Sprat Morrison

CARIBBEAN CONTEMPORARY CLASSICS

Sprat Morrison follows the wonderful adventures of a bubbly young boy in Papine, a suburb of Kingston, Jamaica. Through a series of delightful episodes, we learn with Sprat, laugh with him, share in his discoveries, feel his disappointments and purr in his excitement, all the while knowing that, like Junjo, we are so happy to call him our friend.

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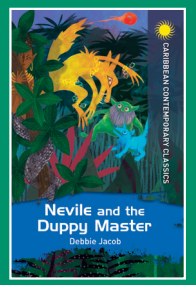

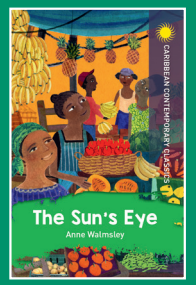

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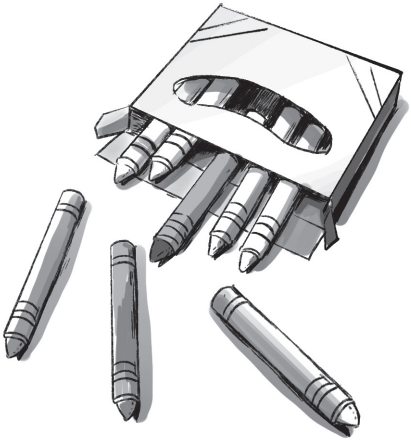

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Jean D' Costa

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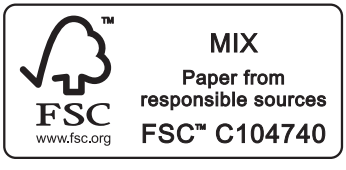


Map of Jamaica
Key
Regions
Capital city
Towns
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Sea
Main roads
Mountains
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Montego Bay
Lucea
HANOVER
Birches Hill
A1
WESTMORELAND
Orange Hill
Savanna-la-Mar
A2
Great River
ST. JAMES
TRELAWNY
A1
Cockpit Country
Gibraltar
Harbour Mountains
ST. ANN
A3
ST. MARY
Rio Nuevo
Highgate
Wag Water River
A3
A1
ST. CATHERINE
Rio Cobre
ST. ELIZABETH
Black River
Santa Cruz Mountains
MANCHESTER
CLARENDON
Milk River
A2
Salt River
Spanish Town
Half Way Tree
Kingston
KINGSTON
Papine
ST. ANDREW
Stony Hill
Blue Mountains
Swift River
Blue Mountain Peak
PORTLAND
Port Antonio
Rio Grande
John Crow Mountains
ST. THOMAS
Morant Point
Morant Bay
Mavis Bank
N
0
20 km
Caribbean Sea

Caribbean Contemporary Classics

Introduction

Over the last century, Caribbean authors, overflowing with stories about the life and society around them, have written many great and enduring works of literature. The Caribbean novels in this *Caribbean Contemporary Classics* collection were written from around the mid-1900s to the present day, and we are proud to publish them. They serve as unique and personal records and are also works of art, running parallel to what historians say about the region, and revealing to wider audiences the depth and brilliancy of generations of Caribbean writers.

The novels in this collection are re-issued in their original forms even though some words and phrases may seem derogatory in the eyes of modern readers. Some words have been partially redacted, but none have been removed. We acknowledge the sensitivities of persons who have experienced discrimination especially in the verbal form and would like to state without reservation that the publisher in no way supports discrimination against any persons or groups of persons by the publication of these works. As in all works of literature, the language used in these novels reflects the authors' experiences and insights and forms an integral part of the text they set out to produce.

As the publisher, we have followed a number of principles in bringing these works to a wider audience. First, it is important to us to allow readers to interpret the authors' words in the context of the story as a whole, reflected through the readers' own experience, but without trying to dictate what that interpretation should be. Second, we respect the authors' integrity and their intellectual property. Third, we believe it to be important to experience works of art from specific geographic and historical contexts in their original form. The choice, as we see it, is whether to publish the book or not, rather than whether to change its language or not. In the present series, we have opted to publish a series of books which we believe to be significant, valued and important parts of the canon. They are rich, engaging and luminous works, in the authors' authentic voices, and we offer them to readers in the hope that they will delight, entertain and inform.

CHAPTER 1

Fire

HE WAS LATE for school again. He was a fat, untidy little boy known to most people as Sprat. One day at the Papine primary school Sprat Morrison ate forty cents' worth of sprats: his lunch, Alvin Barrett's lunch, Desmond Harris's lunch, and Desmond's sister's lunch. It was the result of an elaborate bet as to who would get to sit at the back of Miss Watkins's health science lesson. Of course, Desmond's sister told all, and a caning was handed out to all the other participants, a special extra being reserved for the main criminal. Shirley Harris, as chief witness for the prosecution, was let off with a scolding on gambling and getting mixed up in 'bad boys' games'. Miss Watkins spoke for fifteen minutes at prayers the next day on the sins of gluttony and dishonesty, and the news of Sprat's performance spread through the school.

The road down to the Papine school is long, hot, and winding. Sprat left the house at a run and decided that this morning was a shortcut morning. This means diving under a fence behind the burnt-out Chinese shop, and sliding on your behind down a steep bank into a shrubby slope where the Papine goats spend a lot of their spare time. These goats knew Sprat well, and

might even be said to be his friends, which was just as well on that particular day.

The hills around Papine were burnt dry in the hot sun. No rain had fallen for weeks and weeks. There were black scars on all the hills where bushfires had been started by the March sun. So far there had been no fire on the shortcut hill, but few trees were still alive and the only plants remaining to break Sprat's long slide were some unpleasant roastpork cacti. Sprat knew by experience that rolling into a clump of roastpork would only make a bad day worse. He decided instead to grab at a matronly black and white goat who was peacefully eating whatever it is that goats manage to find in such places. She had no idea of the oncoming disaster.

The slope was as slippery as glass, and Sprat found himself going faster and faster. He could do nothing but clutch his schoolbag and shut his eyes. Stones and stumps of dead plants bruised him and stabbed through his khaki trousers. It was as well that his mother could not see him just then. He was nearing the bottom of the slope and the cacti were rushing up at him. Just in time he flung himself aside, and clasped the astonished goat around the neck.

Now this goat was very good-natured as goats go. Suddenly her quiet morning was shattered, and she was rolling, sliding, kicking and wriggling her way into the cactus patch with a plump Sprat Morrison clutching tightly to her. She had good lungs, and used them. In

fact she bawled long and loud, and for a Papine goat used to scaring off dogs and goat thieves, that is very loud. Still, she did not butt Sprat, not even when they landed together in the cactus patch, with Sprat on top and the cactus underneath.

While they picked themselves up and shook off the dust of their travels down the hillside, other goats took up the alarm. Perhaps they thought she had seen Mr Four Finger Jones, the butcher, coming up the path. The Papine goats knew this gentleman well, and preferred to avoid him. The result is that the Papine herd has flourished even in the height of the beef shortage, and their legal owners have several times, I fear, sold the same goat to more than one butcher. For this they cannot be blamed entirely, as the herd has its own ways of fooling and intimidating human beings. There was, however, one human being whom they could never get around, and that was ancient Mother Rebecca Silvera who lived just beyond the cactus patch. She was a vegetarian, some said an obeah woman; she talked to the goats, to the trees, to her cat and dog, and occasionally to the Roman Catholic padre from the university. She was always pleased when Four Finger came to collect the goats he had bought, and failed to find as many as half of them. She would come out into her tidy little yard, sweeping and humming and grinning to herself. Not a goat would be in sight, and Four Finger would go off up the path muttering. But

if a goat should cry in distress, then Mother Rebecca Silvera would appear brandishing the broom, shouting in Spanish, English, and in something else which she called the 'language of truth'. In the past she drove off at least two different sets of goat thieves, men from Greenwich Town with machetes and butcher's knives.

Sprat had barely finished knocking the dirt and dead leaves out of his schoolbag when Mother Rebecca Silvera appeared over the crest of the hill. She had come up one hundred yards of steep path in less than a minute, and she was not out of breath. She was also about seventy years old and, in the eyes of Sprat Morrison and his contemporaries, nearer to two hundred.

'So,' she said, arms akimbo.

There was an uncomfortable silence. Mother Rebecca Silvera had few words for her own kind, even something as untamed and uncivilised as a small boy.

'Goat tormentor.'

Mother Rebecca's eyes were small and sharp. Sprat fumbled with the strap of his bag and wished she would go away. She was standing right in the middle of the narrow path, and there was no room to get around her. In any case, Sprat had no wish to offend so important a person as Mother Rebecca Silvera, and his knowledge of female ways was limited to his experience of his mother, Miss Watkins, and the girls at school.

He cleared his throat.

'Sorry, ma'am.'

'Are you apologising to me, boy? What about this innocent goat you have been tormenting?'

Sprat shuffled his feet. He thought he could hear the school bell, and prayed hard that it was not the second bell before roll call.

'Didn't mean to trouble the goat, ma'am,' he said. 'She just let me hold on when I fell down, and we sort of rolled down together.' He peeped up at Mother Rebecca.

To his surprise she was grinning at him – a cheerful, toothless grin of good-natured friendship. The goat had stopped trembling, and was nibbling casually at the hem of Mother Rebecca Silvera's faded dress.

'It's all right, boy,' she said, 'you're not as stupid as you look. This goat has spoken for you. She says you are a good boy – just a little careless and late for school again. If you run all the way from here, now, you will reach before second bell.'

It was while Sprat was searching for his pencil and composition book after prayers that morning, that he wondered how Mother Rebecca Silvera knew that he was late, and knew that he would get into class before second bell if he ran all the way down the path. He wondered if she really was an obeah woman, and if she could read minds, and understand animal talk. He thought that perhaps he had better not go down the short cut again, and vowed inwardly to be at school on time for the rest of his life.

It was one of those dull, ordinary days at the Papine primary school. There were no out-of-the-ordinary fights during recess. At lunchtime, Mrs MacKenzie, the mother of one of the 'worst' boys in the school, came to see Miss Watkins about a caning which had been given Junjo MacKenzie the week before. To everyone's disappointment (especially Junjo's) she thanked Miss Watkins profusely, and said that it had 'calmed him down' remarkably. She also enrolled the ungrateful Junjo in the holiday classes in English and Arithmetic, and gave Miss Watkins a free hand to do whatever she wanted with Junjo.

'These boys all need to be kept busy, Mrs MacKenzie,' said Miss Watkins. 'Young people have too much energy for us older people. Why don't you let him go camping sometime?'

Camping was a new thing at school, and no one had ever been to a camp. Rumour had it that you had to make your own bed, sweep floors, cook, do PT every morning at the hideous hour of *7* o'clock, and – horror of horrors – pass tests. Nobody wanted to go. Nobody knew what the tests were like, and nobody was going to find out.

On the way home that afternoon Sprat thrashed this out with Desmond and Alvin.

'I hear you have to read compasses and work out sums,' said Alvin. '*I'm* going to stay with my grandmother in Hanover next holiday.'

He sounded smug. The others had no relatives in the country to escape to, and so they got cross with Alvin.

'Hanover is just bush,' said Desmond. 'I bet your grandmother never saw electric light in her life. I bet you spend the whole time chopping wood and catching fire in the wood stove. She's going to make you carry clothes to the river and help her wash them. I wouldn't want to go to Hanover. I don't like country life.'

As all this was perfectly true, Alvin had no choice but to defend the honour of his grandmother with his fists and a few well-aimed blows with his ruler. Fighting with rulers was unfair, and before long he was running up the road pursued by Desmond and Sprat. Alvin and Desmond were taller than Sprat, and much skinnier. Very soon they disappeared around a corner, and Sprat was left puffing along behind. Then he saw the smoke.

It was coming from the brow of the shortcut hill. It was brownish grey, and a heat haze danced madly below it. It looked like a bushfire, and a bad one. There was no one in sight, up and down the road. No one lives near to the Papine school – no one, that is, but Mother Rebecca Silvera, and she lives alone in a small wooden house on the steep slope of shortcut hill.

Sprat stumped along the road, hot and vaguely cross. Alvin and Desmond were by now out of sight and hearing. It was just like them to run off and leave him, just because he was fat and couldn't run up hills like Mother Rebecca Silvera, and anyway she was probably an obeah woman. Mother Rebecca.

He stopped and looked across the rolling hillsides towards the fire. He wondered if it was as big as it looked, and if she had seen it. As he paused and listened, the sound of a crackling, snapping, quarrelling bushfire came clearly across the still hollow of the valley. It sounded very near, even though he could see that it was on the far side of shortcut hill. A bushfire in the Blue Mountains is usually regarded as an act of God, which God – rather than the fire brigade – will deal with in His own good time. There are few houses in the area, and unless a large settlement is threatened, no one even thinks of calling the brigade.

To this day, Sprat does not know why he suddenly left the road and went up and over the ridge towards the fire. He was not a particularly brave boy, nor even an inquisitive boy. He always came in last in flat races at the Papine school, and his mother knew that carrying the market basket from the bus stop to the kitchen door was enough to melt Sprat like ice-cream in the sun. He never went to see the remains of any of the numerous car crashes on the main road from Papine to Gordon Town – at least, not until the crowd was too thick for him to see anything at all. He was never brave at the dentist's. He went up the hill, perhaps, because he did not stop to think.

He sprang off the road and up the steep bank. The earth was cracked and crumbling from the intense heat and drought of the last two months. Such vegetation

as had survived was brittle-dry, splintering, ready to burst into showers of flames and sparks upwards into the brilliant air. The path marches up, around, down and up again on its way from the road towards Mother Rebecca Silvera's house. Fortunately there was no wind in the valley that afternoon, but as he ran, Sprat could feel from time to time a hot, searing breath that dried his lungs as he gasped for air. Mother Rebecca Silvera was nowhere in sight.

At last he came suddenly to the brow of the hill, from which he could see the little old house of faded boards and cracking walls. Then he looked up. In the cactus and thorn patch where he had had his morning's adventure with the goat and Mother Rebecca, was a towering, roaring fire. It was barred from climbing the slope up to the village above by the twenty-five yards of bare earth and shale down which Sprat had slid that morning. The fire was working its way greedily down through the dried thorn trees and dying cacti to Mother Rebecca's cottage.

For a long moment Sprat was held motionless by the fierce beauty of the fire. In all the wide valley of the Hope River it seemed to be the only living thing. Straight up into the deepening sky it rose, flashing vermilion and painful white, and eating its way slowly, slowly down the hillside towards the silent cottage, and towards him. He drew his gaze away from it and looked around. The only sound was the snapping and roaring

of the fire, the only movement the shooting of flames and the slow toppling into a heap of sparks and cinders of first one tree and then another.

At this point Sprat should have gone home. No one was in the little house. There was nothing to be gained by staying, for what could a fat boy of ten, neither brave nor swift, do to save a wooden house from a hungry bushfire in the month of March? He was on the point of turning away when a faint noise made itself heard through the many voices of the fire. It was a cry for help, weak, but clear, and it came from across the belt of fire.

'Who's that?' shouted Sprat. He felt frightened all of a sudden.

There was no answer.

He strained to hear, but there was nothing. Then it came again: faint, fainter – cries that sounded like 'Help'. He could not be sure.

By now the fire was a solid wall between him and the far slope. There was only one way across: to run down to the bottom of the ridge, and climb the rocky face of the hill around and behind the fire. Again he did not stop to think that climbing up that cliff of shattered rock would be much simpler than climbing back again. Throwing his schoolbag aside, he darted down the hill.

Even without the weight of the bag to hinder him, Sprat found it no easy matter to climb that rock strewn hillside. In this part of the Hope Valley, the land falls

in a series of sudden escarpments down to the level of the river. The village of Papine perches on the highest level, some four or five hundred feet above the winding, sandy bed of that temperamental stream. The outward faces of the scarps are little more than cliffs, with steep falls of shale and sand down which the children of the valley can go sliding. A few slopes – such as the one up which Sprat was toiling like a tired fly – were strewn with boulders of all sizes, and were dangerous places for even experienced rock-climbers. Sprat did not know this, though he had a vague idea that his mother would not be pleased with this excuse for being late for supper. An inner instinct warned him to distribute his weight slowly and evenly as he moved from foothold to foothold up to the top of the precipitous slope.

He heard the cry only once after he began to climb, and he dared not look up to the top until he stood on firmer ground. On his right the fire continued to blaze and crackle. Sometimes a gust of intense heat swept over him as he climbed, reminding him that the fire was by no means ready to die down. Once in a difficult place he had to creep towards it several feet to find a way up. It seemed to bend over him menacingly, but there was nothing on that rocky face to burn, and he made his way after about fifteen minutes of sweaty, sticky climbing to the top of the rockslide.

There are two huge boulders set deeply into the hillside at this point. Sprat sat down to catch his

breath, and as he did so, he saw with the tail of his eye a wisp of faded cloth behind the larger boulder. He crept around and saw an astonishing sight.

Curled into the sheltering hollow of the great stone was the very goat with whom he had slid into the cactus that morning. She was looking more than usually self-satisfied, and nestled into her side, fast asleep, were two very small kids, one pure white, the other as black as night. On the other side of the goat, propped against the outcrop of the boulder, lay Mother Rebecca Silvera. She did not stir, and her eyes were closed. Sprat's heart contracted sharply in his chest. He felt sick, and suddenly tired.

The mother goat nudged him gently. This calmed him, and he looked back down the rockface which he had climbed. No hope lay there. He himself could hardly climb down in the failing light, and he would certainly never get an unconscious old woman down there, let alone a mother goat and two newborn kids. He looked up. The scarp rose smooth and steep above him. He could just see the outline of the ruined shop high above against the sky, and the back of the shelter at the bus terminus. He would have to cross the upper slope where the fire started, and climb up the shale to where the shortcut drives down the bank below the abandoned shop.

The fire had nearly died down on the higher slopes of shortcut hill, but he could not hold on to the glowing

stumps to steady himself as he made his way very gingerly across the face of the hill. When Desmond and Alvin heard of his adventure the next day, this amused them very much, and Alvin laughed out in class twice after passing around a drawing on the back page of his arithmetic book, showing a singed and sooty Sprat lifting his feet with exaggerated care as he walked over glowing coals. The title of the picture, 'Bush fried Sprat', was Desmond's contribution, for which he and Alvin were sent to sit on the bench outside Miss Watkins's office during recess, where they wrote out the whole of the Twenty-third Psalm in a shaky round hand.

But neither now nor then did Sprat Morrison waste a second thinking of anything but how to make his way inch by inch, and not to stop until he had got to the safety of the deserted shop above.

Suddenly he came to a place where he could go neither up nor around. Here the fire had burnt a small thicket of old thorn trees to the ground. About three square feet of glowing embers lay in front of him: just where the slope was steepest. He thought of shouting for help from this point, but a glance upwards to the skyline showed him the futility of that, no one could see him or hear him from the road. He would have to climb all the way, or else spend the night very uncomfortably right where he was. He looked back at the twin boulders, and saw Mother Rebecca lying motionless as before.

It was a choice between going on and staying there: he braced himself, and jumped. Luckily for him, his knees got the worst of it, and as they were pretty tough and horny the pain was not too bad. He landed with his hands and chest in soft ashes, now cool and fine as talcum powder. A desperate scrabbling upwards, and he was beyond the sparks and cinders at the very rim of the burnt area. All that he had to do now was to climb the last twenty yards or so of shaly slope, up to the fence of the old shop.

I don't know why, but the last of anything is always the worst. Sprat was by now very tired, of course, and this was not like other days when he and Alvin and Desmond raced each other to the top. In any case, he himself preferred to go *down* the shortcut, and never *up* unless he had to. The sky was darkening as he climbed wearily up the bank, and crawled under the fence at the back of the shop. On the slope down below him, a light wind teased the clouds of ash into whirling, ghostly shapes.

The street was nearly empty. There were a few parked taxis, the kind that take market people up to Guava Ridge and Mavis Bank. At the bus terminus was a bus, empty save for the driver who was eating a patty from a paper bag, and reading a newspaper. Sprat wasted no time on him. He forced his trembling legs to carry him past the bus shelters to the line of little shops that is the heart of Papine. One of these sells patties, raisin

bread, coco bread and bun. It was well known to Sprat and the children of Papine. At weekends it sold jerk pork brought all the way from Port Antonio. It was ruled over by a stringy woman of indefinite age and immense popularity, known simply as Aunty. On the rare occasions when she quarrelled with anyone, she would call on the name of her dead husband, Greaves, but no one ever called her Mrs Greaves.

Sprat's breath was quite gone by the time he stepped into the tiny shop. Aunty was busy at the till, and her older son Arnold was writing slowly and painfully on a slate as she called out the day's takings to him.

'What is it, child?' she said glancing briefly at Sprat.

He did not answer, and she shut the drawer and looked at him. Arnold, who was not very bright and generally took life with philosophic calm, was staring at Sprat, open-mouthed. And well he might, for Sprat was covered with ashes from head to foot, his hands and face were streaked with cinders, his clothes were torn, and he was gasping as though he would burst.

'The Lord save me but it's Sprat,' exclaimed Aunty. 'You're sick, child? Don't sit there like a fool, boy,' – this was to the slow-witted Arnold – 'go bring my white rum from the closet, now! – and a towel, and the ointment I use for burns, and mix a glass of strong sugar and water. Come on, hurry up, Arnold!'

While Arnold was lumbering down the steep back stairs that led from the shop to the rooms below where

Aunty and her six children lived, she made Sprat sit down on the stool in the shop and lean against the counter.

'Not me – not me – Mother ...'

'I'll send for your mother, Sprat,' said Aunty, misunderstanding him with the stupidity that only adults can have. He got up and almost shook her, tugging at her arm.

'Mother Rebecca – down *there* – in the fire, NOW!'

'What d'you mean, boy?' Aunty was getting flustered. 'Arnold! Hurry up! Hurry! The child's mad!'

But Sprat had not climbed all that way over rock and cinders to be delayed by Aunty's ministrations, however well meant. He pulled at her arm again.

'Aunty, I'm all right. It's Mother Rebecca. She is out on the hillside.' He suddenly felt weak in the legs. He wished his father were there instead of Aunty, who was more interested in dusting him off and exclaiming over the state of his clothes than in trying to hear what he was saying.

'Aunty,' he tried again, 'Mother Rebecca is down there by the bushfire. She is lying on the ground, and she didn't answer me at all. Aunty, I think she is dead.'

She stared at him for a long moment, then slowly turned away. She locked the till, and the counter cupboard, took a battered purse and hat from a shelf somewhere behind, and said, 'Don't worry, Sprat, we will go and find her.'

It was not the least part of Aunty's popularity that though she pretended to fuss and quarrel most of the time, she was one of the few people who could help you sensibly and quickly when you got into trouble. She told Arnold to lock up the shop, give Sprat some supper, and go call Mr Morrison.

'And don't you go and frighten Mrs Morrison with any stories. Just tell her he's all right as soon as you get there, and he's having some supper with me. Say I want to see Mr Morrison, and will he kindly step over here. As for you, Sprat Morrison,' the fussing tone crept back into her voice, 'you will do just what I say. Sit down and have some supper, and mind you wash your face before your father gets here. You look like a rolling-calf covered with flour.'

She disappeared quickly into the darkness of the street, and Sprat, too weary to think, followed Arnold down the rickety wooden stairs to Aunty's kitchen.

Some time later Mr Morrison arrived to find out why his errant son preferred to have supper at Aunty's instead of coming home. At about the same time, a little group of men led by Four Finger Jones climbed slowly up the slope, carrying a bundle which was put into a waiting ambulance. At the last minute the bundle tried to sit up, and a cross voice demanded what was this all about, anyway, and why couldn't people leave her alone. After some argument with the nurse who came with the ambulance, Mother Rebecca Silvera

reluctantly agreed to be taken to the hospital where she could be treated and have a rest. At the last minute she caught sight of Aunty peering in from the back of the little crowd around her.

'You. Madam Greaves.' The voice was thin but commanding. 'Over here: I want a word with you.' Aunty came forward with some reluctance. She had, to tell the truth, much the same opinion of Mother Rebecca Silvera as did Sprat and his friends, and she hoped that the old lady had not guessed that she had called for the ambulance. The old eyes were fixed on her face.

'Tell the boy to come and see me on Sunday. And tell him we are grateful. All of us. We will remember.'

Aunty could make little sense of this, and half made up her mind to advise Sprat to stay away from the old woman. But when she got home and began to tell Mr Morrison and a sleepy Sprat what had happened, it slipped out somehow.

'I wonder what she meant by "we"?' said Aunty. 'Nobody lives down there with her.'

'She thinks she's the Queen, Aunty. You should know that.' Mr Morrison laughed and pulled his son out of the deck chair where he sat nodding. 'Come, Sprat. We'd better get home before your mother sends out a search party for us, and before you finish the entire stock of food in this house!'

Arnold, deeply struck by the dramatic nature of Sprat's adventures, had gone completely mad, and

allowed Sprat to eat a boiled egg, a leg of cold chicken, goodness knows how many fried sprats, nearly half a loaf of brown bread with margarine, and several crackers spread with jam. All this was washed down with tamarind drink (Aunty's preserved tamarinds were famous). Sprat was beginning to forget much of what had happened to him that day. His knees were very sore, he was sleepy and he wondered if Aunty and his father would ever stop exclaiming over him and let him go home to bed.

His mother met them as they walked down the dimly lit street to the cottage where the Morrisons lived. Sprat had a sudden sinking feeling as he remembered the school bag abandoned on the hillside, his torn clothes, and his failure to appear at home in time for supper.

'That child is dead tired, Neville Morrison. You should have brought him home long ago. Aunty can talk for ever, you know: you are no match for her.'

In the darkness she squeezed Sprat's hand.

'Come on, Sprat – bath and bed. No homework tonight. I'll give you a letter for Miss Watkins tomorrow.'

Later in the darkness of his little bedroom, Sprat thought how strange it had all been, and how very queer grown-up people were. When he told his mother about his schoolbag and books, she merely said that they would probably be safe and sound where he had

left them, and that a night out in the open would do them less damage than a day in his care. She said that he should certainly go and visit Mother Rebecca and the goats when the former was well again. He fell asleep thinking of Aunty's fresh fried sprats, and wishing that he had been able to eat all that were in the dish.