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## *A Helping Hand*

by Janet Ritchie

**D**r. Robinson was driving along a quiet country road. Suddenly he saw something unusual up ahead. A dark blue car was parked on the side of the road.

“That’s a strange place to stop,” Dr. Robinson thought to himself.

Dr. Robinson slowed down. He saw that the hood of the car was up. A tall man stood next to the car. The man wore a long, heavy coat. He was looking at the motor of the car.

Dr. Robinson pushed down on the brake. He stopped in front of the blue car. The man suddenly slammed down the hood of his automobile. Then he hurried to the window of Dr. Robinson’s car. Dr. Robinson had lived in the area all of his life. But he had never seen the tall man before.

“Having some car trouble?” Dr. Robinson asked.

The stranger nodded yes. He glanced up and down the road. Then he said, “There’s not much traffic around here.”

Dr. Robinson smiled. “You’re right about that,” he said. “Not much traffic at all. You could stand on this road all day. Two or three cars might come by. You’re lucky I happened to be driving this way.”

“I guess I am,” said the man.

The stranger stared at Dr. Robinson’s car. Then he said, “All right, mister. Get out of that car. And hurry!”

The man’s hand was in the pocket of his coat. Dr. Robinson knew that he was holding a **weapon**.

“All right,” Dr. Robinson said. “Take the car. You’re welcome to it. But I can tell you this. That car is no bargain. It has gone ninety-thousand miles—most of them on these **bumpy** country roads.”

"Your car will do fine," said the man. He looked closely at the doctor. "The problem is what to do with you. I'd like to let you go. I really would. But you've seen my face."

Dr. Robinson was shocked. He stared at the stranger.

"Now get out of the car, mister!"

Dr. Robinson reached across the seat. He picked up his black bag. Then he stepped out of the auto.

"What now?" asked the doctor. His heart was pounding.

But the stranger did not answer. He was looking at the black bag that the doctor was holding.

"Well," said the stranger at last. "Maybe my luck is beginning to change. It looks like I found myself a doctor."

The stranger slowly unbuttoned his coat. There was a handkerchief around his left arm. The handkerchief once had been white. It was now **stained red**.

"Take a look at my arm," said the man. "But be careful, doc. Don't do anything foolish. Remember, I've got a gun in my other hand."

Dr. Robinson lifted the handkerchief. He **examined** the man's arm. But the doctor did not speak.

The man was impatient. "Well, doc?" he asked. "What do you think?"

Dr. Robinson said slowly, "You are luckier than you know. That's a serious wound. A little deeper and you would now be dead."

Dr. Robinson put the handkerchief back in its place. Then he said, "But that bullet will have to be removed right away."

The stranger nodded. "All right, doc. Get busy."

Dr. Robinson shook his head. "No," he said. "I couldn't possibly do that here. You would start to bleed again. I don't think I would be able to stop it."

The stranger looked worried.

Dr. Robinson said, "Why don't we go to my office? Everything that I need is there. It would be easy to remove the bullet."

The stranger thought for a moment. Then he asked, "How far is your office from here?"

"About five miles, at the edge of the village. We could get there in ten minutes."

Dr. Robinson waited while the stranger made up his mind. It seemed to take forever. Finally, he motioned to the car. "All right, doc," he said. "You do the driving."

Dr. Robinson turned around. He took a deep breath. He had no plan. He did not know what he was going to do.

But he felt safer as long as the stranger needed him alive.



Dr. Robinson drove for about a mile. Then he felt the gun against his side. "Hey," the stranger said. "What's going on up there?"

A car stood in the middle of the road ahead.

Dr. Robinson forced himself to be calm. "It looks like a roadblock," he said. "That's Jim Holman's car. Jim is the sheriff around here."

Up ahead, Sheriff Holman relaxed when he saw the doctor's car.

"We'll have to stop," Dr. Robinson told the stranger. "I'll just say hello and ask what's the matter."

"All right," said the stranger. "But don't forget that I have my hand on this gun. Don't use any words that I can't understand. If you do . . ."

The stranger did not finish his thought. But Dr. Robinson knew exactly

what he meant.

Dr. Robinson slowed the car to a stop. He rolled down the window.

"Hi, Jim," he said. "What seems to be the trouble?"

Jim smiled. "This is supposed to be a roadblock," he said. "But so far you're the only one to come along. Didn't you hear about the bank robbery, doc?"

Dr. Robinson shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Jim."

Jim leaned on the car. "A man tried to rob a bank up at Miller's Falls. He didn't get anything. But he and the guard fired some shots at each other. The guard is in the hospital now. The man got away in a dark blue car."

"Is that so?" said the doctor. He nodded toward the stranger. "This is a good friend of mine, Jim. I've known him for years. Say hello to Bill."

The sheriff put his hand through the open window. He said, "Jim Holman's my name. I sure am glad to meet a friend of the doc's."

The stranger kept his hand at his side. He forced himself to smile at the sheriff.

"Don't mind if Bill doesn't shake hands," the doctor said quickly. "Bill's right hand has a pretty deep cut. He got it chopping some wood. I had to go out to his place. I stitched it up there."

"I see," said the sheriff. He thought for a moment. Then he said, "You have to watch those things. Be careful about infection."

Dr. Robinson smiled. "Oh, I don't think my pal has to worry about that. We're stopping off at my office now. I'll give him some pills."

"Had a hard day?" asked Jim.

"Oh, about the same. Mostly kids with colds."

"See you around, doc," said Jim Holman. He turned to the other man. "Take care of your hand."

Dr. Robinson pulled around Jim Holman's car. Then he continued up the road. "You did fine, doc," the stranger said. He turned to look back at Jim Holman. The sheriff was inspecting the tires on his car.

Dr. Robinson kept his speed at thirty miles an hour. "Come on, doc," the stranger said. "You can go faster than this."

Dr. Robinson shook his head. He said, "The road here is pretty rough. And this car has bad springs."

In fifteen minutes they reached the edge of the village. Dr. Robinson said, "This is my driveway. I'll pull up to my garage. We can get out there."

"It's about time," the stranger said. "It took you long enough to get here."

Dr. Robinson stopped in front of the garage. "That's fine," the stranger said. "Now open your door and get out. Stand there where I can see you."

"Now!" thought Dr. Robinson. "Now is the time for Jim Holman to be here!"

The stranger pushed open the door on his side of the car. He stepped out onto the driveway.

Then he heard a loud voice behind him.

"Don't move, mister! Freeze! Drop the gun! This is the police!"

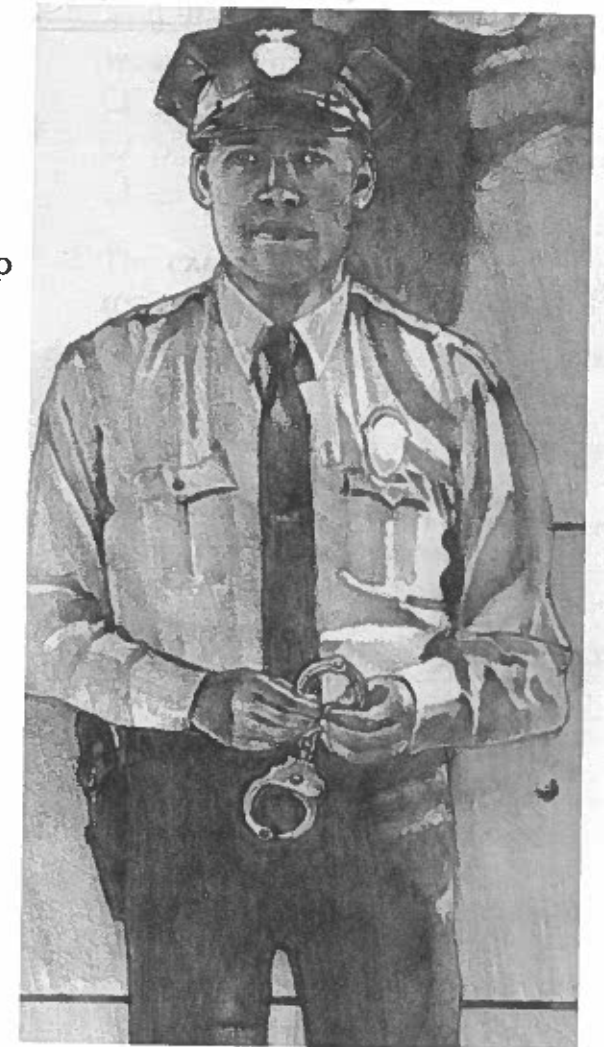
The stranger dropped the gun. Then he put up his hands.

Dr. Robinson said, "I drove as slowly as I could, Jim. I knew you'd take the other road. I figured that you would get here first."

Jim Holman took out handcuffs and slipped them over the stranger's wrists. Jim said, "I had to be careful when you were both in the car. I didn't want to try anything then. I guessed that he had a gun on you."

The stranger's voice was filled with anger. He asked, "What did the doc say? How did he tip you off?"

Jim Holman smiled as they walked up to the doctor's office. Jim



said, "I didn't think that the doc had stitched up your hand. But I *knew* that he hadn't seen kids with colds all day."

The sheriff pointed to a sign in front of the doctor's office. The big letters said:

Henry F. Robinson  
VETERINARIAN  
ANIMAL DOCTOR



**L**OOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY.  
How well can you find facts in a story? Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

1. The tall man was wearing
  - a. a long coat.
  - b. a light jacket.
  - c. a wool cap.
2. Dr. Robinson said that the man should go
  - a. to the hospital.
  - b. to the doctor's office.
  - c. home.
3. After Dr. Robinson went around the roadblock, how fast did he drive?
  - a. thirty miles an hour
  - b. forty miles an hour
  - c. fifty miles an hour
4. The sign said that the doctor
  - a. was on vacation.
  - b. saw people every day except Sunday.
  - c. was an animal doctor.

x 5 =   
NUMBER CORRECT      YOUR SCORE

**E**XAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS.  
Here are four vocabulary questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. Dr. Robinson did what the man said because the man had a **weapon**. A *weapon* is used for
  - a. fighting.
  - b. playing.
  - c. driving.
2. The car traveled over bumpy roads. The word **bumpy** means
  - a. smooth.
  - b. rough.
  - c. busy.
3. The handkerchief once had been white. It was now stained red. The word **stained** means
  - a. colored.
  - b. cleaned.
  - c. tied.
4. He examined the man's arm. The word **examined** means
  - a. shook.
  - b. worried about.
  - c. looked at closely.

x 5 =   
NUMBER CORRECT      YOUR SCORE

**A**DDING WORDS TO A PARAGRAPH.  
Complete the paragraph below. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word appears in the story. There are five words and four blanks, so one word in the box will not be used.

Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_ a pet  
 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>  
 to a veterinarian's office? Most pets  
 act very frightened and  
 \_\_\_\_\_.  
 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>  
 Some animals try to leave as soon as they  
 enter the \_\_\_\_\_.  
 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>  
 Often, it is difficult for the owner  
 to keep the pet  
 \_\_\_\_\_.  
 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>

worried    taken    office  
 motor    calm

x 5 =   
 NUMBER CORRECT    YOUR SCORE

**R**EADING BETWEEN THE LINES.  
These questions will help you think critically. You will have to think about what happened in the story, and then figure out the answers. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

- We may infer (figure out) that the stranger
  - a. tried to rob a bank.
  - b. cut his hand badly.
  - c. knew the roads very well.
- Dr. Robinson was probably afraid that the man would
  - a. get an infection.
  - b. kill him.
  - c. sell the doctor's car.
- Why did Dr. Robinson drive to his office so slowly?
  - a. His car was very old.
  - b. The road was very bad.
  - c. He wanted the sheriff to get there first.
- How did Jim Holman know that Dr. Robinson was in trouble?
  - a. Dr. Robinson kept winking.
  - b. He gave Jim a note.
  - c. Jim knew that Dr. Robinson wasn't telling the truth.

x 5 =   
 NUMBER CORRECT    YOUR SCORE

**N**OTING STORY ELEMENTS.  
Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, **setting**, and **mood**. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

- What happened last in the *plot*?
  - a. The stranger unbuttoned his coat.
  - b. The man dropped his gun.
  - c. Jim Holman's car was blocking the road.
- Which sentence best *characterizes* Dr. Robinson?
  - a. He was too frightened to think clearly.
  - b. He acted coolly and calmly, although he was in danger.
  - c. He was not friendly.
- Where is the story *set*?
  - a. on a farm
  - b. in a large city
  - c. somewhere in the country
- What is the *theme* of the story?
  - a. A doctor's quick thinking probably saves his life.
  - b. A stranger nearly fools a sheriff.
  - c. A bank robber has trouble with his car.

x 5 =   
 NUMBER CORRECT    YOUR SCORE

**THINKING MORE ABOUT THE STORY.**  
Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- ◆ Dr. Robinson said the bullet had to be removed right away. Was that true, or did he make that up? Explain.
- ◆ Why didn't the stranger shake hands with Jim Holman? Why did Dr. Robinson say that he had stitched up the man's hand? Give several reasons.
- ◆ Did you think that the sheriff would be waiting at Dr. Robinson's office? Why?

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 138 and 139.

**L**OOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY  
 +  
 **E**XAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS  
 +  
 **A**DDING WORDS TO A PARAGRAPH  
 +  
 **R**EADING BETWEEN THE LINES  
 +  
 **N**OTING STORY ELEMENTS  
 ▼  
 **SCORE TOTAL: Story 10**