

PATRICIA ST JOHN

FRISKA

MY FRIEND



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Chapter one

It was half past three. And on that warm, sunny afternoon in early summer, the children were glad to get out of school. They ran across the playground, pushing and jostling out through the gate. Some jumped into waiting cars but most of them turned down the road that led to the village. Colin went with them, but where the road split in two he stopped and his friend Will stopped too.

“Here,” said Will, fishing in his school bag, “I’ve got something for her. My mum said I could have the leftovers.” And he pushed something wrapped in greaseproof paper into Colin’s hand.

“Thanks,” said Colin. “Coming to see her?”

Will shook his head.

“Not now. We’re going down to Gran’s for tea. Mum said I was to come straight home. Maybe I’ll come tomorrow. But, Cal, my dad said we’ve got to do something or tell someone. We can’t just keep on giving her things. What’ll happen when we go to camp?”

“That’s ages yet.”

“Yes, but —”

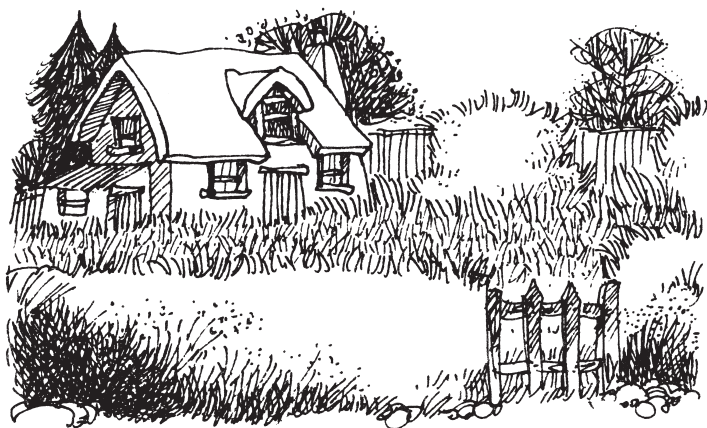
Colin stuffed the greaseproof paper into his bag with his school books and nodded. “I’ll tell my dad tonight,” he said. “He’ll know what to do. I wish... oh, I do wish...”

“What d’you wish?”

“That I could have her,” said Colin. “I just wish that she was mine. I’d soon fatten her up.”

Will nodded. "I might bring a sausage from Gran's," he said comfortingly. "She always gives us sausages! Bye, Cal, see you." He ran off down the road. Colin crossed to the lane that led up the hillside toward his home. He was quite glad to be alone because he had a lot to think about. It was a beautiful day and late bluebells and buttercups grew along the hedge. The warm sun shone on his face and from somewhere in the oak wood a cuckoo called. Then he turned off the lane and climbed a little track that led to the common beyond. On the edge of the common was a cottage surrounded by a garden.

The garden gate was broken and the paint was cracked. Colin rested his chin on it and looked round. The garden was choked with weeds. The grass had grown



as high as his knees. The windows of the cottage were dirty and tight shut. Colin gave a soft whistle.

Nothing happened.

Colin whistled quite loudly with his eye on the window.

There was a sudden rush. A black dog, half Labrador and half terrier, came streaking round the side of the house. She was barking excitedly. She put her paws

on the bottom bars of the gate and pushed her nose through the gap. Her whole thin body shook with excitement. Colin pulled the greaseproof paper parcel out of his bag. He fed the dog with half a Cornish pasty and a piece of cheese. He also had some ham, broken bread and crackers from his lunchbox. He stuck his hand

