

The Long Tunnel

John Milne

Chapter 4

What's Happening?

Sheila and Charles waited in the old building. Slowly it became dark. They walked quietly back to the cottage and hid behind a bush. A lorry was parked near the cottage door.

They waited quietly in the darkness. Suddenly a man hurried up the lane. He knocked at a window of the cottage. The door opened quickly.

'Everything is OK, Frank,' said the man outside. 'Bill has telephoned from London. He's put sleeping pills in the guard's coffee.'

'Good,' said Frank. 'We can start now. Get the bags out of the lorry and into the cottage.'



Page 1

'Paul's in one of the upstairs bedrooms,' said Sheila. 'We must help him.'

'How are you going to get into the cottage?' asked Charles. 'They've locked the door.'

'I'll climb up onto the top of the porch,' said Sheila. 'Then I'll get in through a window.'

Sheila and Charles waited for half an hour. Then they walked up quietly to the front door. There were no lights in the cottage.

'Help me up, Charles,' said Sheila.



Page 3

'What's happening?' Charles asked Sheila. 'Bill's put sleeping pills in the guard's coffee – what does that mean? And what's in those bags?'

'I don't know,' said Sheila. 'Listen – they're talking again.'

'What about that young man?' one of the men asked Frank.

'We'll leave him in the upstairs bedroom,' Frank replied. 'He's tied up tightly. He'll be found tomorrow. By then, we'll be far from here.'

'Paul's in the cottage,' Sheila whispered to Charles. 'And he's a prisoner.'

Four men carried all the bags into the cottage. They closed the door behind them and locked it.



Page 2

Sheila stood on top of the porch. She reached up and pulled at the window. It opened slowly and made a loud noise. Sheila waited for a few moments. Nothing happened.

She opened the window wide. The curtains inside were closed. She opened them carefully and climbed into the bedroom.

In the dark room, Paul was lying on a bed. He was tied up tightly and there was a gag over his mouth.

Sheila quickly took off the gag.

'Sh!' she said. 'Don't make a noise. There are some men downstairs.'

'It's all right,' said Paul. 'They won't hear us. They're not in the cottage. They're out at the back.'



Page 4

Sheila slowly untied the ropes round Paul.

'What's happening?' she asked him. 'Who are those men? What are they doing?'

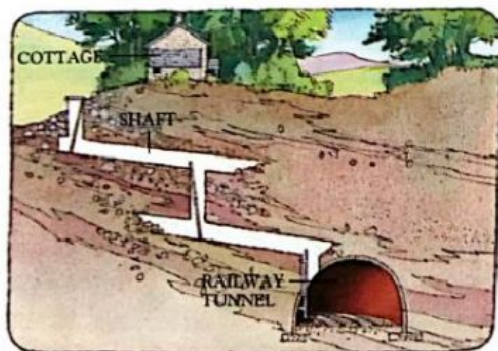
'They're going to rob a train tonight.'

'Rob a train?' asked Sheila in surprise.

'They've found an old shaft behind the cottage,' said Paul. 'The shaft goes down into the railway tunnel. They're going to change the signal in the tunnel. The signal light will be red and the train will stop.'

'Now I understand,' said Sheila. 'Someone has put sleeping pills in the guard's coffee.'

'That's part of their plan,' said Paul. 'The train will stop in the tunnel and the guard will be asleep. The men will steal the bags of money from the train and escape up the shaft.'



Page 5



'But these men have taken bags into the cottage,' said Sheila. 'What are they for?'

'The bags are full of paper,' said Paul. 'They look like the bags of money. The soldiers won't find the paper until tomorrow morning. Then these men will be far away from here.'

'We can run down to the telephone box,' said Sheila. 'We can telephone the police from there.'

'There isn't enough time,' said Paul. 'We have to stop these men. We can put heavy stones over the shaft. Then the men can't get out.'

'And Charles can run down and telephone the police,' said Sheila.

Now all the knots were untied and Paul was free. They climbed out of the window. Charles was waiting for them in the darkness.

Page 6

Read chapter 4 and answer the questions.

1. Who is the stranger? _____
2. What was there in the lorry?. What did they do with it?

3. What did Sheila find? _____
4. What was wrong with Paul? _____
5. What did Sheila and Charles decide to do? _____
6. Sheila got into the house. Why? _____
7. What are the men going to do?. What's the shaft for?
