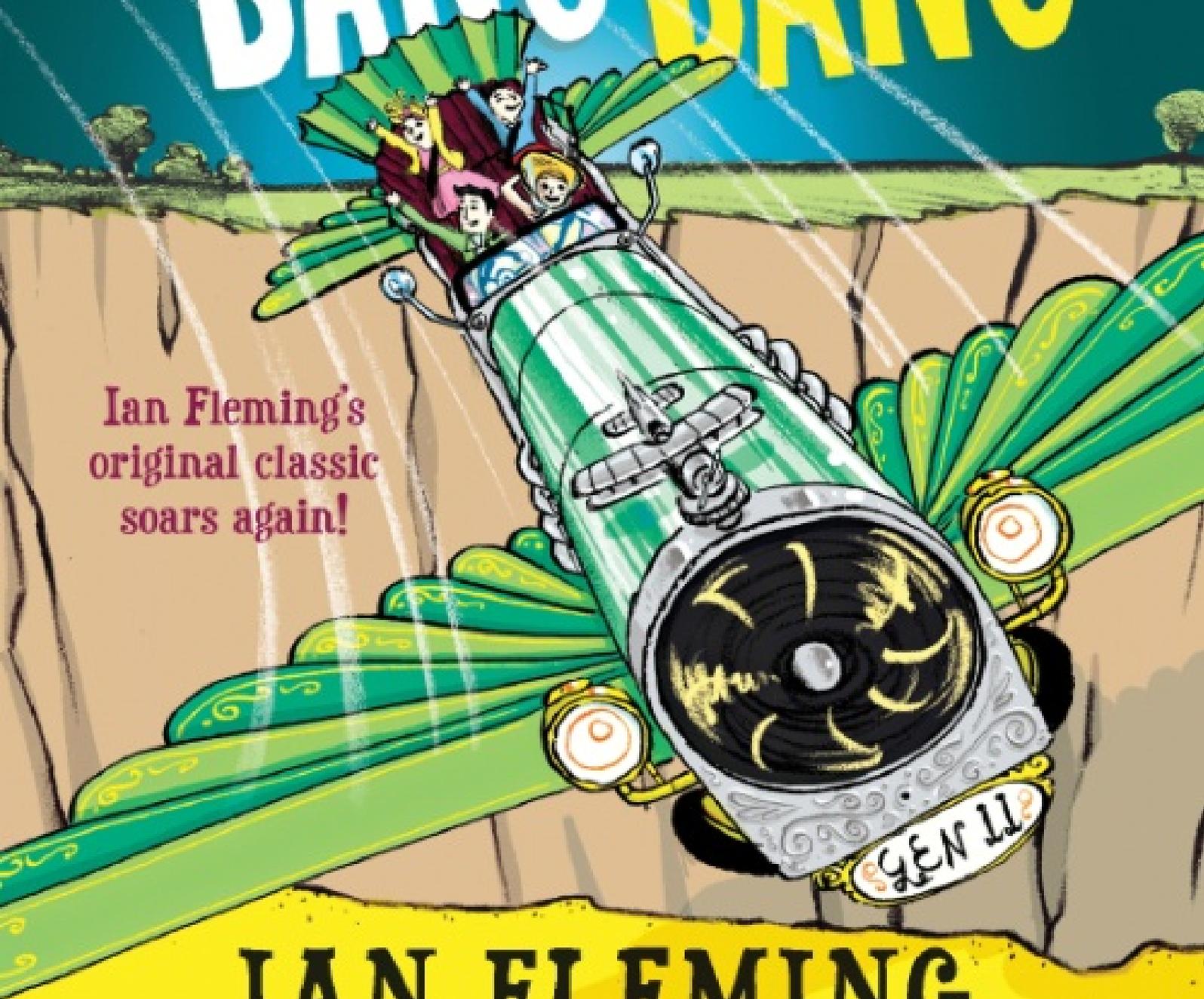


CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG

Ian Fleming's
original classic
soars again!

IAN FLEMING

illustrated by **JOE BERGER**



**CHITTY
CHITTY
BANG BANG**

The
Magical
Car

Ian Fleming

illustrated by **Joe Berger**



CANDLEWICK PRESS

These stories are affectionately dedicated to the memory of the original CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG, built in 1920 by Count Zborowski on his estate near Canterbury.

She had a pre-1914 war, chain-drive, seventy-five-horsepower Mercedes chassis, in which was installed a six-cylinder Maybach aero-engine — the military type used by the Germans in the Zeppelins.

Four vertical overhead valves per cylinder were operated by exposed push-rods and rockers from a camshaft on each side of the crank case, and two Zenith carburettors were attached, one at each end of a long induction pipe.

She had a grey steel body, with an immense polished bonnet eight feet in length, and weighed over five tons.

In 1921, she won the Hundred MPH Short Handicap at Brooklands at 101 miles per hour, and in 1922, again at Brooklands, the Lightning Short Handicap. But in that year, she was involved in an accident* and the Count never raced her again.

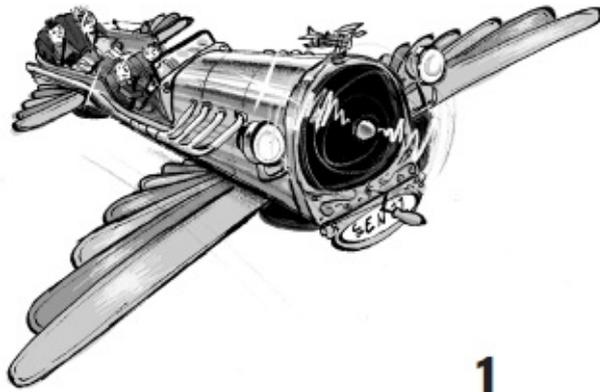
I. F.

** This is a polite way of putting it. In fact, CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG suddenly went mad with rage about something and, with the Count at the wheel, got out of control and charged through the timing-hut, very fast, backwards!*



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1

“Crackpots”

Most motor-cars are conglomerations (this is a long word for bundles) of steel and wire and rubber and plastic, and electricity and oil and petrol and water, and the toffee papers you pushed down the crack in the back seat last Sunday. Smoke comes out of the back of them and horn-squawks out of the front, and they have white lights like big eyes in front, and red lights behind. And that is about that — just motor-cars, tin boxes on wheels for running about in.

But some motor-cars — mine, for instance, and perhaps yours — are different. If you get to like them and understand them, if you are kind to them and don't scratch their paint or bang their doors, if you fill them up and top them up and pump them up when they need it, if you keep them clean and polished and out of the rain and snow as much as possible, you will find, you *may* find, that they become almost like persons — more than just ordinary persons: *magical persons!*

You don't believe me? All right then! You just read about this car I'm going to tell you about! I believe you can guess its name already — her name, I should say. And then see if you don't agree with me. *All* motor-cars aren't just conglomerations of machinery and fuel. Some are.

Once upon a time there was a family called Pott. There was the father, who had been in the Royal Navy, Commander Caractacus Pott. (You may think that Caractacus sounds quite a funny name, but in fact the original Caractacus was the British chieftain who was a sort of Robin Hood in AD 48 and led an English army against the Roman invaders. I expect since then there have been plenty of other Caractacuses, but I don't know anything about them.) Then there was the mother, Mimsie Pott, and a pair of eight-year-old twins — Jeremy, who was a black-haired boy, and Jemima, who was a golden-haired girl — and they lived in a wood beside a big lake with an island in the middle. On the other side of the lake, M20, the big motorway on the Dover road, swept away towards the sea. So they had the best of both worlds — lovely woods for catching beetles and finding birds' eggs, with a lake for newts and tadpoles, and a fine big road close by so that they could go off and see the world if they wanted to.

Well, almost, that is. But the truth of the matter was that they hadn't got enough

money between them to buy a car. All the money they had went to necessities — food and heat and light and clothes and all those boring things that one doesn't really notice but families have to have. There was only a little left over for birthday and Easter and Christmas presents and occasional surprise outings — the things that *really* matter.

But the Potts were a happy family who all enjoyed their lives and since they weren't in the least sorry for themselves, or sorry that they hadn't got a motor-car to go whirling about in, we needn't be sorry for them either.

Now, Commander Caractacus Pott was an explorer and an inventor, and that may have been the reason why the Pott family was not very rich. Exploring places and inventing things can be very exciting indeed, but it is only very seldom that, in your explorations, you discover a really rare butterfly or animal or insect or mineral or plant that people will pay money to see, and practically never that you discover real treasure, like in books — gold bars and diamonds and jewels in an old oak chest.



As for inventions, much the same troubles apply. People all over the world, in America, Russia, China, Japan, let alone England and Scotland and Wales and Ireland, are inventing or trying to invent things all the time — every kind of thing from rockets that fly to the moon to ways of making India-rubber balls bounce higher. Everything, everything, everything is being invented or improved all the time by somebody somewhere — whether by teams of scientists in huge factories and laboratories or by lonely men sitting and just thinking in tiny workshops without many tools.

Just such a solitary inventor was Commander Caractacus Pott, and I am ashamed to say that because he was always dreaming of impossible inventions and adventures and explorations in the remotest parts of the earth, he was generally known in the neighbourhood as Commander Crackpott! You may think that's rude, and so it is, but Commander Pott was a humorous man and he knew his own shortcomings very well, so when he heard that that was his nickname in the neighbourhood he was not at all

cross. He just roared with laughter and said, “I’ll show ’em!” and disappeared into his workshop and didn’t come out for a whole day and a night.

During that time, smoke came out of the workshop chimney and there were a lot of delicious smells, and when the children put their ears to the locked door, they could hear mysterious bubblings and cooking-poppings, if you know what I mean, but nothing else at all.



When Commander Pott came out, he was so hungry that first of all he ate four fried eggs and bacon and drank a huge pot of coffee, and then he asked Mimsie to call Jeremy and Jemima, who were getting in an awful mess digging out a water-rat's hole on the bank of the lake.

(They never caught the water-rat. He dug down faster than they did.)

The twins came and stood side by side looking at their father, wondering what his invention had been this time. (Commander Pott's inventions were sometimes dull things like collapsible coat-hangers, sometimes useless things like edible gramophone records, and sometimes clever things that just, only just, wouldn't work, like cubical potatoes — easy to slice and pack and peel but expensive to grow, each in its little iron box — and so on.) Commander Pott, looking very mysterious, dug in his pockets and produced a handful of what looked like round, coloured, sugar sweets, each a bit bigger than a marble, wrapped in paper. And, still looking mysterious, he chose a red one for Jeremy and a green one for Jemima and handed them over.



Well, sweets are always sweets, thought the children, even though they don't look very exciting, so they unwrapped them and were just about to pop them in their mouths when Commander Pott cried, "Wait! Look at them first — very, very carefully!"

The children looked at the sweets and Commander Pott said, "What do you see? What's different about them?"



And Jeremy and Jemima said with one voice, or almost, "They've got two small holes drilled through the middle of them."

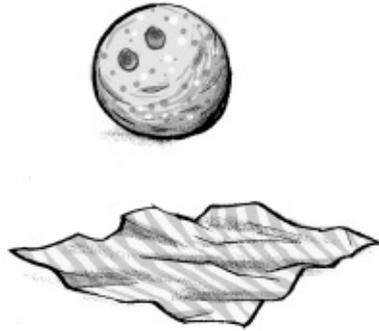
Commander Pott nodded solemnly. "Now suck them."

So Jeremy and Jemima popped the sweets into their mouths and sucked busily away, looking at each other with raised eyebrows, as much as to say, "What do you notice? And what do you taste? Mine tastes of strawberry. Mine tastes of peppermint." And both pairs of eyes seemed to say, "They're just sweets, round boiled sweets, and our tongues can feel the holes in them. Otherwise they're just like any other sweets."



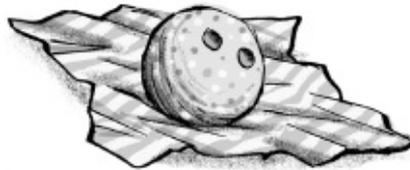
But Commander Pott, who could easily see what they were thinking, suddenly held up his hand. "Now stop sucking, both of you. Twiddle the sweets round with your tongues until they're held between your teeth, with the twin holes pointing outwards, then open your lips and BLOW!"

Well, of course, the children laughed so much watching each other's faces that they nearly swallowed the sweets, but finally, by turning their backs on each other, they managed to compose themselves and fix the sweets between their teeth.



And then they BLEW!

And do you know what? A wonderful shrill whistle came out, almost like a toy steam-engine. The children were so excited that they went on whistling until Commander Pott sternly told them to stop. He held up his hand. “Now go on sucking until I tell you to whistle again,” and he took out his watch and carefully observed the minute hand.



“Now!”

This time Jeremy and Jemima didn’t laugh so much and managed to get their sweets, which of course were much smaller than before, between their teeth, and they BLEW like billy-ho.

This time, because their sucking had hollowed out the holes still more, the whistle was a deep one, like one of the new diesel trains going into a tunnel, and they found that they could play all sorts of tricks, like changing the tone by blocking up one hole with their tongues and half closing their lips so as to make a buzzing whistle, and lots of other variations.

But then, what with their sucking and their blowing, the bit between the two holes collapsed and the sweets made one last deep hoot and then crunched, as all sweets do in the end, into little bits.

Jeremy and Jemima both jumped up and down with excitement at Commander Pott’s invention and begged for more. Then Commander Pott gave them each a little bag full of the sweets and told them to go out into the garden and practise every whistling tune they could think up, as after lunch he was going to take them to Skrumshus Limited, the big sweet people at their local town, to give a demonstration to Lord Skrumshus, who owned the factory.

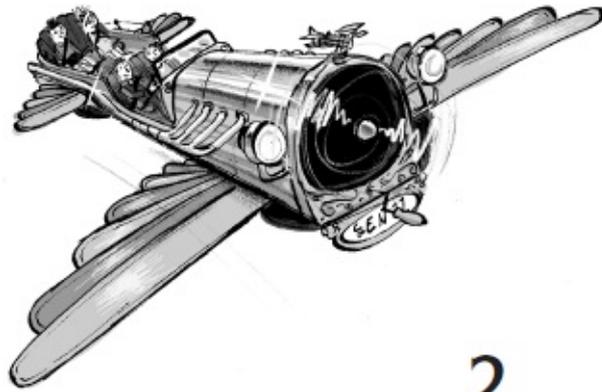
And as they ran out into the garden, Commander Pott called after them, “They’re called Crackpots — Crackpot Whistling Sweets. And you know what, my chickabiddies? They’re going to buy us a motor-car!”

But the children were already dancing away into the woods making every kind of whistle you can think of, at the same time sucking like mad at their delicious sweets. There really seemed to be something special about Commander Pott’s invention — just a little touch of genius.

Well, anyway, I can tell you this, Lord Skrumshus thought so. After he had heard Jeremy and Jemima whistling in his office, he sent them out into the factory and they danced around among the workers, sucking and whistling and handing out sweets from their packets, so that very soon they had all the workers in the factory sucking and whistling, and everyone laughed so much that all the Skrumshus sweet-machines came to a stop. Lord Skrumshus had to call Jeremy and Jemima away before they brought the whole production of Skrumshus sweets and chocolates to a grinding halt.

So Jeremy and Jemima went back into Lord Skrumshus's grand office, and there was their father being paid *one thousand pounds* by the Skrumshus company treasurer, and signing a paper which said he would get an additional one sixpence on every thousand Crackpot Whistling Sweets sold by Skrumshus Limited. Jeremy and Jemima didn't think that sounded like very much, but when I let you into a secret and tell you that Skrumshus Limited sell *five million* every year of just one of their sweets called Chock-a-Hoop, you can work out for yourself that perhaps, just *perhaps*, Commander Caractacus Pott wasn't making such a bad bargain after all.

So then everyone shook hands, and Lord Skrumshus gave Jeremy and Jemima each a big free box of samples of all the sweets he made. The three of them hurried off back to Mimsie to tell her the good news, and straight away the whole family hired a taxi and went to the bank to deposit the cheque for a thousand pounds and then — and *then* they all went off together to *buy a car!*



2

All Rusty and Mildewed

Now, I don't know if you've got it into your heads yet, but the Pott family wasn't a very conventional family — that is, they were all rather out of the ordinary. Even Mimsie must have been rather an adventurous sort of mother, or she wouldn't have married an explorer and inventor like Commander Caractacus Pott, R.N. (Retired), who had, as they say, no visible means of support — meaning he was someone who doesn't do regular work that brings in regular money, but depends on occasional windfalls from lucky explorations or inventions.

So when it came to buying a car, they were all determined that it shouldn't be just *any* car, but something a bit different from everyone else's — not one of those black-beetle saloon cars that look much the same back and front so that, in the distance, you don't know if they're coming or going, but something rather special, something rather adventurous.

Well, they hunted all that afternoon and all the next day. They looked at brand-new cars and they visited the second-hand showrooms, where smart salesmen offered Commander and Mrs. Pott cigarettes and Jeremy and Jemima sweets just to try and tempt them to buy. But Commander Pott knew pretty well all there is to know about cars, having been an engineer officer in the Navy and being an inventor as well, and one look under the bonnet and one trial, listening carefully to the sound of the engine, was generally enough for him — even if he didn't notice that the speedometer had been disconnected or that the chassis was bent because of some crash whose scratches and dents the salesman had carefully painted over. (You have to be very cautious buying *anything* second-hand. You never know how careful the last owner has been. And anyway, whatever the thing is, if it is in good order, why does the person want to get rid of it?)

And then at the end of the second day, they came to a broken-down little garage run by a once famous racing-driver. It was really only a big tin shed with a couple of grimy petrol pumps outside, and inside, the concrete floor was slippery with oil, and everywhere there were bits and pieces of old cars that the garage man had been tinkering with, really, as far as one could see, just for the fun of it.

But he was the sort of enthusiast Commander Pott always had a warm corner in

his heart for. The two of them went on talking for a long time while Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima, who were pretty tired by then, grew more and more impatient.

Suddenly they were surprised to see Commander Pott follow the garage man round to the back of his shed, where there was a long, low object hidden under a tarpaulin. The garage man looked Commander Pott and the family, each one, carefully up and down, and then he went to one end of the tarpaulin and slowly rolled it back.

Well, I can't tell you how disappointed Mimsie and the children were. From the way the garage man had behaved, they thought there must be some splendid treasure of a car under the tarpaulin. But what did they see? A wreck — that's all. Just the remains, rusty and broken and bent, of a very long, low, four-seater, open motor-car without a hood and with the green paint peeling off in strips.

"Well, there she is," said the garage man sadly. "She once knew every racing-track in Europe. In the old days there wasn't a famous driver in Britain who hadn't driven her at one time or another. She's still wearing England's racing green, as you can see — that was from early in the thirties. She's a twelve-cylinder, eight-litre, supercharged Paragon Panther. They only made one of them and then the firm went broke. This is the only one in the world. Doesn't look much, does she? I'm afraid she's due for the scrap-heap. Can't afford to go on giving her living space. They're coming to tow her away next week, as a matter of fact — take her to the dump, pick her up in a big grab and drop her between one of those giant hydraulic presses. One crunch and it just squashes them into a sort of square metal biscuit. Then she'll go to a smelting works to be melted down just for the raw metal. Seems a shame, doesn't it? You can almost see from her eyes — those big Marchal racing headlights — that she knows what's in store for her. But there it is. You can see the shape she's in, and it would need hundreds of pounds to get her on the road again — even supposing there was someone nowadays who could afford to run her."



Commander Pott was looking curiously excited. "Mind if I look her over?"

“Go ahead.” The garage man shook his head sadly.

“She’d appreciate a last look-over by someone like you who knows what real quality used to be.”

The whole family picked their way over and through the patches of oily ground. While Commander Pott looked under the bonnet, Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima prodded the once-beautiful soft leather upholstery (moths flew out!) and looked under the carpets, front and back (beetles scuttled about!), and examined the knobs and switches and dials on the dashboard (there were dozens of them, all rusty and mildewed) and tried the big old boa-constrictor horn that worked with an India-rubber bulb. But nothing happened except that a lot of dust blew out of the end into Commander Pott’s face as he bent over the engine, peering and tinkering. The children looked at Mimsie, and Mimsie looked back at them, and do you know what? They didn’t just dolefully shake their heads at each other. They all had the same look in their eyes. The look said, “This must once have been the most beautiful car in the world. If the engine’s more or less all right and if we all set to and scrubbed and painted and mended and polished, do you suppose we could put her back as she used to be? It wouldn’t be like having just one of those black beetles that the factories turn out in hundreds and thousands and that all look alike. We’d have a real jewel of a car, something to love and cherish and look after as if it was one of the family!”



Commander Pott took his face out from under the bonnet. He looked at them and they looked back at him, and he just turned to the garage man and said, “I’ll buy her. We all love her and we’ll make her as good as new. How much do you want for her?”

“Fifty pounds,” said the garage man. “She wouldn’t fetch much as scrap.”

Commander Pott counted out the money there and then, and said, “Thank you, and will you please have her towed along to my workshop just as soon as you can.”

And do you know? There were almost tears of happiness in the garage man’s eyes as he shook them all by the hand. As they climbed into their taxi to go off home, he said seriously, “Commander Pott, Mrs. Pott, Master Pott, and Miss Pott, you will never regret buying that car. She’s going to give you the time of your lives. You’ve saved her from the scrap-heap, and I’ll eat my hat — if I had a hat to eat — if she doesn’t repay you for what you’ve done today.” He was still waving happily after them when they

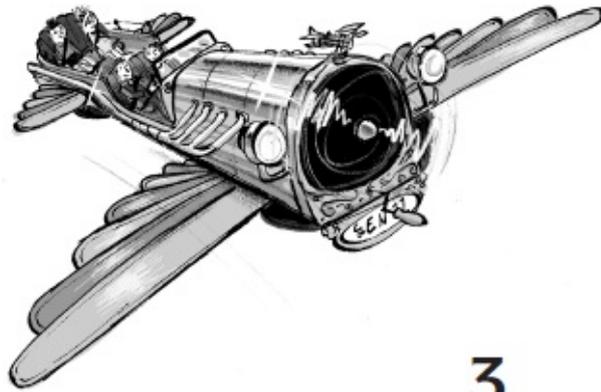
drove out of sight.

As they bowled along in their taxi, Jemima whispered to Jeremy in the front seat next to the driver, “Jeremy, did you notice something very mysterious about the old registration number that was hanging from the back of our car?”

“There was nothing mysterious about it,” said Jeremy scornfully. “It was GEN ELEVEN.”

“Yes,” said Jemima excitedly. “GEN II. Don’t you realize what that spells? *Genii* — like magical people, sort of spirits, like that story about the Bottle Imp by Robert Louis Stevenson that Mimsie read to us once.”

“Hum!” said Jeremy thoughtfully. “Hum! Hum! Hum!” and they sat silently, thinking this odd coincidence over, until they got home.



3

The Most Beautiful Car in the World

Well, the next day Jeremy and Jemima had to go off to boarding-school, so they never saw the arrival of the new car, or rather of the ruins of it, as it came bumping and crashing down the lane behind the tow truck, but Mimsie wrote and told them of how it disappeared at once into Commander Pott's workshop and how their father then locked himself inside with it and only emerged to eat and sleep.

For three months, the whole of the summer term, Commander Pott worked and worked secretly on the wreck of the old Paragon, and Mimsie said that much smoke came out of the chimney and often lights shone all night through the windows, and mysterious packages arrived from engineering factories all over England and disappeared into the workshop through the locked doors. Mimsie wrote that their father went through periods of gloom and impatience and frenzy and triumph and dejection and delight and unhappiness and nightmares and loss of appetite, but that gradually, with the passing weeks, he became calmer and happier until, as the holidays came nearer, he was smiling and rubbing his hands. Then at last came the great day when they fetched Jeremy and Jemima from school and the whole family assembled outside the workshop while Commander Pott solemnly unlocked the doors and they all trooped in to where the twelve-cylinder, eight-litre, supercharged Paragon Panther stood under the bright lights.

Mimsie and Jeremy and Jemima stood and stared and stared and stared until Jemima broke the silence and said, "But she's the most beautiful car in the world!" Mimsie and Jeremy just nodded their agreement and looked at the Paragon with round and shining eyes.

And she was beautiful! Every single little thing had been put right, and every detail gleamed and glinted with new paint and polished chromium, down to the snarling mouth of the big boa-constrictor horn.

Slowly they walked round her and examined her inch by inch, from the rows and rows of gleaming knobs on the dashboard to the brand-new, dark-red leather upholstery, from the cream-coloured, collapsible roof to the fine new tyres, from the glistening silver of the huge exhaust pipes, snaking away from holes in the bright-green bonnet, to the glittering number-plates that said GEN II.

And silently they climbed in through the low doors that opened and shut with the most delicious clicks, and Commander Caractacus Pott sat behind the huge driving-wheel with Mimsie beside him in her own bucket-seat with an arm-rest, and Jeremy and Jemima got in the back and sank down amongst the big, soft, red-leather cushions and rested their arms on their own arm-rest between them.

Then, without saying anything, Commander Pott leant forward and pressed the big black knob of the self-starter.

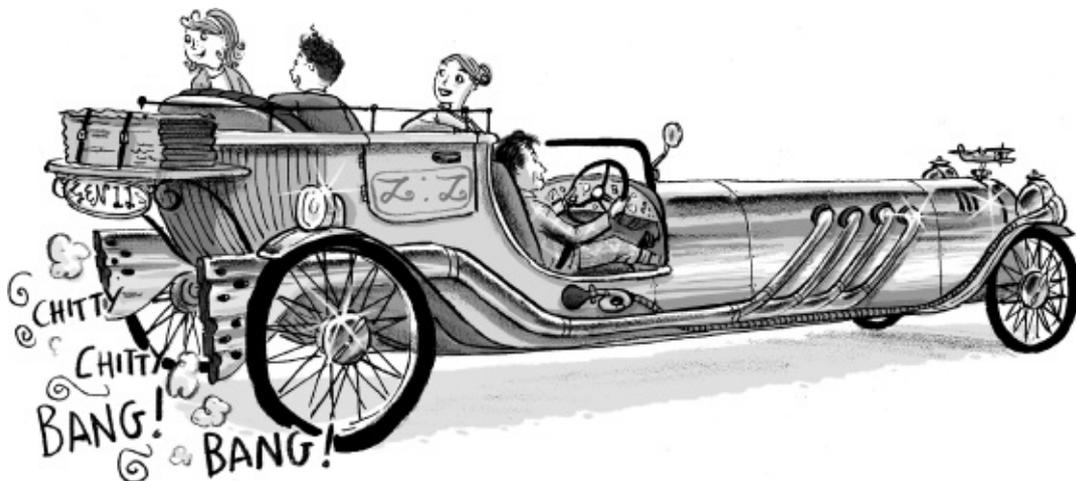
At first nothing happened. There was just the soft grinding from the starter motor. Jeremy and Jemima looked at each other with round eyes. Wasn't she going to work after all?

But then Commander Pott pulled out the silver knob of the choke, to feed more petrol into the carburettor, and pressed the starter again. And out of the exhaust pipes there came just these four noises — very loud: CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG!

And there was a distinct pause after each noise, and it was like two big sneezes and two small explosions. And then there was silence.

Again Jeremy and Jemima looked at each other, now really rather worried. Had something gone wrong?

But Commander Pott just said, "She's a bit cold. Now then!" He pressed the starter again. And this time, after the first two CHITTY sneezes and the two soft BANGS, the BANGS ran on and into each other so as to make a delicious purring rumble such as neither Mimsie nor Jeremy nor Jemima had ever heard before from a piece of machinery. Commander Pott put the big car into gear, and slowly they rumbled and roared out of the workshop into the sunshine and up the lane towards the motorway, and the springs were soft as silk and always this delicious rumble came out behind from the huge fish-tail exhausts.



When they got to the side road that joined the motorway, Commander Pott pressed the big bulb of the boa-constrictor horn and it let out a deep, polite, but rather threatening roar, and then, because he wanted to show everything to the children, Commander Pott pressed the electric-horn button in the middle of the wheel and the klaxon horn fired off a terrific blast of warning: "GA-GOOOO-GA!" Then he steered out on to the motorway and they were off on their first practice run.



Well, I can only tell you that the huge, long, gleaming, green car almost flew. With a click of the big central gear-lever, Commander Pott got out of first gear into second at forty miles per hour, with another click at seventy miles per hour he was in third, and as they touched *one hundred miles an hour*, he put the huge car into top gear and there they were passing the other black-beetle cars almost as if they were standing still.

“GA-GOOOO-GA!” went the klaxon again and again as they swept down the big safe double-lane highway, and the drivers of the little family saloons looked in their rear mirrors and saw the great gleaming monster whistling towards them and drew in to the left-hand side to let her go by, and all the drivers said, “Cooer! See that! What is she? Smashing!” And then the green car was past and away, and they caught the hurricane howl of the big exhausts and made a note of the number, GEN II, and not one of the drivers noticed what the number really spelled, they just thought it was a nice short number to have and easy to remember.

So CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG came to the end of the motorway and Commander Pott carefully swung the big car into the other lane and roared off back towards home, and Jeremy and Jemima clutched their arm-rest with excitement and looked over at the glittering dashboard and watched the needle of the speedometer creep back up to a hundred and stay there until they came to the turning-off for home. And Commander Pott clamped on the powerful hydraulic brakes until the car was only creeping along, and they turned off the motorway and bumped back down their narrow lane and back in under the bright lights of the workshop. And when Commander Pott switched off the engine, it gave one last “CHITTY-CHITTY,” let out a deep sigh of contentment, and was silent.

They all climbed out, and Commander Pott turned to them with a gleam of triumph in his eye. “Well? What do you think of her?”

And Mimsie said, “Terrific!”

And Jeremy said, “Smashing!”

And Jemima said, “Adorable!”

And Commander Caractacus Pott said mysteriously, “Well, that’s good. But I’m

warning you. There's something odd about this car. I've put all I know into her, every invention and improvement I could think of, and quite a lot of the thousand pounds we got from the Skrumshus people, but there's more to it than that. She's got some ideas of her own."

"How do you mean?" they all chorused.

"Well," said Commander Pott carefully, "I can't exactly say, but sometimes, in the morning when I came back to get to work again, I'd find that certain modifications, certain changes, had, so to speak, taken place all by themselves during the night, when I wasn't there. Certain — what shall I say? — rather revolutionary and extraordinary adaptations. I can't say more than that, and I haven't really got to the bottom of it all, but I suspect that this motor-car has thought out, all by herself, certain improvements, certain very extraordinary mechanical devices, just as if she had a mind of her own, just as if she was grateful to us for saving her life, so to speak, and wanted to repay all the loving care we've given her. And there's another thing. You see all those rows and rows of knobs and buttons and levers and little lights on the dashboard? Well, to tell you the truth, I just haven't been able to discover what they're all for. I know the obvious ones, of course, but there are some of those gadgets that seem to be secret gadgets. We'll find out what they're for in time, I suppose, but for now I'll admit there are quite a lot of them that have got me really puzzled. She just won't let me find out."

"What do you mean?" asked Jemima excitedly. "Is it a she?"

"Well," said Commander Pott, "that's how I've come to call her. It's funny, but all bits of machinery that people love are made into females. All ships are 'she.' Racing drivers call their cars 'she.' Same thing with aeroplanes. Don't know about rockets or Sputniks — somehow they don't seem very feminine to me — but I bet the rocketeers and Sputnicators, or whatever they call the Sputnik experts, I bet they call their spaceships and things 'she.' Odd, isn't it? I used to serve in a battleship. Gigantic great ship stuffed with guns and radar and so on. Called the *George V*. But we called her 'she.'"

Jeremy said excitedly, "We've got to have a name for her. And I know what we ought to call her. What she called herself."

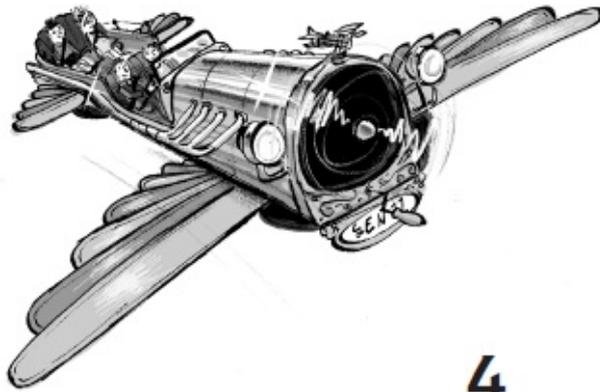
"What do you mean?"

"What was that?"

"When did she?" they all cried together.

Jeremy said slowly, "She said it when she started — CHITTY-CHITTY, like sneezes, and then BANG-BANG! So we'll call her that, her own invented name."

And the others looked at each other and slowly they all smiled and Commander Caractacus Pott patted the green and silver car on her nose and said in a loud and solemn voice, "Now hear me, twelve-cylinder, eight-litre supercharged Paragon Panther. We hereby christen you . . ." and they all chorused: "CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG!" Then they trooped out of the workshop and went happily about all the things they'd forgotten to do for the whole of that exciting afternoon.



4 To the Sea

The next day was a Saturday and the month was August and the sun positively streamed down. It was a roaster of a day, and at breakfast Commander Pott made an announcement. “Today,” he said, “is going to be a roaster, a scorcher. There’s only one thing to do, and that’s for us to take a delicious picnic and climb into CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG and dash off down the Dover road to the sea.”

Of course everyone was delighted with the idea and while Commander Pott and Jeremy and Jemima went to get CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG ready, fill her up with petrol, check the water in the radiator, verify the oil in the sump, test the tyre pressures, clean yesterday’s squashed flies off the windscreen, dust down the body, and polish up the chromium until it shone like silver, Mimsie filled a hamper with hard-boiled eggs, cold sausages, bread-and-butter sandwiches, jam puffs (with, of course, like all good jam puffs, more jam than puff) and bottles and bottles of the best fizzy lemonade and orange squash.

Then they all piled into the car, with the hood down of course, and, with CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG’s usual two sneezes and two small explosions, they were off up the lane to the motorway that led towards Dover and to the sea, some twenty miles away.

But, but, but! And once again but!!

Twenty-two thousand, six hundred and fifty-four other motor-cars full of families (that was the number announced by the Automobile Association the next day) had also decided to drive down the Dover road to the sea on that beautiful Saturday morning, and there was an endless stream of cars going the same way as the Pott family in CHITTY-CHITTY-BANG-BANG.