

## Chapter 9 Where is Parsley?

Trebiana Tipperley sat in her room at her grandmother's house. Stephanie had been right, she was sad.

'I've messed things up, haven't I,' she mused. 'Eustace was trying to help and I actually enjoyed going to his house. If I'd done things differently, we could have carried on practising. Better than hanging round here all day.'

Then she started to think about things she could do to improve the situation. "I could go for a walk. I might bump into him or one of the Wagleys. If they say anything, then we'll see. They might ignore me but at least I'll know where I stand. I could be here for weeks so I should at least try."

There was news from home. Her parents were talking again and they had promised to pay her a visit. She knew one of their first questions would be, 'Have you met anyone in the village?'

'If I say I haven't,' she mused, 'my mother will want to know why and my father will stand up for me. There'll be another argument.'

While these thoughts were going through her mind, her grandmother tapped on the door.

"Trebi, are you there? You have visitors."

"Who are they?"

"It's the two smaller girls from up the lane with a French woman."

"You mean Antoinette Court Manteau?"

"No, her name's Stephanie. She was here a few months ago."

"Alright, I'll be down in a minute."

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Cheddar Cheasley was now in the police station and singing like a canary. "It wasn't me, it was Parsley Plinkoff! It was his idea! I didn't want to steal it honest!"

"So, you do admit," replied Inspector Crooklock, "that you stole it?"

"You don't have to answer that!" said his solicitor.

“What’s the point of denial, I want this nightmare to end. The sooner I’m sent to prison, the sooner I’ll get out.”

“Something else concerns us,” said Inspector Crooklock, “Parsley Plinkoff has not been seen for a number of days now. Do you know where he is?”

“No, he didn’t reply to my last phone call.”

“Well, I have a hunch,” replied the Inspector, “he’s going to turn up dead.”

“What?”

“Well, think about it. It’s the old story Two crooks ...”

“My client is not a crook!” said the solicitor.

“Two light-fingered gentlemen steal something valuable then one decides a fifty-fifty split is not sufficient reward. This individual lures his partner into the woods and, well, you can imagine what happens next.”

“But I didn’t ...”

“We have a witness who saw Mr Plinkoff going into the trees behind Woodhayes Lane. No one saw him return. It sort of fits, doesn’t it? What do you say, Mr Cheasley? You’re guilty, admit it!”

“I protest!” said the solicitor.

“I didn’t do it!” repeated Cheddar.

“That,” replied the Inspector, “is what they all say.”

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Stephanie had taken Meldy and Sophie to visit Trebiana Tipperley so they didn’t notice a police car stopping outside the Wagley’s house.

Mr Wagley answered the door.

“Sir,” said Constable Honestly, “we have recovered your medal. Very interesting, if I may say so.”

“Oh, thank you, Constable. My daughter will be really pleased.”

“Family heirloom, is it?”

“Yes, it was awarded to an ancestor.”

“The odd thing is, it has the date 1971 on the back.”

“We’d noticed that, we assume the engraver made a mistake. Our daughter was named Esmerelda after her ancestor Esmeralda. We changed it to the British spelling.”

“Yes, of course. You don’t mind if we retain it as evidence for the trial?”

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Trebiana was walking down the lane with Stephanie while the girls skipped on ahead. “I suppose they told you all about me,” said Trebiana.

Stephanie avoided answering directly but said, “I thought I would like to meet you. I heard about you from Meldy and Sophie. They said you have a beautiful singing voice.”

Trebiana thanked her for the compliment. She didn’t usually say thank you but she thought she’d give it a go. Actually, it wasn’t as difficult as she thought it might be.

They walked down the lane past some more houses until they neared Eustace’s drive. Trebiana began to feel nervous. If she saw him, what should she say? Should she say anything? ‘It was easier when I just ignored everyone,’ she thought.

Suddenly, there he was. Stephanie knew Eustace from her last visit so she recognised his embarrassed expression. She gently took Trebiana by the arm, steered her towards him and there was no resistance.

“Hello Eustace, Trebiana was just telling me about the music festival and how you were kind enough to play for her.”

“Well,” he shrugged, “it was nothing really.”

Stephanie noticed him looking at Trebiana while he was saying this.

“That is not what I heard,” she replied, “I think it was something, something special. I would love to hear you both perform.”

“I suppose...” began Trebiana.

“Maybe next week....” continued Eustace.

“Unfortunately, my visit will be short. I am sorry that I will not hear....”

“Trebiana, I would like to play for Stephanie, what do you think?”

“Well, I could sing now if that’s alright with you.”

“Thank you,” said Stephanie. “Sophie and Meldy, we are going to Eustace’s house. Do you want to come?”

“Can we Eustace?” asked Meldy.

“Of course you can,” he replied.

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Stephanie had previously persuaded Antoinette and the Wagley twins to pay Trebiana a visit. When they went it had gone very well. Meldy was soon telling her mother all about it.

“Antoinette and Trebi sang together!” she had said.

“I wish I’d heard that,” replied Mrs Wagley.

“Eustaces’s Mum thought it was brilliant!”

“I’m surprised your sisters managed to pull it off.”

“It wasn’t them, it was Stephanie. She’s wonderful! I wish she was my teacher, I’d learn so much more if she was.”

Stephanie came in at that precise moment. “By the time I qualify you will be too old,” she pointed out.

“Why do you need to qualify?” asked Meldy, “you’re brilliant already!”

“I think the right qualifications are very important,” mused Mrs Wagley, “but how do you know she’s brilliant Meldy?”

“Well teaching isn’t just about telling people things, is it. It’s also about getting people to do things that they might not want to do....”

“How do you mean?”

“Or is it seeing things are possible when students think they can’t do them?”

“You learnt that by visiting Eustace?”

“Mrs Wagley,” replied Stephanie, “I sensed Trebiana was uncomfortable when Mrs Berrington brought Antoinette and the twins in to see us so I praised Trebi’s singing and when Sophie agreed I may have suggested they tried singing a duet....”

“From what I heard,” said Kick who had just entered, “it was more direct than that!”

“But it worked didn’t it?” added Meldy, “and it was Stephanie’s idea!”

“What was?” asked Popster who came in with Sophie.

“Getting Trebi to sing with Antoinette.”

“You’re right,” replied Popster, “she did and it was great.”

“Why do we not have a musical evening like we do at home?” asked Sophie.

“Yes let’s!” cried a very enthusiastic Meldy.

“Although I think it would be wonderful,” sighed Mrs Wagley, “our visitors have told me they must soon be going home.”

“But that’s not fair!” replied Meldy. “I really want them to stay!”