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Opening extract from

Banana Bunch

Written by

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FOREWORD

Being asked to write the foreword for this book is a real privilege. These heart-warming stories about the mischievous adventures of a family of monkeys and their covert endeavours are enhanced by incredibly delightful illustrations by Linden Hare, which both my three young children and I thoroughly enjoyed.

As a parent, Winston's Wish and Tŷ Hafan charities are very close to my heart as they offer so much valuable support and comfort to so many young people.

These stories, affectionately dedicated to a dear friend in hospital, have left me feeling truly inspired. Dawn's initial "one-off" card to cheer her friend Sheila has, through a huge collective effort, been published for many others to share and enjoy.

Stephen Terry, The Hardwick

Sunday 25th March

Dear Granny Millicent,

I am most awfully sorry to have to tell you that the magic carpet proved a little more troublesome than we had expected.

With great skill Marcel (you will remember that he flew our aeroplane) managed to persuade the carpet to take off for a test run. At first, everyone seemed to be having tremendous fun as the carpet zoomed vertically upwards at a positively exhilarating speed.

Shortly after this Marcel shouted down that he couldn't find the steering wheel.

I'm sure you can imagine my feelings as I watched them all tumble to the ground when the carpet made a particularly sharp turn in mid-air.

I am sending you a photograph of the wounded heroes. They have all asked me to tell you that falling off was really quite good fun, and that they don't mind their injuries at all.

They do, though, feel dreadfully bad that most of them landed on top of Sebastian who had remained on the ground to guard the banana supply during the test flight. Thankfully Sebastian was only slightly squashed. The bananas, though, suffered rather badly.

Any further banana delivery attempts are clearly out of the question for the next week or so, but never fear.

I have been in touch with our monkey relatives in Wales and they are keen to set up a Welsh branch of The Banana Bunch. They have offered to take over banana delivery duty until the English team have recovered.

Lots of love, Marigold

THE DAFFODIL HOUSE
SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN

Wednesday 28th March

Dear Grandma Millicent,

Thank you so much for all of your letters. Your trip to Fiji sounds brilliant. I can hardly wait to see the photos of Grandpa Merlin para-sailing behind the boat.

Has Marigold told you that we have been asked to take over the duties of the English branch of The Banana Bunch temporarily? We are so pleased to be able to help. And, while I wouldn't dream of criticising Marigold and her family, I did have to laugh when I heard that they had tried to use a second-hand magic carpet!

Now that the Welsh branch of The Banana Bunch are in charge I can positively guarantee that Sheila's long-delayed bananas will finally be delivered.

Our plan is very simple. We have arranged to borrow a helicopter from our friends at the SMS (that's the Special Monkey Squadron, just in case you didn't know).

Luckily for us, Murdoch gained his Pilot's Licence several years ago by means of a correspondence course. He is absolutely confident that he will be able to keep the helicopter hovering over the roof of the hospital while Mortimer and Miranda abseil down ropes with rucksacks full of best quality bananas. Bruiser is so excited at the prospect of being the navigator.

The moment the folks at the hospital hear the rotor blades the first delivery of health-giving bananas will be only minutes away.

Positively foolproof.

I will write tomorrow to tell you of our success.

Love and hugs, Magnolia and the family

THE DAFFODIL HOUSE
SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN

Thursday 29th March

Dear Grandma Millicent,

It pains me to have to tell you that things did not go entirely to plan. I am beginning to suspect that this secret banana delivery lark is more complicated than it seems at first glance.

Much to his surprise Murdoch found the helicopter controls the teensiest bit challenging. It seems that helicopters were not covered during his correspondence course.

Everyone on board was a little surprised too. They had not realised that a helicopter could fly upside down.

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But things were getting better and Murdoch undoubtedly would have got the hang of the controls if the helicopter had not run into that inconveniently placed radio mast.

After that things went from bad to worse.

I am quite sure that the SMS must have a few spare helicopter rotor blades lying around somewhere, and will be able to fix the helicopter with no difficulty at all, but they are making a most unreasonable fuss about Murdoch's little accident.

I am sure you will be as shocked as I was to hear that my darling husband Bruiser, together with Murdoch, Mortimer and Miranda have all been sent to jail. Outrageous!

But never fear. We Welsh monkeys are extremely resourceful. I confidently predict that they will all be home soon.

In the meantime, while they are away, I am working on a new plan...

Love and hugs, Magnolia