

Story for performance #71
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The dog's gone to bury its bone and all this time we've been fighting about the smallest and craziest things so you would think we were mad or just like terriers ourselves hanging onto things like grim death and refusing to let go.

Put that down Eric and go and find the dog. It's getting dark and he's too small to be out there and I have no idea what could possibly be keeping him. Now don't get lost. If you are still gone by the time it's dark I'll have to let out the rest of the dogs and they will find you in no time at all, especially if I don't give them their dinner. Look at them. Just like a seething carpet with swirling patterns. Heaven help you if you trip and fall into them at dinnertime. Now what are you waiting for. Off you go. I can hear the men putting the horses into the stable already.

Praise be at last he's gone! Now what's up with you Harry? Lift up your head. Have you something in your ear and it's wriggling about? Well I can't blame you for screaming so. Just wait and I'll warm a little oil. Take some milk from the pot on the hod Winnie, and pour it over those left over crusts for your grandfather. The poor old devil is as toothless as a tooth fairy at a footman's picnic. Hold on to your stool Harry I haven't forgotten you. The oil is warm and I have to check that it's not hot. I don't want to boil your brains, oh not in a fit. Here hold your head as far over as you can. Rest it on my lap. There. Just a little oil. Oh my Lord. What a huge spider. It looks far too big and fat to have fitted into such a small lad's ear hole. Hold still and keep as quiet as you can. He won't bite you. He's more pleased to be rid of you than you of him. Voila! I've caught him in my tea towel and I'll put him outside. No I'm not going to kill him or her or it. He's one of God's creatures and he's got his work cut out catching flies and bugs that would nibble us in the night. No Harry he won't come and crawl back into your ear when you are asleep. I could tell that he didn't really like being there in the first place, as good and well behaved a lad as you are. He must have mistaken your ear hole for a knothole in that big chair you were sleeping in this afternoon. Well go and have a look then. Turn the chair over and look in all the

nooks and crannies. No I can't. Ask Winnie nicely and she will help you. Better still ask your Grandfather: he has had more to do with spiders than the Heavenly Father himself.

What on earth is all that racket? The dogs have run off towards the garden gate as if Christian himself were calling for help from the murky depths of the Slough of Despond or the rowdy excesses of *Vanity Fair*. Well just look at that. Don't tell me he's going to knock on the door. Gather round me children and Grandfather fetch that copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* from behind the pantry door. The big leather book with that shiny blue ribbon mark. We'll give him what for won't we children?

Good afternoon, Vicar. Yes it has been marvellous weather. Has your horse dropped a shoe. My Errol will fix it for you I'm sure. What is it? Yes that sounds like my boys. Did they do any damage. No I don't think so. It's more likely that the dog was burying a bone not digging them up. I'm sure the boys meant no harm. They often play hide fox and all after amongst the tombstones. They're just boys. What? Sword fighting. Not with...no, no surely not. And where are the boys now? Yes they can run rather fast. Sometimes when they hide from me they run into the caves. But please don't concern yourself when they...I'll...Believe me...I'll remove the hide from them. Good evening, Vicar. Harry, see the Vicar to the garden gate and see if your father is there and ask if he can see to the Vicar's horse's shoe. Run now!

Well, there has not been so much going on at one time since we had to take water to your Uncle Otto when he was in the stocks in the village square and the dog fell into the well. Where are those boys? I'll lay a wager that they are still hiding in the caves. Well all they'll have to eat is raw cave fish if they can catch them. The blind trying to catch the blind if you ask me. Still they'll be home when they're hungry and that should be anytime soon. As your uncle Jean-Jacques always says, 'Man's weakness makes him sociable'.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Nola Farman.