



## Chapter Twelve

*"Look before you leap."*

Josephine Mary Cresswell and Tommy stood on the wooden bar of the front gate and swung to and fro as they waited for Aunt Jenny to arrive.

"Those kidnappers won't get far," said Tommy, trying to reassure Josephine. "Someone's bound to spot them. There's not many black Vanguards like that around, especially with griffin wings on the bonnet." Tommy knew a lot about motor cars. He loved collecting swap cards and memorising every detail on them.

But Josephine was not listening. Her throat tightened as she remembered how she had cried out for revenge. She was too ashamed to tell Tommy how she had prayed that Prudence would be taken away by the evil Mrs Marsh.

Constable Greenfield came panting up the hill on his bicycle. Mrs Greenfield ran out of the house, her frilly apron flapping.

"Have they found her?" she asked in a husky voice. He shook his head.

"Someone reported a large black car heading east at high speed. A road block has been set up. Senior Sergeant Oliver is driving out there as we speak. He's convinced the kidnappers are Russian spies. That foolish man! Always talking about 'Reds under the bed.'"



“Could they be spies?” Mrs Greenfield asked. “Perhaps they captured Prudence to get information about her father.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, woman,” said the constable, lowering his voice. “You’ll frighten the children. What on earth is there here to spy on?” He turned to Josephine.

“Jo, your aunt has gone with Dr Dreaver to the naval base to try to contact the commander. You’re to stay with us until she returns in a day or so. Okay?” Josephine nodded.

“You’ll need to pop home and collect some things, Jo,” said Mrs Greenfield. “The back door’s unlocked. Run along... sort out what you’ll need for the next couple of days. When Tommy’s finished his chores he can come and help carry your bag. Okay?”

Josephine sped barefoot along the narrow gravel path, past the icecream shop to the cottage. The kitchen seemed empty without Aunt Jenny and the wonderful smells of her cooking. Josephine walked into the sitting room and fastened back the French doors which led onto the front verandah. A soft sea breeze flowed through the cottage. Then she ran up to the attic and packed the items she needed. Just as she was closing the bag, an odd scuffling sound came from the kitchen.

“Is that you, Tommy?” she called, bumping her bag down the small flight of stairs into the sitting room and leaving it near the open French doors. There was no reply. The scrabbling sound continued intermittently. Josephine felt a little scared and called out again.

“C’mon, Tommy, stop acting the goat.” There was silence.