

THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



STEVEN WALTON

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ELEVEN PIPERS PIPING

*On the Twelfth Day of Christmas,
Our friend Lucy Wilson,
Met some tall nutcrackers.
On the Eleventh Day of Christmas,
We'll have to wait and see.
What will happen to our Lucy...?*

'Ow!' Lucy shouted as a large snowball hit the back of her head. Three younger children ran away. Hobo tried throwing snowballs back at them but his aim was a little off. Instead, they hit the side of the house, the hedge, and the back of a Transit van. The alarm from the van started to go off. It rang through the cold winter air.

Lucy looked at Hobo as if to say, 'You've done it now.'

Her dad had rented the van a few days before. It was part of a big clear-out he had insisted the family

did before Christmas. It was unfortunate for him, that the heavy snow had arrived before he could take the things away.

What made matters worse, the water pipes had started to freeze over, and the van was parked exactly where he needed to get to.

Lucy and Hobo had been charged with clearing the snow from around the vehicle, a task that so far had resulted in extraordinarily little achievement.

The winter sun lit the frost that covered the freshest layer of snow. Lucy picked up her shovel and continued to clear the path. It didn't take long, although the sun made it difficult to work on one side, blinding them both.

Eventually, the job was done. There wasn't much daylight left as Lucy's dad did what he could to lag the pipes in the little time he had.

The house was starting to get a little chilly inside without the water being able to get to the boiler. Lucy put on her thick winter coat, while Hobo just did up the zip on his hoodie.

Lucy's mum brought in four mugs of hot chocolate. Opening the living room window, she also alerted Dad. Within a few seconds, along with enough snow to fill the hallway, Dad burst through the door.

'It's getting pretty bad out there,' he said, almost in shock at how hard the wind had blown him

inside. 'Hobo, I think you ought to head off home. If you leave it much later you might not be able to.'

'Let him finish his hot drink. The poor boy is freezing,' Mum interrupted. 'Here's yours!'

Dad picked up the mug without even taking his gloves off. The hot chocolate was almost gone in a matter of seconds.

'Did you manage to fix the pipes?' Mum asked.

'No, I'm going to have to call someone. That's all I need, and at Christmas too,' Dad huffed.

'What are we going to do about heating?'

'Love, there's nothing I can do. Maybe we just fill a few hot water bottles and wear our coats,' he replied.

'With what water? Most of it's frozen up in the pipes.'

'I've just spent the last hour putting the lagging on. That's bound to melt some of the ice.' He finished the last sip of his drink. 'We're going to have to cut back you know. Lucy, I don't know what you were hoping to get for Christmas, but if it wasn't *The Beano Annual* then you may be disappointed.'

Lucy looked up. She knew Christmas was not all about the presents, and she did actually have the annual on her list, but she had hoped for something a bit more.

'If that's the case, you can forget about those

cufflinks and make do with a pair of reindeer socks,' Mum joked. Dad's face changed.

'Will it really cost *that* much, Dad?'

'Depends. You see, water expands when it turns to ice. For all we know, every pipe in the house could be broken.'

'I could have married a happy man... ' Mum said under her breath.

It was true... not the Mum thing, of course. Although that also could have been true. I'm not really sure. I wasn't there at the time. I guess Mum is still good-looking, so perhaps she could have pulled someone happier than Lucy's dad.

Where was I? Oh yes, water does expand when it turns into ice. See, not only is this story fun, it's also educational.

'Can't we just melt the ice? We could put a candle near it or something,' Lucy suggested.

'No, Luce, if we apply heat to the pipe too quickly then the metal will warp,' Hobo said.

'Well done, young man, I wrapped some cloth and bubble wrap around them. That should do it,' Dad said.

Mum, feeling a boring conversation coming on, decided it was time to take Dad's mug to the kitchen.

'You could always pour hot water over the cloth?' Hobo suggested. With that, he and Lucy's dad leapt into action.

Lucy wandered over to the dining table. As she sat there, drinking her hot chocolate (*although it should now be called almost-cold-but-still-drinkable chocolate*) she could hear a tapping from the rooms above.

‘Mum, what’s that noise?’

‘It’s most likely your dad,’ Mum replied from the kitchen. ‘Just ignore it and Google a plumber.’

Lucy didn’t agree. She could hear her dad talking to Hobo outside the front door. The noise was coming from upstairs.

Still wearing her coat, she ran up the stairs but paused halfway. She thought she had seen a tear in the wallpaper but it was just the light.

The tapping sound repeated itself, she checked her room, then Mum and Dad’s. Nick’s room, although out of bounds, was also quiet. She paused and waited for it to pick up again.

When it did, she slowly raised her head and looked up.

‘The attic...’

‘Luce?’ Hobo called from the front door. ‘Your dad wants to know if we can borrow your hairdryer?’

‘I’m up here!’

Lucy could hear Hobo rush up the stairs.

‘What are you doing?’ he asked, picking up the hairdryer from Lucy’s bedroom floor.

There was a dirty sock that almost ruined his mission, but he survived the smell... just.

Lucy poked her head out from the attic hatch. She looked almost frozen.

'Luce, are you okay?'

'Hobo, I heard something in the attic. I thought it might be a cat or something,' she stuttered from the cold.

'Hang on, I'm coming up.'

Hobo attempted to climb the steps of the ladder. Lucy kept watch, basking in the warmer air from the landing. He looked up at her but Lucy noticed his face was full of fear.

'Luce, look out!' he shouted, pointing at something behind her. Before Lucy could turn, something grabbed the back of her head and pulled her to the floor.

She tried grabbing at it but couldn't find anything. Whatever it was, its strength was beyond Lucy's. If it weren't for Hobo helping out, she would never have been able to break free.

As she got back to her feet, she looked for her attacker. There was nothing there.

'What was that?' Lucy asked.

'I don't know. I didn't really see it. All I saw was something leap towards you.'

They searched for a moment or two but found nothing amongst the dusty old toys, clothes, and

the giant old lampshade that everyone seems to have in their attic.

Hobo moved a few of the old books, but slipped on a small patch of ice on the floor. It was no bigger than a coaster but enough to slip on and nearly fall. He managed to catch himself on the old coffee table but the copy of *Fly Fishing* by J R Hartley hit the floor, damaging the spine.

‘Are you okay?’ Lucy asked as Hobo steadied himself. She knelt down on the floor and checked the patch of ice. ‘Where’s this from?’

She looked up around the roof searching for a leak. She ran her fingers across the rafters, apart from traces of condensation there were no signs.

Hobo checked too but had no luck either. He had no idea where the ice had come from. He took the slightly rusty lid from the tank, finding the water within had frozen.

‘Luce, I think I need to get your dad.’

But before Hobo could move a muscle, a large wave of ice particles launched out of the tank. Lucy tried to fight them off but the ice was sharp and scratched her face.

Hobo managed to get to his feet, but the small drops of ice were crawling over him. Lucy took a nearby vase and batted them away like cricket balls. More and more of the droplets erupted from the tank until the entire attic was full.

Lucy checked to see where the hatch was, but it was covered in the droplets that were now starting to merge together. As they formed a large attic-shaped block of ice, Lucy pulled Hobo over to the far end below the skylight. Hobo swung the hairdryer around, but it was no good. Meanwhile, Lucy used the lampshade to hold back the avalanche.

She noticed Hobo staring at her, but couldn't turn her head for fear of losing control over the nearby droplets. Hobo swooped behind her, and she could hear him plug something in. He stood in front of Lucy, holding the hairdryer like a cowboy. He switched it on and the droplets instantly melted in the heat. As he continued, the steam filled the attic and made it difficult to breathe.

Lucy climbed on an old dining chair and pulled the latch on the skylight. It was frozen shut, but the steam helped loosen it.

It started to budge.

She used all of her strength to push it open and with one last heave, she managed it. The steam whooshed out of the window and into the sky. It swirled around and formed a humanoid shape in the air.

'Thank you,' the voice echoed through the sky. 'I was an entity travelling through the universe and then the coldness of this planet froze my form. I was

trapped but you have set me free. I give my thanks and bid you farewell.'

As Hobo melted the last of the ice and the final wisps of steam floated away, Lucy waved.

'What on earth have you been doing?' Dad asked, appearing at the attic hatch. 'Lucy, shut that window!'

He ordered them both down, before descending himself, muttering some words that must never be said in front of children, vicars, or little old ladies.

When Lucy and Hobo dried themselves off, the heating was back on. Once again the house was getting warm.

Mum called them from the kitchen for some cheese on toast, but when they arrived downstairs a mouldy envelope appeared through the letterbox.

Lucy, to whom it was addressed, picked it up and opened it:

'Professor Wilson,
I need your assistance,
Urgently!'

To be continued in Ten Lords Are Leaping...

Available from Candy Jar

**The Mystery of Lucy Wilson: Apocalypse Tomorrow
by Steven Walton and Shaun Russell**

Lucy Wilson's adventures in time have taken her to some strange places. Dangerous places, faraway places... But none so strange and alien as where she finds herself now... The 1990s.

Pokémon battle in the schoolyards. Tamagotchi roam the streets. And a giant spider from a ruined future looks to spark an apocalypse that, technically, has already happened.

Timelines converge and realities shattered as Lucy's exile in time reaches its epic climax. And in the end, it all comes down to one question: who's better, 2Unlimited or Adamski?



Available from Candy Jar

**The Lucy Wilson Mysteries:
The Best Christmas Ever by Chris Lynch**

Christmas is the busiest time of the year, but this never seems to be a problem for the monsters and aliens that visit Lucy Wilson over the festive period!

Alongside her best friend Hobo, Lucy discovers one of her grandad's old secrets, investigates a creepy haunted mansion, and gets a visit from a mysterious goatman called Krampus, who takes bad children away.

This is a collection of three stories set over the Christmases of 2018, 2019 and 2020. Defending Earth doesn't stop for anything, not even Christmas! But which Christmas is the best one ever?





Listen to the Spotify Christmas list. Updated daily.

