

The doctor by Granny Pearce drew a quick, sharp breath. Sandy moved her left arm—the one that was not broken—from below the covers and let her hand dangle down, feeling, as she always did in the mornings, for Lob’s furry head. The doctor nodded slowly.

“All right,” he whispered. “Let him go to the bedside. But keep a hold of him.”

Granny Pearce and Lob moved to the bedside. Now she could see Bert and Jean, white-faced and shocked, on the far side of the bed. But she didn’t look at them. She looked at the smile on her granddaughter’s face as the groping fingers found Lob’s wet ears and gently pulled them. “Good boy,” whispered Sandy, and fell asleep again.

Granny Pearce led Lob out into the passage again. There she let go of him, and he ran off swiftly down the stairs. She would have followed him, but Bert and Jean had come out into the passage, and she spoke to Bert fiercely.

“I don’t know why you were so foolish as not to bring the dog before! Leaving him to find the way here himself—”

“But, Mother!” said Jean Pengelly. “That can’t have been Lob. What a chance to take! Suppose Sandy hadn’t—” She stopped, with her handkerchief pressed to her mouth.

“Not Lob? I’ve known that dog nine years! I suppose I ought to know my own granddaughter’s dog?”

“Listen, Mother,” said Bert. “Lob was killed by the same truck that hit Sandy. Don found him—when he went to look for Sandy’s schoolbag. He was—he was dead. Ribs all smashed. No question of that. Don told me on the phone—he and Will Hoskins rowed a half mile out to sea and sank the dog with a lump of concrete tied to his collar. Poor old boy. Still—he was getting on. Couldn’t have lasted forever.”

“*Sank him at sea?* Then what—?”

Slowly old Mrs. Pearce, and then the other two, turned to look at the trail of dripping-wet footprints that led down the hospital stairs.

In the Pengellys’ garden they have a stone, under the palm tree. It says: “Lob. Sandy’s dog. Buried at sea.” ☹