



*Peter got back into the lorry and drove out of the gate.*

Peter slowed down and stopped. The boy ran up and opened the door.

'Where are you going?' the boy asked.

'Manchester,' Peter said.

'Can you give me a lift?' the boy asked anxiously.

'Yes, get in.' As he spoke, Peter leant over and helped the boy into the lorry. The boy closed the door. He was very, very wet. Peter drove off.

'Where are you going?' asked Peter.

'I don't know,' said the boy.

'You don't know?' Peter repeated, in a surprised voice.

'No. I've run away from home.' The boy spoke quietly.

'What?' said Peter. The lorry was very noisy and it was difficult to talk.

'I said I've run away from home.' The boy repeated his words loudly but Peter still could not hear.

'What?' Peter asked again.

'I said I've left home. I'm not going to go back,' the boy shouted.

'Why?' asked Peter.

'We had an argument, that's all,' the boy replied slowly.

'What's your name?' inquired Peter.

'John. John Stevens. What's yours?' the boy asked.

'Peter,' replied the lorry driver. 'Well, John, do you feel like a cup of tea?'

'Yes, please.' The boy smiled with pleasure at the idea of a cup of tea.

'There's a café just ahead and we'll stop there,' said Peter, pointing in the direction of the café as he spoke. The lorry stopped outside the café. It was still raining heavily and John and Peter ran inside.



*Peter slowed down and stopped.*

## *The Newspaper*

It was warm in the café and Peter went up to the counter where a girl was serving. John took a seat at a table.

‘Two teas, please,’ said Peter to the girl at the counter.

‘Here you are, love,’ said the girl, as she pushed two cups of tea towards Peter. ‘That’s ninety pence, please.’

Peter gave her the money and carried the cups of tea over to the table where John was sitting.

‘Thank you,’ said John. The tea was hot and sweet and warmed both of them up.

‘So you’ve left home, then,’ said Peter.

‘That’s right,’ John replied.

‘Why?’ Peter asked.

‘I told you. We had an argument,’ said the boy.

Peter smiled. ‘You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.’

‘I want to,’ said John. ‘I must talk to someone.’

‘Tell me what happened then,’ said Peter, in a kind voice.

‘Well, you see,’ John began, ‘my parents are dead and I live with my uncle.’

Peter interrupted the boy. ‘In Bristol?’

‘Yes, that’s right,’ said John. ‘My uncle has always been kind to me, but he never lets me do anything.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Peter.

The boy pushed back his chair. ‘Well, he never lets me go out in the evenings.’

Peter nodded. ‘Why not?’

‘Oh,’ the boy said, ‘he says that I must stay in and study instead. He makes me stay in and study every night while my friends are out enjoying themselves.’

'I see,' said Peter, as he drank his tea. 'That's why you ran away, is it?'

John shook his head. 'Not really. It was because of what happened last night.'

'What did happen?' asked Peter, watching the boy's face closely.

'I told my uncle that I wanted to go to the cinema with some of my friends,' John explained, 'but my uncle wouldn't let me go and told me to study instead.'

'Yes,' said Peter, encouraging the boy to continue his story.

'When he wasn't looking, I ran out and went to the cinema with my friends. When I came back my uncle was waiting for me. He was very, very angry and asked me where I had been. I told him I'd been to the cinema. When I told him that I'd been to the cinema, my uncle hit me in the face.' John paused to drink his tea.

'Does he often hit you?' asked Peter.

'When he gets angry. Last night he hit me very hard and I got angry and hit him back,' replied John.

Peter's face was serious. 'What did your uncle do then?' he asked.

'Nothing. You see I must have hit him very hard because he fell on the floor and didn't move.' John stopped speaking and looked at the table.

'What did you do then?' asked Peter quietly.

'I was . . .,' John hesitated, 'I was afraid and so I ran out.'

'Where did you go?' inquired Peter.

'I can't remember. When I came back an hour later, there were several police cars outside the house. All the lights in the house were switched on. Then a policeman came out of the house and saw me. "There he is," he shouted and ran after me. I ran away and the policeman didn't catch me. I slept in the bus station and started hitch-hiking early this morning.'

‘Well,’ said Peter, ‘you certainly had a busy night. Why did you run away from the police?’

‘Because they wanted to catch me and put me in prison,’ answered John.

‘But why do you think they wanted to put you in prison?’ continued Peter.

‘Because my uncle must have telephoned the police. He must have told them to catch me because I had hit him.’

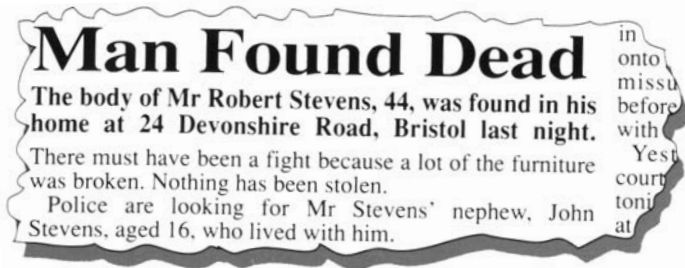
‘Do you want some more tea?’ asked Peter.

John nodded. ‘Yes, please.’

‘Here’s ninety pence,’ said Peter handing John the money. ‘Can you go and get two more teas?’

John went to get the tea. There were a lot of people in the café and he had to wait. Peter picked up a newspaper which someone had left on the table.

Peter looked at the front page:



When Peter had read this, he quickly put the newspaper in his pocket. A minute later John returned with the tea.

‘Was there anything interesting in the paper?’ John asked.

‘No,’ said Peter. ‘Drink up your tea because we must leave as soon as possible.’ They finished their tea quickly and walked out to the lorry. Peter started the engine and drove off. It had stopped raining and the sun was shining. It was now warm inside the lorry and John began to feel sleepy.

‘If you want to sleep,’ Peter said, ‘you can get into the back.’

The lorry's not quite full and there's an old coat of mine there you can lie on.'

'Thanks,' said John, 'that would be good.'

Peter stopped the lorry and John got into the back. They drove off again. Peter drove as fast as he could in order to make up for lost time. There were only a few cars and soon the lorry was near Tewkesbury. Suddenly Peter saw a police car stopped on the road ahead. As he drove closer, a policeman walked out in front of the lorry and held his hand up.

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*The Lorry is Stopped*

The policeman held his hand up. Peter slowed the lorry down and stopped. The policeman walked up to the side window.

'What is it?' asked Peter. 'What's the matter?'

'We're looking for a boy who we think may have killed his uncle,' replied the policeman.

'Oh, yes,' said Peter, 'I heard the news about it on the radio this morning.'

'Well,' continued the policeman, 'we think the boy has left Bristol and he may be hitch-hiking north.'

'Is he dangerous?' asked Peter.

'Very dangerous. He killed his uncle with a chair leg,' the policeman added.

'What does he look like?' asked Peter.

The policeman took out his notebook and read, 'John Stevens, aged 16. Brown hair. Brown eyes. Average height. Last seen wearing a red jersey and blue jeans.' The policeman looked up from his book. 'Have you seen him?' he asked Peter.

'Yes,' said Peter, 'I've seen hundreds of young men dressed

like that this morning. It could have been any of them.'

'OK,' said the policeman, 'thanks for your help. If you do see him let us know, won't you?'

'Of course,' replied Peter and started the engine.

'Cheerio,' shouted the policeman.

'Just a minute,' said another voice. The policeman turned around. Another policeman was getting out of the police car. He was big and red-faced and had a nasty voice.

'What is it now?' asked Peter. 'I've got to be in Manchester before five o'clock.'

'All right. This won't take long,' said the second policeman. 'We're going to search your lorry.'

'Why?' asked Peter angrily.

'The boy may be hiding there.' Both policemen walked around to the back of the lorry.

What shall I do now, thought Peter. I could drive off before they look in the back. But if I do drive away they'll drive after me and their car is much faster than my lorry. What shall I do? Sit here and wait. If they find John, I can say that I didn't know he was in my lorry.

'Hey, you!' shouted one of the policemen.

They've found him, thought Peter.

'Hey, you, come and help us open the back of your lorry.'

'Right,' shouted Peter and got out. If I'm there when they find John, he thought, perhaps I can give him a chance to escape by getting in the policemen's way. Peter walked around to the back of the lorry and opened it for the policemen. They looked in. All they could see was a lot of boxes and, in one corner, some old coats on the floor.

'Right,' said the second policeman, 'I'm sorry to have made you wait so long. You can go now.'

Peter thanked him, got into the lorry and drove off. He drove for ten minutes until he was sure that the police car was not following him. Then he stopped, jumped out and ran around to