

Chapter 18 Captain Duplessis Takes Action

At the police station, Captain Duplessis was finishing her report. 'A successful operation,' she said to herself. 'The prisoners sang like canaries and we have a long list of names so it is now just a matter of timing. We can pick them up when they leave the Palace.'

Her thoughts shifted to Princess Augustine. She had wondered if Meldy and her friends had been involved but had dismissed it from her mind. 'If a group of professionals rescued her, what would they be after?' she mused, 'surely we would have heard something by now.' Her thoughts turned back to the children. 'What if it was them? There could well be a secret passage that no-one knew about. If they did rescue her, where is she now?'

Then it dawned on her. 'She is at the Court Manteau Residence!'

She had to think fast. What should she do? The Transitional Council would be planning their next move and may also have realised where she was hiding. If so, they would attempt a recapture in order to hush things up.

If the public found out the Royal family had not left the Departement, most would question the legitimacy of the Transitional Council. The Emperor and his daughter were still the rulers so she must abide by the law.

She walked over to her bookcase and ran her finger along a row of leather-bound books. In one there was a list of names, these were her contacts in the force she knew she could trust. Out came the book and there was the list. She sat at her desk, picked up the phone and started dialling.

One hour later three wagons left the police station and headed off through the streets of the city. They fanned out and took different routes but they were all heading for the same destination: the Court Manteau Residence.

The two guards outside were sitting by the wall reading magazines when the first wagon appeared. They looked up, yawned, then carried on reading. When the wagon stopped they stood up, brushed themselves off and ambled over.

Soon another wagon appeared. "What is going on?" asked one.

The Captain appeared from behind one of the wagons and the guards jumped to attention.

"Madame Captain! Good morning!"

“You may leave now, your task here is complete,” she replied.

The confused guards were about to argue when the third wagon appeared. At a pre-arranged signal, all three back doors opened and twenty of the fittest and largest policemen and women jumped out and sprinted over to the Captain. They formed up as if on parade.

“P.A.P.D. ready for inspection Captain!” said the most senior Lieutenant.

“At ease officers!” she replied.

The guards were impressed. They stared in amazement but they soon left as directed.

After they had gone, the Captain continued, “we are here to guard the Court Manteau Residence. There might be trouble so we have to be prepared for any eventuality. The Transitional Council is illegitimate. Princess Augustine is inside this house and she must be protected at all costs. Our duty under the law is clear. Inspect all identity cards as we discussed, that is all. To your posts!”

Inside the house, everyone wondered what was happening. Soon there was a knock on the door and Stephanie brought Captain Duplessis to see Madame. Thinking they might be in trouble, the twins slunk in but were very surprised when she saluted them.

“I congratulate you on your successful rescue mission!” she said then explained why she had brought a detachment of trusted colleagues to guard the house.

“We must uphold the law. The ‘P.A.P.D.’, that is the ‘Princess Augustine Protection Detachment’, will ensure her safety while she is here. Now, where is your eldest daughter Madame?”

Once she was told she was in hiding, it was suggested she would be safer at home.

“We will send a police wagon to collect her. I think one of you should go as well, in order to provide reassurance. Also, we need to be prepared for problems. It is possible that her hiding place has been discovered.”

Kick offered to go with the four policemen and women to Madame Delpierre’s house. When they arrived, they found two hostile looking men on her doorstep.

“We know you are hiding her here! Hand her over!” said one.

Madame Delpierre was trying to stop them gaining entry. “Look behind you, the police are here!” she cried.

“Ha Ha! Good try!” said the other, “You do not think we will fall for that old trick do you?” A heavy tread behind them followed by arm locks on both convinced them it was no trick.

“Attempted kidnap, the penalty for that is ten years!” said the senior policewoman.

“We were only carrying out orders!” whined one of them.

“Whose orders? We want their names. Cooperate and you might be out in five years. Put them in the lock up at the end of the street, we will collect them later.”

Kick went in to update Antoinette on the latest developments.

“How did they know we were here?” asked Antoinette.

“Someone must have seen the carriage when you were dropped off,” mused Madame Delpierre.

“Thank you so much for your hospitality!” said Antoinette as she left to climb into the police wagon. Soon she was back home with her family and loyal friends.

The Transitional Council were not about to give up so they put out a statement on the radio.

“Citizens of the Departement de Londres, some of you may have heard rumours that Princess Augustine is in our city. This, of course, is not true. The Royalists have produced an imposter and they are claiming she is the Princess. This is a laughable attempt to go against the will of you, the people. Our loyal friends are now, at this moment, looking for this imposter and will soon find her. We will then display her for all to see.”

Stephanie now knew who Veronique really was. She had heard the radio broadcast and had realised a crisis was about to develop. Yes, there were twenty police officers outside the house but what if a large mob of Transitional Council supporters appeared? What would happen then?

Would the police be heavily outnumbered and could they and the occupants of the house be in danger? She could not just sit idly by, she had to do something. What about ringing Alain at the university?

She picked up the receiver and dialled but the line was dead. Undeterred she jumped on her bicycle and headed off to the campus where she managed to find him.

“Monsieur Alain,” she said, “Princess Augustine is at Madame Court Manteau’s and the police are expecting trouble. Is it possible to do something, anything, what about the students here?”

“I think so,” he replied. “I will collect some together in my department, why do you not go to the education faculty where there are a lot of female students? See if you can persuade them to join us.”

The word spread fast. Most students wanted the freedom to travel across the border to England. This is what the Princess’s intervention would have persuaded the Emperor to allow but the Transitional Council had put a stop to that. Once reminded of this, a sizeable group of students and lecturers assembled.

Some placards were produced and the slogans ‘Save the Princess’, ‘Open our Borders’ and ‘Reinstate the Emperor’ written in large letters. While these were being prepared, more and more people appeared. Some were a bit sceptical and needed persuading. Telling them about the lies and the kidnappings mostly did the trick. Soon an army of demonstrators set off, chanting as they went. People along their route heard them, asked questions, then many joined in. Some hecklers tried to compete but were soon drowned out.

Inside the Court Manteau’s house, Meldy had joined Sophie in her upstairs room. They had watched the police line form up outside and they had seen the two guards being dismissed. They had also seen Captain Duplessis enter the house but they had no idea what she had said.

“Let us explore the attic,” suggested Sophie. They went to the top of the house, opened some trunks and got out some old clothes. While they were playing up there, Antoinette was brought back home. Unaware of this, Sophie suggested they both went back to her room to have another look out of the window.

“What are they doing now?” asked Meldy. The police were still lined up and they were holding some large menacing truncheons.

“Are they going to arrest us all?” asked Sophie.

“No,” replied Meldy, “they are facing the wrong way. They are waiting for something.”

They soon found out what that was. A rag tag mob of men were approaching and they could hear their chants through the open window.

“Arrest the fake Princess!” they cried, “Arrest her now!”

“I am scared,” said Sophie

“Me too. I hope the Captain will be alright,” replied Meldy.

Down below, the heavily outnumbered police line waited. They swung their truncheons defiantly.

To be continued