

## Chapter 4 Where is the Baron From?

Baron von Kühlschrank was an early riser. He crept out of the Berrington's house and walked down the lane into the village. When he came to Tansie Tipperley's hedge, pruned for maximum vision from kitchen to lane, he ducked and ran along beside it until well clear. He wanted a quiet walk without too many interruptions.

On his way back he bumped into Meldy and Daniel who were going to see Nicky. Meldy was keen to tell the Baron about Misia's pen friend.

"Baron, did you know Bunny's coming?"

"And who, might I ask, is this Bunny?"

"She's from Germany. You know, where you're from."

"And where is this Germany? I am not familiar with it."

"But you must be," added Daniel.

"Ah. I see where the confusion has arisen. German is my main language but it is not a country."

"Oh yes it is," replied Meldy, "we learnt about it in Geography at school. Just before I was thrown out. But I'm back now."

"Bunny will ask where you're from," added Daniel, "and she'll keep asking and you'll have to tell her 'cos she won't stop. While she's bouncing around and things. She's super friendly."

"That's why we call her Bunny," said Meldy.

"Well, I am indebted to you both. I will consider this coming meeting very carefully."

Later that same morning, Kick and Popster had a word.

"I have already heard about this Bunny," he told them. "I do understand that I should not tell her where I am from."

"Exactly," replied Kick. "One never knows. Not everyone is broad minded and we don't want them taking you away for laboratory experiments!"

"Are you saying they do such things here?"

“Well you are a curiosity,” laughed Popster, “and for all we know you might not actually be human.”

“Mrs Tipperley thinks I am. Maybe she can vouch for me when they arrive with their wagon or whatever they might use.”

“And there’s no doubt in Terpsichore’s mind either.”

“Ah yes. Miss Terpsichore. A very interesting young lady.”

“That’s one way of putting it,” said Popster. “By the way, Brunny’s from Berlin.”

“Ah yes, Berlin. I have spent many happy weeks there. It is ruled by an uncle of mine.”

The twins exchanged glances. “Baron von Kühlschrank,” said Kick, “this is the first time you have ever told us anything about your background.”

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Brunhilde arrived on schedule and was very eager to join the cast of the pantomime. “Tee hee!” she tinkled, “I’ll make a good little helper.”

She was introduced to the Baron at the next rehearsal and the reason for her nickname soon became apparent. When she talked she moved around incessantly.

“Herr Baron, where are you from?” she asked.

“I come from...”

“Kühlschrank is a funny name for a Baron,” she pointed out. “It means refrigerator in English.”

“And what, may I ask, is a refrigerator?”

“Don’t you know? How do you keep your food cold in.... Oh! I am sorry, I forgot to ask where you are from.”

“I am from Op....”

“But you must know what a refrigerator is. You open the door and there is your milk and everything nice and cold, well it would be if you had not left it out on the top overnight! Tee hee! Silly me!”

“Miss Brunhilde. What you are describing is a device for keeping things cold. That is why we call it a kaltkasten which translates as a ‘cold box’.”

“Now you are kidding me. So at your home in....”

“Oppenheim.”

“Oppenheim on the Rhine? I know it very well. Where do you live?”

“Do you know the castle?”

“Yes! Burg Landskron! We had a picnic on the grass outside and there was a concert....er, what was it? I cannot remember who we saw. Do you find you forget things?”

“Yes Miss Brunhilde, I do. One remembers in the night, then forgets by the time dawn has stolen across the window sill.”

“Baron, are you a poet? You sometimes talk like one. You were going to tell me about the castle. Such a romantic ruin, I could have stayed for ever and ever. Do you want to stay somewhere for ever and ever?”

The Baron could think of a few places he would like to be at this precise moment but his mind was working overtime. His beloved castle a ruin? What had they done with it? Parallel worlds were not very parallel he decided. “It is a shame, is it not, there are so many ruins?”

“So where do you live? I keep going on and on, everyone says I talk too much.”

“Surely not, Miss Brunhilde.”

“Well I think it is because other people do not talk enough. But you are so polite!”

At that precise moment, Tansie started the rehearsal and the four helpers clustered round Terpsichore who seemed pleased to have one extra. An onlooker would have heard Brunny’s tinkling laugh as the introductions were made.

Later she was talking to the twins. “The Baron is puzzling,” she confided.

“Why’s that?” asked Kick.

“His German is different. Maybe it is his poetry or something, he talks more formally than is normally normal. Tee hee! Did you see what I just did? He has encouraged me to be a poet as well!”

“Very impressive Brunny,” said Popster.

“His name means refrigerator in English. He does not even know what one is and he called it something strange instead. Where did you meet him?”

Kick gave Popster a look. At that precise moment Meldy appeared and distracted Brunny so she did not seem to notice. Popster returned her sister’s look but decided to lead off anyway.

“Well,” she ventured reluctantly, “it was when we were, er, in France and we met the royals and we....”

“Royal people? As in Queens and Princesses? How exciting! Tell me all about it!”

“We can’t tell you,” replied Meldy, “cos it’s dangerous to tell people about royal people cos not all people are nice people and some people can do nasty things to other people and...”

“Meldy! You do like to say the word ‘people’!”

“Yes Bunny, don’t you? After all we’re all people too aren’t we but we’re not royal people. The world is peopled by people.”

“English is so funny, Tee hee!” Royalty was forgotten as Brunny started to go through some strange English words. Luckily Misia came to take her away.

“That was brilliant Meldy,” said Popster, “she was onto the Baron and asking some really awkward questions.”

“His castle in Germany is a ruin,” said Kick, “and she’s been and seen it.”

“Poor Baron,” said Meldy, “he must have been upset when she told him.”

“Well yes,” said Popster, “I suppose he was. I didn’t pick up on that.”

“Well if I went back to the Departement de Londres I would want to know someone was living in our house.”

“And that would be our parents,” said Kick.

“You know what she means,” replied Popster. “I think we need to have another word with the Baron.”

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The three younger helpers were running round outside the community hall.

“Let’s go on a treasure hunt,” suggested Daniel.

“But there’s no treasure round here, is there?” asked Nicky.

“There’s always treasure somewhere,” replied a very confident Meldy.  
“There was this man with a metal detecting thing and he found millions and millions of pounds in gold.”

“Millions?” asked Daniel, “where was it?”

“In a field somewhere. My dad said it wasn’t far away.”

“I bet there’s treasure up in the woods,” said Nicky, “people like burying things in woods.”

“But it might not have been a wood,” said Meldy, “when they wanted to bury it.”

“If I was burying treasure I’d want to do it in secret,” said Daniel, “near a big tree. So I could find it again.”

At that moment the Baron appeared and asked what Daniel wanted to bury.

“Baron von Kùhlschrank,” replied Daniel, “don’t you think a wood is a good place to bury treasure?”

“Yes, Master Daniel, I do. I found some treasure in a wood when I was your age.”

“Wow!” exclaimed all three.

“What did you do with it?” asked Nicky.

"I have it here." With that he produced a gold coin. "I always carry it for luck."

"It's amazing," said Meldy, "but one coin doesn't make a treasure does it?"

"Well, that is a very interesting question. How many coins do make a treasure? Two? Three? Four? Or more? I do not know the answer. To me a treasure is something that you treasure when you find it."

"I agree," said Nicky as he gazed at it. "Is it Roman? It looks like it. Where did you find it?"

"In a wood on my estate. Not far from my castle. My ruined castle," he added ruefully.

"But it isn't ruined in your world is it," said Meldy. "And that's what counts, doesn't it?"

"Yes Lady Esmeralda, you are correct. That is indeed what counts."

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As a result of the Baron's visit, Wood Tofton was abuzz. Whenever two or more were gathered together and gossip was on the agenda, which was frequent, the subject of the Baron came up. However, some people were suspicious.

"And who exactly is he?" they might say, "that's what I'd like to know. He could be a criminal couldn't he!"

"I heard his impressive sounding name actually means refrigerator. No one's ever named after one of them are they."

"Well, the Wagley girls have vouched for him."

"Yes, but what about it? That youngest one is a trouble maker. She's been thrown out of school more times than I care to mention!"

"But the twins are well behaved, aren't they?"

"Well there could be something else behind this. Didn't they all disappear a while ago? Where did they really go that's what I'd like to know."

"They said they had to keep it a secret because of the royals. You know people like that don't like publicity."

“Well, maybe they don’t but it all sounds very convenient to me. Very convenient. Don’t complain when we’re all murdered in our beds!”

Tansie Tipperley normally enjoyed a bit of gossip but she still believed in the Baron.

“Good breeding always shows,” she’d say, “always. Criminals are not well bred are they.”

“Maybe he’s a new breed of super sophisticated criminal. You know, a confidence trickster. I’ve heard it said there is nothing about him on the internet, surely a Baron should have a social media profile.”

Eventually even Tansie began to wonder. However, the subject of all this gossip was unconcerned and continued to greet villagers in the same polite manner.

The Wagleys and their immediate neighbours, the Mastertons and the Berringtons, knew where he was really from so they tried their best to counter the rumours. This proved to be difficult when one couldn’t possibly mention the subject of parallel worlds.

There was one other person in the village that never doubted him. That was Dot of Dot’s cafe.

“He’s a gent,” she’d say, “no doubt about it. I once worked for a titled family and I can smell them. He paid his debt to me and gave me a nice tip. He’s the real deal.”