

CHAPTER 1

There were four of us – George, Harris, myself and Montmorency. We were in my room talking about our medical **weaknesses**.

Harris said he **occasionally** felt dizzy, and George said he often felt dizzy too. With me, it was my liver that was the problem. I had read the symptoms listed on a **leaflet**, and I had them all. It's very interesting that whenever I read about a disease, I discover that I have the disease myself. The symptoms **correspond** exactly with what I am feeling. I now felt certain that my liver was not right. I had all the symptoms but, most **obviously**, I was suffering from tiredness. Even as a little boy, I had suffered from tiredness, while the adults around me **merely** said that I was lazy. Of course, I didn't know it was my liver then, and I received no treatment, except for a hit round the head. Surprisingly, this was more effective than a whole bottle of pills.

weakness (noun) the state of not being strong

occasionally (adverb) sometimes, from time to time

leaflet (noun) a piece of paper that gives you information

correspond (verb) to be similar to something

obviously (adverb) in a way that is easy to see or understand

merely (adverb) only, just



There were four of us – George, Harris, myself and Montmorency.

We sat for half an hour and described our illnesses to each other. I explained to George and Harris how I felt when I got up in the morning, and Harris told us how he felt when he went to bed. Then George gave a **vivid** description of how he felt in the night. You know George often believes he's ill although there's really nothing wrong with him.

At this point, Mrs Poppets knocked on the door to see if we were ready for supper. We smiled sadly and said we would try to swallow a bit. We sat at the table and toyed with a little steak and onions, and some apple tart. I must have been very weak, because after the first half hour, I took no interest in my food, and I didn't want any cheese.

Then, we refilled our glasses and continued the discussion about our health. We couldn't be sure what the problem was, but we all felt we were overworked.

'What we need is a rest,' said Harris.

'Rest and a complete change of **scenery**,' said George.

vivid (adjective) very clear, seeming like real-life

scenery (noun) a view of natural features such as mountains, forests and valleys

We considered going to the country, but Harris thought it would be too **remote**. We discussed **the pros and cons** of a sea trip, but I was concerned about seasickness. Then George said, ‘Let’s go up the river. We’ll get fresh air, and exercise and quiet. There’ll be changing scenery, so we won’t get bored, and the hard work will make us eat and sleep well.’

‘Be careful, George,’ said Harris. ‘I don’t think you should do something that will make you sleep more than you already do! There are only twenty-four hours in a day. If you sleep any more, you might as well be dead.’

‘Good idea, George,’ I said.

The only one who didn’t like the idea was Montmorency. ‘But there’s nothing for me to do,’ he said. ‘I don’t like scenery; you won’t stop if I see a rat and you might throw me in the water. I think it’s a silly idea.’

But it was three against one, and we decided to start out the following Saturday. We pulled out the maps and made a plan.

‘Let’s camp out,’ said George. ‘It will be so wild and free.’

remote (adjective) far away

the pros and cons (idiom) the advantages and disadvantages of something

We closed our eyes and pictured the **peaceful** river. Our little boat will gently float to the **bank** while water birds fly overhead. We'll put up our tent and prepare a simple evening meal, have a drink and a chat and watch the moon above.

'What about when it rains?' said Harris.

Harris has no imagination, but, in this case, he was right. Imagine it's evening. You're wet through, and there's water in the boat. You find a place to land and pull the tent out into the rain. Everything is **damp**. It's difficult enough to put up a tent in dry weather, but in wet, the task becomes impossible. The tent is **soaked** and heavy, and it falls on you and makes you mad. The rain is pouring **steadily** down all the time.

We decided to camp out on fine nights and stay in a hotel when it was wet, or when we wanted a change.

Montmorency approved of this idea. Montmorency looks like an innocent and helpful little dog, but I've paid for about twelve chickens that he's killed, and I've dragged him out of a hundred and fourteen street fights. He loves to make friends with a

peaceful (adjective) quiet and calm; pleasant

bank (noun) the side of a river, lake or sea

damp (adjective) slightly wet

soaked (adjective) very wet

steadily (adverb) not changing; staying at a similar rate

VOCABULARY QUIZZES

Quiz-1

Complete the sentences with the phrasal verbs/idioms below.

make a fool of myself

give it a miss

the pros and cons

in advance

get rid of

put up in charge

in silence

head back

cut like a knife

1. Sorry, I forgot my swimsuit. I think I'll just
2. We booked the flight tickets four months to get them cheaper.
3. We argued again, so we drove home
4. I am not a good singer, so I didn't sing at the party because I didn't want to
5. If you want to your old clothes, you can take them to the recycling bin at the superstore.
6. We worked as a team to our tents before it got dark.
7. We'd better home before it is too late.
8. The bitter wind blew. It as we walked up the mountainside.
9. We are thinking of moving to London, but we don't know of living there.
10. Can I talk to the person here? I want to make a complaint.

Quiz-2

Complete the sentences with the words below.

pessimistic

remote

decline

peaceful

soaked

furious

spacious

yelled

1. We want a bigger home with a living room.
2. She was when she saw that the dog was digging up her plants.
3. He lives on a island which is far from the mainland.
4. I accidentally stepped in a puddle, and my shoes and socks got
5. He says 'no' to everything and makes excuses. He is so
6. The demonstration for the environment was
The police made no arrests.
7. I had to their invitation to the wedding as I would be abroad on a business trip.
8. My father at me as I played on the computer for so long.