

The Lost Treasury

Chapter 1 Sophie has an idea

It was a balmy evening in the Departement de Londres which is a country in a parallel world. The Court Manteau's musical evening, an important social event in the City of Londres, was paused while performers and guests socialised and took refreshment. The youngest member of the household, Sophie Court Manteau, sat in the garden with her friends Paul Lebrun and Raoul Delpierre. Their conversation soon revolved around their recent exciting adventures.

"It is amazing," said Raoul, "that we freed the Empress. Well she was not the Empress then was she."

"I never thought," replied Sophie, "that we could do it on our own."

"We had Meldy with us then," said Paul, "I think we made a great gang."

"Of course her sisters helped," mused Sophie. "I miss Meldy, I wish she was coming back."

"I wonder what she is doing now," asked Paul. "I bet she is in Nicky's tree house. I wish we could all be there, it sounds wonderfully wonderful!"

"Yes," replied Sophie as she thought back to her recent visit to Meldy's world, "it is wonderful. It is big and there is lots of room. We could all fit inside. His father made it."

"I have never been in a tree house," said Raoul, "Does it sway? I think I would get sea sick. I was sick on a boat once."

"I do not think so," replied Sophie, "it is in a really big tree."

The friends thought about houses in swaying trees for a minute. Then Sophie had an idea. "Let us go and visit Meldy and Nicky. Then you can see his tree house."

"How do we do that?" asked Raoul.

"Sophie knows how to get there," said Paul.

"Well," replied Sophie, "I do not know if I know but I do know you have to go to the Place de Napoleon and stand near the statue."

“What happens then?” asked Raoul.

“It is something to do with the university,” said Sophie. “They have a machine which opens a gateway and off you go. All you have to do then is walk down the hill and go to their houses. They are next to each other on a lane.”

“I want to go,” declared Paul. “You went with your sister and you came back.” He paused then continued, “I can ask my brother, he will know because he does physics. It has got to be something to do with that. He was talking about a machine yesterday, that could be the one.”

While the friends talked, they could hear bits of conversation drifting across from a nearby table.

“Of course,” the voice said, “nobody knows. It could still be hidden somewhere in or near the castle.”

“I heard the rebels ransacked it and never found a thing.”

“Well if they did find it they would not have said so! A lot of it was gold and you could melt that down. Any precious stones could easily be hidden I suppose.”

“But the point is they wrecked the whole place. It had to be be totally rebuilt. To me, that sounds like they were unsuccessful.”

“What makes you say that?”

“They would smash their way through everything until they found it then they would run off. Do not forget an army was approaching. Personally, I think it is still there.”

The three children looked at each other. “Treasure!” whispered Paul.

“But where is it?” whispered Sophie.

Someone else joined the group at the other table.

“We were talking about the treasure,” said someone.

“Oh that,” said the new arrival, “do not believe the stories. Those pirates made off with it.”

“There were pirates!” whispered Raoul, “they always had loads of treasure!”

Meanwhile, the nearby conversation continued. “But how do you know? I think it could still be there.”

“Pure speculation, that is all. Here is Alain, he can tell us all about it.”

“All about what?” asked Alain.

“The treasure at your father’s place. You know, when the rebels invaded.”

The children looked at each other once again. Now they knew the location of this treasure. Three small pairs of ears listened intently. What would Sophie’s cousin, Alain Court Manteau, say next?

“You mean the pirates, that is what they were. Anyway, I do not think it could be anywhere in the castle. It was totally rebuilt afterwards.”

“But why did they destroy everything? It looks to me like they searched in vain.”

“I do not think so. Anyway, all the people who know where it was hidden were killed in that battle near Douvres. But I am sure if it was still there we would have found it by now.”

The children’s faces betrayed their excitement.

“I bet it is still there!” whispered Paul.

“Do you think so?” asked Raoul.

“Meldy and Nicky could help us look,” added Sophie. “They would come if they knew there was treasure!”

“I know,” said Paul, “My brother writes everything in his diary and I saw where he keeps it. That machine at the university might be the one. He calls it the matter transportation machine.”

“Will he show it to you?” asked Sophie.

“I will look when he is not there. Then you can stay with me Raoul, we are close to the Place de Napoleon and my parents like you.”

“What about me?” asked Sophie. “It is a long way to go and I cannot get the carriage to take me, it might be too early in the morning.”

They were interrupted by the gong that signalled the second half of the evening. As choir members, Paul and Raoul had to get ready to sing while Sophie sat on the grass a bit longer.

‘Maybe they should go without me,’ she thought, ‘then they can all come back together. With five of us it would not work I think.’

Raoul and Paul sang their pieces then, after acknowledging the enthusiastic applause, returned to the garden. Sophie was waiting.

“Let us move further away from the house,” she said, “I have an idea.”

The boys followed her through a shrubbery to an area of lawn bounded by a wall and some luxuriant flower beds. A good place to hide, no one would hear them there.

“You two must go without me,” she said, “I cannot get out of the house. Meldy’s parents will watch her if you are there. They will know she will want to go back with you so you must hide in Nicky’s tree house.”

“That will be brilliant!” enthused Raoul. “You said it is big enough.”

“But,” asked Paul, “how long do we have to wait by that statue in the Place de Napoleon?”

“Paul, your brother will know,” replied Sophie, “it might be in his diary.”

“Yes, you are right. I will look.”

“How did you find Meldy’s house?” asked Raoul, “is it far away?”

“It is easy. You walk down the hill and...”

“But which way?” asked Paul.

“Oh. Look down through the trees and turn right,” said Sophie.

“And you get to the lane?” asked Raoul.

“Go down the track until you reach it. You must turn left and then you come to Meldy’s house. It is next to a house with a big hedge. Daniel lives there, he can hit anything with his catapult.”

“When you get to Meldy’s,” she continued, “you can go through the bushes and hide in Nicky’s tree house. I will draw a map.”

“Paul,” said Raoul, “I want to go now....” He stopped because they heard someone coming. It was Antoinette, Sophie’s older sister.

“What are you all doing here?” she laughed, “are you plotting something again?”

“Er no,” replied Sophie, “We were saying how much we miss Meldy and Nicky and we were talking about when we rescued the Princess, I mean the Empress.”

“And do not think for a moment she has forgotten, in fact she mentioned it again a few minutes ago. She would like to see you all before she goes.”

The three adventurers got up and followed Antoinette back to the house.

They now had a plan.