

The Mystery of the Missing Sheep

A Harley Pack Adventure

Chapter One: Farmer Jenkins's Problem

The February morning was cold but bright, with frost still clinging to the grass as the sun rose over Lytchett Matravers. Harley was enjoying a peaceful breakfast when the sound of raised voices from outside caught his attention.

"It's happening again!" Mr. Jenkins's voice carried through the window, thick with frustration and worry. "Another three gone overnight. That's fifteen sheep in two weeks!"

The pack gathered at the window, ears pricked with interest. Mr. Jenkins stood in the lane with Mrs. Pemberton and several other farmers, all looking equally distressed.

"No broken fences?" Mrs. Pemberton asked.

"Not a single wire out of place," Mr. Jenkins replied, shaking his head. "No tyre tracks, no footprints, nothing. It's like they just vanished into thin air. The police have been out twice, but they've found nothing. If this keeps up, I'll be ruined."

Dillon's analytical mind was already working. "Fifteen sheep don't just disappear. Someone's taking them, but how are they doing it without leaving any trace?"

"That's the mystery," Harley said quietly. "And it sounds like the farmers desperately need help."

Oscar's tail wagged despite the serious situation. "So we're going to investigate?"

"We should at least look," Lewis suggested. "Maybe fresh eyes—or rather, fresh noses and keen sighthound vision—will spot something the police missed."

Moss was already at the door. "We should go now, before any tracks or scents fade further."

Timm stood, ready for action as always. "Where do we start?"

"Mr. Jenkins's farm," Harley decided. "That's where the most recent disappearances happened. We'll search the area thoroughly."

What they didn't know was that this mystery would lead them deep beneath the Dorset countryside, into a network of tunnels that had been forgotten for over a century. And they'd need every skill the pack possessed—including Billy's patient observation—to solve it.

Chapter Two: The Scene of the Crime

Mr. Jenkins's farm lay on the outskirts of the village, rolling fields stretching toward the heathland. The farmer was surprised but grateful when the pack arrived, having heard about their previous adventures.

"You're welcome to look around," he said, leading them to the field where the sheep had vanished. "But I'm telling you, there's nothing to find. I've been over every inch of this field a dozen times."

The field was large, bordered by sturdy stone walls on three sides and a thick hedge on the fourth. The remaining sheep huddled nervously in the far corner, clearly spooked by the recent disappearances.

"Show us exactly where the missing sheep were last seen," Harley requested.

Mr. Jenkins pointed to an area near the eastern wall. "That's where they tend to graze. The three that went missing last night were definitely there at dusk when I did my final check. Gone by dawn."

The pack spread out, each using their particular skills. Timm and Oscar, with their keen Afghan Hound senses, checked the perimeter for any signs of disturbance. Lewis examined the gates and fence posts for tampering. Moss investigated the hedge line with her practical, street-smart approach.

Dillon stood in the centre of the field, thinking. "Fifteen sheep would need transport. A truck or trailer at minimum. But there are no tyre tracks in the field or the lane."

Harley was sniffing carefully around the area where the sheep had been. There was something odd here—a faint smell that didn't quite belong. Earth, yes, but different from the field soil. Older. Deeper.

"Harley!" Lewis called from the eastern wall. "Come look at this."

The pack gathered where Lewis stood. At first, Harley didn't see anything unusual. Just the old stone wall, covered in moss and lichen, with grass growing at its base.

"Look at the grass here," Lewis said, pointing with his nose. "It's been disturbed. Not trampled exactly, but... moved recently. And look at these stones."

Now Harley saw it. Several of the stones in the wall, near ground level, had slightly different coloured mortar around them. Fresher. And when he pressed his nose close, that strange earthy smell was stronger.

"These stones have been moved," Dillon observed, his sharp mind putting the pieces together. "Recently and repeatedly, by the look of it."

Timm started pawing at the base of the wall, and suddenly his paw went through—not into solid wall, but into empty space beyond.

"There's a gap here!" he exclaimed. "Behind the wall!"

Working together, the pack managed to dislodge several of the loose stones, revealing a dark opening. It wasn't large—just big enough for a sheep to be pushed through, or for a person to crawl into.

"A tunnel," Harley breathed. "That's how they're doing it."

Mr. Jenkins came running when he saw what they'd discovered. "Good Lord! I never knew that was there. The wall's been standing for over two hundred years!"

"The tunnel might be even older," Dillon said. "Smugglers, perhaps? Dorset's coast is riddled with old smuggling tunnels."

"But where does it lead?" Oscar asked, peering nervously into the darkness.

Harley made a decision. "We need to follow it. But carefully. If the thieves are using it, they might be down there."

"We should tell someone," Mr. Jenkins said worriedly. "The police—"

"Will want evidence," Moss pointed out practically. "Let us scout it first. We're smaller, quieter, and we can see better in low light than humans."

"But be careful," Mr. Jenkins urged. "I'll wait here. If you're not back in an hour, I'm calling for help."

The pack exchanged glances. This was their most dangerous investigation yet. But those sheep needed help, and the farmers were losing their livelihoods.

"We go together," Harley said firmly. "The pack sticks together."

And one by one, they slipped into the darkness of the ancient tunnel.

Chapter Three: Into the Tunnels

The tunnel was narrow, cold, and absolutely dark once they were a few metres from the entrance. But sighthounds have excellent low-light vision, and as their eyes adjusted, they could make out the rough stone walls and dirt floor.

"This is old," Dillon whispered, his voice echoing slightly. "Very old. Look at the stonework—this is centuries old."

"But someone's been using it recently," Moss noted, her nose close to the ground. "I can smell sheep. And diesel fuel."

The tunnel sloped gently downward, leading them beneath the field and beyond. It was slow going—they had to move in single file, with Harley leading and Moss bringing up the rear. Every few metres, Harley would pause, listening and scenting the air.

After what felt like ages but was probably only ten minutes, the tunnel began to widen. Side passages branched off, creating a maze beneath the Dorset countryside.

"This is bigger than I thought," Lewis said, looking around nervously. "We could get lost down here."

"We won't," Harley assured him. "We remember the way. And look—" he pointed with his nose to the ground. "Sheep droppings. Recent ones. They came this way."

They followed the trail through the maze, taking careful note of each turn. Left at the junction with the wooden support beam. Right where the ceiling dropped lower. Straight through the chamber with the old smugglers' markings on the wall.

Then, ahead, they heard something that made them all freeze: voices.

"—should have another batch ready by Thursday," a gruff male voice was saying. "The boss wants twenty this time."

"Twenty?" A second voice, younger and nervous. "That's a lot. People are going to notice."

"People are already noticing, you idiot. That's why we're moving operations after this week. Few more nights, and we're done."

The pack crept forward silently until they could see light ahead—electric light, bright after the darkness of the tunnels. They peered around a corner into a large underground chamber.

It had clearly once been a smugglers' storehouse, with old wooden shelving built into the walls and brackets for torches. But now it held modern equipment: battery-powered lights, folding chairs, and in the centre, a makeshift pen containing at least a dozen sheep, including Mr. Jenkins's distinctive black-faced Suffolks.

Two men sat near the sheep, drinking tea from a thermos. A third passage led off from the far side of the chamber, and from it came the unmistakable smell of fresh air and diesel.

"That must lead to where they're loading the sheep into trucks," Dillon whispered.

"We need to block their escape and alert Mr. Jenkins," Harley decided. "Oscar, you're the fastest. Can you get back and bring help?"

Oscar nodded, already turning back toward the entrance.

"The rest of us will make sure these men don't leave—and that they don't harm the sheep," Harley continued. "Timm, Moss, Lewis—block that exit passage. Dillon and I will handle these two."

"Handle them how?" Dillon asked. "We're dogs."

Harley's eyes gleamed in the electric light. "We're the Harley Pack. And these men are about to find out that sheep rustling in Dorset is a very bad idea."

Chapter Four: The Confrontation

The pack moved into position. Oscar raced back through the tunnels, his golden coat disappearing into the darkness. Timm, Moss, and Lewis positioned themselves at the exit passage, ready to block anyone trying to escape. Harley and Dillon waited just out of sight, muscles tensed.

Then Harley barked. Not his usual friendly bark, but a loud, echoing sound that ricocheted off the stone walls, making it impossible to tell where it came from.

The two men jumped up, startled. "What was that?"

Dillon barked from a different direction. Then Timm from the exit passage. The chamber filled with echoing barks and howls, sounding like a pack of dozens rather than just five dogs.

"Dogs?" the younger man said, his voice shaking. "How did dogs get down here?"

"I don't know, but I'm not staying to find out!" the older man grabbed a torch and headed for the exit passage—only to stop dead as Timm, Moss, and Lewis emerged from the shadows, three elegant sighthounds blocking his path, their eyes reflecting the torchlight eerily.

The man stumbled backward, and suddenly Harley and Dillon were there too, cutting off the other escape route. The pack formed a semicircle, keeping the men corralled but not attacking. They didn't need to—the sight of five large hounds in an underground chamber was threatening enough.

"Okay, okay!" the younger man held up his hands. "We're not going anywhere! Just... keep those dogs away from us!"

"How did they even find us?" the older man wondered, sinking back into his chair, all fight gone out of him.

The pack maintained their positions, occasionally barking to keep the men nervous, while they waited for help to arrive. The sheep, sensing that something had changed, were calmer now, huddling together in their pen.

It seemed like hours but was probably only thirty minutes before they heard sounds in the main tunnel: voices, footsteps, and the beam of powerful torches. Oscar appeared first, followed by Mr. Jenkins, two police officers, and several other farmers.

"Good Lord," one of the officers said, taking in the scene. "It's a whole operation down here."

The two men were quickly handcuffed while the police examined the chamber. The exit passage, as suspected, led to a hidden opening on the far side of the heathland, where tyre tracks showed where trucks had been loading the stolen sheep.

"We've been looking for these two for months," the senior officer told Mr. Jenkins. "They've been operating across three counties. But we could never figure out how they were moving the sheep without being seen. Ancient smugglers' tunnels—brilliant, really, though I hate to admire criminals."

"If it weren't for these dogs," the other officer said, crouching to pet Harley, "you might never have found them. Or the sheep."

The rescue operation took hours. The sheep had to be carefully guided back through the tunnels (thankfully, the exit passage was large enough for them to walk through to the trucks above). The farmers reclaimed their animals, and the police documented everything for evidence.

When they finally emerged into daylight, the pack was covered in tunnel dust but victorious. The

farmers insisted on a celebration, with treats and praise for all six dogs.

"Seven," Mr. Jenkins corrected, looking around. "Weren't there seven of you?"

Harley's ears pricked up. Seven? He counted: himself, Timm, Oscar, Dillon, Lewis, Moss... that was six.

Chapter Five: The Watcher Above

"I swear there was a seventh dog," Mr. Jenkins insisted. "Smaller, black and white. I saw him sitting up on the hill above the farm, watching everything. Been there most of the afternoon."

The pack exchanged knowing glances. Billy.

"I need to thank him," Harley said quietly to the others. "He may not have come into the tunnels with us, but I bet he was keeping watch."

That evening, as the sun set over Lytchett Matravers, the pack made their way to Billy's favourite tree in the village. Sure enough, there he was, sitting at the base, looking up at the branches where squirrels chattered and played.

"Billy," Harley called gently.

The small black and white lurcher turned, his expression a mixture of hope and nervousness. "I heard about the sheep. You found them?"

"We did," Harley confirmed. "But we heard you were watching from the hill. All afternoon."

Billy ducked his head. "I wanted to come into the tunnels with you, but I was too scared. Dark, confined spaces..." he shuddered. "But I couldn't just do nothing. So I watched the entrance. Made sure no one else went in. Made sure you had a clear escape if you needed it."

"That," Dillon said warmly, "was exactly the right thing to do."

"Really?" Billy looked up hopefully.

"Really," Moss confirmed. "Everyone has different strengths, Billy. You knew the tunnels weren't for you, but you found another way to help. That takes wisdom."

"And it worked perfectly," Lewis added. "We could focus on what we needed to do because we knew you had our backs."

Oscar bounded over, his usual enthusiasm undimmed. "You're part of the pack, Billy. That means we all contribute in our own way. You don't have to be brave in the same way we are."

Billy's tail wagged slowly, then faster. "So I didn't let you down?"

"Not even slightly," Harley assured him. "In fact, there's something I've been thinking. We solved this case, but it made me realize something. We've been lucky so far—our investigations haven't been truly dangerous. But those tunnels... if they'd collapsed, if the criminals had been violent... we need to be smarter."

He looked at Billy. "We need someone who can stay above ground. Someone who can fetch help if things go wrong. Someone who can watch and wait and keep track of the bigger picture while we're focused on the immediate problem."

"You want me to be your... safety dog?" Billy asked, testing out the concept.

"I want you to be our strategic observer," Dillon corrected. "Every good team needs someone who can see the whole situation. We get too caught up in the action sometimes. You keep the perspective."

"Plus," Timm added with a grin, "your squirrel-watching skills mean you can sit still and observe

for hours. That's genuinely useful."

For the first time since they'd met him, Billy sat up straight, pride evident in his posture. "I can do that. I can be really good at that."

"We know you can," Harley said warmly. "You already are."

As they walked back to the village together, Billy no longer trailing behind but walking alongside, they talked about the case. The police had explained that the rustlers had discovered the old tunnel system during a historical survey and had been using it for months, moving sheep from farms all across the area.

"The tunnels will be sealed now," Dillon said. "Except for one entrance, which they're making into a historical site. The tourist board is already interested."

"And all the sheep are back with their rightful owners," Lewis added with satisfaction.

"Mr. Jenkins said he's never seen anything like it," Moss reported. "Five dogs appearing out of nowhere in an underground chamber. The criminals thought they were hallucinating."

Oscar laughed. "The look on their faces when Timm stepped out of the shadows!"

"We make a good team," Harley said, looking around at his pack—now seven strong, each member contributing in their own unique way.

And high above them, unnoticed by humans but not by the dogs, a parliament of crows sat in the trees. One of them cawed, and Billy glanced up.

"That crow's been following those squirrels for days," he observed. "Three trees over, always watching for when they leave their stash unguarded."

"See?" Dillon said to the others. "Strategic observer. We'd never have noticed that."

Billy's tail wagged. Maybe he'd finally found where he belonged.

Chapter Six: Recognition

The following week, the local newspaper ran a front-page story: "Mystery of the Missing Sheep Solved by Remarkable Dogs." It detailed how the Harley Pack had discovered the ancient tunnel system and trapped the rustlers, recovering over fifty stolen sheep from across the region.

The farmers organized a proper thank-you celebration in the village hall. The pack sat together at the front (with Billy between Moss and Lewis, finally comfortable being part of the group) while the humans explained what had happened.

"These dogs showed more determination and cleverness than some humans I could mention," Mr. Jenkins said warmly. "They didn't give up when there was no obvious answer. They looked deeper—literally—and they kept those criminals contained until help arrived."

"I've been asked by the Agricultural Association," Mrs. Pemberton added, "to formally recognize the Harley Pack's contribution to our community. You've saved Christmas, solved a phantom mystery, and now recovered our livestock. You're officially Lytchett Matravers's finest detective agency!"

The room erupted in laughter and applause. The pack received special handmade collars with little detective badges, and each farmer whose sheep had been recovered brought treats and gifts.

But the best part, at least for Billy, came at the end. A local television crew had turned up to film a segment about the rescue, and they wanted to interview the pack's "secret weapon."

"We've heard," the reporter said, crouching down to Billy's level, "that while the pack was in the tunnels, you kept watch above ground. That you made sure they had a clear escape route and that

you were ready to sound the alarm if needed. Is that true?"

Billy, nervous but determined, wagged his tail in confirmation.

"That," the reporter said to the camera, "is what we call a strategic thinker. This might be the Harley Pack, but every pack needs every type of skill. Not everyone can go into dark tunnels—but someone needs to watch the entrance. Not everyone can confront criminals—but someone needs to fetch help. This little lurcher found his role, and in doing so, made sure his pack was safe."

Later, back at their favourite spot under Billy's tree, the pack sat together in comfortable silence, watching the sunset.

"Do you think there will be more mysteries?" Oscar asked.

"Undoubtedly," Dillon replied. "Dorset is full of history and secrets."

"And we're here to uncover them," Timm added.

"Together," Harley said, looking around at his pack. "Always together."

"Each of us contributing what we do best," Lewis agreed.

Moss simply thumped her tail on the ground in contentment.

And Billy, small and shy but no longer uncertain of his place, watched a squirrel in the branches above and smiled. He belonged. He was part of something bigger than himself. He was part of the Harley Pack.

Epilogue: The Network Revealed

The police investigation into the tunnel system revealed something remarkable. The tunnels weren't just a single route—they were part of a vast network beneath the Dorset countryside, dating back to the 18th century and probably earlier. Smugglers had used them to move contraband from the coast inland, and the passages connected farms, villages, and estates across miles of territory.

Historians were ecstatic. The local university sent a team to map the entire system. They found old smugglers' marks, hidden chambers, and even a few forgotten treasures—coins, bottles, and once, a cache of very old brandy.

But they also found something that would have been impossible to discover without the Harley Pack: evidence of how the network had been used throughout history. And they made sure that the dogs' contribution was properly recorded in the historical survey.

"These tunnels might have remained lost forever if not for a pack of very clever dogs," the lead archaeologist told the press. "We owe the Harley Pack a debt of gratitude for not just solving a modern crime, but uncovering an important piece of Dorset's heritage."

The entrance the pack had discovered in Mr. Jenkins's field was carefully preserved and turned into an educational site, with a plaque that read:

"The Harley Pack Entrance

Discovered by Harley, Timm, Oscar, Dillon, Lewis, Moss, and Billy

February 2026

*When sheep went missing and police found no clues,
Seven dogs used their skills to recover what was lost
And revealed a piece of history in the process"*

And if you visit that site today, you'll often find a small black and white lurcher sitting quietly nearby, watching visitors explore the entrance, his tail wagging whenever anyone stops to read the plaque.

Because Billy had learned something important: heroism comes in many forms. Sometimes it's

rushing into danger. Sometimes it's patient observation. Sometimes it's knowing when to fetch help. And sometimes, it's simply being there for your pack, however you can contribute.

The Harley Pack had solved their third mystery. But the biggest mystery they'd solved wasn't about sheep or tunnels or criminals.

It was about discovering that everyone has a place where they belong—you just have to find it.

The End

But the pack's adventures continue. Somewhere in Dorset, another mystery awaits...