

Stig sat there playing with them. He seemed to have the idea of fitting one inside the other, but that wouldn't work because they were all exactly the same size. However, one of them that had got a bit pinched did fit into another, which seemed to please him a lot. Barney thought it was a bit childish of Stig to sit there playing, like a baby with plastic bricks, when there was all that work to be done. But Stig went on seriously worrying over the problem of fitting them together. He found that by pinching together the end of a tin he could make it fit into the next one, and soon he had four or five fitted together like a length of stove-pipe.

But what had happened to his legs? He couldn't sit up when he tried to. His legs wouldn't move. Perhaps I've broken them, Barney thought. What shall I do then? He looked at his legs to see if they were all right, and found they were all tangled up with creeper from the face of the cliff. Who tied me up? thought Barney. He kicked his legs to try to get them free, but it was no use, there were yards of creeper trailing down from the cliff. I suppose I got tangled up when I fell, he thought. Expect I would have broken my neck if I hadn't.

Was Stig a person you could just go and play with like the children at the end of the road at home? He had to find out, but he didn't want to go to the chalk pit and find – nothing! He stood with his hands in his pockets in the middle of the lawn, his fingers playing with something hard in the left-hand pocket of his jeans. He remembered something, and pulled out the thing he had in his hand. Of course – the int! He looked at it glinting in the sunlight, like a black diamond with its chipped pattern. He'd seen Stig make it! There was no mistake about that. Of course Stig was real!

It was getting late in the autumn evening, and it was already dark and gloomy in the pit. Barney knew there was a way out right at the other end of the pit, and by going a long way round he could get back to the house. There were rustlings in dry leaves and mud sounds from the middle of bramble patches, but somehow Barney found he didn't mind. He felt the hard stone in his pocket and thought of Stig in his den under the cliff. You weren't likely to find anything stranger than Stig wherever you looked. And, well, Stig was his friend.

He set off running, back to the garden. Presents for Stig! When you visited people this time of year you always brought something from the garden: tomatoes you couldn't bottle or apples you hadn't room to store. He looked round the big old apple tree for windfalls. There were some big ones, difficult to manage without a basket, but he stuffed them into his shirt, making sure there weren't any wasps in them first. What else? He saw a line of carrots – his favourite fruit! He was allowed to pull up carrots, they were good for his teeth, so he heaved up a few good-sized ones and rubbed the earth off with his fingers. Then he had an idea and ran to the tool-shed where he found a ball of garden string. It was all right just to borrow it. Back he ran again, across the garden, over the fence, across the paddock, over into the corpse, and through the brambles and dead leaves to the edge of the pit.

The Thing sitting in the corner seemed to be interested. It got up and moved towards Barney into the light. Barney was glad to see it was Somebody after all. Funny way to dress though, he thought, rabbit-skins round the middle and no shoes or socks. 'Oh pu!' said Barney, 'I can't reach my feet. You do it, Stig!' He handed the knife to Stig.

Far below was the bottom of the pit. The dump. Barney could see strange bits of wreckage among the moss and elder bushes and nettles. Was that the steering wheel of a ship? The tail of an aeroplane? At least there was a real bicycle. Barney felt sure he could make it go if only he could get at it. They didn't let him have a bicycle.

That night he kept the int under his pillow, and thought of Stig out there in the pit sleeping on his bed of bracken and old newspapers. He wished he lived all the time at Granny's house so that he could get to know Stig. He had to go back the day after tomorrow. Never mind, he'd visit Stig in the morning.

'Have a carrot, Stig!' called Barney. 'For you,' he said, pointing to Stig. 'To eat,' he added. 'Good for your teeth!' he said, making biting movements. Stig leapt at the carrots as they swung past, caught them, looked at them closely, smelt them, then put one in his mouth and crunched it. He looked up at Barney, smiling with his mouth full, to show that he liked his present, then made signs which clearly meant that Barney was to come down.