

Chapter 4 The Visitors

Parsley Plinkoff had received the results of the DNA test on Meldy's hair. He was convinced it would show evidence of an alien life-form. It didn't. Now, he would have to change his approach.

One possibility remained. Meldy's mind had been invaded by that alien life-form. Somewhere far away on another planet they might already have an image of him seen through her eyes.

'How can we ever counter such incredible advances?' he pondered as he gazed out of his office window. One thing was certain, he needed more information. He could not go back to the minister with a theory, he needed concrete evidence.

He idly thumbed through a brochure of security equipment. 'These micro-cameras will be perfect!' he said to himself. A few days later he set out with a backpack loaded with sandwiches, a flask and his new surveillance equipment. He was returning to Wood Tofton.

When he arrived, he left his car in a secluded spot and worked his way round through the trees behind Woodhayes Lane. He was hoping to gain access to the rear of the Wagley's property in order to set up his spy cameras.

'Any visitors will talk round the back,' he mused. 'They are hardly likely to sit anywhere near the lane.'

As he worked his way through the trees he thought how peaceful it was. 'No wonder aliens chose this village for their undercover activities,' he said to himself. But then something odd was happening. First it was an agitated squirrel, then some birds started screeching. Finally, his skin started to crawl. What on earth was going on?

In front of him two young females were lying on the grass under a large tree. First they weren't there, then they were. Instantaneously. He couldn't believe his eyes. 'They have to be aliens,' he thought, 'beamed down from the mother ship and now I've actually seen it with my own eyes!'

He crept over to the two and pulled out his mini-scissors. A tiny sample of hair was quickly removed from the elder of the two, then he retreated behind a bush to watch.

The younger girl sat up, yawned and stretched. "Antoinette!" she said. "Depeche-toi! Nous sommes arrivees!"

Parsley's jaw dropped. 'They're French! So they have beaten us to it! How on earth did they do it?'

The older girl sat up. She yawned, rubbed her eyes, then looked around. “Eh bien, nous voici! But we must speak English now. Let us find the Wagley sisters.”

Parsley was still hiding behind his bush when the visitors stood up, brushed themselves off and looked around. “What was it that Stephanie said?” asked the one called Antoinette.

“Walk along the path to the track.”

Parsley opened his notebook. ‘She distinctly said the Wagley sisters,’ he wrote. ‘Are their parents involved? Also, who is Stephanie? She must have already been here so how many more are there and when will they get here?’

“Yes, that is right, Sophie. Do not go past the quarry. Let us go this way.”

Parsley wrote down, ‘French accent. Good English.’

The girls had hit on the right direction. They walked down the track to Woodhayes Lane as per their instructions then they proceeded to study the house numbers.

Parsley followed along behind, dodging into hedges and hiding behind trees but then he tripped over a root. The sudden noise alerted the girls who came back to see what had happened.

“Excuse me, Sir,” said Antoinette. “You are not injured?”

“No, I don’t think so, thank you for asking.” He was struck by the concerned expression on their faces. ‘They train these aliens really well,’ he thought.

“Sir, do you know the Wagley family?” asked Sophie.

“Well, naturally I know of them. Why do you ask?”

“We are visiting,” said the one called Antoinette. “From France. We have not been here before.”

‘Smooth,’ thought Parsley. ‘Very smooth. But I know different.’ He told them where the Wagleys lived and watched them go up to the front door.

Hiding in the bushes, he was keen to see the reaction. After they had knocked, the door was opened by a man. Must be the father. He called out two names, neither of which was Meldy. A girl of similar age to Antoinette appeared, shrieked and the two clung to each other. What’s this? Another identical girl appears. More hugging after which they hugged the girl called Sophie.

Parsley wrote in his notebook. 'Twin daughters greeted the aliens. They know them very well. This goes much deeper than I thought. I need to mount a surveillance ASAP. The aliens are polite, charming and well-spoken. Impossible to identify in isolation, let alone in a crowd. Our national security could soon be under threat.'

Parsley crept round the side of the house. 'Lots of cover,' he thought. 'They'll be occupied in there so won't notice me.' He moved to the rear of the property and found a seating area. 'Secluded. Ideal spot to plot their next move. This is where the cameras should go.'

Two small devices were placed in the trees nearby. Tiny microphones, very sensitive, would pick up any speech. Soon he was gone. 'Survival training finally came in useful,' he murmured as he made his way back to the lane.

Once in his car, he tested his system. 'Why does that robin need to be so loud?' he thought.

Inside the Wagley house, Meldy had heard the commotion so she came down the stairs to investigate. There was her best friend Sophie, standing there, tears in her eyes, looking straight at her.

"Sophie! Sophie! You came! You came!" she cried as she rushed over.

"Esmeralda! You have not forgotten me?"

"Forgotten you? My best ever friend?"

"You said you had a best friend here, too."

"I'm so glad you came! I've been lonely cos my other so-called friends think I'm weird."

"What is weird?"

"Strange, like my other friends who aren't my friends anymore. Come outside, we can play in the garden."

The two girls went round one side of the house while Parsley was creeping round the other. They went up to the rear of the property, in amongst some trees, then down the boundary with their neighbours, the Mastertons.

"Who is that boy?" asked Sophie.

"That's Daniel. Daniel! Come and meet my special friend Sophie!"

Daniel Masterton had an older sister called Misia who was friends with the twins. He shuffled over, looking embarrassed. “Hello, Sophie,” he said without really looking at her.

“Sophie came over from France,” said Meldy.

“You mean like Stephanie?” he asked with enthusiasm, “Do you know her?”

Sophie knew Stephanie because she had been on the staff at her parents’ house. That house was not in France but in the Departement de Londres, in the parallel world. However, Stephanie had warned her she should be cautious when talking about it.

“I know Stephanie,” said Sophie. “She told me about coming here.”

“Yes, she stayed with us. I like Stephanie and I hope she comes back soon.”

Meldy also liked Stephanie. They had met in the Departement de Londres. Like Sophie, Meldy and her sisters, she really was a hero there. When the Wagley sisters first went through to the parallel world, they had changed places with Stephanie but no one really understood how it had happened.

“Meldy,” continued Daniel, “there was a man in your garden. He put something on those trees.”

“Show me.”

Daniel squeezed through the boundary hedge and, pointing to the two objects, recognised them at once. Putting his finger to his lips, he signalled they should be quiet. Once well clear he gave his verdict.

“They’re spy cameras and they can hear you as well. I’ve read about them in my big spy book.”

“They are so small,” said Sophie.

“Yes,” replied Daniel, “but they can tell what you’re up to.”

“What did the man look like?” asked Meldy.

Daniel described him. She knew immediately who it was. “He’s the birdwatcher!” she cried, “Nicky and I saw him in the lane. But why is he spying on us, or is he looking for more birds?”

Slowly the truth dawned on her. This must be something to do with what happened at school. Well, if he wanted to spy on them, she'd give him something worth spying on.

"I know, let's play a trick on him!"

Cheddar Cheasley had been wondering why no one had answered his advertisement when his phone rang.

"Mr Smith?" the voice asked.

"Yes, I'm Mr Smith."

"I have some information for you, about a very interesting medal. Napoleon the Second, so my daughter said."

'Bingo!' thought Cheddar as he took down the details. He took the caller's name and address although he had no intention of paying him anything.

'I must have that medal,' he thought at the end of the conversation. 'No one will ever have heard of such a thing. It will be worth a fortune!'

Daniel sat with Nicky in his tree house. Down below, Meldy called out, "Nicky, Daniel, can we come up? I've brought Sophie."

"Hello Sophie," said Nicky once the girls had climbed the ladder. "Meldy said she missed you but now you're here she won't have to miss you any more. Do you like my tree house?"

"Yes I do, but you do not have horses?"

"Meldy told me about them. And the carriages, she really liked them."

"What carriages?" asked Daniel. He had not heard about the Departement de Londres and his friends were reluctant to tell him.

"The carriages are at Sophie's house," replied Meldy. "That's in France."

The three then told Nicky about the spy cameras and the 'bird man' who had put them there. "Why did he do it?" he asked.

“We don’t know but we want to play a trick on him,” said Meldy.

“Oh, I know!” said Nicky. “We could pretend to be aliens. I’ve got a book about them.”

“That will be fun,” said Sophie.

“Yes, let’s be aliens!” agreed Daniel and Meldy.

“We all need alien names,” suggested Nicky. “I’ll be Afwar.”

“I’ll be Ydlem! That’s Meldy backwards.”

“I will be Trouc,” said Sophie. “That is almost a bit of my last name backwards.”

“I’ll be Leinad,” said Daniel.

“We need some paper and a pen,” said Nicky. “I’ll go get them.” He climbed down the ladder and disappeared.

While he was away, his older brother Eustace climbed up to see them. “Who’s this?” he asked when he saw Sophie sitting there.

“This is my best friend Sophie,” said a proud Meldy. “She’s from France. Her big sister Antoinette’s at our house. Eustace, why don’t you go see them, she’ll want to meet you won’t she Sophie.”

“Yes because Meldy told her all about you.”

“And she’s the best ever singer!” added Meldy.

Eustace was a bit on the shy side but felt he couldn’t avoid it so he went back in the house to comb his hair. He noticed a chocolate stain on the side of his mouth, wiped that off, then walked towards his front door.