

## MELDY AND THE MICE

There was a house down a lane on the edge of town. It was surrounded by trees with birds and squirrels and it was home to the Wagley family. There was Mr and Mrs Wagley and the Wagley twins, Kick and Popster, then there was the youngest child Esmerelda. Nobody had the patience to call her by that name so it was shortened to Meldy. She didn't mind this, as far as she was concerned they could call her anything as long as it wasn't nasty.

Meldy spent a lot of time in her room as the twins always stuck together as if they had used superglue. They ran round the house and the garden while Meldy watched the birds or lay on the floor of her room looking at the shadows on the ceiling. She could do this for ages.

When there were no shadows she would imagine them - there was a dog, or was it a cow? Could that have been a camel? She had seen one in a zoo and was very impressed. They looked so intelligent unlike her sisters who were, quite honestly, a bit silly. To be frank, she would have liked to play with them but they never asked so she made sure she kept out of their way.

One day she was lying on the floor of her room when she looked across to the skirting board. It was a brown colour and went round the bottom of the room. Whoever put it there hadn't done a very good job as there was a gap. She stared at the gap trying to imagine what was behind it when she saw a little nose.

Had she imagined it? Yes, it was a nose and as it moved forwards it showed some whiskers and two dark eyes. She lay very still and waited. The eyes watched her and she watched the eyes. Neither of them moved for a while until a small brown mouse appeared. The mouse sniffed the air and scuttled off along the skirting board.

A mouse! There's a mouse in my room! She was so excited but she knew she must keep it a secret as her father would call in the pest control man who would want to remove it. She was trying to think of a name for it - what about Maurice? Maurice the Mouse? Yes, I like that! She blinked her eyes in disbelief as she saw four, no five, no six little mice moving along the skirting board to the gap. They ignored her. Had Maurice told them she was alright? But which one was Maurice?

Oh yes! No doubt about it, he was leading the way. She got even more excited and was itching to tell someone but now she really must keep the secret as her father would get very worked up!

That evening, as the children went to their rooms and the house became silent, Meldy fell asleep. She awoke around midnight to hear the distant chiming of the church clock. As she lay there, she thought she could hear something. It sounded like singing, yes, just like singing! Think of a school choir but get everyone to sing as falsetto as they possibly could, and then a bit more, and that was it.

It wasn't very loud but it was definitely singing. Where could it be coming from? She crept round the room until she neared the gap in the skirting board and noticed that it got louder. When she moved away it got quieter. That must be it! The mice were singing! She was really excited now and couldn't sleep for ages.

Next morning she was fast asleep when her mother came in to see where she was. "Wake up, Meldy!" she said as she gently shook her. Meldy was still groggy so when her mother asked her what she was doing in bed so late, she let slip that she had been listening to the singing.

That did it. Her mother called in the twins who smirked when they saw Meldy looking so uncomfortable.

"Were you singing last night?" asked Mrs Wagley.

No, Mother," they chorussed.

"Were you on your computers?"

"No, Mother," they chorussed.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Mother. We were so tired after our game that we slept like logs!"

"Well, Meldy heard singing last night and it kept her awake."

"Well, it wasn't us! Honest!" they said.

Meldy knew it wasn't them as she knew who it was but she must keep quiet. She must never tell her family!

A few days later she was going down to breakfast when she heard her parents talking. She just knew it was about her.

"What was it that he said?" asked her father in a rather impatient voice.

"Well, um, he thought that it was nothing to worry about as children often imagine things like that," said her mother.

"She's weird," said one of the twins but they both sounded exactly the same so Meldy couldn't tell which one it was. She turned round to go back to her room when Popster appeared, coming towards her.

"Hello Meldy," she said which surprised Meldy as she was actually being polite! "Coming to breakfast?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, hurry up then or there will be nothing left." With that Popster zipped off to the breakfast room and Meldy reluctantly followed.

So, it was Kick who thought she was weird! Oh well, nothing new there.

Breakfast passed off peacefully.

"Did you have a good night, Meldy?" her mother asked.

"Yes, Mother," she said. She could tell four pairs of eyes were on her.

"That's good, dear," said her mother as she helped herself to more tea.

Meldy finished, then politely asked to be excused. As she left she heard the twins do the same but thought no more of it as she went into her room.

She was about to look out of her window when she sensed someone coming in. She turned to see the twins standing there. They gently closed the door and Kick said, "What exactly did you hear?"

Meldy didn't say anything but Popster said, "It's okay, Meldy. We won't tell, we promise!"

“Yes, we do promise, honestly!” said Kick.

Meldy weakened and described what it sounded like and when she heard it. She started to have doubts as Kick went to the door and opened it.

“You promised you wouldn’t tell!” said Meldy as tears started to appear.

“We won’t! We heard it, too. I was checking to see no one was listening. We think it’s mice!”

“It is! It is!” said Meldy. “I can show you where they are but you must promise never, never, never to show anyone else! If you do, I will never, ever, ever speak to you again and I will hate you for ever and ever and even after that!”

That night the three girls sat on Meldy’s bed and listened to the singing. They all swore never to tell a soul unless that soul was of the right understanding sort of soul. They all slept peacefully as the church clock chimed midnight in the distance.

A week later Mrs Wagley said to her husband, “It’s so nice that the girls are playing together again.”

“Well, as long as they stay quiet as mice.”