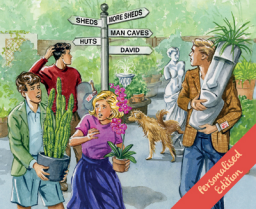


Enid Blyton

**FIVE LOSE
DAD IN THE
GARDEN CENTRE
—FOR DAVID—**



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GARDEN CENTRE**

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Text by
Bruno Vincent

Hope you enjoy the book
Love Rebecca xx

Enid Blyton for Grown-Ups

Quercus

First published in Great Britain in 2017 by

Quercus Editions Ltd
Carnellie House
50 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0BE

An Hachette UK company

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 78648 755 1

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Cover illustration by Ruth Palmer

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Signature House, 23 Vaughan Road, Haverley, AE5 4PL.

Printed in the UK.

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CHAPTER ONE

An Unexpected Visit

It was a beautiful summer's day in Dorset. The sun was high and hot in the clear sky, making holidaymakers reach gratefully for their hats, dark glasses and sunscreen. Over the cliff-top where Kirrin Cottage was located, though, a keen wind whipped away the worst of the heat, leaving only the glorious benefits of sunshine.

'Oh, darling!' came Aunt Fanny's voice. 'Look who's here!'

Uncle Quentin nearly fell off his stool. Unexpected visitors to Kirrin Cottage – at least ones he was supposed to talk to – were unheard of. He had seen to this by making sure that anyone who came to the door expecting a cheery greeting left under no illusion that they were anything but a monstrous interruption to his routine. He huffed and sighed and looked at his watch until visitors were provoked beyond endurance and beat

FIVE LOSE DAD IN THE GARDEN CENTRE – FOR DAVID

their retreat, delivering apologies that he mercilessly ignored.

So it had been these many years past. And so would it be now!

What made Quentin's heart lurch, however, was the possibility of Fanny coming into his office (against strictest instructions) to find him not there. To find, in fact, the doors of the dusty old wardrobe in the corner open and the old coats thrust aside, disclosing a ladder which passed into a shaft in the floor. A shaft up which shone the bright lights of a top-class modern laboratory, and from which also drifted a few wisps of sweet-smelling pipe smoke.

Then the questions would begin. Begin? They might never stop.

'Quentin?' called Aunt Fanny again. 'Are you in there? Oh, he's fallen asleep again . . .'

Her voice was relayed through a PA, high on the laboratory wall, from the microphone he had secreted outside his office door.

Quentin switched off the oxyacetylene torch he had been using and placed it back in its holder, then threw his pipe on to the nearest surface and rushed to the hatch. No



*'Oh, darling!' came Aunt Fanny's voice.
'Looks who's here!'*

time to use the motorized ladder lift of his own invention – elegant and comfortable, perhaps, but much too slow. He pulled himself up rung over rung until he lurched into the office, slammed the doors of the wardrobe shut and leant against them, panting.

‘Quentin!’ Fanny said insistently. ‘I’m coming in!’

He saw the door handle start to turn, and checked himself over. He brushed some steel fibres off his chest, took a deep gulp of air to try and regulate his breathing, and popped a mint in his mouth. At the last moment, as the door came open, he suddenly remembered the plastic goggles he was wearing, and whipped them off with a gasp of terror, stuffing them down the back of his waistband.

‘There you are,’ Fanny said. ‘Didn’t you hear me calling?’

‘Oh, er, did I? I’m not sure,’ Quentin said, assuming the air of scholarly abstraction that he generally wore to get away with not paying attention. He plumped himself down into his leather chair and then stiffened with discomfort as the goggles stuck into his lower back.

‘Sorry,’ he said. ‘I was, er . . .’ He waved at his desk vaguely, presuming that this gesture alone vouchsafed that

End of Sample.