

# THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



STEVEN WALTON

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# SIX GEESE ARE LAYING

‘Lucy!’ It was a familiar voice and it wasn’t the  
Lucy Lucy wanted to hear.

She walked into the next room. It was a large boardroom, with oak panels and a large thick table. All but one of the surrounding chairs were empty. There, at the far end, sat Mel.

‘Ah, there you are. Come on. There’s no time to waste. I need to be ready for the press release.’ Mel clapped her hands in a ‘chop, chop’ kind of way. ‘I think I’d look friendlier with curls.’

Lucy held her breath and counted to ten. Then counted once more as ten wasn’t enough.

‘Come on. The cameras will be here any minute.’

Lucy, not knowing what was happening, decided to play along. She picked up the hairbrush and curlers from the side table and started to brush Mel’s hair. It was annoyingly soft, silky and smooth. As much as she tried, Lucy couldn’t find any tangles to

accidentally pull out.

'Tell me, what's the press release for?' Lucy asked, still brushing, and resisting the urge to use the brush as a lethal weapon.

'Oh my god, where have you been? The goose!'

'The goose?' repeated Lucy.

'Yes, the goose!' Mel rolled her eyes and turned to face Lucy.

'You really are on another planet, aren't you?' Mel scoffed. 'Daddy found the goose at an auction, remember? Obviously being the prime minister, it was his duty to buy it.'

'Obviously,' Lucy said, mockingly.

'Precisely!' Mel didn't realise she was being sent up. 'Normally Daddy would have just thrown it in the bin, but some animal rights group, that you're probably a part of, told him that it wasn't ethical. Imagine that, Daddy not being ethical. Daddy "ethically" saved millions of pounds by reducing NHS waiting times. Only those who can afford it are allowed in now. And this has reduced the need for nurses and doctors. Such a brilliant plan!'

Lucy gripped her fist so tight that she almost snapped the brush in two. Something was wrong. Very wrong! Why on earth was Lucy brushing Mel's hair? And, more importantly, why was Mel's dad prime minister? One thing hadn't changed though. Mel was still an annoying little brat. Lucy smiled slightly.

'It only turns out that Daddy's goose is a festive anomaly. It doesn't lay eggs, but Christmas puddings. Are you going to curl my hair or just stand there?'

'Sorry, Mel.' Lucy plugged in the hair curlers, rolled her eyes and continued with the hair styling. She didn't really want to talk with Mel more than she needed to, but something was niggling her.

'Did your dad see the goose lay the pudding?' Lucy asked.

'Not the first one, but he saw the second and the third. We're having it for Christmas dinner.'

'The goose?'

'The pudding, silly.' Mel frowned at Lucy and picked up a nearby magazine. 'Daddy's going to be centre of attention this Christmas, don't you think?'

'Hmm, yes. Although it sounds like the goose did most of the work,' Lucy mumbled.

Lucy didn't stay for the press statement. She felt that she had suffered Mel's company long enough. As an alternative, she decided to search for the goose.

*If Mel's dad is the prime minister then this must be 10 Downing Street, Lucy thought. Although I'm not sure where you'd keep a bird in this place.*

As she wandered about the house, it was obvious that everyone knew her and, apart from the weird metal vault, she was allowed to go anywhere she

wanted. So, naturally, the only place she really wanted to go was the vault!

She crept downstairs and found herself in a noisy kitchen. Chefs of all ranks ran around. Some decorated the tops of cakes. Others prepared trifles, tiramisu and heavenly desserts. Others were glazing meat, making pastry or chopping vegetables.

'Excuse me,' Lucy asked one of the bigger men.

'Go bother someone else.'

Lucy frowned, then looked for someone else to ask. A woman was doing something with dough, throwing it into some sort of flour repeatedly. Lucy managed to push her way through, only to be turned down again.

It was an exercise that she soon grew tired of. No one wanted to talk to her. She leaned against one of the freezer doors, but was soon ushered along as she was in the way.

Her new, not-in-the-way-spot, was close to the sinks. A young girl of about Lucy's age was hard at work scrubbing pots and pans, plates and bowls, dishes and cutlery.

'Excuse me,' Lucy said, tapping the girl on the shoulder.

'Yes?' the girl said.

'Sorry to bother you, but can you please tell me where the puddings are? You know, the ones the goose laid?' Lucy desperately hoped the girl wasn't

about to say 'in the vault' because Lucy wouldn't stand a chance.

'Yeah, sure. They're in the wine cellar.' The girl smiled at Lucy as relief filled her face. 'Sorry, who are you?'

Lucy suddenly realised that being a hair stylist to the daughter of the prime minister was not a good enough reason to be in the kitchens, let alone asking for the whereabouts of food.

'I'm the health inspector!'

No sooner had the words left her mouth than the whole kitchen erupted into panic. Everyone began cleaning down their stations. There were queues for the sinks, fights over soap, and a particularly nasty incident with a spatula over a hairnet.

Lucy thanked the girl and decided it was best that she left.

If the kitchens were basement level, then the wine cellar was sub-basement. The staircase down was a remnant of the olden days. The steps and walls were made of polished stone; electrical wires ran along the top where lights had been put up periodically. The old gas lamps remained on the walls; Lucy could imagine how creepy it would look by candlelight.

Reaching the bottom, she came across a large iron gate. There was a padlock, but it wasn't locked. She slowly creaked it open. The noise echoed around the cellar.



Dusty walls of wine bottles lined the rooms. It felt like catacombs but with old glass bottles on wooden racks, rather than the remains of the dead.

Further wooden racks stood in the centre of the room, lined up like isles do in a supermarket. Lucy clicked on a light switch and multiple lights on the ceiling turned on. It was a godsend. Without it, she could hardly see where she was going, let alone where puddings were kept.

The bottles looked centuries old. Some had royal crests embossed on the sides, others had handwritten labels. Some were different shapes, sizes and colours.

After a brief search, she spotted three bundles placed in a line on a desk. It was the cleanest thing in the room, with a layer of plastic acting as a tablecloth. Each bundle was circular, a cloth wrapped around each, tied at the top.

Lucy pulled at one of the knots. Whoever tied them was really good at tying knots. She struggled to even loosen the first two. The third bundle was a little easier but, even then, she could only open it enough to squeeze the pudding out.

The pudding was heavy, almost too much for Lucy to carry. She rolled it out of its sack and stared at it. It was unusually round, with no bumps or lumps. She took a pen from her pocket and poked it. It was spongy. She pushed the pen in further. It was

hard work; the pudding was dense. She was just about to give up when the pen hit something hard. Thinking it might be a coin, Lucy poked the pen in a different place. The same happened.

Not thinking of the consequences, she started to rip open the sponge of the pudding. It was soil-like in texture and smelt like rotten fruit. She scraped more and more away until eventually she could see a perfect Perspex cube. Inside was a huge array of wires, circuit boards and, most importantly, a block of explosives.

‘What you up to?’ a gruff man’s voice came from behind her. She dropped the pudding in shock, and the cube skidded across the floor. The man stared at her in horror.

The cube came to stop, silently.

Lucy looked up from the cube at the man, he did the same back. She took a glance to the left and ran to the right. He had been tricked and headed to her left. She knocked over one of the carts near the door. It stopped him for a moment but it was all in vein.

As soon as Lucy reached the stairway, another man grabbed her.

‘Curious little thing, isn’t she?’ the gruff man said as the other man tied Lucy to a chair. ‘It’s a shame that you did this. You should have just left well alone.’

‘This bomb is no use to us now. What should we do with it?’ the other man asked, holding up the cube.

'We could always leave it with her...'

'Who are you? What do you want? Why do you have a bomb?' Lucy realised the stereotypical-ness of what she had just said, but it was too late. It was out there now.

'Do you really think we're going to tell you our plan?' the gruff man said, laughing.

'What's she going to do? Look at her. She's all tied up. She won't be able to tell anyone,' the other man said.

'No, we've been told not to tell anyone.'

'That's a bit rubbish though, isn't it?' Lucy said, an idea forming in her head. 'I suppose your idea is a bit lame. That's why you don't want to say it. Don't worry, I have embarrassing ideas too.'

'It's a solid plan,' the gruff man said.

'I'm sure it is, but if you don't have faith in it I'll—'

'I do have faith in it,' the gruff man interrupted.

'Now you mention it, Boss...'

the other man remarked.

'Come on, you can't have second thoughts now.'

The gruff man took his companion to one side.

'I'm not saying I'm having second thoughts. I'm just saying that a second opinion might be useful.'

The two men looked at each other for a moment, before the gruff man gave in.

'Okay, I'll tell you. But beware, the plan is so ruthless, so disgusting, so terrible that you may wish

you never asked,' the gruff man said. 'We are Murg—'

'Aliens!' Lucy interrupted.

'Yes... ' The gruff man looked at his companion. 'I told you she wouldn't understand. If it's not about *Strictly*, *Big Brother* or *Doctor Omega* nobody on this planet wants to know.'

'I do,' Lucy said, smiling.

'Honestly?'

'Cross my heart and hope to die,' Lucy said, crossing her fingers behind her back just in case.

'Okay, that's all right then. We've been sent here to check for habitable planets. This one fits our needs. Ours is dying. Trouble is, my friend here bought an old guide to Earth.'

'It was much cheaper and we'd already splashed out on our spaceship,' the other man explained.

'If we kill your prime minister, everyone in the world will blame everyone else. This will lead to war, and we'll pick up the pieces in the end,' the gruff man explained.

'Nifty plan, eh?' the other man asked.

'Let me get this straight, you got a goose to lay a Christmas pudding, which is actually a bomb, to kill the British prime minister. Which you hope will start World War III, so aliens can take over the world?' Lucy summarised.

'Well, when you put it like that, it sounds a little

daft,' the gruff man said.

'It does sound a little far-fetched,' the other man agreed.

'Why go through the whole goose thing?' Lucy asked.

'We wanted the prime minister to get his just desserts.'

Lucy just blinked, not knowing if they were being serious or not. She then opened her mouth to say something, but had second thoughts. Lucy tried hard not to look unimpressed.

'Enough of this!' the gruff man shouted. 'We do not need your approval. The plan is already working. We'll leave the tampered pudding with you. As soon as we detonate the PM's, it will set off a chain reaction. All three will explode. Merry Christmas!'

With that, the two of them left with the two other puddings, turning out the lights as they did.

Alone in the dark, Lucy started to plan. Her hands and feet were tied firmly to the chair. Then an idea struck her. If she could break the chair, then she could get free.

She shuffled left and right, the chair creaking beneath her. 'Come on!' She continued to move around until there was a huge crack. Before she could think about it, Lucy was in a pile of broken

wood on the floor. Her legs were still tied to the chair, but at least her hands were free.

She reached around the floor, hoping to find the cube. She was careful not to push it around too much. There were broken bottles, splintered bits of wood and goodness knows what else around her.

The end of her fingers touched the cube, but it slid away. She tried again, stretching out as much as she could. She flipped over, pulling hard at the rope around her feet. With a bit of wiggling, she managed to pull herself free. Quickly she retrieved the cube and rose to her feet. It was still completely dark and she couldn't see. Blindly, she edged towards the staircase.

Finding the iron gate at the entrance was a painful experience. She never saw it coming and walked straight into it. She slowly opened it, hoping the two men were not still around to hear the noise.

The walk up the steps was scary. At any moment she could have slipped and fallen backwards. She could just about make out a source of light ahead. It was the kitchen lights shining through the cracks in the door. It gave Lucy the courage she needed to speed up.

She was almost there. She sped up, not noticing the edge of the last stone step. She slipped and fell, the cube tumbling down a few steps behind her.

The light around the door allowed her to find the

cube easily. Thankfully it had only fallen a few steps, so she didn't have far to go. She was also thankful that it was made of strong stuff or else it would have been curtains for her. Lucy had only dropped a few steps too. Her arm hurt, but other than that she was okay.

She slowly opened the door, hoping no one would notice her leave. It dawned on her that she was in Downing Street with an explosive.

She poked her head around the door into the kitchen. It was still full of life. She could feel a high level of stress in the air. Looking around, she noticed a plastic pumpkin gathering dust on one of the shelves. Walking around the prime minister's house with the cube wasn't a great idea. While no one was looking, she hid it in the pumpkin.

It was a short walk out of the kitchen, made easy when all the others were so busy.

Not knowing her way around, or wanting to raise suspicion, Lucy crept around the house. Every time someone came through a door or around a corner, she would smile and walk away.

She eventually found the oak room she had met Mel in earlier. The press had cleared away, Mel was on her phone, and her dad was talking with two men. These were the two that had tied her up in the wine cellar.

The men headed towards the door. Lucy didn't

have time to run anywhere, so jumped behind the Christmas tree and crouched down.

‘Maybe I should try one tonight, or at least have a slice?’ Mel’s dad suggested.

‘Sir, we’ve already had that taken care of,’ the gruff man said. ‘That’s why there are only two puddings left.’

‘Oh, I see. Well done, lads.’

The three of them walked along the corridor and down the stairs.

Lucy waited a few moments in case one of them returned. Assuming the coast was clear, she left her hiding place and walked straight into Mel.

‘Erm, what are you up to?’

Lucy went blank.

‘I... um... I dropped a hair clip,’ Lucy lied.

‘It must have been a pretty special clip for you to rummage around in a Christmas tree?’

‘It was my lucky hair clip.’

‘Right...’ Mel raised her eyebrow, before returning to her phone. She continued to talk but never looked away from it. ‘Where were you? I had a complete disaster in there. The hairspray you used wasn’t strong enough. My curls kept falling in my face. It was an utter nightmare. Anyhow, I need to get dressed for the party. Be in my room in about forty-five minutes.’

Lucy nodded, although she didn’t remember



putting any hairspray in Mel's hair. She was just about to go into the oak room, when two women left, pushing the two puddings on a trolley.

'Where are you taking them?' Lucy asked, but neither woman replied. Lucy turned to Mel. 'Mel, where are the puddings going?'

'To the banquet hall, of course. They're going on display for the party tonight,' Mel replied.

'Party?'

'Yeah, the party you're going to do my hair for in forty-three minutes!' Mel scoffed.

'Can I come?'

'No.'

'But just think how great it would look to the press and others,' Lucy said after some quick thinking.

'Mmm, it would be a good PR stunt. Mixing with the hoi polloi. You're on,' Mel replied. 'This could be fun. You'd need to dress nicely though. Come on, I have some spare clothes in my room. They're last season, but beggars can't be choosers.'

Mel was actually fun to be with while they got ready. Lucy was under the impression that Mel didn't get to be herself a lot. They joked and did each other's hair. Lucy had her nails painted and was allowed full access to Mel's jewellery collection.

Within an hour, a smartly dressed woman came

to the door.

‘Miss, the guests are starting to arrive. Your father requests you make your way to the banquet hall.’

‘Thanks, Karen,’ Mel replied, her manners confused Karen slightly. She wasn’t used to pleasantries from the prime minister’s daughter. Lucy smiled knowingly.

Lucy looked at herself in the long mirror on Mel’s wall. Her gown was white with a black poinsettia made of gems near the right shoulder. Her necklace, bag and shoes matched. Mel had done a great job at straightening Lucy’s hair. It was now sleeked back and she couldn’t help but feel like a movie star. It was a far cry from her normal clothes, which were usually baggy and had little glamour about them. But the big difference was that all this stuff just pinched, squeezed, pushed, and weighed down on her. How did Mel do it? Give her a hoodie anytime.

Everyone looked amazing at the party, Dean Martin played through the speakers, the food and drink was flowing, and some of the extroverts danced. In the far end of the room, a large display cabinet was decorated in red poinsettias, holly and fir tree branches. The tips had been sprayed with glitter and these sparkled in the light. Inside were the two puddings.

Lucy turned to Mel.

'I know this is going to sound crazy, but we need to get rid of those puddings. I think there are bombs inside of them,' Lucy explained.

'Bombs!' Mel shouted. Luckily the music and chatter drowned her out, although one or two people did turn towards them.

'Shh! Yes, I found one in the third pudding. Those two guys from earlier want to kill your dad and start a war,' Lucy continued.

'I think you should lay off the mulled wine. It's clearly affecting you.'

'You've got to believe me. We've got to get rid of them. If one explodes then it will set off the others. It won't just be your dad that dies but everyone in this house.'

Mel could see the sincerity in Lucy's eyes.

'Why do I believe you?'

Lucy couldn't explain properly but something within her led Mel to believe.

'The fire alarm!'

'Brilliant!' Lucy exclaimed. 'Right, you set it off and then help me with the puddings.'

'Where?'

'I'm not sure yet, maybe we can defuse them?'

'I'll tell my dad.'

'He might let the cat out of the bag. That's if he even believes you,' Lucy added. 'Hang on, I have it. Down in the kitchen, there's a plastic pumpkin. I put

the third bomb in it. Can you please go and get it for me? But whatever you do, don't let the other two see you.'

'Got it!'

Mel ran over to the other end of the hall, through the servant's door that led straight down into the kitchens. It also had the added bonus of being where the fire alarm was.

Mel used her large diamond ring to smash the glass on the little red box. It started the alarms. While everyone else rushed for the other exit, Mel snuck through the servant's door.

Lucy hid until everyone had gone. Then she ran to the cabinet. It was locked and secure.

Thinking quickly, she took off one of the high heels Mel had given her and whacked at the glass, which smashed across the floor. The puddings were too heavy to carry on their own, so she began clawing away at the outer coat of cake.

Mel returned.

'Did you scuff my shoe?'

'Perspective, Mel, perspective,' Lucy replied, still clawing at the puddings.

Mel placed the cube she had retrieved from the kitchen next to the other two.

'So, what now?' she asked.

‘We can take them to the Thames. They could still explode but at least it would be water, not Downing Street.’

Lucy picked up one of the three cubes. Mel had the other two. They both dashed for the door, Lucy limped as she was only wearing one heel.

As they burst through the front door, Lucy was shocked to find she was no longer in Downing Street. In fact, she was no longer in England. As she gripped her cube she looked around her.

Mel was no longer with her, but instead, hundreds of shoppers surrounded her. She looked up once more to see the huge skyscrapers towering above...

*To be continued in Five Gold Rings...*

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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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