



CHAPTER 30

SURPRISAL

Back at the hospital, Gelar was doing his duty, lying on his side covered, and cruising in dreamtime just under the radar of consciousness.

The door opened. Footsteps. A hand gently on his head. A woman's voice softly, musically called, "Wake up, wake up, wake up sleeping prince, wake up little boy, wake up wounded Romeo, wake up, wake up."

Gelar pulled the covers slowly down so his eyes alone were exposed. They opened wide and he gasped as the voice continued, "Oh there you are you poor dear. How are you? Are you in pain?"

Gelar shot up and exclaimed, "Bluey! Bluey!"

Mindy leaped back. "Gelly! What are *you* doing here!"

"I'm... I'm pretending to be Gupta. You're free!"

"This is the ultimate in stalking!" She was in new clothes and had an Ahern's *High Fashion* shopping bag in her

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hand.

“Bluey! Where have you been? Have you just been shopping?”

“Only for the last couple of hours. Before that I was a prisoner.”

“You were!”

“I sure as hell was. You *like* that?”

“No. No. I Like you free. You escaped?”

“Yes, I did—but I didn’t escape you Gelly!”

“I’m not stalking you honey. I’m helping to find you.”

“In there? You were looking for me under the covers?”

“Bluey I can’t explain everything right now. There’s too much to tell and I’m too... I thought they were going to kill you. But you’re safe now.” He started crying. “We have all been working together to find you and we tried to pay off Fenster but it failed and Gupta’s arm was badly burned...”

“I saw his face on a TV screen in the copy shop just down the street. He was in an ambulance. Something about an accident at the Mint. I ran over here to find out what hospital he was in and lucked out. I mean I thought I lucked out. But where *is* he? What’s this all about?”

Frannie walked in, gasped excitedly, ran up, and hugged Mindy saying, “Oh how wonderful! Where’ve you been? What happened?!”

“I escaped from my kidnapers.”

“Where were you?”

“In a room in the Swan Brewery where I was being held by Fenster’s boys.”

“You *were* there,” said Gelar.

“You knew?”

“How’d you get away?” Frannie asked.

“One of the kidnapers let me go.”

“You just walked out?”

“Yeah. Well, there’s more to it than that, but yeah. I walked over to the restaurant and sat down with some people. Threw them a little off kilter at first but then we got on fine. They ended up giving me a ride downtown.”

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"I'm so glad to see you," said Gelar. "So glad." And he whimpered a little.

"We're so happy you're free," said Frannie hugging her again. "We were worried to death and doing everything imaginable to find you. Actually—much more than you could imagine. We were there at the Brewery. A bunch of us. Anyway, we've been on your case round the clock for a week."

"That's kind of you."

"You've been shopping?" said Frannie looking at Mindy's shopping bag and new beige pants and chocolate brown silk blouse.

"I was a mess. I had them drop me at Ahern's where I have an account. Took a shower and threw away the clothes I came in with. Now what were you saying, Gelly? About Fenster and Guppy?" She turned to Frannie. "I saw Guppy on the telly bein' loaded into an ambulance. That's how I came here. And then I find Gelly! I still don't get it."

"Well," said Gelar, "what happened was..."

Samo and Techo walk in.

"Samo! Techo!" said Frannie. "This is my mate Samo and this is my mate Techo," she said to Mindy, "and this," she paused, "is my mate Melinda otherwise known as Mindy. Mindy's free!" she said with a broad grin. "She *was* kidnapped and she escaped!"

"A miracle!" exclaimed Samo. "How fortunate. So good to meet you and see you're free."

"Give him a hug," said Frannie. "He's been workin' night and day to find you and free you. And Techo too."

Mindy hugged Samo then Techo who were both dazed by the news. "I don't know what you've been up to but I appreciate it," she said.

Samo got right into checking on Mindy's condition. Was she hurt anywhere? Was she in shock? Should she be examined by a doctor?

"I think that mainly I need some exercise," she said. "I've had plenty of rest and I've been fed alright. Not the restaurant food though. Fast food. Awful. Why didn't they get

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me good food from the restaurant there. I couldn't believe it when I got out and found it in the same building."

"They sure let you dress nicely," said Samo.

"Just got this stuff. I was all dirty and sweaty a couple of hours ago."

A man with a suit walked in, the lawyer from the Mint. "Excuse me," he said. "I just wanted to make sure Mr. Gupta was doing alright." He approached the bed. "And to give him a copy of the agreement he signed." He handed it to Gelar. "Um—Mr. Gupta?"

"Yes. Thank you."

The lawyer handed it over hesitantly, walked slowly toward the door, turned around looking quizzically at Gelar.

"He looks terrible after he's slept," said Frannie. "I don't recognize him in the morning."

"I don't know what's happening either," said Mindy shaking her head.

The lawyer managed a confused smile and left.

"Now who was he again?" said Mindy.

"He's from the Mint," said Frannie. "It's about the money they gave Gupta."

"The Mint gave Gupta money?" asked Samo.

"I haven't been able to get hold of you," said Frannie.

"Techo and my mobiles were both down. My fault."

"The Mint gave money to Guppy?" said Mindy.

"How much?" said Samo.

"Enough to pay Fenster," said Frannie. "Three Hundred thousand dollars."

"Pay Fenster?" asked Mindy.

"Well where's Gupta? Where's Davo?" asked Samo.

Frannie gasped. "Davo and Guppy! They've got the money and they're on the way to Amenity to give it to Fenster! We've got to stop them!"

Techo's head jerked. He went out.

"We've got to get to them right now!" said Samo. "Call them! He's got Mindy's mobile."

"Ah—I'll call them up on mine," said Frannie. There

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was a silent pause. Then she was talking rapidly. "Gupta! Gupta! Pick up the phone! Pick up the phone! Oh you can't hear! Mindy's out! Don't give them that money! Don't give them the money! Mindy's free! She got out!" She hangs up. "It was just a message. I just left a message. I'll try again." She held the phone to her ear and put it back in her pocket. "Not answering. What should we do!?"

"We should rush to the funeral home," said Samo.

Everyone poured out of the room.

"Come on Techo! Get off that computer! Let's go," called Samo. "We're not gonna wait for you. Gotta get to Amenity now!"

"I'm comin'!"

"What's this about money again?" asked Mindy as they ran down the hall.

"The ransom money—three hundred thousand dollars!" said Gelar.

"For me?"

"Yes," said Frannie. "Well, for Fenster for you."

"That's very flattering. Though I could see more—even a million. But how'd you get \$300,000?" she panted trotting.

"I don't know much more than you," said Frannie as they quickly descended stairs. "I think the Mint gave it to Guppy for burnin' his arm. He cashed it at the bank down the street. We've got to stop them from payin',"

"But he'll just kill us all then won't he?" asked Gelar as they exited to the street and piled into Samo's car.

"Mindy's free," said Samo. "He just lost his shield."

"He'll still want to kill us," yelled Gelar over the engine roar.

Techo caught up and jumped in the back seat as the Volvo sped off.

"Kill you?" said Mindy.

"Yes," said Gelar. "Fenster has been threatening all of us. With beheading no less. You too."

"He's not going to behead anyone, or be a danger to any of us anymore," Mindy said reaching into her shopping

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bag. "I got the goods on him here. Evidence to tie him up with a long string of crimes."

"We should back that disk up," said Techo.

"I've already got it all backed up on disk and hard copied and waiting to be distributed to media and the authorities if anything happens to me or to anyone. A friend at the copy shop is prepared to act if I don't get back to him before long. And if lightning strikes him, I left it with my friend at Ahern's."

"How'd you get all that?" asked Samo as they sped along.

"I turned the charm a little on one of the fellows watching me."

"On Johnno," said Samo nodding.

"On Johnno," she agrees.

"No! No Bluey! Not one of those gangsters!" cried Gelar.

"Johnno was cute. He's waitin' for me to run off with him and I feel a little bad about that."

"No! Sleeping with the enemy!"

"I'm alive too!"

"Where were you?" asked Samo.

"In the empty part of the Swan Brewery."

"We looked everywhere," said Frannie.

"It was a sort of hidden room. You wouldn't have found it."

"What time did you get out?"

"Before noon."

Samo hit his head with one hand. "They fooled us." He made a sharp turn with the other.

Mindy asked Samo who fooled them? He explained.

"Oh," she said. "Johnno had Queenly tied up but I was still waiting for him to give me the goods on Fenster. I wondered what all that racket was about. I was close but I thought at the time it was just them and some of Fenster's other men arguing. I was almost out of there but Johnno was insecure and needed a little more reassuring I really loved

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him and would meet him later to run off. I feel bad I won't be there."

"No, no," said Gelar holding his head with his hands.

"What did they tell you?" Mindy asked Samo.

"That they were practicing tying each other up and getting loose and the reason they were coming and going in shifts was Fenster made them meditate and do some sort of martial arts and stuff."

"Fenster does make them do all that—or try to. They complained a lot—having to cross their legs in the Buddha room. They didn't know if you guys were with the cops or what and Johnno couldn't believe you left them there with Queenly still tied. Johnno just put the gag back on as soon as you were out. He was laughing when he came back to me. So that was you. It wasn't long after that he gave me the disk and stuff and let me go. Trusting soul."

"We were *that* close," said Samo. "That's terrible."

"It's a day for screw-ups," said Techo. "I even put on the wrong music."

"If you'd saved me then I wouldn't have had the goods on Fenster," said Mindy. "Johnno had it hidden where you probably wouldn't have found it."

"If there were only some way we could tell Davo and Gupta!" said Frannie.

"There's a chance the boys will find out," said Techo.

"Why don't you call Fenster," said Frannie, "and tell him we got the goods on him and not to take that money or harm them and maybe we'll leave him alone?"

"Maybe better to surprise him. With Mindy out, I'll call my buddy at the station and have them come on over as well. I'm eager to see what you got on Fenster, Mindy—minus your own case, which would mean trouble for you and the boys with Rudy. Right?"

"Oh yeah, we don't want him to know about this. It wouldn't be worth what'd hit the fan. It's all in here," she said and pulled a large envelope out of the shopping bag. There was a photo of a white wooden building on the face of it with

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Amenity Funeral Home written across the top. She stuck it in front of him.

“That's where we're going,” said Samo.

“Amenity,” said Mindy. “I used to go there when I was a kid. Back when Rudy and Fenster were on better terms. They have a crematorium in back Fenster’s fond of. Uh-oh. We’d better hurry.”