



THE THIEF OF POSH HILL MANSION

The man walked quickly down the dark slippery cobbles. The moon had disappeared behind a cloud and the lantern he was carrying only just pierced the darkness. He was heading to Posh Hill Mansion, home to the fabulously wealthy Lady Windermere and her husband, Professor Jack Windermere. The figure shivered. It was a cold night and even though he was wearing a thick blue cloak the cold still hit him like an arrow. This one was going to be a big job. A big, difficult job. He was scared. He would be in big trouble if he was caught. A large building loomed in front of him. Clearly it was old. Clearly the architect had gone flat out but it was too vulgar for his taste. He reached into the folds of his cloak and withdrew a key. He placed the key in the lock and the door creaked open. He took a deep breath and stepped into the house.

In a house called no.13 Flub Street Sir Barnaby Blankwhistle was sitting in a red chair reading a thick book titled: Snobs, A History. The chair had the lustrous sheen of velvet and there was fire roaring in the great. The ring of a telephone broke the silence. Sir Barnaby lifted the receiver and his eyes widened as he heard the message.

"Come George," he said to the short freckled boy standing in front of him as he threw a tweed cloak over his shoulders and fixed the silver clasp. "We're paying a visit to Posh Hill Mansion."

Rap Tap Tap. A steel lion head doorknocker hit against the polished oak door. Sir Barnaby and George were quickly admitted by a sour looking butler in a black tailcoat.

"Ah, Sir Barnaby. Please come in," he said "We have everybody gathered in the drawing room," Blankwhistle stepped in. The butler turned around and guided them into a cosy looking room containing three very different people. One was an old and greying lady in a peacock green satin dress. Around her neck hung an emerald necklace. The second was tall and distinguished with a curling moustache standing protectively beside her. He had an arrogant, obnoxious look on his face. Behind him stood a quiet looking man wearing a doctor's white coat. He and all the others held the same expression on their faces. An expression of anxiety.

"I am here on a very serious matter," Sir Barnaby began, "Someone in this room stole no less than £20,000."

"And 48 pence!" George piped up

"Thank you George," Barnaby continued frostily. "Someone in this room stole no less than £20,000 from Lady Windermere." The woman in the dress let of a soft groan. "I will begin my investigations immediately," and with that he walked out of the room into the oak panelled corridor. His first stop? The master bedroom.

The master bedroom was a stately room with a large four poster bed covered in crimson velvet and gold silk. In a corner of the room was a small table made of polished mahogany that glinted in the light. On it stood many strange trinkets collected by Lady Windermere and Professor Jack on their travels abroad. A gas lamp flickered beside an intricate model ship in a bottle. Blue checked curtains hung over a gargantuan window from which you could see many houses in the distance. The most

intriguing item of all was a small mother of pearl mirror. It gleamed and shimmered in the sunlight. Despite its beauty Blankwhistle was sure that it was hiding something. He was right.

Blankwhistle had found his first clue to the case of [named by George] the Old Ladies Cash. He ran back into the drawing room holding a half-eaten cheese sandwich. He had discovered it at the master bedroom behind that shimmering mirror.

"Sir Barnaby arrest the butler at once!" boomed the moustached man. "Yes you're right Jack darling. Arrest him at once!" Cried Lady Windermere.

"Whatever for?" George began.

"Well everybody knows that cheese sandwiches are Mr Smegley's favourite food!" Professor Jack retorted.

"Well I'm afraid that a cheese sandwich isn't enough proof just yet but I've made my list of suspects: Professor Jack, Mr Smegley and Doctor Silence." Began Blankwhistle. He was greeted with an uproar from Jack and Smegley but Silence stayed silent. "Now if you'll excuse me, I'm returning to my home with George."

It was a cold night and Sir Barnaby was tossing and turning in his bed; his head was full of clues like the sandwich. Who would eat a sandwich at 10 o'clock in the evening? He thought. Maybe this clue wasn't all it seemed to be. He tried to settle down and relax and soon his mind was drifting away. Blankwhistle's eyes snapped open. He looked wearily at the polished mahogany clock on the mantelpiece. It was 9 am. Time for some breakfast before going back to Posh Hill Mansion. The enticing smell of eggs and bacon wafted down from the kitchen and reached his nose. Quickly he dressed into his usual waistcoat and black trousers before striding down the corridor to the kitchen.

Half an hour later he had arrived at Posh Hill with George at his heels. As he entered the drawing room a strange smell hit him. Then Professor Jack appeared. "Ah Sir Barnaby, what do you think of my new aftershave? Don't you think it's heavenly?"

"It's certainly pungent," Barnaby admitted. "Anyway I must go and investigate the master bedroom," and before Jack knew it he was gone. In the bedroom Sir Barnaby was striding up and down the carpet sniffing the air. "There's a peculiar scent in here George. I'm sure I've smelled it before but I can't put my finger on it." He was saying.

"I can smell it too!" George replied "It does smell familiar doesn't it," he pondered. "I wonder where we've smelt it before." They continued to search the room until they found a stethoscope. Sir Barnaby just stared at it for a while then put it on the bed. "I think that I've just found our second clue to this mystery," he said slowly. "I think it's time to return to the drawing room," he announced suddenly and began to walk down the marble staircase leading to the drawing room.

"I believe that I've solved this case," came a voice. All heads turned towards the small boy in the corner of the room. "I believe that I've solved this case," George repeated. Before anyone could say anything he began. "When we arrived yesterday we found a cheese sandwich lying on the floor of the crime scene so everybody suspected Mr Smegley but then I thought ; why would somebody eat a cheese sandwich in the middle of the night? It didn't make sense so I thought either he had eaten

the sandwich before the crime had been committed or someone had put it there to make it look like Mr Smegley had stolen the money. The next clue came just a few minutes ago when we found a stethoscope in the bedroom so I thought maybe it was Doctor Silence but I knew he comes every week to check on Lady Windermere so he could have just forgotten it. The last clue was the most perplexing of all: the strange smell in the bedroom. We knew we'd smelled it before but couldn't think where when all of a sudden it hit me! It was Professor Jack's aftershave." He stopped with his blue eyes gleaming.

"So who did it?" Lady Windermere asked.

"Isn't it obvious? It was Professor Jack! He put the sandwich there to frame Mr Smegley!" George cried. With that Jack ran to the door but Dr Silence blocked it. "Why did you do it Jack?" Lady Windermere cried. Her eyes were streaming and her face was crumpled.

"I didn't have any money," he said miserably. "I wanted to leave you but without any money I couldn't so I stole it. I knew it was wrong but I couldn't help myself."

"Mr Smegley go and call the police." Sir Barnaby said and turned to George "Well done George. A difficult case solved."

By Elinor Baker AGE 11

Primary 7 Port Ellen Primary School

Islay

PICTURE IS CATALOGUE NUMBER 65