing nervous laughter. “I’m sure it’s nothing like that. I guess it’s been awhile since I’ve been in this big house all alone and . . . Well, I don’t know where the Fitchhorns are, and I haven’t seen Cousin Jeb for hours! I tried to take a nap, but then I kept hearing those strange noises.”

“Your Cousin Jeb is out in the garden,” Bob informed her. “He’s been out there for hours.”

Jupiter rubbed his chin and looked thoughtful. “Could you show us where you were the last time you heard the noises?”

“In the kitchen,” she said.

The boys followed her there and then stood very still, listening in earnest for the mysterious, ghostly sounds.

She looked more embarrassed than ever. “I heard the strangest tapping noises – like in the pipes – and I even swore I heard a voice a couple of times.” She looked sheepishly at the boys. “Well, whatever it was, it’s gone now.”

Jupe smiled at her. “We were just about to have a meeting, why don’t you come with us,” he suggested, hoping to put her at ease. “Is there someplace private where we can talk?”

“In the library,” she said. “This way.”

The library turned out to be a huge, dimly lit room full of books and shadows. The volume-lined walls seemed to go up forever, finally ending at an impressive vaulted ceiling. The faint smell of old, musty paper lingered in the air and made the boys think of the public library back in Rocky Beach, where Bob held his part-time job.

An enormous globe rested in one corner of the room, and a tall ladder on wheels allowed books to be shelved around three of the walls. In one corner of the room there were no books. This is where huge, stained-glass windows made an elaborate, somewhat spooky picture of a knight in blue armor astride a black charger with glowing ruby eyes. A piece of glass toward the bottom of the window, shaped to look like a scroll of paper, had the words: KNIGHT TEMPLAR in ancient English letters.

Patricia drew aside thick velvet curtains to let some light into

the gloomy space, revealing the intimidating glass.

Bob whistled. "I'd hate to clean those windows. That knight is looking right at us."

"And that horse isn't any friendlier," added Ben with a shiver.

"I think we're very close to solving the riddle," interrupted Jupe. "But we'll have to move quickly. It would appear that another party in this house wants to locate the treasure just as badly."

"I take it that was the meaning of your wink earlier," Patricia said wisely. "Do you have any idea who it might be, Jupiter?"

Jupe peered out one of the sections of clear glass at the gathering storm clouds that were approaching. From his vantage point he could see the garden with the sundial and Jebediah at the far end. "What do you know about the Fitchhorns, Mrs. O'Connell?" he asked. "For that matter, what do you know about your Cousin Jebediah?"

Patricia sat in an oversized leather armchair and sighed, rubbing her forehead again. "The Fitchhorns first arrived here with some shady lawyer while I was at the reading of my father's will in Hollywood. They showed some papers to Julia and claimed that they proved they were related and entitled to a share of the estate. Well, I kind of figured that my father's death would bring all sorts of kooks out of the woodwork, so I didn't think too much about it. Heaven knows I had enough on my mind as it was, so I told Julia to let them stay until I got here. I guess I was hoping they would lose interest and eventually leave."

"And what about your cousin?" Jupiter prodded.

Patricia sighed. "Jebediah is a strange bird to say the least. He seems honest enough. He took an early retirement because of his leg and helps out around the house as a groundskeeper. I let him stay free of charge as his payment. He seems quite content with the arrangement ---- but at times he'll grow sullen and withdrawn, a virtual recluse. He'll disappear for days and not tell a soul where he's been."

There was a soft knock on the door, and Winston entered holding a tray. "I thought you might like some tea, madam."

"That's very thoughtful of you, Winston," smiled Julia. "The boys were just saying they think they might have solved the puzzle."

"Splendid! Do all American boys show such ingenuity?" Winston beamed. "But I say, were there not three of you?"

"Gosh, that's right!" Bob exclaimed. "Pete's been gone for hours!"

Jupiter looked alarmed. "You mean you haven't seen him since Ben and I left for London?"

"Not since we split up," answered Bob.

"Perhaps we should search for Master Pete," volunteered Winston. "He may have become lost somewhere on the grounds. They are quite large ---- a person could get lost for days out in the woods!"

Jupiter was about to suggest splitting up to look for Pete when he stopped in his tracks. "Wait a minute," he hissed. "Listen!"

The group in the library stood very still and waited in silence for a tense moment.

"I'm afraid I do not hear anything, Master Jupiter," Winston said finally. "It will be dark soon. If Master Pete is in the woods . . ."

"Wait . . . Shh!" he whispered again. "Did you hear that?"

The group listened again. This time, very faintly, they could just make out a tapping sound that seemed to be coming from the floor.

"By jove, I do hear it!" cried Ben. "It sounds like someone banging on a pipe."

"That's the sound I heard!" said Patricia.

"It's an S.O.S. signal!" Bob exclaimed. "It must be Pete trying to signal us!"

"Where could Pete get access to the pipes?" Jupiter asked quickly.

"Why, in the cellar!" Winston cried. "Follow me, lads!"

The lanky butler nearly ran out of the library, with the boys and Patricia close at his heels. He led them to the pantry where he tore open the door and the group clattered down the stone steps.

Winston fished around in the dark until he found a string to the single lightbulb at the bottom of the steps. When he clicked it on, the boys could see a complex network of pipes running along the low ceiling ---- it seemed impossible to tell which one Pete

was banging on!

"The banging is louder now," said Jupiter.

"This way!" commanded Winston. The tall man in the tuxedo navigated the enormous cellar like an expert – down row after row of wine bottles until he finally arrived at a door. With one swift motion he undid a large bolt lock and threw open the heavy door with a screeching of hinges.

On the other side of the door was Pete Crenshaw – holding a lead pipe like a baseball bat! His eyes were closed and he came out swinging, nearly bringing the pipe down on Winston's head!

"You're not going to get me, ghost!" he was shouting.

Jupiter lunged for Pete's wrists and grabbed them before he could bring the pipe down on Winston's skull. "Pete!" he cried. "Pete, it's us!"

The strong Second Investigator blinked several times before relaxing his grip on the bar.

"Boy am I glad to see you!" he said weakly.

Jupe took the pipe from Pete's hands and threw it back into the room. "What happened?" he asked. "How did you get locked in?"

"Get me into some nice warm sunlight and I'll tell you all about it." Pete said.

They led their tired friend back to the cellar steps, but Jupiter paused at the bottom with a thoughtful expression on his face.

"What's wrong, First?" Bob asked.

"This is no time for deductions," Pete moaned. "I've got to eat something before I keel over from starvation!"

"Okay," Jupe agreed. "I guess you're right."

The party headed upstairs and reconvened in the library. Winston hustled to the kitchen and returned with a silver platter brimming with thick ham and cheese sandwiches and orange soda.

"You'll have to bring another tray for everyone else!" Pete joked as he tore into a sandwich. "I haven't eaten since breakfast!"

"While Pete's fending off starvation," said Jupiter, taking a large bite of his own sandwich, "Ben and I will tell you what we learned from the jukebox record. Afterwards, Pete can tell us how he ended up locked in the cellar."

“That reminds me, madam,” said Winston. “I meant to tell you that the door to the projection room has been tampered with. I have repaired the lock, but you might take an inventory of the memorabilia.” He cleared his throat and looked somewhat embarrassed. “I know it is not my place to say, but I feel I should inform you that I observed Mr. Fitchhorn lurking about upstairs,” he added as an afterthought.

“Thank you Winston,” said Patricia. “I think the Fitchhorns have overstayed their welcome,” she declared. “It’s high time they were on their way! And they certainly are not getting a penny of my father’s money!”

“We’ll get what’s rightfully ours,” boomed a voice from the doorway.

9. Clocks and More Clocks

“THE FITCHHORNS!” CRIED PETE. “We can’t tell the clue from the record now!”

The round man took a menacing step into the library, followed closely by his sparrow wife. “You have another clue?” he asked Jupiter. “What is it, boy? Speak up!”

“Don’t do it, Jupe!” Bob said hotly. “They broke into the projection room and stole the record – and now they can’t figure out the clue!”

“We did no such thing, young man!” Stella Fitchhorn screeched in a nasally voice. “The nerve of young people these days!” As if to emphasize her point, she produced a handkerchief and honked her beak-like nose mightily.

Timothy Fitchhorn glared at his wife. “I told you to let me do the talking!” he growled. “Now then. You might as well come out with it, boy. If we all worked together we could probably crack old Hitch’s riddle tonight!”

“I am highly dubious of this man’s honesty, madam,” declared Winston. “I suspect he intends to take the treasure for himself once it is found.”

“Listen, you glorified waiter,” Mr. Fitchhorn threatened, “you’re paid to be a servant – not a consultant! You’d mind your own business if you knew what was good for you!”

“That’s enough!” Patricia shouted. Bob saw she was shaking and looked close to tears. “Jupiter, tell us what you’ve learned and we’ll all look together. That way no one can claim ownership of whatever it is my father has hidden.”

Suddenly another voice spoke from the doorway. “I heard shouting,” said Jebediah. “Are ye having a party and not inviting old Jebediah?”

“I’m glad you’re here,” said Jupiter Jones. “Now that we’re all together we can discuss Mr. Hitchcock’s final clue.”

“Aye, more of that nonsense,” Cousin Jeb sneered. “You can keep my share of the fortune for all I care. ‘Tis probably fools gold knowing Mr. Hitchcock’s humor.”

“You all heard what he said!” howled Mrs. Fitchhorn, “he gave up his share!”

“Quiet you!” snapped Timothy Fitchhorn. “All right, kid, what’s the last clue from the record?”

“Jupe, are you sure about this?” asked Pete.

“I don’t know if this is such a good idea, Aunt Patty,” Ben said under his breath.

Jupiter stood in front of the menacing stained glass window, hands on his hips. “This is a big house,” he said finally. “But not big enough that one’s actions can go unnoticed for very long. Rather than have everyone sneaking around the estate, we might as well all work together.”

Timothy Fitchhorn rubbed his hands together in excitement. “A wise decision, boy,” he crooned. “Now what did the record say?”

Jupiter drew himself up to his full height – he couldn’t help being a showman, it was in his blood. “The second verse of the song ‘Hidden Treasures’ by ‘Denny Lynds & The Gail Force Winds’ says:

*Time has stood still without you,
I’m like Adam without an Eve,
I’ll go on searching the universe,
Until I’ve buried what I grieve.*

Timothy Fitchhorn’s eyes gleamed with excitement. “I’ll bet the reference to time standing still means a clock that no longer works!” he exclaimed, mopping his sweaty forehead with a handkerchief. “There must be one somewhere in this house!”

Ben jumped up. “Aunt Patty, do you know of any clocks that don’t work?”

“There must be dozens of clocks in this house,” she said in exasperation, “there might be several that don’t work anymore!”

“We’ll have to check them one by one,” Jupiter declared. “And we’ll have to check them together. It’s the only way!”

“A fine idea, boy,” Mr. Fitchhorn agreed, plastering his hair into place with the palm of his beefy hand. “Let’s start by checking the grandfather clock in here!”

The treasure hunters crowded around the large clock in the library while Winston and Pete carefully examined it.

“It looks on time to me,” said Pete. “I guess this is the wrong

clock.”

“To the next room!” Mr. Fitchhorn exclaimed with gusto.

One by one, the search party checked each and every clock in the house. It was quite late by the time they arrived in the billiard room on the second floor, the only room they hadn’t checked. They were all frustrated at their lack of success.

“There are two clocks in this room,” said Bob. “One on the wall and another grandfather clock.”

The large grandfather clock began to chime, indicating it was now midnight, as Bob and Ben took the smaller clock off the wall.

When the grandfather had finished its last stroke, Jupiter sat up as if something had bit him. He faced the old timepiece.

“Hey,” said Pete, “what’s got into you?”

Jupiter quickly strode over to the clock and began examining it with his fingers. “Give me a hand with this, Pete,” he said.

The group had noticed the stocky boy’s excitement and crowded around the big clock.

“Have you found something, Jupiter?” Ben asked eagerly.

“Remember, we’re entitled!” Stella Fitchhorn reminded everyone.

“Not another word!” her husband warned.

“Unless there is a new hour called ‘thirteen o’clock,’” said Jupiter over his shoulder, “I think our treasure is behind this grandfather clock!”

“Wow!” said Bob. “I didn’t even notice that it had chimed thirteen times!”

Jupiter had now opened the glass door that allowed one to pull the brass weights that kept the clock running. His probing fingers finally fell upon a button far in the back.

“Jackpot!” he cried.

His pudgy finger pushed the button and there was an audible ‘snick’ of a lock opening. The entire clock moved a few inches forward.

“It’s on hinges!” Jupiter said in amazement. “What a piece of work. The entire clock is hung on a steel frame embedded in the wall!”

The stout First Investigator swung the clock-door open, revealing a small room no bigger than a closet. The brick-lined

space was bare except for a pedestal against the far wall on which sat a white marble bust of Alfred Hitchcock, similar to the one the boys had in their headquarters.

Underneath the bust was an envelope sealed with wax with “???” written on it in flourishing penstrokes.

Jupiter brought the envelope out, his eyes gleaming with excitement. But when he turned the letter over in his hands to break the wax seal, a strange expression crossed his face.

“What is it, First?” asked Bob.

“Come on, Jupe,” Pete urged, “open it!”

Timothy and Stella Fitchhorn were nearly dancing from foot to foot. “Yes, boy,” the fat man grinned, licking his lips, “open it!”

“That’s just it,” Jupiter said, holding the envelope up in front of his face, “it’s already been opened!”

10. The Opened Letter

“WHAT THE DEVIL DO you mean, opened?” Winston gaped. “It’s sealed in wax!”

“Explain yourself, boy,” Timothy Fitchhorn, demanded. “I’m growing quite impatient with your Sherlock Holmes routine!”

“How do you know the letter has already been opened, Jupiter?” Ben asked.

“Look here,” Jupe instructed. The group crowded around and looked closely at the wax seal. “I’m assuming this letter is from Mr. Hitchcock, and, if so, he originally sealed the back of the envelope in dark red wax. Now, when colored wax is put on paper, it leaves a stain,” he explained. “Whoever opened this letter re-sealed it with a different, lighter color of red wax ---- failing to completely cover up the stain from Mr. Hitchcock’s original wax seal.”

Stella Fitchhorn produced a white handkerchief from her sleeve and blew her nose. “And what does all this prove?” she sniffed haughtily.

“Simply that someone in this house may have already found the treasure,” replied Jupiter.

The bird-like woman put her hand to her throat and pursed her lips. “But, but, w-w-we’re entitled . . .” she stammered.

Winston stepped up beside Patricia and cleared his throat. “If I may, madam. I suggest we at least open the envelope and reveal what is written.”

Patricia hesitated for a moment, eyeing the Fitchhorns as if they were a dangerous enemy. Finally she sighed and then nodded at Jupiter. “Go ahead, Jupe,” she said, “let’s see what my father had to say. I’ve had about all I can handle of these riddles. Let’s just get it over with!”

Jupiter nodded and put his thumbs on either side of the wax seal, splitting it in two. He carefully pulled out a piece of fine parchment from inside the envelope. The paper had been folded three times. He spread it flat on the green felt of a billiard table and smoothed it with his hand.

The group crowded close together so that they all might read what it said.

The letter read:

???,

I shall be much surprised if it is not you who are reading this – if my assumption is correct, then you should know that this letter has been sealed with wax. If the wax has been broken, or the letter is without an envelope, then someone has beaten you to it!

However, all is not lost! For if you are reading this, then I must say to you . . . “tsk, tsk, tsk!” Your interpretation of the clues does not live up to your reputation! You did not truly believe the mystery would be that simple, did you? I certainly hope not! Study the clue from the record again, and this time – remember who you are dealing with!

*Sincerely,
A.J.H.*

“Holy smokes!” said Pete. “It’s not the treasure after all!”

“Which is why the thief re-sealed the envelope,” Jupiter murmured seriously. “Whoever it was that opened this letter couldn’t deduce the last clue’s meaning ---- and needed us to do it!”

The group that was gathered around the billiard table looked around at each other as if the culprit might be in their very midst.

“We’ll put off the search until first light,” decided Jupiter. “Tomorrow morning we’ll tackle the clue from the jukebox record again and see where it leads us.”

“Very well,” yawned Winston, “with your permission, madam, I shall retire for the evening.”

“Of course,” said Patricia. “We should all get to bed. It’s been a long day.”

“I’ll take a double helping of that!” Pete said. “It’s not every day that you get locked in the cellar by a ghost!”

“What?” everyone cried together.

“Oh yeah,” Pete said sheepishly, “we got so wrapped up in the clue from the record that I forgot to tell you my story.”

“You say you were locked in by the ghost?” Jupiter asked incredulously.

"I know what you're going to say," Pete moaned, "you're going to say that it was only my imagination, and that there are no such things as ghosts, and I must have jumped to conclusions." He went on to describe everything he remembered before he was left alone in the dark cellar. "I know what I saw and what I saw had on a dress and was holding a noose and was glowing!" he concluded.

"Amazing," said Winston.

"Yeah," Timothy Fitchhorn replied flatly, "amazing imagination. I'm going to bed!"

His wife nodded sleepily, "I'm heading upstairs as well. You boys better come along, too."

"No one believes me," muttered Pete.

"I believe that something strange is going on in this house," said Patricia wearily. "And I just might sleep with the lights on tonight."

"I'll sleep on the floor in your room, Aunt Patty, if you'd feel more safe," Ben offered.

"I'd feel a lot safer," she confessed.

Jupiter tried to be logical about Pete's ghost. "In a situation like that, your mind can play tricks on you," he lectured. "Perhaps you only saw what your mind wanted to see."

"Or perhaps you can't admit there might really be a ghost in this house!" Pete grinned at his overweight friend.

"Ghost or no ghost, someone is going to have to keep a watch at all times tonight," Jupiter said, stifling a yawn with the back of his hand. "We can take turns, switching off every three hours."

"I'll go first," volunteered Bob. "Now there are two things I want to see in England ---- the Tower of London and Pete's ghost!"

11. The Single Footprint

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, Pete and Bob were roughly shaken awake by Jupiter.

“Whassis . . .?” Pete mumbled sleepily,

“. . . wanna sleep in, mom . . .”

“Pete!” It was Jupiter whispering in his ear. “Pete, Bob, wake up!”

Bob stretched his arms. “What time is it?” he yawned, reaching for his glasses and looking out the window. “It’s not even light yet, Juve.”

“Two important things have happened,” Jupiter Jones whispered dramatically.

“What are they?” asked Pete. “You discovered you have insomnia?”

“One is that I believe I’ve solved the riddle from the jukebox record,” said Jupiter, ignoring Pete’s sarcasm.

“And what’s the other?” asked Bob.

“Someone is prowling around downstairs! Get your shoes on and follow me. Maybe we can capture a ghost before breakfast.”

“Couldn’t we have waited for the sun to come up before going on a ghost hunt?” muttered Pete to himself.

The boys crept silently down the hallway and tiptoed down the old oak stairs. When they reached the first landing, Jupiter got down on his belly and looked around the corner of the top railing. From his vantage point he could see a shadowy figure lurking about the main floor’s great hall.

“Whoever it is down there is looking for something,” breathed Jupiter.

“Can you tell who it is?” asked Bob.

“Negative – it could be anyone. We’ll have to go in for a closer look.”

“I was afraid you’d say that,” said Pete.

“Should we wake Ben?” Bob asked.

Jupiter shook his head. “We’ll let him sleep in, he’s going to have a long day.” Without bothering to explain, Jupiter stood up and grasped the railing. The Three Investigators eased down the giant curved staircase, being careful not to make a sound.

When they had reached the last step, Pete accidentally put his foot on a loose board, which gave a screech like a rusty nail being pulled from a wood plank. Pete scrunched up his face and held his breath.

“Too late!” hissed Jupiter. “They heard it. Come on!”

The three boys went charging into the great hallway, but stopped short when they saw it was silent and empty. They waited for a sound that might give away the intruder’s location. Presently, they heard a faint creak that Pete recognized.

“That’s the door to the cellar,” he whispered. “In the pantry.”

“Are you sure?” Bob urged.

“Believe me, Records, I was hoping I would never hear that sound again!”

“To the kitchen!” Jupiter commanded.

With Pete leading the way, they raced to the kitchen where they saw the cellar door in the pantry standing slightly ajar.

“We’ve got them trapped in the cellar,” chirped Jupiter with glee. “Bob, get the flashlight and candles from the cupboard.”

Bob raced to the cupboard below the kitchen sink and grabbed the large flashlight and two candles. He quickly lit the candles and handed one to Pete. Sticking close together, they descended the cellar stairs.

“Let’s stay close,” Jupiter intoned.

“You took the words right out of my mouth,” Pete mumbled through clenched teeth.

As silently as mice, the three friends examined row after row of dusty shelves. When they had reached the last row, Jupiter silently pointed to the large door of the room Pete had been trapped in earlier, and nodded his head.

“In there,” he mouthed silently.

Pete and Bob gulped and nodded back. With Jupiter in the lead, they approached the iron rung door. Pete grabbed a bottle of vintage wine off the nearest shelf and handed it to Bob. Then he grabbed one for himself. He felt better having some kind of weapon in his hands, just in case there really was some kind of bloodsucking, ghoulish creature on the other side of the door.

“On three,” Jupiter mouthed. With his fingers he slowly ticked off the numbers – when he reached three, the hefty First Investigator gripped the heavy iron ring and pulled with all his

might.

With a cry, the three boys rushed down the three stone steps and into the dank room.

It was empty.

Jupiter flashed his light around the small room in disbelief. Dusty shelves, crammed with junk and boxes of various sizes, lined the walls all the way around the room. It appeared as if the intruder had simply vanished.

"He must be in here!" Jupiter said stubbornly. "Look for a hidden door."

Pete shook his head. "If there was a secret door in here, Jupe, I would have found it!"

"It was dark and you were under considerable stress," said Jupiter. "It would have been difficult for anyone to make a precise, methodical search."

"There's always a lever or a catch to these doors," said Bob. "Look for something on the shelves that seems out of place."

The boys began to carefully pull things off the dusty shelves. They had no luck until Bob came to a small shelf in the corner that seemed different somehow. All the other shelves nearly touched the low ceiling and were about five feet in length. But this particular shelf was only about two feet long. Bob tried to lift a small jar off the top shelf and yelped.

Jupiter Jones was by his friend's side in a flash. "What is it, Records?"

"This is it!" cried Bob. "Look!" The small boy tried to pull an ancient desk fan from the shelf, but it wouldn't budge. "Everything on this shelf is either glued or nailed down!"

"Look for the catch," urged Jupiter.

It didn't take long for Bob to find it. By rotating a small can of bolts and washers, a mechanism inside the wall released a catch, and the entire shelf swung open on hinges like a door.

Cold, musty air blew past the boys as Jupe shined his light into the creepy space.

A narrow passageway lined in crumbling, moss-covered stone, led to a flight of steep steps made of cobblestone.

"This wall is part of the foundation," nodded Jupiter. "Those steps must lead outside. And look at these cobwebs, they've been disturbed. The 'ghost' obviously used this as an exit. Bob,

stay in the room until I've got the door leading outside open ---- we don't want to get trapped in another passageway."

Bob looked nervously behind him. He hadn't considered that the ghost might still be in the room somewhere.

"Don't worry, Records, the cobwebs were disturbed, so he probably went through this door," Jupiter pointed out. The stocky boy went up the stairs until he reached a small door in the ceiling. Putting his shoulder against it, he heaved until the heavy trap door creaked open. Another whoosh of cold air blew past Pete and Bob.

"This door does lead outside," reported Jupiter. "Come on up, fellows."

Pete and Bob hurried up the stairs and looked around them. A cool fog rolled in from the moors, and the sun was just beginning to rise, signaling the start of a new day. Bob examined the three foot by three foot trap door and noticed that it had been sodded over, so that it blended in perfectly with the grass of the yard.

"You wouldn't know a trap door was here even if you were standing on top of it," he said in genuine admiration.

"We're behind the house," whispered Pete. He looked up at the foreboding stone structure. It seemed to tower over them ---- looming ominously, like it wanted to swallow them up.

"Look at this," said Jupiter, pointing to the turf at the foot of the secret doorway. Pete and Bob looked closely at the ground. In the dew covered grass was the unmistakable imprint of a large man's shoe!

"But there's only one!" said Pete. "Where's all the rest?"

Jupiter stepped out of the trap door and placed his foot directly on top of the shoe print. It was much bigger than his own. He balanced himself for a moment and then leaped sideways onto a stone path a few feet away.

"Our 'ghost' paused on one foot long enough to shut the trap door," Jupiter explained. "Then leaped over to the stone path so as not to leave any more footprints than necessary. The act of an experienced criminal."

Pete and Bob came up from the secret door, closing it behind them. They stood on the ancient stone path, shivering in the misty morning air.

"Where does the path lead?" asked Pete.

“I was back here all day long,” exclaimed Bob, “I know exactly where it goes! The Abernathy’s cottage!”

“Come on,” said Jupiter grimly, “it’s time to give the Abernathys a wake-up call!”

12. Jupiter Has a Plan

THE THREE INVESTIGATORS followed the stone path that led to the Abernathy's cottage, but before they reached the front door, Jupiter stopped short.

"Hello," he said, "what have we here?"

The stocky boy bent over and picked up a white piece of cloth.

"It's a handkerchief!" said Bob.

Jupiter turned the material over in his hands and examined it closely. "A monogrammed handkerchief," he said, holding it up for Pete and Bob's inspection. In fine stitching they could clearly read the letters "S.F."

"Stella Fitchhorn!" Pete stared.

But Jupiter shook his head. "That footprint was too big to be hers," he reminded them. "You'll recall she's a very slight woman, and that footprint was larger than my own."

"Mr. Fitchhorn?" asked Bob.

Jupiter pulled his bottom lip and was quiet for a moment. "Possibly," was all he would say. Without saying another word, the stocky First Investigator abruptly turned on his heel and jogged towards the back door of Hitchcock Manor, leaving Bob and Pete gaping at each other with bewildered expressions.

When they finally found him in their upstairs bedroom, Jupiter was hastily loading film into his flash-bulb camera he had packed in his suitcase.

"I'll have to ask Ben to drive me into London again today," he announced.

"You have a plan," guessed Bob.

"I do. But there's no time to explain. Just play along. Ben and I will leave after everyone has had breakfast. Hopefully we will be back before nightfall."

Bob and Pete were quite used to Jupiter Jones being secretive when he had an idea or course of action in mind. It was just the way he operated. Juve didn't take kindly to being wrong about anything, so he often clammed up until he was sure he was right. It was a trait that could be maddening to anyone who didn't know him well.

“And what should Bob and I do all day?” asked Pete. “I’ll tell you one thing ---- I’m not going anywhere near the cellar! As far as I’m concerned it’s London’s hotspot for Monsters Incorporated!”

“Stay close to Mrs. O’Connell,” Jupiter instructed. “I believe she’ll be safe, but it’s better not to take any chances. And keep an eye on Cousin Jebediah, the Fitchhorns, and the Abernathys. As of now, they’re all suspects!”

Jupiter snapped the back of his camera closed and advanced the roll of film as he trotted down the stairs.

The sunny kitchen was bustling with activity. Patricia, in a robe and slippers, was pouring coffee for her Cousin Jebediah, while Julia scooped heaping portions of eggs onto the Fitchhorns’ plates. Winston entered the room with the morning paper under his arm. He unfolded it on the table in front of Timothy Fitchhorn and then turned to the boys.

“Good morning, sirs,” he said, flashing a broad smile. “I couldn’t help but overhear the activity outside my front door earlier ---- I trust everything is okay?”

It didn’t take long for Bob and Pete to see the First Investigator had some kind of scheme devised. Jupiter had been an actor on a television program when he was just a toddler called “The Wee Rogues,” in which he played a character with the unfortunate title of “Baby Fatso.” He was a natural actor then, and he could still be a very good actor now ---- when he wanted to. As he entered the kitchen, he allowed his shoulders to sag and his face to droop – effectively giving the impression that he was an utter and complete imbecile.

Jupiter gave the butler a look of absolute incompetence. “Gee, we’re sorry if we woke you up,” he yawned, sitting down at the breakfast table. “We thought we heard the ghost again, but it turned out to be Pete walking in his sleep.”

“Huh?” said Pete. But before he could say any more, the lanky Second Investigator felt his ankle receive a sharp kick from Jupiter under the table. “Ouch! Oh, yeah, I do that sometimes,” he said lamely.

“Aye,” said Jebediah, brushing crumbs from his wiry mustache, “don’t be so sure, laddies. Old Molly is a clever spirit.” He pointed his cane at Jupiter. “You won’t want to be a-

sneakin' around the house after dark ---- I'm warning ye now!"

"Well I don't know about Pete," offered Patricia, "but I slept like a bear for the first time in days!"

"Well, Ben," Jupiter said sadly, "it hardly matters now. I guess we came all the way over here for nothing. We can't crack the last code from the jukebox. I guess we'll just have to do some sightseeing and take some pictures. It's too bad Bob is feeling ill and won't be able to join us."

This time Bob received a kick under the table. He cleared his throat and tried to look sickly. "Uh, yeah. I must have caught a chill," he coughed. "I guess I'll have to stay behind."

Patricia looked concerned. "You better rest up, Bob. Tomorrow is your last full day here, and you don't want to be sick on the plane ride back to the states – that would be just dreadful."

Across the table, Timothy Fitchhorn choked on his eggs and quickly stood up, spilling his cup of coffee all over the morning newspaper.

"Oh drat!" he fumed. "I've made an awful mess here. Winston, be of some use for once and help me clean this up!"

"Of course, sir," the butler said patiently.

Pete and Bob watched the fat man and the butler with amusement, but when Bob turned to look at Jupiter, he saw him staring intently. Jupe turned to him and quickly darted his eyes, nodding toward the newspaper. Bob understood immediately and silently nodded back.

"I think I'll go rest in bed," the smallest of the boys said, rising from his chair and patting Pete on the shoulder. "That was very nice of you, Pete, volunteering to keep me company."

"Sure," Pete replied, somewhat baffled, "it's the least I can do, old buddy."

The two Investigators excused themselves from the table and headed upstairs.

Meanwhile, Jupiter had prepared his flash camera. He quickly snapped a picture of Winston and Timothy Fitchhorn, who were too engrossed in cleaning up the mess to notice. Next he turned to Patricia and snapped a picture of her. She held her hand up before her face and laughed.

"Jupiter Jones! I don't even have my make-up on yet!"

"That's okay," he smiled, advancing the film, "I just need to use up the rest of this role so I can have a fresh one when Ben and I go sightseeing." He turned and snapped a picture of Ben, who made a silly face into the camera.

"Beautiful!" cried Jupiter. He advanced the film and snapped one of Cousin Jebediah and Stella Fitchhorn. Mrs. Fitchhorn turned ashen faced and Jebediah glowered at him.

"I don't take kindly to me picture being taken, laddie!" he grumbled.

"Sorry, sir," said Jupiter, jumping up from his seat. "Well, Ben, we better hit the road if we're going to see everything on my itinerary. I think we'll start with Big Ben, then move on to the Tower of London. I'd also like to see the home of Arthur Conan Doyle if time permits." He continued prattling on down the hall as if he were tremendously excited about the sightseeing expedition.

"Remember boys," called Patricia, "I want you wearing seatbelts!"

"We will Aunt Patty," Ben said as he pulled on his jacket. He didn't have time to say more as Jupiter was already out the front door and jumping into the gleaming Silver Cloud.

"Gee, what's the hurry?" he asked. "We have plenty of time to see everything."

"We're not going sightseeing," explained Jupiter. "That was just a ploy to get out of the house."

He held up the camera and snapped another picture of Ben. "This is the real reason. We've got to get this role of film developed ---- and fast!"

13. Front Page News

WHEN THE BOYS HAD shut the bedroom door, Bob turned quickly to Pete.

“We’ve got to get a copy of that newspaper!” he cried.

Pete looked at his friend like he had lost his marbles. “What’s the big deal?” he asked. “It’s only a newspaper. Your dad is a star reporter for one of the biggest in California. He could probably get you a copy of any newspaper in the world!”

“Not for a souvenir,” Bob explained patiently. “Timothy Fitchhorn saw something on the front page that upset him. That’s why he spilled his coffee all over it. So he could destroy it before we saw what it was!”

“Yikes!” cried Pete. “You got all that from a spilled cup of coffee? You’re turning into another Jupiter Jones ---- and that the world does not need!”

“Jupe saw it first,” conceded Bob, “but there is definitely something in that paper ---- and we have to find out what it is!”

Pete sat down on the bed. “But how? You’re supposed to be up here all day, sick in bed, remember?”

Bob shook his head and grinned. “I’m supposed to be up here all day, sick in bed. You, on the other hand, are perfectly healthy!” The studious Investigator undid the lock on the window and pushed it open. Pete joined him at the window and gulped. It was a good twenty-five feet to the ground below.

Pete looked blandly at Bob. “Any more bright ideas, smart guy?”

Bob examined the ivy covered stones outside the window and frowned. “I was hoping for some kind of drain pipe you could use to shimmy down.” He thought for a minute and snapped his fingers. “The bedsheets!”

Pete rolled his eyes. “I was hoping for something a little more sturdy.”

“It’ll have to do. Come on, let’s get started tying them together.”

Twenty minutes later they had fashioned a long rope out of three bedsheets. Bob tied one end of the make-shift rope to the bedpost that was closest to the window, and then threw the other

end over the side.

“Down you go!” he smiled.

“You seem to be enjoying your sickness a little too much,” Pete muttered. “Where do I go to find a newspaper once I’m down?”

“Try the nearest neighbors house. Just keep on the horse path we used the other day ---- it continues through the woods and ends up near the neighbors’ land not too far away.”

“And what are you going to do while I’m gone?” Pete asked skeptically.

Bob threw himself on the bed and laced his fingers behind his blond head. A big smile crossed his face. “Rest and relaxation is the best cure!”

Pete sighed and threw his legs over the window sill. “I’ll be back in an hour,” he said, and began lowering himself down the sheet rope.

On his way down, Pete passed a window that looked in on the library. Being careful not to be seen, he paused long enough to peer in ---- holding a hand up over his eyes to shield the glare. On the other side of the ornate stained glass, he could see someone lurking about in the deep shadows of the book-lined room! He was squinting his eyes into the gloom, trying to catch a better glimpse, when he suddenly felt a jerk on the rope! He looked up in alarm, but it was too late.

Pete had just enough time to see that one of the knots in the rope was coming undone before he felt himself plummeting the last ten feet to the ground. He stifled a cry and braced himself for impact!

The athletic boy landed with a grunt ---- the sheet draping over his head as he sat up. Feeling chagrined, Pete quickly balled up the sheet and hid it in a nearby bush. Then, being careful not to be seen, he sprinted across the yard toward the thick woods.

When he reached the cover of the trees, Pete paused again. This time he observed that Jebediah O’Connell was once more in the garden, suspiciously prodding about with his cane. What was he looking for? Pete wondered. At least he knew it wasn’t Cousin Jeb searching the library!

Pete kept trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle together in his mind as he raced through the woods. He was glad that Jupe had

a plan in mind, because he could make no sense of the baffling clues and suspects that surrounded this case!

Within minutes, an out-of-breath Pete Crenshaw had spotted the nearest neighbors house. He took a moment to catch his breath and then strolled up the lane to the front door.

Rapping firmly, the tall boy waited and waited. After several minutes, Pete grew restless. Was no one home? He rapped again, this time harder. He was hoping he hadn't come all this way for nothing when the door was slowly opened by an elderly woman hobbling on a cane.

"Can I help you, young man?"

"Good morning, ma'am," said Pete. "I'm a guest of your neighbors' daughter, Mrs. Hitchcock O'Connell . . . I was . . ."

"Ah," the old woman smiled fondly, "good people, the Hitchcock's." She sighed and looked sad. "What a shame. We had been neighbors for thirty years. He always claimed that house was haunted, you know. But we never believed any such thing. I think he was just trying to put a scare into us. Imagine that! Alfred Hitchcock trying to scare his neighbors!" The old woman cackled heartily. "Yes indeed, I shall miss them. Why, I remember this one time. . ."

Pete cleared his throat. It was obvious this woman was lonely in her big house, and was delighted to have someone to talk to. Pete wished he could stay and chat more about Mr. Hitchcock, but he thought he should really be getting back.

"I'm sorry, ma'am . . . but I . . . uh . . ."

"Oh yes," the woman smiled, the deep wrinkles on her face turning up. "You youngsters are always on the go. Always an adventure to be found. I can still remember being that young, you know. Well then, how can I help you?"

Pete explained about the newspaper being ruined by the coffee spill, and asked if they might be able to borrow her edition of the London Times – if she was through reading it.

"Certainly, certainly," she crowed. "I'll go fetch it. I won't be but a moment."

Pete waited patiently on the stoop. He began to wonder how long her 'moment' was going to take, for it seemed she was gone an eternity. He was just beginning to think the elderly woman wasn't going to return when he finally heard her shuffling back to

the front door.

"Here you are, young man."

"Thank you very much, ma'am," Pete said politely. "We really appreciate it."

The elderly woman smiled warmly at Pete, her eyes twinkling. "Oh my, think nothing of it. Give my regards to dear Patricia from Miss Ashley, won't you?"

Pete promised he would and turned to leave. He was about to say goodbye to the nice lady when an idea struck him and he turned around.

"Excuse me, Miss Ashley ---- could I ask you a question?"

"Be my guest," she cackled merrily. "What would you like to know, laddie?"

"I was just wondering . . ." Pete paused, deciding on just the right way to ask. "I was wondering if in all the time you knew the Hitchcocks, had they ever mentioned a relative named Jebediah? Possibly a cousin of Patricia's?"

The old woman thought for a moment and then shook her head. "Not that I recall," she said. "Hitch and his wife Alma talked often of family ---- family was very important to them, you see. They were always having relatives stay as guests when they came here for the summer. I'm sure I would have heard of a cousin named Jebediah. Such a distinct name."

Pete thanked her for the information and the newspaper and turned to leave.

"Be sure to say 'hello' to Patricia, won't you?" she called after him.

Pete said he would and trotted back into the woods with the newspaper tucked safely under his arm. When he reached Hitchcock Manor, he observed that Jebediah was still wandering the grounds, searching suspiciously with his cane. He made a mental note of it while he retrieved the sheet from the bush and called quietly up to Bob.

Bob's head appeared from the bedroom window. Pete silently showed him the sheet, then indicated with his hands for Bob to tie the knots tighter this time. He threw the ball of sheets up to Bob's waiting hands and waited nervously behind the bush for Bob to toss the sheet-rope back down. When he did, Pete stuffed the newspaper into the back of his pants and began climbing. He

stopped again at the library window, but this time all was quiet inside the ominous room. He climbed the rest of the way and pulled the make-shift rope up after him.

"Jebediah has been out in the garden looking for something all morning," Pete reported. "And the lady who gave me the paper says she's never heard of a relative named Jebediah! Also, I saw someone through the window sneaking around in the library!"

"Let's see the paper!" Bob said eagerly.

"Gleeps!" Pete cried. "I forgot all about the front page!" He quickly pulled the newspaper out and spread it flat on the bed. Both boy's eyes went wide when they saw the picture plastered on the front page.

Under a story headlined "SWINDLERS AT LARGE" was a blurry picture from a surveillance camera that showed two people leaving a bank. One was a large, fat man. The other was a skinny, short woman. The picture was of poor quality, but the likeness was unmistakable!

"The Fitchhorns!" both boys cried together.

A small caption ran beneath the grainy picture. It read:

SWINDLERS AT LARGE

... Two known con artists were spotted leaving a bank in Liverpool last week. The couple, under the alias of Thomas and Shirley Fidgewick, are wanted on several charges of fraud and money laundering. Story on Page 6 . . .

"Wait'll Jupe sees this!" Pete exclaimed. "We can sure rub it in when he gets back that we solved the mystery without him!"

A wide smile spread across Bob's face. "Boy, I can't wait to see his expression! He'll be in fits when we tell him we figured out it's been the Fitchhorns one step ahead of us this whole time!"

"Gee," said Pete, shaking his head doubtfully, "if they're behind it all, then who's playing the ghost? He's much too big and she's too small. Unless . . . Unless there really is a ghost!"

"I think you know very well what Jupe would say about that, Second!" laughed Bob.

While they waited for Jupiter's return, Pete wandered

downstairs from time to time to check in on Patricia and make sure she wasn't being harassed by the Fitchhorns. The boys savored their triumph until five o'clock, when they came down for dinner. Bob announced that he was still under the weather and would take his dinner back to his room. Pete, wanting to keep an eye on the crooked Fitchhorns, decided to stick close to Patricia for the rest of the evening.

Thunder shook the brooding house and storm clouds rolled in just as it was starting to get dark. Pete and Patricia sat in front of the television in the den when the lights flickered.

"I hope the boys get back soon," she said in a worried voice. "I don't like them out driving in the rain. Ben's a very responsible boy, but accidents can happen."

"Don't worry," said Pete reassuringly. "Between Ben and Jupe, they'll be just fine."

Patricia smiled at Pete as rain began spattering against the tall windows. Pete had just gotten up to throw another log onto the fire when he stopped in his tracks ---- the hair on the back of his neck standing on end.

An long, ear-piercing scream had shattered the night!

14. Race to the Embassy

WHEN BEN AND JUPITER had left Hitchcock Manor in Ben's Silver Cloud roadster, the older boy had assumed they were really going sightseeing. Jupe quickly shook his head at this and began rummaging in the glovebox for a map.

"I thought you had given up on the case," said Ben.

Jupiter grinned at the tall boy as he unfolded a map of London. "Not by a long shot!"

Ben looked confused. "Then if we're not going to see Parliament, where are we going?"

The stocky Investigator held up his camera. "First, we need to get the film in this camera developed. Then we have to get to the American Embassy," he declared, "and as fast as legally possible!"

With Jupiter acting as navigator, Ben maneuvered the sleek car through the busy London streets like a daredevil. An hour after they had left home, Ben was pulling his purring Silver Cloud up to the curb outside the large, white stone building of the American Embassy. Jupiter spied a small shop across the main thoroughfare that had a sign reading: "ONE HOUR PHOTO."

"There's a photo shop across the street. Meet me there once you've parked!" While Ben payed for parking, Jupiter ran across the busy London street to the little shop. As it turned out, they had only to wait about forty-five minutes before the large eight by ten pictures were finished being developed. Jupiter stuffed them into a large envelope and the two boys rushed out the door.

Huge pillars and American flags marked the entrance to the impressive embassy building. "Come on," said Jupe, "we've not a moment to lose!" The hefty boy began racing up the first of several stone stepways, with Ben close behind.

When the two boys reached the front doors, they were stopped by armed guards who demanded to see passports. Jupiter, who had traveled abroad before, was expecting this and came prepared. He whipped out his little blue book and showed it to the guards. He then explained that Ben was a citizen of England. Ben was asked to produce his driver's license to verify

this.

When the two boys were cleared to enter, they had to repeat the process with Jupiter's passport again at the front desk. They were then asked to walk through a strange doorway that beeped and buzzed as they passed through.

"Please remove all metal objects from your pockets," said a stern looking woman in a military uniform. "Also any watches or jewelry."

The boys did as they were asked and were cleared to enter. As they were strapping their watches back on their wrists, Ben shook his head in confusion. He had to admit he was baffled.

"I'm quite sure you have a plan, Jupiter," he said, "but I'll be blasted if I know what it is!"

"No time to explain," the cherub-faced Investigator panted, "we have to find a delegate to the United States who can help us!"

The boys looked around the great marble hall of the embassy. Finally Ben let out a cry. "There! Over in the far corner!" Jupiter followed Ben's gaze to a sign that said "International Affairs." The two boys hurried over to the office and went in.

Once inside the office of International Affairs, they were greeted by a serious looking man in a sharp suit and tie sitting behind a desk. His name-tag read "Agent R. Arthur – U.S.A./U.N." He looked at the boys as if they were a couple of pranksters. "Can I help you boys?" he asked suspiciously.

Jupiter drew himself up to his full height and jutted out his chin. In a clear and concise voice that made him appear older than he really was, he addressed Agent R. Arthur. Ben looked on in wonder at Jupiter's performance.

"I certainly hope you can be of assistance," Jupe stated firmly. "I need to get in contact with a delegate from the country of Varania. It is a matter of the utmost urgency!"

The well-dressed agent raised his eyebrows. "Varania? I've never heard of it. Are you sure you don't mean Bavaria?"

"Quite sure," Jupiter said stiffly.

Agent R. Arthur shrugged his shoulders. "Okay, kid. If you say so." He thumbed through a thick index and scanned the pages. After a tense moment, he finally grunted. "I'll be darned," he said, "there really is a Varania. Must be a small country!"

The Agent picked up one of three telephones at his desk and spoke briefly into it. After a long pause he finally hung up. "Okay, kid. A delegate from Varania will be down in the lobby in about ten minutes. But this better not be some kind of game!"

"I assure you it is not a game," said Jupiter solemnly. "Thank you for your time, sir."

The boys left the office of International Affairs and sat on a bench to wait. When ten minutes had passed, they were approached by a dark-skinned man in an impeccable brown suit. On his lapel he wore a pin of the Varanian flag and an emblem of a silver spider.

He bowed to the boys as a greeting and then said in a thick Varanian accent, "My name is Duke Antony. You are the boys who wish to meet with a delegate from Varania?"

Jupiter and Ben bowed in return, and then Jupe cleared his throat. "I seek the aid of Prince Djaro of Varania on a matter of the upmost importance!"

Jupiter was referring to the crown Prince of Varania, whom The Three Investigators had befriended in the Mystery of the Silver Spider many months before. That was a case in which they had helped recover the royal emblem of the country that had been stolen ---- the necklace of a silver spider ---- and aided Prince Djaro in thwarting a sinister plot to overthrow the throne.

Duke Antony smiled warmly, but shook his head. "I'm afraid I cannot simply call up the Prince and say two boys would like to play James Bond," he said patiently. "No, no, no. That would not do. And now I bid you good day." The delegate of Varania turned to leave, but Jupiter wasn't finished.

"Excuse me, sir," he said importantly, "but if you would be kind enough to tell the Prince that it is Jupiter Jones calling ---- one of the three American boys who helped find the Silver Spider, and who rung the honored bell of Prince Paul several months ago ---- I am positive that he would want to speak with me."

The dark-skinned man hesitated, and then turned around, looking uncertain.

"You are the American boys who aided Prince Djaro in saving the kingdom?" he asked skeptically.

"I'm one of them," replied Jupiter. "How else would I know

that the bell was rung to summon aid for the Prince? The whole matter was not made public as a matter of national policy.”

Duke Antony narrowed his eyes at Jupiter and bit his lip. It was obvious he did not want to displease the Prince. Finally he nodded his head. “Follow me,” he said briskly. “I will put you through a direct line to the palace.”

Ben grinned at Jupe. The chubby boy could sure sound important when he wanted to!

They followed the delegate of Varania up a long flight of stairs and into a small, cramped office located at the far end of the embassy. There was not enough space in the tiny room for three people, so Ben waited in the hall while Duke Antony placed the call for Jupiter.

Inside the office, Jupiter noticed official looking folders piled high on top of outdated filing cabinets. Maps covered the walls, and a large flag with a spider on it hung above the door. Amid the clutter on the Duke’s desk were two telephones. One black, the other red. The delegate picked up the red one and pushed the single button on the front of it. After a short pause, Duke Antony spoke into the phone, and then handed it over to Jupiter.

While Ben waited for Jupiter to make his call, he amused himself by trying to identify all the different flags of the countries that were represented at the American Embassy – each hanging from the railing of the second floor balcony. After nearly thirty minutes, Jupiter stepped out of the office. He had a big smile on his face. Duke Antony stepped out after him, holding Jupe’s manilla envelope with the pictures inside. He locked the office door and then turned to face Jupiter.

“I will process these photos immediately,” he said respectfully. “And might I add my most sincere apologies for rudeness to an honorary member of the Order of the Silver Spider.”

“Think nothing of it,” Jupiter replied. “How long until we find something out about those photographs?”

Duke Antony thought for a moment. “I would estimate the process to take approximately two, possibly three hours. Is that acceptable?”

“Quite acceptable,” said Jupiter.

“Then you will be pleased to follow me,” the Duke said, leading them back downstairs. When they reached an office door with the word “INTERPOL” stenciled on it, the Duke instructed them to wait outside.

“Two or three hours,” he promised, and entered into the room. Jupiter and Ben sat on a bench and prepared themselves for the long wait.

“What’s going on?” Ben demanded. “What’s ‘Interpol’? And how in blue blazes do you know the crown Prince of Varania?”

Jupiter explained to Ben how The Three Investigators had met Prince Djarro in California and all the exciting events that had followed. “When I called the Prince just now, I asked him if he could have Duke Antony process the photos through the American Embassy’s Interpol office.”

“But what’s Interpol?” asked Ben.

Jupiter took a deep breath. “Interpol stands for ‘International Criminal Police Organization.’ It was originally founded in Austria in 1923, but later moved to France. Most every country participates – it’s like an international cooperation between police forces. I took those pictures of the Fitchhorns and Jebediah on purpose. So I could run them through the Interpol database and see if they are wanted felons.”

“Amazing!” said Ben in wonder.

“Now all we have to do is wait,” sighed Jupiter. “And hope the treasure is still there when we get back!”

15. The Ghost Strikes Again!

PETE DROPPED THE LOG HE was about to toss into the fireplace when a horrifying scream shattered the silence of the old stone house.

"That sounded like Julia!" cried Patricia.

"Come on," said Pete, dashing out the door. He raced through the long hallways and burst into the kitchen, his heart beating fast. The Second Investigator looked around the room, expecting to see another ghostly apparition. What he found instead was Julia Abernathy in a dead faint on the kitchen floor.

"Jumping catfish!" he cried, rushing to the maid's side. Patricia hurried into the kitchen and put her hand up to her mouth in shock.

"Is she okay?" she asked breathlessly.

"I think so," said Pete. "I think she's fainted." Pete elevated the maid's legs on a nearby stepping stool and gently massaged her wrists. The plump maid moaned and her eyes fluttered.

Bob entered the room and gaped in surprise at the sight of the maid sprawled on the floor.

"What happened?" he cried in wide-eyed astonishment. "I heard a scream!"

Patricia shook her head. "I don't know, something must have given her a fright ---- she's fainted! Just . . . out cold!" Bob could see Patricia was trying to keep from trembling. She was obviously quite upset by this recent turn of events.

"Why don't you sit down, Mrs. O'Connell?" he said soothingly. "I'll make you a nice cup of tea."

"Thank you, Bob," she said gratefully, sitting down at the kitchen table.

Now Timothy and Stella Fitchhorn barreled into the kitchen, followed closely by Jebediah O'Connell, who was dripping wet.

"We heard a scream," Mr. Fitchhorn barked. "What's happened? What's wrong?"

"Why, Julia's taken a spill!" exclaimed Jebediah, his eyes going wide. The man with the thick mustache limped to her side. "Are ye okay, m'lady? Are ye hurt?"

Pete was just helping her sit up. The maid blinked a couple of

times, as if she were dazed.

"My goodness," Julia Abernathy said, "what in heaven's name am I doing on the floor?"

"You fainted, Julia," Patricia explained. "Are you okay? Did you hurt yourself?"

"I've got a bump on the back of my head, but 'tis nothing serious, madam." The maid circled the bump with her fingers for a moment. Suddenly, fear washed over her face and she brought herself to her feet.

"I remember now," she gasped, pointing to the cellar door with a shaking finger. "There," she intoned gravely, "I saw the ghost of Molly Thibidoux on the other side of that door . . . just as plain as day, I did! I was about to go down for a jar of pickles when I opened the door and there at the bottom of the steps she was ---- just aglowin'!"

Bob and Pete looked at each other and then looked at Patricia, who could only sit helplessly.

"I warned ye of the ghost!" cried Jebediah, brandishing his cane like a wildman. "I warned ye but ye wouldn't listen to old Jeb! Called me crazy you did! Now poor Miss Julia has been frightened half out of her wits!"

The limping groundskeeper suddenly turned to the Fitchhorns and sneered in a menacing voice. "If I find out ye had a hand in this, I'll club ye over the head with my cane ye no good tyrant!"

"Jebediah!" Patricia cried in dismay.

"Shocking!" shrieked Stella. "Absolutely shocking that family would be treated this way!"

"Now see here, bub . . ." growled Timothy Fitchhorn, stepping close to Cousin Jeb. "You just watch it, you old scoundrel. I've had about all I'm going to take from you for one night!"

Jebediah O'Connell began rolling up his shirtsleeves, his eyes narrowing. "Perhaps we should be settling this like men," he threatened.

Bob and Pete looked on in fascination as Timothy Fitchhorn wiped his brow with a handkerchief. "You don't scare me, you . . . you blustering Scotsman!"

"That is quite enough!"

Everyone jumped when a stern voice shouted from the kitchen

doorway.

"There will be no fighting in this house!"

"Winston!" Julia sobbed, rushing to her husband. "The ghost ---- it 'twas here! I saw her with my own eyes down the cellar steps! She was wearing an old dress and she held a noose up for me to see and her face was aglowin' just like death itself!"

As the butler embraced his distraught wife, Bob observed that Winston was also quite wet from the rain. Probably due to the butler having to cross over from the servant's cottage to the house, the small Investigator guessed.

Lightning and thunder cracked outside, making the lights flicker again. Julia cringed and buried her face in Winston's shoulder. "There, there," he said in a soothing voice, putting an arm around his wife's shoulders.

Winston spoke to his wife in a hushed voice. "You've had a scare, darling. Let me take you to the cottage so you can lie down. I'll prepare an icepack for that bump on your head."

"Oh, thank you, dear," Julia whimpered. "With your permission, I'll leave dinner to you, m'lady," said Julia to Patricia. "I'm afraid I shan't be much of a cook tonight."

Patricia said "Of course," in a tender voice. "I'll take care of everything, Julia. You just go and rest for awhile."

As Winston helped Julia out of the room, Jebediah O'Connell gave one last glare to Timothy Fitchhorn and stormed out of the kitchen. Fitchhorn looked disdainfully at the boys, then pulled on the lapels of his overly tight sportscoat and marched out of the room with his bird-like wife in tow.

"I don't know if I can take much more of this," Patricia moaned, burying her face in her hands. "I don't think I can live here another month until the house sells!"

Pete looked at Bob and sighed. "Well, I guess this means we have to search the cellar for the ghost again. Come on . . ." Pete pulled Bob by the arm, but the smaller boy didn't budge. "Hey," said Pete, "what's gotten into you, Records?"

Bob was silent for a moment, as if he were lost in deep thought. Then he spoke softly. "I think we may be wrong about the Fitchhorns."

"What about the Fitchhorns?" asked Patricia. "What are you talking about, Bob?"

Bob showed her the front page of the newspaper which he had been clutching in his hand the whole time. Patricia gasped when she saw the grainy photo of the Fitchhorns leaving the bank.

“Criminals!” she said furiously. “Con-artists trying to get their hands on my father’s money! Well, they won’t get a cent! Not one!” She buried her face in her hands and began to sob. Bob put a comforting arm around her shoulder.

“What do you mean we might be wrong about the Fitchhorns?” Pete asked stubbornly, pointing to the newspaper. “It’s all right there in black and white!”

But before Bob had a chance to explain, they all heard a slam at the front door. Moments later Jupiter and Ben hustled into the kitchen, sopping wet and with bare feet!

“What happened!” cried Patricia in a worried voice. “Are you boys okay?”

“We’re fine, Aunt Patty,” Ben grinned. “In fact, we’re better than fine! Jupiter has discovered who our ghost is!”

Pete leaped up with a huge grin on his face. “But not before Bob and I discovered it!” he gloated with satisfaction. “Guess what we learned about the Fitchhorns!”

“Wait a minute ---- don’t tell me!” said Jupe dramatically. He pulled on his bottom lip as if he were concentrating deeply. “Hold on . . . it . . . it’s coming to me! Wait . . . I’ve got it!” he cried. “Timothy and Stella Fitchhorn are a husband and wife con-artist team that have swindled people all over Europe!”

Pete and Bob looked at each other in astonishment, their mouths hanging open.

“How did you know?” cried Pete in amazement. Then understanding washed over his face. “You must have found another newspaper!”

Jupiter grinned at the Second Investigator and patted him on the shoulder. “I assure you I did not find another newspaper, Pete,” he laughed, pulling a slightly damp envelope out from under his shirt. “And it wasn’t mind-reading, either!”

“That’s what we went to London for,” explained Ben. “Jupiter has got the key to the case right inside that envelope!”

16. Bob Makes an Accusation

“THE FITCHHORNS ARE THE ghost?” cried Patricia, “or is it someone else?”

Jupiter shook his head. “I don’t have any concrete evidence yet ---- but I think I can get it!”

“How Jupe?” asked Pete.

Jupiter grabbed an apple from a basket of fruit on the kitchen table and bit into it hungrily. He had a big smile on his face and he explained while he munched. “By having everyone in this house assemble in the library so we can unmask this ‘ghost’ once and for all!” he said dramatically. “Records, Second ---- go around the house and tell everyone to meet in the library in five minutes.”

“At least let me know what happened to your shoes and socks,” demanded Patricia.

“They were too muddy to wear inside, Aunt Patty,” answered Ben. “When Jupiter and I pulled up the drive, we saw someone by the light of my headlamps creeping around the garden. Of course we jumped out and gave chase ---- well, Jupiter will fill you in on the rest when we get to the library.”

“Okay, Jupe,” she said, throwing up her hands. “Lead the way!”

Within five minutes the entire household except for Julia had congregated in the musty library. Jupiter paced back and forth in front of the windows. He held the large envelope in one pudgy hand and the apple in the other, as the lights flickered in tune to the thunder outside.

“Winston, be a dear and bring us some candles,” said Patricia. “In case the lights go out.”

“Very good, madam,” he bowed. The tall butler left the room and soon returned with several candles. He placed them about the library and lit them with a box of matches.

Patricia smiled, slightly embarrassed. “Thank you, Winston. I guess I don’t want to be left in the dark on a night like this.”

“Of course, madam,” the butler agreed.

Timothy Fitchhorn poured brandy into a crystal tumbler and pushed his hair back on his head. “Okay kid, this better be

important,” he said impatiently. The fat man put his arm up on the mantle of the fireplace and drank deeply.

“Yes,” agreed his wife, honking her nose into a lace handkerchief, “we’re missing our favorite television program!”

“Aye,” said Jebediah, “someone should be with poor Julia. ‘Tis not right leaving her by her lonesome on a night like this.”

“Actually,” said Jupiter, “she’s in the safest place of all.”

Winston was lazily spinning the large globe in the corner. He suddenly looked up at Jupiter and glared. “What do you mean, young man?” he snapped. “I believe Jebediah is correct. Perhaps I should fetch my wife this instant.”

Jupiter stopped pacing and stood in the middle of the room. “I simply meant that she is safe in the servant’s cottage because the ‘ghost’ is in this very room as we speak!”

They all looked around them, as if the ghost of Molly Thibidoux were sneaking up behind each one of them, ready to cinch her icy noose around their necks. A fresh burst of lightning and thunder crackled ---- and when the lights in the library flickered, everyone in the room gasped.

Jupiter seemed the most frightened of all. At the sound of the thunder, he clumsily dropped the half-eaten apple he was holding. It fell on the floor in front of Winston.

“Sorry,” he said, somewhat embarrassed. The overweight Investigator knelt down to pick up the apple and smiled. “I guess I’m a little jumpy,” he confessed.

“Are you going to keep us in suspense all night, Jupe?” Pete said impatiently. “Where’s the ghost at?”

“All right, Second,” he nodded. “But let’s start at the beginning and work our way up to the ghost, shall we?”

“You better start somewhere,” Timothy Fitchhorn threatened, “or I’m leaving!”

“For once I agree with the blowhard,” said Jebediah crossly.

Jupiter ignored them and took a deep breath. “The first thing we need to discuss is the last clue from the jukebox record ---- ‘Hidden Treasures.’ If you’ll remember, the second verse said: ‘Time has stood still without you, I’m like Adam without an Eve, I’ll go on searching the universe, Until I’ve buried what I grieve.’”

“Mr. Hitchcock’s letter said that we were wrong about the

meaning,” remembered Bob.

“But you said this morning that you had figured out the real meaning,” added Pete.

Jupiter grinned at his partners. “I did ---- and so did someone else! When you take each line as a riddle in itself, the answer becomes clear. ‘Time has stood still without you’ is what threw us off track the first time. It’s clearly a reference to a timepiece of some sort, but we were too hasty in our judgement. The rest of the verse tells us exactly which timepiece to look for!”

“Well, which one is it?” Stella Fitchhorn chirped excitedly.

Jupiter had a superior look on his face. “That’s simple enough,” he said. “The second line tells us! ‘I’m like Adam without an Eve.’ Well, according to Genesis – the first book of the bible – where did Adam and Eve live?”

“I know that one!” cried Pete. “The garden of Eden!”

“Exactly!” crowed Jupiter. “So if the first line means ‘timepiece’, we can assume the second line of the song means ‘garden.’”

Patricia looked confused. “But what kind of timepiece could be in the garden?” she asked. “A clock would be ruined out there.”

“Naturally a real clock would rot away,” agreed Jupiter. “But not a marble clock!”

Suddenly Jebediah’s eyes lit up. “By jimmy, I think I see what the fat one’s drivin’ at . . . Mr. Hitchcock was talkin’ about the sundial in the garden! That’s a timepiece, and it’s broken too. The metal gnomon that makes the shadow broke off years ago. That’s what ‘Time has stood still without you’ means!”

The Fitchhorns and Jebediah rushed over to the stained glass window that looked out onto the garden. Pete, Bob, and Patricia crowded close behind.

“It’s too dark to see anything,” Pete reported, cupping his hands on either side of his eyes. “We’ll have to go out there.”

Jupiter smiled at Ben and shook his head. “There’s really no need,” he said. “Someone else has already deduced the last two lines of the verse. Once you understand the pattern it’s really quite simple. ‘I’ll go on searching the universe, Until I’ve buried what I grieve,’ simply means ‘search for something buried.’

“And someone has done just that!” Ben Hitchcock cried. The

lights in the library flickered again ---- staying off a fraction of a second longer this time.

“But who?” asked Patricia.

Jupiter Jones stood in the middle of the library looking as proud as a peacock. He drew himself up to his full height. “Someone who knows every inch of this house. The same person who has never been around when the ‘ghost’ has made an appearance,” he said.

“The Fitchhorns!” cried Patricia. “They’re the ones that have been trying to scare us out of the house so they could find the treasure!”

Timothy Fitchhorn took a step forward. “Careful what you say, missy,” he growled. “I’m not a man to be crossed!”

Stella Fitchhorn’s face glowed red. “How dare you say such a thing to family!” she bellowed.

“We know you’re not family!” Pete said hotly. “We saw the newspaper!”

Timothy Fitchhorn stood speechless. He wiped beads of sweat off his brow with a handkerchief and sputtered. “I . . . I don’t know what your talking about. W-What newspaper?”

Bob threw the newspaper onto the coffee table where everyone could observe it. “The one that you spilled coffee on so we wouldn’t see it. The one that says you and your wife are con-artists who have scammed people all over Europe!”

“W-Why that could be anyone!” Stella Fitchhorn sputtered nervously. “Anyone at all!”

Timothy Fitchhorn glared at his wife. “I told you to let me do the talking!” He calmly straightened his jacket and brushed back his greasy hair. “That picture doesn’t prove a thing. We have committed no crime here ---- and we are certainly not impersonating a ghost. The idea! What could possibly be gained from dressing up as a ghost anyway?”

Pete took a step forward. “To scare us out of the house,” he accused, “so you could search for the treasure without being caught! Too bad you didn’t count on us being Investigators and not being scared off that easily.” He looked at Bob and Jupiter and grinned lamely. “Well, two out of three, anyway.”

Lightning crashed again – very close this time. The lights flickered and rain beat brutally against the window pane. Jupiter

spoke up.

“Mr. Fitchhorn is right,” he said calmly. “They’re not the one dressing up as the ghost.”

Everyone turned to look at Jupiter.

“What?” Patricia cried. “Then if they’re not the ghost ---- w-who is?”

Suddenly Bob stood up and cleared his throat. “Would you mind if I guessed, Jupe?”

Jupiter, looking a little surprised, nodded reluctantly to Bob. The stocky boy clearly enjoyed being in the spotlight, but he wasn’t above giving Bob a fair shot if the smaller boy thought he knew the answer.

Pete scratched his head in confusion. “Why am I the only one that doesn’t know what’s going on around here?”

Bob smiled and pointed a finger.

“The ghost is none other than the butler ---- Winston!”

17. Nobody Move!

THE LANKY BRITISH butler sat up like he had been stung by a hornet. “What’s the meaning of this!” he cried. “Why, that’s preposterous! The idea of me scheming against my own employers is utterly ridiculous!”

Patricia looked to Jupiter in astonishment. “I have to agree with Winston,” she said severely, “there must be some mistake!”

“I always knew he was up to no good,” Jebediah scowled, approaching the servant with his cane in hand. “I didn’t trust ye from the start. Using poor Julia like that!”

Winston Abernathy gave Jupiter a deadly look. “You’d better explain yourself, young man. As it is, I will be tendering my resignation,” he fumed, glaring at Patricia. “I have never been so insulted in my life!”

Jupiter calmly opened the oversized envelope he had been holding and produced the two eight by ten pictures – one of Stella Fitchhorn and Jebediah O’Connell, the other of Timothy Fitchhorn and Winston. He tossed them onto the coffee table.

Lightning crackled as everyone looked at the pictures. The lights blinked off and on again and the wind howled and moaned outside the intimidating window.

“Ben and I went into London and had these pictures run through the Interpol database at the American Embassy. I’ll admit that my true intention was to find out the background of the Fitchhorns and Mr. O’Connell. I suspected they were criminals, but it was the photo I took of Mr. Fitchhorn and Winston that really struck gold!”

“You see, when I snapped the photo of Mr. Fitchhorn, Winston was kneeling beside him, helping to clean up the coffee that Fitchhorn spilled to hide the newspaper photo. When Interpol checked the pictures, they not only looked into the Fitchhorns’ and Jebediah’s background, but also Winston Abernathy’s. And what they found was pure dynamite!”

“I’m afraid your butler has made a successful career out of marrying servant women just like Julia so he can gain access to some of the wealthiest houses in Europe. In fact, he’s wanted in the Netherlands, Ireland, France, and many other countries for

pulling the same scheme.”

“I think it is also safe to say,” Jupiter added, “that Winston and the Fitchhorns know each other ---- but rather than one ratting on the other, spoiling both their chances at the fortune, they decided to keep quiet and work together. I suspect that is why Winston set the newspaper in front of Mr. Fitchhorn ---- to let him see that the police were on his trail, as well as to keep his own secret safe. For if the Fitchhorns were exposed, they would most certainly expose Winston as well!”

Patricia looked ashen-faced. She confronted the butler. “Is . . . is this true, Winston? Were you planning on robbing us?”

“Absolutely not!” the butler cried. “And even if I were, these young cretins haven’t a shred of evidence! How do you expect to prove these outrageous allegations, young man?”

The stocky First Investigator crossed his arms and shrugged his shoulders, as if the answer were as obvious as the nose on his face. “By examining your shoes,” he said serenely.

All eyes in the room looked down at the butler’s shoes.

They were muddy!

“I ran over from the house when I heard Julia scream,” he explained. “Anyone can see it’s raining outside.”

“But there’s a stone path from the cottage to the back door,” countered Jupiter. “And more importantly, when Ben and I pulled up the driveway in his car, we saw someone in the garden by the light of the headlamps ---- in the exact location of the sundial!”

“That’s why Jupe and Ben had to take off their shoes and socks!” cried Bob.

“Exactly,” said Jupiter. “Ben and I gave chase into the muddy garden, but without flashlights it was too dark to see anything. However, the lightning provided enough illumination to see that the sundial was tipped over and a large round container had been removed from underneath!”

“You carefully stayed off the stone path so as not to leave any footprints leading to your door. It’s raining, so the footprints would have only lasted moments, but we were right behind you. You couldn’t have known we didn’t have flashlights, but you didn’t want to take the chance of us following the muddy footprints to your cottage door. Just the opposite of when you

stayed off the dew-covered grass the morning before.”

“I’ll admit I was still uncertain of who the ghost was when Ben and I came inside. Mainly because I observed that both Jebediah and Winston’s clothes were wet. Then I remembered that Jebediah often went for walks in the rain – but never through the muddy garden! The first thing I did when I saw him was to examine his shoes. Cousin Jeb’s were wet, but not muddy.”

Jebediah nodded his head in agreement. “Aye,” he said, “the wind caught my umbrella and blew it inside out. I was soaked to the bone by the time I heard poor Julia scream and I ran inside!”

Jupiter nodded and continued. “When we all met in here, I made sure to ‘accidentally’ drop something near Winston so I could examine his shoes. When I observed they were caked in mud, I knew I had found the right man ---- or should I say ‘ghost’?”

Winston looked outraged. “That still proves nothing!” he snorted. “Your entire story is based purely on conjecture and circumstantial evidence!”

Now Bob stepped in. “If Jupe is wrong, then how did you know that Julia had bumped her head when she fainted in the kitchen?”

Winston flushed. “Why . . . Why . . . Don’t be ridiculous! I was standing right there! Everyone saw me!”

Bob shook his head. “No, you weren’t there. I heard Julia scream when I was upstairs. When I came running into the kitchen, Pete was at her side and Patricia was standing by the counter.”

“That’s right,” Pete exclaimed. “I remember now! The Fitchhorns and Cousin Jeb rushed in right after Bob. But Winston didn’t come into the kitchen until after Julia said she had bumped her head!”

“You knew,” accused Bob, “because you were standing at the bottom of the cellar stairs! Probably changing out of the ghost costume.”

Jupiter confronted the butler. “All the pieces of the puzzle are beginning to come together now. You figured out the riddle of the jukebox record ---- but too late! You knew Ben and I would be returning any minute, so you had to act fast! You created a diversion by dressing up as the ghost and scaring your own wife.

When everyone came running, you slipped off the costume and ran out the secret exit in the back room of the cellar. Next you made a bee-line for the sundial in the garden. And you would have gotten away with it if Ben and I hadn't returned just as you were pulling the box out of the ground!"

Jupiter gave the butler a smug look. "Yes, you were about to make your escape when Ben and I pulled up the driveway, catching you in the headlights. That frightened you ---- but only for a moment! You couldn't have had time to hide the treasure very well. I believe that if we search the Abernathy's cottage, we'll find whatever was buried beneath the sundial. And most likely a dress, wig, and noose as well!"

Rage washed over the tall butler's face. "Why you no good little punk! I've had enough of your meddling!"

Suddenly the butler held a small, deadly pistol in his hand. He waved it desperately. "Nobody move!" he barked hoarsely.

"Winston!" Patricia cried out in shock. "How . . . How could you?"

"It was easier than you think!" the butler sneered. "The hardest part is catering to you fat-cats and your every whim for a year while I learn where all the safes in the house are located! This job proved trickier than most ---- but how could I pass up a challenge from Alfred Hitchcock?"

He waved the gun menacingly and nodded toward the door. "Everybody out!" he ordered. "I want everyone in the cellar!"

"Timothy, do something!" Stella Fitchhorn sobbed hysterically. "He's going to make off with the treasure!"

"Quiet you!" Fitchhorn snapped. "Do you want to get us shot?"

"Do as he says," said Jupiter boldly. The First Investigator raised his hands above his head and marched slowly towards the door. He was followed closely by Bob and Pete, who looked at their leader in surprise. It wasn't like Jupiter Jones to give in so easily.

"You'll pay for what you did to Julia!" Jebediah swore. "If I have to search all of Europe, I'll track ye down and find ye!"

"Into the cellar," commanded Winston. "It doesn't pay to threaten a man with a gun!" He waved the pistol again. "Anyone tries anything funny and I put a hole in them!"

The group marched peacefully down the hall and into the brightly lit kitchen.

“Open the door, Sherlock!” Winston growled to Jupiter, pointing to the cellar door in the pantry.

Jupiter did as he was told.

“Now go down those steps ---- all of you! And no tricks or I shoot!”

The captives slowly descended the steps into the dank, creepy cellar.

“Now take out that lightbulb and throw it up to me!” the butler commanded.

Again, Jupiter did as he was told. He unscrewed the single lightbulb and tossed it up to Winston’s waiting hand.

Winston Abernathy let the bulb drop on the stone steps, shattering it into a hundred pieces. “Don’t bother trying to use the secret exit,” he laughed, “I’ve locked it from the outside. You’ll also be pleased to know that I have given Julia a strong sleeping sedative, so she won’t be awake until tomorrow afternoon at the earliest!”

With that the tall butler closed the cellar door with a sickening slam!

The group of captives were trapped ---- engulfed within the claustrophobic darkness of the cellar!

18. The Ghost of Molly Thibidoux

STELLA FITCHHORN LET OUT a frightened squeak when the cellar door was slammed shut, then began to sob in hysterics.

"I can't stand the dark!" she bawled. "I'm claustrophobic! Timothy, you've got to get me out of here this instant!"

"Oh pipe down!" her husband huffed. The Three Investigators heard the fat man climb the steps, the glass crunching beneath his feet. He threw his shoulder against the cellar door. It remained tightly sealed, not moving an inch. After several repeated attempts, he gave up.

"It's bolted from the other side. This door isn't moving until Julia unlocks it tomorrow," he panted. Then he spoke to Jupiter. "If you've got any bright ideas, Jones, now is the time for them."

Jupiter remained oddly silent.

Somewhere in the dark Pete spoke up. "Hey, maybe we should try to find the secret door in the back room. Maybe Winston was only bluffing about it being locked."

"A secret door ye say?" said Jebediah. "Not surprising in this house, I suppose. If we keep together and follow the shelves, we could find it with little problem."

"That sounds like a good idea to me," said Patricia. "The sooner we get out of this cellar, the better. What do you think, Jupiter? Jupiter?"

"Hey Juve," said Bob nervously. "Are you still with us?"

"Shhhh!" hissed Jupiter from the top of the black steps. "Listen!"

The group crowded close to the thick door at the top of the stairs and strained their ears. For a long moment there wasn't a sound. Then the group heard muffled thumps and footsteps.

"Someone is prowling around up there!" whispered Ben.

"It must be Winston," breathed Bob. "Why is he taking so long to escape?"

"Maybe he didn't find the treasure after all," guessed Patricia. "He might have come back to search the house some more."

In the darkness, the group huddled close together on the steps. They held their breath, listening intently for more sounds of the intruder.

Suddenly, a long, horrifying scream made their hair stand on end as it gurgled out into silence.

“Whiskers!” Pete yelled. “That was Winston!”

“The ghost ---- the ghost of old Molly Thibidoux got to him!” Jebediah whispered triumphantly. “Serves the scoundrel right for what he did to poor Julia.”

“I hear something else,” Ben said urgently. “More footsteps! And they’re coming this way!”

Suddenly there was a mad rush in the oppressive darkness to get away from the cellar door. Pete was in the lead.

“I’ve already seen the ghost once,” the Second Investigator cried in alarm. “And that was one time too many!” He began feeling his way down the steps, but Jupiter grabbed his arm.

“Wait a minute, Second. Let’s see if our ‘ghost’ opens the door for us!”

“What!” everyone cried together.

But Jupiter remained firmly on the top step.

“This is no time for jokes, Jupiter!” said Patricia in a shaky voice. “Whoever is up there could be very desperate. Even dangerous!”

“I don’t think so,” said Jupiter. “In fact, I’m certain that it’s a friendly spirit.”

“How do you know, Jupe?” asked Bob. But Jupiter remained mysteriously silent.

“I sure do hope you know what you’re doing, First,” Pete said uneasily.

They listened once more. The footsteps stopped right outside the cellar door. Now the ghost of old Molly Thibidoux, the maidservant who hanged herself from a willow tree on the moors over one hundred years ago, was drawing the bolt back on the massive door.

With a ghastly scre-e-e-e-ch that made Pete’s blood run cold, the door slowly moved.

The group stood on the cellar steps with wide eyes as the door swung open.

Patricia gasped and squeezed her eyes shut as she saw the glowing face of their rescuer.

Stella Fitchhorn moaned and dropped into her husband’s arms in a dead faint.

"Th . . . Th . . . There really is a ghost!" stammered Ben and Bob together.

Jebediah O'Connell's jaw moved up and down as if on a string. "By thunder . . ." was all he could manage to say.

It appeared to be true! Standing in the darkness at the top of the cellar stairs was a woman in a Victorian dress ---- holding a noose!

"Yikes!" Pete yelped, scrambling to get away from the phantom. But Jupiter stubbornly held firm to his friend's arm.

Suddenly, a light was shining on the ghost's face. Molly Thibidoux had a flashlight! Even more surprising, she had a mustache!

"Right on schedule, Duke Antony," Jupiter grinned.

The 'ghost' removed a wig from its head and wiped off the glowing face paint with a handkerchief. The Duke grinned back at Jupiter. "The Order of the Silver Spider is always willing to help friends of Prince Djaró!"

"The Silver Spider?" cried Pete.

"Prince Djaró?" echoed Bob. "What's going on here, First?"

"Let's get out of this cellar and see what Mr. Hitchcock's treasure is," said Jupiter, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "Then I'll explain everything to you."

At that moment all the lights in the house flickered back on. The boys had to cover their eyes for a moment at the sudden harsh glare.

"Ah," said Duke Antony, "I see power has been restored. A lightning strike took out the lights just as I was enacting your plan, Jupiter. That accounts for the delay. I dare say, it must have made my 'ghost' act that much more convincing. I wasn't sure Winston had even seen me when he began screaming ---- but he must have. Regardless, I will venture it will be months before Winston Abernathy can sleep with the lights off!"

As the party eagerly climbed the old stone steps leading out of the cellar, Duke Antony clapped a hand on Timothy Fitchhorn's broad shoulder.

"Not so fast," he commanded.

"What's the meaning of this?" Fitchhorn blustered. "Unhand me this instant or I'll press charges! This is assault and harrassment!"

Duke Antony shook his head seriously. "On the contrary," he said in a diplomatic voice, "in the name of Prince Djaro, crown prince of Varania, I declare you and your wife under arrest."

Stella Fitchhorn's eyes fluttered and she looked around in a daze. "Prince who?" she said.

"Varania?" Timothy Fitchhorn scowled. "You have no jurisdiction here! This is England if you haven't noticed, you imbecile."

"I assure you I do have jurisdiction," the Duke calmly explained. "And even if I do not, these men most certainly do!"

The Fitchhorns' eyes went wide as several bobbies, British police officers, swarmed into the room and surrounded them. Two officers quickly snapped handcuffs on the Fitchhorns and escorted the bickering couple from the room.

As The Three Investigators watched the drama with the Fitchhorns play out, Jupiter noticed Winston being attended to by a police officer. The crooked butler had a heavy wool blanket draped over his shoulders and he was shaking uncontrollably ---- babbling about a ghost with a noose that appeared from the shadows, his narrow, hawkish face growing white at the memory.

Jupiter chuckled and shook his head as he led the group to the back door of Hitchcock Manor. "I get the distinct impression Winston Abernathy won't be impersonating a ghost for quite some time!"

When the arrests had been made, Duke Antony joined the group as they dashed through the rain to the Abernathy's cottage. They only had to look for a moment before Ben discovered the large metal cannister hidden under Winston's bed. The round container was about two and a half feet in diameter by one foot deep. It was still wet and spattered with fresh mud.

"It's padlocked," he said.

Jebediah was tending to Julia, slipping the shoes off the sleeping woman and pulling the bed covers up to her chin. "There's bolt cutters in my shed across the way," he offered. "Ye can use those to cut the lock."

Pete ran for the cutters and was back in a flash. He handed them to Jupiter, who quickly snapped off the lock.

They all crowded around in excitement as Jupiter raised the lid on Alfred Hitchcock's hidden treasure. But when they saw it, brows furrowed in confusion. It wasn't money or gold or sparkling gems or even pirate's treasure.

"It's reels of film!" cried Bob.

Bob was right. Inside the cannister were several reels of motion picture film. A note was taped to the top reel. Jupiter quickly plucked the note off and opened it. He read out loud:

Congratulations!

It is my sincere hope that this note has found its way into the hands that I had intended. If so, compliments are in order to my daughter, Patricia, and a certain three young lads. You have lived up to your remarkable reputation. If it is not in your hands ---- well, whoever is perusing this letter, the treasure is now yours!

Speaking of the treasure – you may be asking just what it is you're looking at. Well, I suppose an explanation is in order!

As you know, movies were my life. I worked in the motion picture industry until I was not physically able to continue. My last picture was to be my ultimate thriller, my swan song, so to speak. It was to be called "THE SHORT NIGHT," and its star was none other than my dear friend, Creighton Duke. This was a movie that I financed myself ---- with no help at all from a major studio. A dream, I might add, that I had long wished fulfilled. It was mine. I owned it, and I could do with it what I pleased. Confidentiality agreements were drawn up and signed by all the cast and crew. Although there has been much speculation, the public has never known of the final, "lost" Hitchcock picture until now.

Unfortunately, I fell ill just as principal photography was about to wrap. As I write this I fully understand that I will not be able to finish my last picture. As you can imagine, when I realized that "THE SHORT NIGHT" would most certainly fall into the hands of a studio upon my death, I was distraught. I pondered various ways of dealing with this dilemma, but it was an idea of Crate's that led us to devise this scheme. It proved to be a way to avoid the catastrophe, and, as a way to say goodbye

to those whom I knew would be searching for it.

Other than a few scenery shots, a musical score, sound and special effects, and various other technical glitches, the film is complete. I know that it will be safe in the hands of my daughter and The Three Investigators. You have my permission to do with it as you please.

Well then, I suppose there is really nothing left for me to say except goodbye. I hope you lads found as much thrills and entertainment solving the mystery of the Hitchcock inheritance as I had concocting it!

And now, I must bid you farewell.

Sincerely,

ALFRED J. HITCHCOCK

P.S. I hope you'll forgive me for borrowing the sundial element from one of your cases. I've always felt it would make an ingenious hiding place, and couldn't resist using it in my own mystery!

Jupiter's eyes gleamed as he touched the film reels reverently with his fingertips. He felt very strange for a moment, as if a lump were caught in his throat. The thought that The Three Investigators would never again see their mentor, Alfred Hitchcock, left him without words ---- a condition rarely imposed on Jupiter Jones!

Finally he cleared his throat and turned to face the group. The portly First Investigator had a big smile on his face.

"Who wants to see a movie?"

19. Reginald Clarke Asks Some Questions

TWO WEEKS LATER, The Three Investigators were once more seated across from Reginald Clarke, the famous motion picture producer, in his big office at World Studios.

"The butler did it?" he boomed, slapping his hand down on Bob's sheaf of notes. "By thunder, I believe Hitch would have been quite pleased with that solution!"

The three boys beamed and nodded their heads in agreement.

"Winston Abernathy wasn't the butler's real name," Jupiter explained. "He actually went by several aliases. His real name is Mortimer Vincent Carey. He's a notorious cat-burglar and confidence man, wanted on countless charges of theft and breaking and entering in ten different countries."

"And all of them are scrambling to get a piece of him!" added Bob.

"Quite so!" rumbled the producer. "Winston's plan was to impersonate the ghost and scare everyone out of the house so he could search for the treasure. But tell me, young Jones, when did you first suspect the butler might be more than he seemed?"

Jupiter squirmed a little in his chair. "I really should have suspected Winston when I learned that he had only been there a year ---- not thirty years like his wife. However, my first real clue came from Pete."

"It did?" Pete asked in surprise.

"It struck me as odd," Jupiter continued, "that Winston knew just where to go in that enormous cellar when we were trying to find Pete as he was banging on the pipes. I had observed that there were pipes all over the ceiling of the cellar. Pete could have been anywhere, but Winston took us directly to that door ---- because he already knew where Pete was since he was the one that pushed him in!"

"He also suggested that we search for Pete in the woods," added Bob. "Probably so he could get us out of the house in order to search for the clock in the riddle."

"Mmmm," said Reginald Clarke, looking down his nose. "But the clock was not the correct timepiece after all. It was a sundial that the movie reels were found under."

"That's correct," agreed Jupiter. "We believe that Winston was searching the cellar for the clock in the riddle when he heard Pete come down the steps. The cellar was where he had been hiding his 'ghost' costume, so he quickly put on the dress and wig and rubbed fluorescent paint on his face so that Pete wouldn't recognize him. After he locked Pete in the room, he was free to search the rest of the basement. Eventually his search led him to the grandfather clock in the billiard room. He scraped off the wax seal on Mr. Hitchcock's letter, thinking he had found the treasure. When he discovered it was the wrong clock, he was forced to wait for us to discover the true meaning."

"Amazing," said the producer. "And you did just that! But it seems to me that there is a ghost sighting for which you have not accounted for. Exactly what or whom did Jebediah see at the top of the stairs your first night at Hitchcock Manor?"

"That was Winston," said Bob. "He confessed that he was trying to scare us out of staying at Hitchcock Manor. The boarded over dumbwaiter on the third floor was really another secret door that Winston had made himself. He used a rope to lower himself down to the cellar where he could change out of his 'ghost' disguise without being seen."

The great producer looked shrewdly at Bob. "Since the case against Winston the butler seems to be wrapped up quite neatly ---- answer me this, young Andrews: just what was cousin Jebediah O'Connell doing roaming about the grounds at all hours of the day?"

Bob grinned and looked sheepish. "We forgot to take into account that he was the groundskeeper of the estate. That was his job to make sure the landscaping was tended to and the weeds in the garden were pulled. But there actually was another reason he spent so much time out there."

Mr. Clarke looked at Bob with raised eyebrows. "And what would that be?" he asked.

"Jebediah O'Connell was secretly in love with the maid, Julia!" crowed Pete. "Cousin Jeb never did trust Winston. He was constantly watching the butler's every move, trying to expose him for the fraud he was!"

"Ah, true love can be found in the strangest of places," commented Mr. Clarke, shaking his head. "And does Cousin

Jeb's affection for Julia Abernathy remain shrouded in secrecy?"

Jupiter grinned. "No. He told her. But they are going to wait until Julia can get her marriage to Winston, I mean, Mortimer, annulled before they start courting each other."

"Fine. Fine," chuckled Reginald Clarke. "That brings us to that most curious of couples; Timothy and Stella Fitchhorn. A most unlikely duo by all outward appearances."

"Yes sir," Jupiter nodded. "Of course, they were using aliases too. Their real names are Nicholas J. West and Marcia Brandel. And they're not even married!"

"They work as a team," he explained. "Together they have bilked people all over Europe and America out of millions of dollars. They saw the Hitchcock inheritance as the ultimate challenge. However, they found they weren't as talented at solving riddles as they were at smooth talking and conning people with forged documents."

"They needed us to solve the riddles for them!" said Pete. "They were expecting money or gold as the treasure, but Duke Antony and the London police arrested them before they could find out different!"

Reginald Clarke laughed heartily. "I imagine they will be doing some hard time as well. I certainly hope they do not have adjoining jail cells. Their constant arguing would upset the rest of the prisoners!"

The boys all laughed at the idea.

"I take it you arranged with Prince Djaro of Varania to have Duke Antony summon the London police to the Hitchcock estate."

"Yes sir," Jupiter confirmed. "Duke Antony and the police left London about twenty minutes after Ben and I left. However, they were slowed down considerably by the strong thunderstorm. That's why Winston had a chance to get the drop on us with his gun, which, by the way, turned out to be a simple pellet gun. Regardless, I wasn't expecting that, but I wasn't worried either."

"I was sure worried when I saw Duke Antony dressed up as the ghost!" cried Pete.

"Indeed," agreed Mr. Clarke. "Another arrangement between you and the Duke?" he asked Jupiter.

"Yes sir. At that point I was almost certain the 'ghost' was

Winston. Jebediah's background check at Interpol had come up clean, yet Winston's had produced several pages of criminal activity."

"Pete had gotten the best look at the ghost. According to his description, Timothy Fitchhorn was too big to be the ghost, and his wife was too short. So, feeling confident that it was Winston disguising himself as old Molly, I had Duke Antony stop at a costume shop before he left for Hitchcock Manor to pick up a dress, wig, face-paint and noose. That's why he was twenty minutes behind Ben and I."

"A taste of his own medicine," laughed the great producer. "You certainly have a flair for the dramatic, young Jones."

"That's what I had in mind, sir," agreed Jupiter with a pleased expression. "But, as it says in Bob's notes, I didn't expect to see both Winston and Jebediah soaking wet when I arrived at the house. Clearly, someone was outside in the garden as Ben and I pulled up the drive. I thought I might be mistaken about Winston until I checked his shoes and saw they were obviously muddy."

"An astute observation that proved to be his undoing," said Mr. Clarke. "It seems every loose end has been tied up. But tell me, what's to become of Hitch's final motion picture, 'THE SHORT NIGHT'?"

Pete fielded this question. "Patricia has said that she will use some of the money she inherited to independently finance the completion and release of the film, with all the proceeds going to charity. And she wanted to know if you'd serve as technical adviser!"

"Me?" said Reginald Clarke in surprise. "I would be most honored to work on one last Hitchcock picture," he said solemnly. "Most honored, indeed."

The boys were just about ready to leave when Reginald Clarke spoke up. "Not so fast," he boomed, a playful gleam in his eyes. "There is one more question that needs addressed!"

"W-what is that, Mr. Clarke?" said Pete.

"What of Molly Thibidoux," he asked, grinning at the boys. "Duke Antony claims Winston screamed in terror before he saw him in his 'ghostly' disguise. Does that mean her disembodied spirit actually does wander the great halls of Hitchcock Manor?"

Jupiter looked offended. "Of course not," he said stubbornly.

“There are a great number of mirrors and pictures lining the walls of Hitchcock Manor. Winston must have seen the Duke’s ‘ghostly’ reflection in a mirror. There are no such things as ghosts ---- no matter what Winston or Pete tell you!”

Reginald Clarke roared with laughter. “Splendid! Well, each of you are entitled to your own convictions as to the validity of the paranormal! In any case, it was a fine mystery worthy of the master of suspense himself. Indeed, I’m certain Alfred Hitchcock would be pleased to know that you not only found his buried treasure, but captured three notorious criminals in the process!”

The boys glowed at the great producer’s praise, then thanked him for his time. As The Three Investigators filed out of his office, Reginald Clarke leaned back in his chair with a slight smile. Quite a thrilling yarn, he thought to himself ---- “The Mystery of the Hitchcock Inheritance.” Quite thrilling indeed.

A Final Word from Reginald Clarke

I AM COMPELLED to add a few words of postscript to this narrative in order to make clear to the faithful readers of The Three Investigators my position within their adventures.

They did, indeed, ask me to introduce this case for them, as well as others that came their way after the untimely death of their friend and mentor, Alfred Hitchcock. However, as I was about to begin production on a big-budget historical drama at the time, I had to regretfully decline for the moment. You have my word that I fully intended to fill the rather large shoes of Mr. Hitchcock, if fate and circumstance hadn't played its hand.

As it turned out, the boys soon met another great man of mystery, the author and screenwriter Hector Sebastian, on one of their very next cases. The lads had clearly found their new mentor, and so I humbly stepped aside.

The fallout of this tumultuous time in the career of The Three Investigators is this: several exciting cases involving myself and others have fallen between the cracks, never to be published or read ---- until now! The boys hope you enjoy these 'hidden treasures,' and have assured me that there will be more on the way!

REGINALD CLARKE