CHAPTER ONE

A NEW MYSTERY

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

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

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

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

Peter and Jack stared at her.

‘Are you coming in?’ Janet said. ‘Or have you forgotten that this is an emergency meeting? You’re
not scared of spiders, are you?’

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

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

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

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

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

Jack gasped. There was always time for snacks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘What’s the password?’ asked Peter.

Peter was getting on Jack’s nerves.

‘ARMPIT!’ he shouted.

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

But before Peter could say anything about the Armpit thing, Colin said, ‘Scotland! The password is Scotland.’

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

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

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

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

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

But before Janet could answer there was scratching at the shed door and George almost jumped out of his skin because Janet had just finished telling
Colin about the whole giant web thing.

Everyone froze and listened to the creepy scratching sound.

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

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

George gulped.

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

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

‘Scoooootland,’ another voice said. It was Barbara.

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

But Peter wasn’t laughing. He had his arms crossed and looked mega annoyed, and everyone knew that it wasn’t just because Pam and Barbara
were late. It was because they were wearing fancy
dress to an official Secret Seven meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘When I went up to my room, I got a strange
feeling the minute I opened the door,’ he said. ‘I just knew that someone had been in there while I’d been gone.’

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

‘And then I found this.’

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

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

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

This was real.

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

Because it was a skull!
NO ONE had any idea where the skull could have come from or why it had been in Peter’s bedroom.

Colin inspected the skull closely.

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

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

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

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

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

‘Maybe it’s not dirt,’ said Jack. ‘Maybe it’s blood!’
THE PETER SKULL

Pam gasped and grabbed Barbara’s hand.
Janet wiped the skull with her sleeve. ‘I think it says Peter,’ she said.
‘This is too weird,’ said Jack. ‘I need a biscuit.’
Jack shoved a whole ginger biscuit in his mouth and then passed the plate to Pam but she said that she didn’t want one because the Peter Skull was making her feel a bit sick.
All of a sudden George drew in a huge breath. ‘What if it’s a warning?’
‘What do you mean?’ said Peter.
George swallowed the rest of his biscuit with a loud gulp. ‘I think someone might have put the skull there as a threat. They might be trying to warn you off something.’
Just then they heard a noise outside.
‘Did anyone else hear that?’ Jack whispered.
Everyone nodded.
Peter got up and looked out of the peephole. But he couldn’t see anyone.

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Then there was another sound. It sounded like it was coming from the roof.

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

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

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

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

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

Someone burst out laughing.

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

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

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

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

Jack was furious. ‘Get down NOW!’ he said. ‘Or I’ll tell Mum you were climbing on Peter and Janet’s mum’s property and you’ll be grounded for life!’

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

‘Yeah, Peter! We’re only having a laugh!’ said Binkie.

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

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

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

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

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

‘Did YOU put that skull in Peter’s bedroom?’ Jack shouted. ‘How did you even get in?’
Mystery of the Skull

Susie smirked. ‘Mum was watering their plants while they were away. I might have gone along to help.’

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

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

Jack stopped and looked at Peter.

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

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

‘Where did you find it?’ asked Peter.

‘How much is it worth to you?’ said Susie.

Jack marched back over. ‘I’ll tell you exactly how much it’s worth. Either you tell us where you found it now or I’ll tell Mum you sneaked into Peter’s
room and left a skull there. I’ll also tell her what really happened to the Hoover. How about that?"

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

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

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

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

‘And are they?’ asked Peter.

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

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

‘We’re not!’ said Binkie. ‘Someone’s been digging there. Go and see for yourself!’
AS SOON as the Secret Seven got close to the hotel
grounds, Peter hissed, ‘Get down!’ and everyone
dropped to the ground, just like he had trained
them to do.

‘What is it? What’s going on?’ whispered Jack.

Peter lay flat in the long grass and pointed ahead.
There was a figure in the distance.

‘Someone’s digging,’ he whispered back. ‘We need
to get closer to get a better look. Follow me.’

The Secret Seven followed Peter carefully,
staying as low to the ground as they could. But
then Scamper started barking and ran through
a gap in the wire fencing straight towards the
digging man.
SOMEONE SUSPICIOUS

‘Scamper! Come back!’ Peter cried. But Scamper kept on running so Janet ran after him.
‘Is this your dog trespassing on my land?’
That’s when Janet noticed that the digging man was actually a woman with a weird accent, and also that she was absolutely covered in mud.

All of a sudden the muddy woman rushed towards Scamper but Janet got there first. ‘What does he have there? What’s in his mouth?’ the woman demanded.

‘It’s just a stick,’ said Janet.
Peter arrived and apologised about Scamper and asked if she was the new owner of the hotel. And that’s when the woman completely changed.

‘Oh, yes! Yes! I *am* the new owner,’ she said with a massive grin. ‘My husband and I have come all the way from the USA to be here. We just love the English countryside!’

‘My uncle’s got a new job at your restaurant. He says there’s loads of people booked to come to
your big opening tomorrow. No wonder! Everyone in the village was very excited when they saw all the adverts for it.’

The muddy woman looked flustered. ‘Yes. Well. Um. We may have to close the restaurant for a few days after the opening. There’s still a bit of decorating to do.’

But then the muddy woman noticed everyone staring at the giant hole next to her. ‘I’ve just been doing a little weeding,’ she said.

The Secret Seven watched as she moved herself in front of the hole so that they couldn’t see it properly. ‘Better get back to it!’ she said.

The woman stood there, giving them a weird, fake-looking smile.

It was obvious she wanted them gone, so Peter said goodbye and they left.

But Janet didn’t trust the muddy woman one bit. She didn’t like the way she’d rushed towards Scamper like that and the look she’d had on her face.
SOMEONE SUSPICIOUS

Janet turned round to take one last look at the woman as they walked away.
The muddy woman wasn’t smiling any more. And she wasn’t weeding either.
She was staring at them as they walked off.
And she did not look happy.