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Opening extract from

The One Hundred and One Dalmatians

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EGMONT LUCKY COIN

Our story began over a century ago, when seventeen-year-old Egmont Harald Petersen found a coin in the street.

He was on his way to buy a flyswatter, a small hand-operated printing machine that he then set up in his tiny apartment.

The coin brought him such good luck that today Egmont has offices in over 30 countries around the world. And that lucky coin is still kept at the company's head offices in Denmark.

The Happy Couples

Not long ago, there lived in London a young married couple of Dalmatian dogs named Pongo and Missis Pongo. (Missis had added Pongo's name to her own on their marriage, but was still called Missis by most people.) They were lucky enough to own a young married couple of humans named Mr and Mrs Dearly, who were gentle, obedient and unusually intelligent – almost canine at times. They understood quite a number of barks: the barks for 'Out, please!', 'In, please!', 'Hurry up with my dinner!' and 'What about a walk?' And even when they could not understand, they could often guess – if looked at soulfully or scratched by an eager paw. Like many other much-loved humans, they believed that they owned their dogs, instead of realising that their dogs owned them. Pongo and Missis found this touching and amusing, and let their pets think it was true.

Mr Dearly, who had an office in the City, was particularly good

at arithmetic. Many people called him a wizard of finance – which is not the same thing as a wizard of magic, though sometimes fairly similar. At the time when this story starts he was rather unusually rich for a rather unusual reason. He had done the Government a great service (something to do with getting rid of the National Debt) and, as a reward, had been let off his Income Tax for life. Also the Government had lent him a small house on the Outer Circle of Regent's Park – just the right house for a man with a wife and dogs.

Before their marriages, Mr Dearly and Pongo had lived in a bachelor flat, where they were looked after by Mr Dearly's old nurse, Nanny Butler. Mrs Dearly and Missis had also lived in a bachelor flat (there are no such things as spinster flats) where they were looked after by Mrs Dearly's old nurse, Nanny Cook. The dogs and their pets met at the same time and shared a wonderfully happy double engagement, but they were all a little worried about what was to happen to Nanny Cook and Nanny Butler. It would be all right when the Dearlys started a family, particularly if it could be twins, with one twin for each Nanny, but, until then, what were the Nannies going to do? For though they could cook breakfast and provide meals on trays (meals called 'A nice egg by the fire') neither of them was capable of running a smart little house

in Regent's Park, where the Dearlys hoped to invite their friends to dinner.

And then something happened. Nanny Cook and Nanny Butler met and, after a few minutes of deep suspicion, took a great liking to each other. And they had a good laugh about their names.

'What a pity we're not a real cook and butler,' said Nanny Cook.

'Yes, that's what's needed now,' said Nanny Butler.

And then they both together had the Great Idea: Nanny Cook would train to be a real cook and Nanny Butler would train to be a real butler. They would start the very next day and be fully trained by the wedding.

'But you'll have to be a parlour maid, really,' said Nanny Cook.

'Certainly not,' said Nanny Butler. 'I haven't the figure for it. I shall be a real butler – *and* I shall valet Mr Dearly, which will need no training as I've done it since the day he was born.'

And so when the Dearlys and the Pongos got back from their joint honeymoon, there were Nanny Cook and Nanny Butler, fully trained, ready to welcome them into the little house facing Regent's Park.

It came as something of a shock that Nanny Butler was wearing trousers.

'Wouldn't a black dress, with a nice, frilly apron be better?' suggested Mrs Dearly – rather nervously, because Nanny Butler had never been *her* Nanny.

'You can't be a butler without trousers,' said Nanny Butler, firmly. 'But I'll get a frilly apron tomorrow. It will add a note of originality.' It did.

The Nannies said they no longer expected to be called Nanny, and were now prepared to be called by their surnames, in the correct way. But though you can call a cook 'Cook', the one thing you cannot call a butler is 'Butler', so in the end both Nannies were just called 'Nanny, darling', as they always had been.

After the dogs and the Dearlys had been back from their honeymoons for several happy weeks, something even happier happened. Mrs Dearly took Pongo and Missis across the park to St John's Wood, where they called on their good friend, the Splendid Veterinary Surgeon. She came back with the wonderful news that the Pongos were shortly to become parents. Puppies were due in a month.

The Nannies gave Missis a big lunch to keep her strength up, and Pongo a big lunch in case he should feel neglected (as the fathers of expected puppies sometimes do), and then both dogs had a long afternoon nap on the best sofa. By the time Mr Dearly

came home from business they were wide awake and asking for a walk.

'Let us *all* go for a walk, to celebrate,' said Mr Dearly, after hearing the good news. Nanny Cook said the dinner was well ahead and Nanny Butler said she could do with a bit of exercise, so off they all set along the Outer Circle.

The Dearlys led the way, Mrs Dearly very pretty in the green going-away suit from her trousseau and Mr Dearly in his old tweed jacket which was known as his dog-walker. (Mr Dearly wasn't exactly handsome but he had the kind of face you don't get tired of.) Then came the Pongos, looking noble; they could both have become Champions if Mr Dearly had not felt that dog-shows would bore them – and him. They had splendid heads, fine shoulders, strong legs and straight tails. The spots on their bodies were jet black and mostly the size of a two-shilling piece; they had smaller spots on their heads, legs and tails. Their noses and eye-rims were black. Missis had a most winning expression. Pongo, though a dog born to command, had a twinkle in his eye. They walked side by side with great dignity, only putting the Dearlys on the leash to lead them over crossings. Nanny Cook (plump) in her white overall, and Nanny Butler (plumper) in a well-cut tail coat and trousers, plus dainty apron, completed the procession.