

# THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



STEVEN WALTON

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LUCY WILSON  
MYSTERIES**

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# TWO TURTLE DOVES

Lucy could feel the cold. She had been wearing a coat when she left her home, but there was something about the wind that stung. She rubbed her hands together and wished she had worn gloves like her mother always told her to.

Snow-covered hills surrounded her, with old stone walls that stood around the parameters of the fields. They too were covered in snow.

Lucy found that she was on a road, just ahead there was a small stone bridge. Trudging along, she made her way through the few centimetres of snow on the ground.

‘That settles it,’ she declared. ‘It must be England. Only this small amount of snow could close down the traffic in England.’

She looked back at her footprints behind her. Further snowfall was beginning to hide them. The wind still whistled in her face.

Beneath the bridge, a small stream had frozen over. Lucy could make out her reflection in the ice. She was cold and her face showed it. She hunched her jacket up over her mouth and pulled down her hat, rubbing her hands once more, before folding her arms.

'Is that a s-signpost?' Lucy stuttered, noticing something further along the road.

She continued the walk. The wind had now changed direction, and instead of blowing her in the face, it now helped her along. The snow, however, was getting worse. Lucy felt it weighing her down and she shook like a dog every so often. Clumps of snow fell from her hat and clothes.

The signpost wasn't the most helpful thing. It simply said 'Centre 2M'.

*Well, it can't mean metres, so it must be miles. I don't think I can make it that far,* Lucy thought.

She looked around for any further signs of life. In the distance, she could see a farmhouse. Again it was too far to walk. The weather was almost a blizzard and she struggled to see a metre in front of her.

She turned to face the wind, feeling certain that she could make it back to the bridge and shelter there.

The walk back seemed longer, but finally she made it. She sat down on the bank and slid down

the slope to the edge of the ice. Luckily, the stream didn't fill the underside of the bridge, and she didn't need to sit on the ice. She crawled under, checking for trolls first.

As she crouched under the damp stones, the snow continued to fall outside. To save herself from the harsh winds, she rested her face in between her knees.

It took a while for the weather to calm down. Lucy didn't like the idea of spending the night outside. Firstly, she didn't know what fate had in store for her. Secondly, it was getting even colder.

She began her journey once more, deciding that the farmhouse would be an easier walk than the town centre. She could see the lights from the windows and smoke from the chimney. Someone was definitely in, and it would be warm.

Some of the birds chirped around. Two white birds, in particular, were fascinated with Lucy. As she walked, they would take flight and land a little closer to her. Lucy admittedly did appreciate the company.

By the time Lucy reached the road, the snow was deep. Her jeans were wet right up to her knees and this weighed her down.

On the crossroads, there was an old-style red telephone box. Seizing the opportunity to call for

help, she made a B-line for it. Strangely, it felt colder in the box than it did outside. An old phone with a dial was perched on a shelf. She read the instructions about putting coins into slot A, but as calling the police was free, she opted to just dial 999.

It seemed odd to her that the number for emergencies was actually the hardest number to dial on the phone.

She held it up to her ear, but nothing.

'Come on, come on.' If things weren't bad enough, she now needed the toilet. *That's weird, where's the hum?* she thought.

Lucy pressed the receiver.

Silence.

*Where am I now?* thought Lucy. She took a deep breath. She had arrived quite a while ago, but this time she remembered everything. If it wasn't the Christmas pudding-laying geese, then the battle between Brussel sprouts and carrots was the clincher.

Before making the final stretch to the farmhouse, she looked out at the world around her. The snow glistened in the moonlight; the two white birds had followed her down, but looked like they were ready to nest.

She could see the lights of the town in the distance. When some went out, she assumed it was the people going to bed. To their nice warm beds.

The snow blocked out all sounds. If it wasn't so cold, it would have been beautiful. Lucy leaned her face against the glass. She needed a minute to rest.

**BASH!**

Without warning or reason, a bird flew straight into the glass that Lucy was resting her head on. It made her jump.

Shocked, she left the phone box and checked to see if the creature was okay. Sadly, it had hit the glass so hard that not only had it cracked the pane, but it had killed itself in doing so.

This shook her up a bit. She did not like it when any living thing was harmed, not people, not birds and not even the monsters that tried to defeat her. She picked up the small bird and buried it in the nearby layby. The ground was frozen solid and she couldn't dig a deep grave, so instead mounted stones over it.

She took one last look at the cracked windowpane, before resuming her journey up to the farmhouse. The two white birds once again hopped from tree to tree behind her.

The courtyard outside the farm was barren, apart from some spare parts for a trailer, the odd pile of wood or metal, and a large gate that led to the barn. All were delicately covered with a thick layer of snow.



A large wooden caravan wheel was propped up under a window. The two white birds perched themselves on the wheel, flicking some snow to the ground.

Lucy knocked on the large oak door. It took a moment but, eventually, someone opened it. Standing in the doorway was Dame Anne.

'Lucy!' she said, shocked to see her at the door. 'Are you trapped here too?'

'Can I come in? It's freezing out here.'

'Yes, of course, come in. I'll get you a hot drink and some new clothes.'

The house was mainly lit by gas lamps on the walls, the lights flickering all the way into the large kitchen. All other doors were closed, but the kitchen had been propped open by a small iron.

The iron wasn't electrical and this fitted in perfectly with the rest of the kitchen. There were only gas lamps in the room, with the glowing fire from the Aga shedding flickering light on the room. It was amazingly warm, the heat tingling Lucy's cheeks. Her fingers were still numb, but were slowly thawing out.

Dame Anne followed her. She guided Lucy to an old armchair next to the Aga and poured hot water into a cup from a saucepan.

Lucy watched intently as Anne opened the window slightly and pulled in a glass bottle of milk.

She dropped a bit in a small jug and returned it outside.

The two didn't speak, which felt strange. Anne usually had plenty to say. Lucy leaned forward towards the Aga, warming her hands more.

Lucy didn't know what to say. The last time she and Anne had met it hadn't gone well.

'Rough weather we're having,' Lucy eventually said in a desperate effort to break the silence. She thought the best way to achieve this was to use the one subject no British person can resist talking about: the weather.

Anne didn't take the bait.

Instead, she handed Lucy her cup of tea and sat down on the chair opposite. Lucy held the cup tightly, gathering warmth. On the stool next to her, she caught a glimpse of a newspaper.

'It's a little old now but read it if you want,' Anne said, noticing her visitor's glances.

'You're telling me,' Lucy said. 'It's nearly sixty years old.'

Dame Anne looked confused.

'Wait, what year is this?' Lucy asked.

Anne stared at her guest. Lucy couldn't make out what she was thinking.

'Is it really 1966?'

'Lucy, what year did you think this was?'

'2023.'

Anne's expression changed. She placed down her cup on top of the newspaper.

'You're not joking, are you?' she said, staring Lucy directly in the eyes.

'You said yourself, the newspaper is old!'

'Yes, but only by a few days. The snow's been falling for almost a week. The paperboy couldn't get up here.' Anne tilted her head slightly.

'But if it's 1966, then why don't you look younger?' Lucy asked. 'You look like you do in 2023. Why not how you looked in the '60s?'

Before Anne had a chance to answer, a clatter rose in the next room. Lucy put down her tea and followed Anne into what turned out to be the living room.

It was dark and dingy and Lucy could see her breath because it was so cold. The curtains were drawn and the fireplace had a screen placed in front of it. Anne produced a torch and shone it at different parts of the room. Above the fireplace was an old watercolour of hills and mountains by a lake, mounted in a golden frame. There were a few ornaments on the mantelpiece and a small wooden clock. The rest of the room had chairs, a bureau, and an upright piano. Lucy thought it was like an Aladdin's cave. Everything looked like it had a history to it. Nothing looked new, but it didn't look rundown either. As the torch flicked around the

room, Lucy could see different pictures on the walls, and a large set of double doors with a cornice box carved in grand Victorian designs. Two dark curtains flowed to the floor, closed for the winter.

The noise repeated itself. It was a mixture of a clatter, scratching and falling dust. They both turned around to the fireplace.

The torchlight fixed on the screen in front. Anne handed the torch to Lucy.

‘Keep it on the fireplace.’

She moved forwards. Lucy could see the nervousness on her face.

Anne took one of the tools hanging next to the fireplace on a weird miniature hat stand. Lucy recognised that one of them was a poker. It was similar to the one her dad used on the barbeque.

‘Lucy, keep the light still,’ whispered Anne.

She used the poker to push aside the metal screen. It fell to its side, making a clanging sound on the stone hearth.

All fell silent.

The two women held their breath, waiting for something to happen.

A small cluster of soot dropped from the chimney.

Silence then returned.

From above them, an odd scrambling noise came from higher up the chimney.

'Maybe it's a bit of snow falling down the chimney?' Lucy suggested.

'And snow makes a scratching noise?' Anne responded, dismissively.

'Maybe I can open the door and have a look?'

'The doors are bolted for the winter, they let in too much cold,' Anne replied. 'Try the windows.'

Lucy moved one of the chairs to the right to get access to the window while Anne, after taking back the torch, kept a light firmly on the fireplace. Being an old log fire, it illuminated the brick wall beyond.

Lucy struggled with the window. After pulling back the curtains, she could see a huge mound of snow piled up on the other side of the glass. She pushed as hard as she could but there was simply too much.

'Hang on,' she said, rushing back to the kitchen.

When she returned, she was holding the large kettle that had heated the water for the tea.

She carefully poured the hot contents through the gap she had managed to create. The snow instantly melted and Lucy was able to push the window out all the way.

It was dark outside and she couldn't see a lot.

'Anne, can I have the torch please?' she asked. Anne handed it to her and Lucy shone the light outside, pointing up at the house above her.

Apart from a small number of birds on the

windowsill above, there wasn't much more she could see.

'I might need to climb out,' Lucy suggested, but Anne didn't respond.

Instead, she grabbed Lucy's arm and pointed to a small gathering of robins on the outhouse nearest to them. Lucy flashed the torch over and, as she did, the light reflected in the eyes of every bird out there.

Every ledge out in the farmyard was smothered with birds. They lined up along the roofs, over the tractors and trailers, barrels and urns were absolutely covered.

'What are they doing?' Lucy asked.

'Shut the window.'

'What?'

'Shut the window!' Anne ordered. Lucy leaned out to pull the latch and, as she did, the flock of birds targeted the glass. Swarms of them crashed and scratched at the pane, similar to the bird at the phone box.

The glass began to crack.

'Lucy take this, then help me with the piano.' Anne gave Lucy the metal screen from the fireplace. It was ice cold, but Lucy drew the curtains and then propped up the screen. She jammed it in place with a variety of ornaments, lamps and books.

Anne pushed the piano across the room. The casters caught in the carpet and tore a hole. Lucy

joined her and the two of them managed to get the instrument up against the window. They piled more books and things on top.

But it was a useless effort. The screen at the window was already being attacked.

Behind them, they could hear the glass smash on the other side of the curtains. The thick purple velvet started to move as the birds desperately trying to get in. Lucy held her breath at the sound of the lining being pecked and ripped.

‘What do we do?’ Lucy asked, but before Anne could respond, a large cloud of soot shot from the fireplace. Magpies, robins, crows and pigeons fired into the room, pecking and clawing at Lucy and Anne.

Lucy grabbed a nearby candlestick and started to bat them away. Anne did the same with the torch.

They hurried back into the hallway, scratched and hurt. Lucy pulled the door shut behind them, but the relentless attack continued.

She pulled on the door handle, hoping it would withstand the pressure.

A crack started to form in Lucy’s eyeline; she could see tiny beaks pecking at it, making it bigger. There was glass smashing all around the house. Anne grabbed her and ushered her back to the kitchen. There was nothing they could do. The birds

were everywhere. One of them even knocked over an old oil lamp.

Instantly the oil spread across the floor, running through the grouting of the tiles. Almost as if they knew what to do, the birds knocked at the Aga over and over again. Embers flew around the room, resting on furniture and oil.

As the flames picked up, the two women ran back down the hallway.

‘Outside, I have a car!’ Anne ordered.

They ran towards the front door, followed by a swarm of birds.

Outside was no better. They walked straight into a barrage of beaks, wings and claws. The candlestick and torch were little help against the army of avian beasts.

Anne’s car was a classic 1960s Mini. The birds took full advantage of this, trapping both victims in the small tin-like car.

Lucy, instinctively, put her seatbelt on. Anne felt awkward for a moment, but quickly followed suit.

‘Where do we go?’

‘I’m not sure, Lucy,’ Anne said. ‘But I’m going to need you to hold on.’

Anne turned the key in the ignition and the Mini started up immediately, the headlights illuminating the swarm of birds.

With a sharp take off, the car launched through



the birds. Lucy could just make out the road as they sped out into the courtyard and down the small lane.

The snow was freshly laid and the ice wasn't much of an issue, but from time to time the car skidded slightly.

Lucy held on to the dashboard, as Anne reached 50mph on a snowy road in the dark. The birds were still distracted by the house, which freed up the windscreen.

'Where are we going?' Lucy asked.

'Into the town centre. I need to get a message to someone.'

Lucy knew Anne meant her grandad, but couldn't work out why she didn't just say that. Maybe there was confusion with the timeline that Anne didn't want to explain.

She turned around to look at the farmhouse. Flames were now flickering from the windows.

'I'm sorry about your house,' Lucy said.

'That's not my house. I just arrived there.'

Lucy turned around once more, but she could no longer see the flames, just a cloud of darkness forming in the sky. A tornado of doves, crows and other birds was following the car.

Anne took evasive action but lost control in a skid to the right. The Mini turned a full 360 degrees, before crashing into the red phone box at the end of

the lane. The birds surrounded the wreck as smoke emitted from the bonnet.

Apart from shock, both Lucy and Anne were okay. Lucy tried her door handle but it was jammed. Anne had better luck and indicated for Lucy to leave by the driver's door.

The birds were fast behind them, hitting the car and phone box. A few of them strayed over to attack the two women, but it wasn't enough to distract the others.

They crouched down under a tree trying to concoct a plan. As Anne checked out a clear route, Lucy watched the flock around the car.

Some of them seemed to be flying in through the open door eager to attack, then simply flew away.

She checked to see if was still wearing her backpack. Yes she was, but the zip had been torn. She rummaged through it to check if anything was missing, only to remember Hannah's Christmas present.

'Anne, I had this gem.'

'We haven't got time to look for lost jewellery...'

'The gem is in that car!'

'We don't have time.'

'Perhaps we don't, but it seems to be doing something to the birds!'

Anne shuffled over to the other side of the bushes to check out the wreckage of the car.

'Were did you get it?'

'From Eon.'

'You had an off-world gemstone and you haven't reported it to me. Lucy we have been over this. You must keep me informed.'

'Can we keep on subject?'

'It seems to be the only subject we talk about.'

Lucy had to admit she was right, but at this moment there were bigger fish to fry.

'I'm certain the stone will protect us. It might also release the control over the birds. They might just fly away,' Lucy explained. 'I know you want to contact Grandad, but what would realistically happen? Can you say that none of those poor creatures would be hurt?'

Anne looked away.

'I'll tell you what will happen. He will arrive with fifty men, with fifty guns and within five minutes the whole area will be clear of birds.' Lucy loved her grandad, there was no doubt about that, but he was a military man at heart. He knew his solutions. For Lucy, this was not the path she had chosen. She hoped, as a scientist, Anne would understand.

It was a tough few seconds before Anne responded.

'I wasn't going to call him. I have contacts with ornithologists. I hoped they would find a humane

way of resolving the problem.'

Lucy looked sheepish.

'Sorry...'

Lucy suddenly realised why Anne had treated her the way she had. The world was changing. There were new threats coming all the time. Lucy wasn't strong enough to fight them on her own, no matter how much she thought she could.

'So, this gemstone, do you think we can retrieve it?' Anne said, breaking the awkward silence.

'If I distract the birds, would you be able to get it from the car?' Lucy replied. 'I can run faster, so maybe I can get them further away?'

'Teamwork! I like it.' Anne smiled at Lucy.

Lucy grabbed her mobile from her pocket and turned on the torch app. It shone through the bushes. She could see one of the birds turn and squawk at her. Before she knew it, the flock was honing in on her. She started to run. It was difficult in the snow. The birds were fast, but all she needed to do was keep ahead.

Although there was smoke coming from the engine, the headlights on the car were still lit. Lucy could just make out Anne going through the dark grey cloud.

'LUCY!'

It hadn't taken Anne long to grab the stone. Lucy dashed back to the car. Some of the birds flew ahead

of her and aimed for the elderly Dame Anne holding something shining in the car lights.

Lucy watched as hundreds of birds dived at Anne. Then she slipped on a large tree root poking through the ground. As she fell to the floor, she witnessed the bird tornado swirl around her friend. The hypnotised creatures circled Anne, preparing to attack but instead of blood, they came out with their minds free.

It created a stunning mushroom cloud high up into the air, until every bird had dispersed.

Lucy made it back to the car. They were both safe, a little scratched, but safe. Without thinking about it, they simply hugged.

The two friends walked, with arms around each other, through the snow back up to the burning house. A fire engine raced next to them along the road. As they watched the house go up in flames, they didn't say a word.

Snow once more started to fall. On the concrete gate post outside the courtyard the two white birds from earlier perched.

'That reminds me,' Anne said. 'In the future, please don't send me a Christmas card.'

Lucy laughed. As she watched the snow flurry through the air, she could see a strange contraption near a wooden gate.

‘What’s that?’

‘Oh, it’s a joke. It’s a weather forecaster. On the end of the piece of rope is a rock. If the rock is dry, it means it’s sunny. If it’s wet that means, it’s raining. If it’s swaying it’s windy, and if it’s gone we’ve had a hurricane,’ Anne explained, laughing at the absurdity.

‘Well, it’s covered in snow.’

‘Means it’s snowing!’

Lucy laughed and they both ran over to the wooden frame. Lucy nudged some of the snow from the stone to tidy it up, but underneath she didn’t find a stone. Instead, a round red bauble began to shine.

Without warning, there was a flash of red light.

*Bah, how she thinks she can get away with it I don't know. Let's see how she does when she's faced by me.*

*To be concluded in A Partridge in a Pear Tree.*

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**The Mystery of Lucy Wilson: Apocalypse Tomorrow  
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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?



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**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?







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