



Enid Blyton Stories

The River of Adventure



Philip, Dinah, Jack and Lucy-Anne are on a boat, travelling down a river in an ancient land. Their lively pet parrot, Kiki is with them. The boat is being driven by a man called Tala and a local boy, Oola, is with them, having been rescued by Philip from a cruel master.



The boat went on between the banks, which were now narrowing even more. And then, as well as narrowing, the banks began to grow higher!

‘Why – we seem to be going between cliffs now!’ said Jack, in wonder.

‘Tala! Don’t go so fast!’

‘Tala not go fast!’ called back the man, looking puzzled.

‘River go fast – very fast! Take boat along. Tala stop motor, and you see!’



He stopped the motor and the children did indeed see what he meant! The current and the children did indeed see what he meant! The current was racing along at top speed and the boat needed no motor to take it along – it was carried by the current!

The cliff-like banks rose even higher and the children felt alarmed. ‘We’re in a kind of gorge now,’ said Philip. ‘A gorge that must be dropping down in level all the time and making the water rush along.’



Hey, Tala, stop! This is getting dangerous.'

Tala called back at once. 'Tala no can stop! Boat must go on, on, on. River take boat all the time.'

'Whew! He's right!' said Jack. 'How can we stop?' And if we did, where? There are only these high cliffs of rocks one each side now – nowhere to stop at all! We'll be dashed to pieces if Tala doesn't keep the boat straight.'



The children were very pale. Kiki was terrified and put her head under her wing., the boys looked up the rocky cliffs on each side. Yes – they were now getting so high that they could see only a strip of sky. No wonder it seemed dim now, down here in the boat.

The water raced along, no longer smooth, but churned-up and frothy. 'It's pouring down a rocky channel, a channel that goes downwards all the time and makes the water race along,' said Jack, raising his voice a little, for the water was now very loud.



‘We must be going down into the depths of the earth,’
said Philip, staring ahead. ‘Jack – listen, what’s that noise?’

They all listened and Talal himself went pale.

‘Water fall down, water fall down!’ he called, above the
roar of the river.



Jack clutched at Philip, panic-stricken. 'He's right. We're coming to a cataract! A gigantic underground waterfall! We're pretty well underground now, it's so dark. Gosh, Philip, the boat will swing over the top of the fall and we'll be dashed to pieces. It sounds like an enormous cataract!'

The noise became louder and louder, and entirely filled the rocky gorge. It seemed to be the loudest noise in the world and the girls pressed their hands to their ears, terrified.



Tala too was terrified, but he still has his hand on the wheel, trying to prevent the boat from crashing into the rocky sides. He suddenly gave a shout.

‘We come to waterfalling!’

The children could not hear anything now but the roar of the waterfall ahead. Nor could they see anything, for the gorge was now too deep to admit much daylight. They could only clutch at the boat and each other.



And then – the boat swung violently to the left, almost turned over, rocked dangerously to and fro, and came to a shuddering stop!

All round was the sound of the giant cataract, but the noise had diminished. What had happened! Wonderingly the children raised their frightened faces and peered round. They were in the darkness and could see nothing.



Philip left something clutching his knees – a pair of hands. That must be Oola at his feet.

‘Is boss safe?’ said Oola’s voice, sounding over the noise of waters.

‘Quite safe, Oola,’ said Philip, finding his voice trembling as he spoke. ‘You all right, girls?’

‘Yes,’ they answered. But that was the only word they could manage to say. They were still clutching each other tightly.



'I'm safe too,' said Jack's voice, sounding unexpectedly cheerful.

'Hey, Tala! Are you all right?'

The sound of moaning reached the children, a doleful regular moan. Jack felt his way across the boat to Tala.



‘Are you hurt?’ he asked, feeling the man all over. He felt for his torch in his pocket and flicked it on. Tala was at the wheel, bent over it, with his hands over his head. He moaned all the time.

Jack could not see that he was hurt. He shook Tala and at last the man looked up. He was shaking violently.

‘ARE YOU HURT?’ shouted Jack, thinking that Tala must have suddenly gone deaf.



Tala seemed to come to himself. He blinked at the torch and rubbed his eyes. He felt himself all over very carefully.

‘Tala not hurt,’ he announced. ‘Tala good.’

Jack flashed his torch around to see where they were. They appeared to be in a quiet pool surrounded by walls of rock. How extraordinary! How did they get here, out of the raging torrent? Only just in time too, for the waterfall could not be far away.



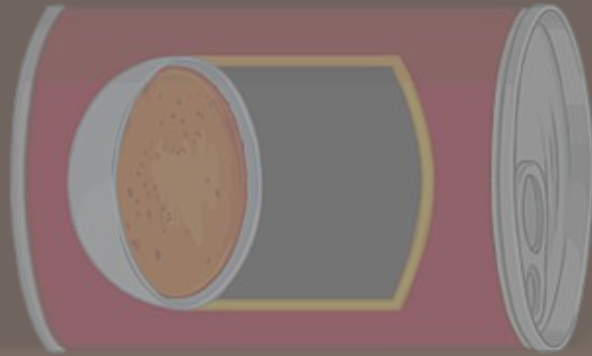
He went back to the others, who were now recovering. ‘Well, we seem to be safe for the moment,’ said the cheerful Jack. ‘I vote we have something to eat. Nothing like something in our tummies to make us feel better. Where’s Kiki?’

‘In that cupboard,’ said Dinah. ‘I heard a little unhappy squawk from there just now.’



Jack flashed his torch at the cupboard. The door was a little ajar, burst open by the tins that had rolled about violently. Kiki had gone there to hide in peace, away from the roar of waters.

‘Kiki! You can come out now,’ called Jack. And Kiki waddled out, her crest down, looking very old and bent and sorry for herself!



She climbed all the way up Jack, as if her wings couldn't possibly fly and was at last on his shoulder. She settled there, grumbling away, angry at all the disturbance she had been through.

'Get out a few tins, Dinah – you're nearest to the cupboard,' said Jack. 'Cheer up, Lucy-Ann. Philip, reach over to that lamp and light it, will you? It's the one used for the prow of the boat and ought to be bright. Buck up!'



It was a good thing that Jack took charge. He made everyone brighten up, even Tala, whose moaning still went on for a while. Soon they were all sitting together, munching sandwiches made of bread and ham, with orangeade to drink.

‘Fun this, isn’t it?’ said the indomitable Jack, looking around at the little company, lit quite brightly by the boat’s lamp.

Lucy-Ann managed a weak smile, though she felt that nothing could possibly be fun at the moment.



‘Don’t be silly,’ said Philip. ‘Let’s enjoy our misery before we say it’s fun! Gish – I feel as if I’m peculiarly unpleasant dream. Anyone know what happened yet?’

Nobody did. It seemed an utter mystery. There they had been, whirling onwards to what must be an enormous cataract by the sound of it – and yet, suddenly, they had shot round to the left – into safety.



The food loosened their tongues and soon they were talking much as usual. Tala condescended to take a sandwich, and he soon felt better too. He astonished the company by suddenly beaming round them with the broadest smile on his face that the children had ever seen.



‘What’s up, Tala?’ said Jack, amused. ‘You look as if you’ve lost a penny and found a shilling!’

Tala looked puzzled. ‘Tala not lost penny,’ he said.

‘All right, all right – forget it!’ said Jack. ‘What are you suddenly so happy about?’



'Tala brave man. Tala save everybody, said Tala,
beaming round again.



There was an astonished silence. Whatever did Tala mean? He sounded slightly mad and certainly looked odd, sitting there in the light of the lamp, nodding his head up and down.

‘I don’t get it,’ said Jack. ‘How did you save everybody!’

‘Tala just now remember,’ said Tala, still beaming. ‘Boat go fast, fast, fast – big noise come – waterfalling nearby. Then Tala sees where cliff break – Tala swing boat round – bump-bump – boat nearly over. Now we here!’



There was another astonished silence. All the children stared at Tala and even Kiki peered at him around Jack's face.

'But, Tala – you couldn't see a break in the cliff – it was too dark!' said Jack at last.

'Yes, yes,' said Oola's voice from besides Philip. 'Oola see big hole too – big hole in cliff. Have good eyes for dark, Tala too.'



‘Well, I’m blessed!’ said Philip. ‘I never saw a thing. But I suppose Tala must have been deliberately looking out for some break in the cliff and caught sight of one just in time. He must have eyes like a cat!’

‘Tala eyes good, very good,’ agreed Tala, pleased at the interest he had caused. ‘Tala see much, much. Tala save everybody. Tala good man.’



Tala looked as if he would burst with pride at being such a ‘good man’. Jack reached over and patted him on the back.

‘Tala, you’re a marvel!’ he said. ‘Shake hands!’

This idea delighted Tala enormously. He shook hands very solemnly with everyone, including Oola – and was most gratified when Kiki too bent down and offered him her foot.

‘God save the Queen,’ said Kiki, in her most pompous voice and gave a hollow cough, feeling sure this must be a solemn occasion.



‘So that’s what happened!’ said Jack, handing round more sandwiches.

‘Well, whether this a dream or not – and I’m not really certain about it yet! – it’s pretty exciting. Let’s finish our meal and then do a spot of exploring. We may be out of the frying pan and into the fire, of course!’

‘Gosh – I hope not!’ said Philip, looking round. ‘But I can’t say that I feel awfully hopeful!’



In about ten minutes' time they all felt cheerful enough to want to get of the boat and explore round the cavern they were in. it was not part of the gorge, that was quite clear, for the rocky roof closed over their heads about ten feet above them.

The torches showed this clearly. 'It's a big cave opening into the cliff from the gorge outside that takes the river to the waterfall,' said Jack. 'That much is clear, anyway.'



‘Tala see one, two, three others,’ said Tala, nodding his head.

‘Boat go by fast. Tala no stop.’

‘I see. Yes, I daresay there are quite a lot of caverns in the sides of the gorge,’ said Jack.

‘The thing is – are they just caves – or do they lead anywhere?’



‘We’ll have to find out,’ said Philip. ‘Now, before any of us step out of this boat on to any ledge nearby, please see that you each have your TORCH.’

We’ll leave the lamp burning on the boat – then we can call see it and come back to it safely. But for goodness’ sake keep together if possible.’



Tala had put the boat near to a ledge on the left-hand side of the cavern. He had managed to find a jutting rock nearby and had tied a rope round it. He was terrified that the boat might swing over the pool and be drawn by the current into the river again.

Soon all six were out on the ledge. Tala had a powerful torch that he had found in the boat and proudly flashed it all around. As far as they could see, the cavern stretched a good way back, ending in darkness.



‘Perhaps this quiet pool runs right back and becomes a kind of underground stream,’ suggested Jack hopefully.

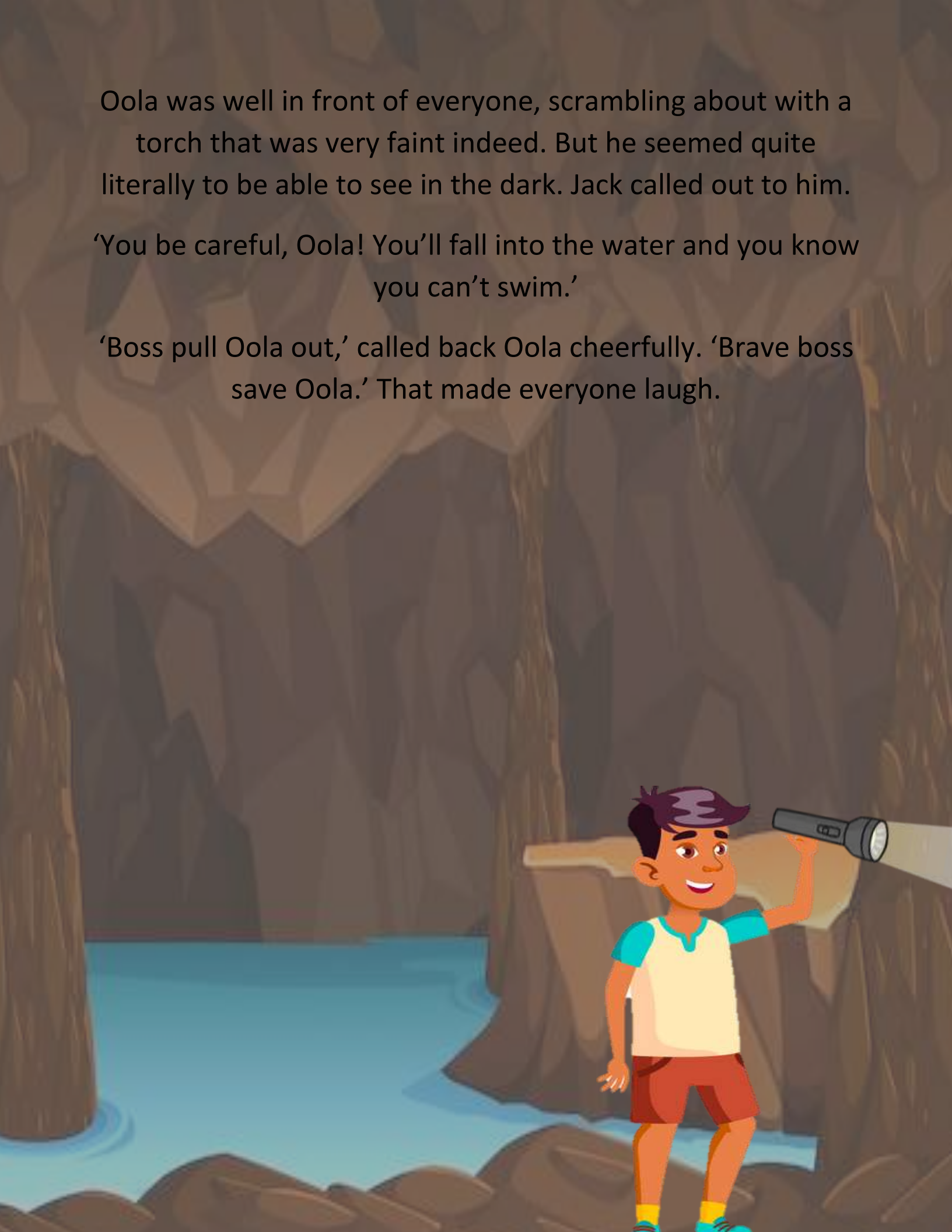
‘What a hope!’ said Philip. ‘Why, we can’t even see a way out for ourselves, let alone the boat. You’re too cheerful, Jack. Pipe down a bit, or you’ll be raising hopes all the time!’

‘Let him say what he likes,’ said Lucy-Ann, flashing her own torch round. ‘I feel as if I want to hear all the cheerfulness possible in this horrible place!’



Oola was well in front of everyone, scrambling about with a torch that was very faint indeed. But he seemed quite literally to be able to see in the dark. Jack called out to him. 'You be careful, Oola! You'll fall into the water and you know you can't swim.'

'Boss pull Oola out,' called back Oola cheerfully. 'Brave boss save Oola.' That made everyone laugh.



They scrambled about, flashing their torches here and there, getting farther and farther towards the back of the cavern.



The water ran back in a wide channel, a rocky ledge beside it on each side. The cavern narrowed at the end. Oola, who was first, shouted back.

‘Ai! Ai! Here is tunnel!’



At once everyone felt excited. A tunnel?
Then surely it must lead somewhere.

The End





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