

# a Short Story

## Memory of a 1928 Summer Holiday

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We were actually  
a family of five



In the 1920s we lived in the Midlands of England, and among our many other relatives we had an Aunt Maud, who lived in Devon at Torquay.

and

We hardly knew Aunt Maud but somehow it was arranged that she would have three of us to stay for two weeks in the summer of 1928. ~~I've never known why,~~ but it was agreed that the three were to be my 13 year-old brother, Robin, my sister, aged 10, and me, aged 8. Robin was a good choice as he was a seasoned traveller, going back and forth to boarding school by train. My sister and I lived very sheltered lives and so far we had never even seen the sea! So we were ecstatic. "How big is it?" we asked. "Huge" they told us and, when we pestered them for more our brothers just said "Wait and see."

So we waited in growing excitement till the day finally came and I can remember the train actually crawling along the Devon coast giving us a grand view of the sea before we even reached Torquay. And here we were, to stay for two weeks!

Aunt Maud had a maid of all work, a local girl, Stacey, who entered heartily into the holiday spirit. For instance, at low tide she showed us tiny crabs skittering sideways in the wet sand, and at high tide she took us, one in either hand, to brave the rougher waves. We had never dreamed the sea would be like this.

Robin had ideas of another sort. To liven things up he wrote a preposterous, nonsensical letter to Aunt Maud from an entirely fictitious person, proposing something totally absurd (probably to her advantage) and got someone good natured to mail this letter to her from a different postmark. It must have been a masterpiece of a phoney letter and Aunt Maud completely fell for it! I can remember how she muttered to herself wondering what this could be all about. Naturally Robin had sworn my sister and me to secrecy and kept us both in the conspiracy until the game was up and everyone had had a good laugh – that is, everyone except Aunt Maud who never could see the joke.

The rest of the holiday has merged in my memory with other seaside holidays but the time now came when we must return home, and what happened now I do remember very clearly.

Aunt Maud had got us to the station in a taxi to wait for the train, when suddenly she remembered she'd left the train tickets on the mantelpiece at home, and I remember this vividly --- at this moment she completely lost her head. She ran distractedly round the platform accosting anyone and everyone, telling them what

⊗ I enclose this copy which the stupid editor messed up trying to make out how there could be more than three children in our family.



she had done. Soon the Station Master came forward and advised her that if she took a taxi now she could get home and be back with the tickets and still be in time for us to catch our train. So off went Aunt Maud in another taxi and we anxiously awaited her return. Alas – precious time had been lost and my aunt returned just in time to see our train – the one to take us on the first leg of our journey north – slowly gathering speed before it disappeared round the bend, leaving us all in awestruck silence ---

But not for long – Now Robin took over and began directing operations, cheering up Aunt Maud, finding a set of train times that would get us home, and informing our parents. I do remember a long day with several changes of trains but with no further mishaps, and Robin occasionally treated us to a slot-machine chocolate bar (as long as his pocket money held out).

By the time we reached Chesterfield, our destination, it was getting dark and as we lived some way out of town we needed another taxi to get home. Robin's pocket money was by now exhausted, but he explained our situation to an understanding taxi driver and at last we were on our way. The few remaining miles sped by and all of a sudden we had arrived home! All the lights went on like a theatrical production, the parents rushed out to greet us and a joyful reunion took place.

I don't remember much after that, but it had been a long day and I'm sure that when I saw my parents I just burst into tears, and so did my sister. Robin had kept our spirits up all day and now it was time for a light snack, and off to bed.

Now wasn't that an unforgettable holiday for two little girls who had always lived such sheltered lives and had never seen the sea!