

The stunning sequel to *Raising Arcadia*

*To understand the present,
Arcadia Greentree must dig deep into her past.*

Her family torn apart by tragedy, Arcadia tries to locate the “professor” whom she believes to be ultimately responsible. A series of clues lead her to Oxford University and a confrontation with her enemy—but all is not as it seems.

“Packed with intellectual puzzles, the taut chain of events invites the reader’s participation every step of the way. This subtle, intriguing novel raises the bar for young adult contemporary fiction. When we enter the world of our brilliant teenage protagonist with all its attendant mysteries—Who is Arcadia? Who is our killer?—we are reminded that the present, viewed keenly, holds all the keys to the past. This book is impossible to put down.”

Michelle Martin, Radio Personality, Host of *Talking Books*

Finding Arcadia is the second in this exciting trilogy.



Raising Arcadia
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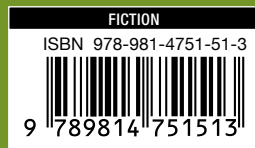


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For Review Only

SIMON CHESTERMAN

FINDING ARCADIA

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THE SECOND BOOK IN THE RAISING ARCADIA TRILOGY

SIMON CHESTERMAN

FINDING ARCADIA

Praise for *Raising Arcadia*, the first book of the trilogy:

“...pleasurably packed with clever, solvable, well-explained puzzles; hits the spot for a mystery lover.”

Kirkus Reviews

“*Raising Arcadia* is a pacy mystery novel that has, at its centre, the irrepressible (and perhaps sociopathic) heroine Arcadia, a sixteen-year-old searching for her place in the adult world. Stuffed with intrigue and mystery, it will be adored by young adults and by adults who prize curiosity and challenge. Read it—and then read it again, to see if you noticed all the clues.”

Adrian Tan, lawyer and author of *The Teenage Textbook*

“Chesterman’s compelling creation of Arcadia, a preternaturally precocious sleuth with an unsettlingly clear-sighted and plain-spoken manner, is matched by the twists and turns of a devious plot, making for a true page-turner.”

Philip Jeyaretnam, S.C., lawyer and author of *Abraham’s Promise*

“In prose so still and measured, Chesterman methodically uncovers Arcadia’s world. Beneath this astonishing portrait of a family is an invisible intellectual machinery at work that will intrigue readers at every turn. I am already impatient for the next book.”

Leeya Mehta, author of *The Towers of Silence*

“What a mind-racing read! *Raising Arcadia* is *Fringe* meets *Perception*, Hermione meets Sherlock... a wonderful exploration of destiny *vs.* potential.”

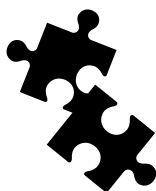
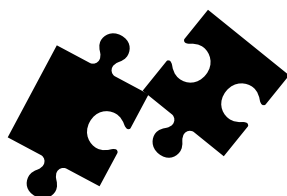
Sharon Au, actress and founder of styleXstyle.com

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SIMON CHESTERMAN

FINDING ARCADIA



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CONTENTS

	Prologue	9
1	Tick	11
2	Starr	32
3	Marshmallows	52
4	Cuckoo	73
5	Mistletoe	96
6	Oxford	118
7	Tock	139
8	Records	164
9	Double	178
10	Trouble	196
11	Boom	214
12	Breadcrumbs	228

PROLOGUE

A dream, but not a dream.

Haze. A mist due not to steam long dissipated but to uncertainty. The water is warm. Residual bubbles cling to the skin. Now empty, the glass on the stool retains the faintly sweet smell of whisky. And something else?

Bitterness.

I am by the water; I am in the water. By the water or in the water? No struggle. Sacrificial limb or sacrificial lamb?

Tendrils escape at first, wending their way as spirals, then clouds.

Until the water of the bath runs red.

1
TICK

“Might you persuade your friend to stop breathing quite so loudly? It’s more than a little distracting.”

For a moment Henry stops respiring completely. It is at best a temporary measure; within a minute his short gasps have resumed, though he is trying to keep the noise to a minimum.

“I don’t believe he is intending to distract you, Magnus,” she says. “Even you must understand that he finds this predicament somewhat stressful.”

“Indeed, sister dear. But if we are to get him out of his ‘predicament’ it would be prudent to concentrate on the matter at hand.”

“I didn’t realise that you were so easily diverted. How ever will you complete your doctorate if the mere breathing of those around you derails your train of thought?”

Magnus puts down the screwdriver and gives her an exasperated look. “I agreed to assist you in this matter



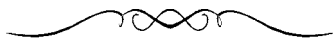
because you assured me that this was a friend of yours and that you needed my help. Is it too much to ask that I be spared unnecessary interruptions?”

Her own breathing remains steady. Yet she cannot shake a slight tightening in the back of her throat. Anxiety? Another distraction. “Perhaps,” she says evenly, “you might return to what you were doing? There are indications that the mechanism includes a timer of some sort.”

Magnus sniffs and picks up the screwdriver once more. “Everything is a rush with you. You invite me here, promise me high tea, and instead have me mucking about with tools. It’s really not my style, you know. Scones and clotted cream, you said.”

Is time of the essence? Difficult to tell, but the consequences may be unfortunate if it runs out. Encourage rather than mock, then. “Very well, Magnus. Clotted cream and scones it shall be—once we are done here.”

Between them, Henry has been trying not to move his body, even as his eyes dart from left to right. “Now,” he whispers, “that you’ve sorted out afternoon tea, maybe you could get back to disarming the bomb?”



The visit was unannounced, as usual. She had been reading in her rooms when the creak of a floorboard outside interrupted her. The protestations of the timber were clearly more than would be occasioned by even the

largest teacher—with the possible exception of Mr. Pratt. As it was highly unlikely that her erstwhile science teacher would be paying a social call on a Sunday, however, it left only one probable solution.

“Come in, Magnus,” she called, before her brother had time to knock.

Or had he even been going to knock? In any case, he entered the room and cast about for a chair. The journey from Cambridge—train ride, then taxi—had taken a toll on him, but on a previous trip to see her at the Priory School one of the standard-issue dormitory chairs had given way under his girth. He settled on the end of her bed.

“You’re travelling first class now? How extravagant.”

His face registered nothing, but a hand touched the pocket in which his return ticket was stored. Assuming it had been poking out for her to see? It was a guess, informed by the absence of creases on his jacket.

“You look less rumpled than when you have to squeeze yourself into a seat in standard.”

A raised eyebrow. “Yes, well, it’s good to see you too, Arcadia. I came into some money after performing a modest service that returned St. Edward’s Sapphire to its rightful owner.” A pause, then awkwardly: “So, how have you been?”

There was no hugging.

“You can tell our aunt and uncle that I’m fine.” Aunt Jean and Uncle Arthur periodically express concern about



her well-being, attempting to check up on her through phone calls and messages.

And she was fine. Is fine.

"I informed them of that before coming here, Arcadia," he continued. "Though I shall not pass on the fact that you've lost three pounds in weight. Skipping... breakfast, is it? A mistake as it really is the most important meal of the day. With the possible exception of dessert." He yawned, leaning back against the wall on which a copy of the periodic table hung. "But you probably should eat a little more red meat, or a lot more spinach. You obviously aren't anaemic, but particularly at this time of the month—"

"That's quite enough, Magnus." She stood. "Shall we take a walk in the gardens en route to Hall? In a remarkable coincidence, you arrive just in time for high tea."

No coincidence, of course. Yet a pre-prandial stroll was not what her brother had in mind. "A walk?" The mattress had settled under his weight; eventually it would revert to flatness. He watched her take a coat off its hook before starting the process of standing up himself. "I suppose it's a necessary evil if there are scones and clotted cream at the end of it."

Outside, autumn colours were giving way to the bleakness of winter. From the rear exit to the dormitory building they began the short walk through the gardens that would deliver them back to the main quadrangle and Hall. Pretty enough, but Magnus clearly suspected

(correctly) that she chose this path to make him trudge through the gravel.

“And how goes your doctorate?” Neither of them is very good at phatic speech, the polite conversation that keeps the wheels of society lubricated.

“Oh it goes, it goes,” Magnus replied at the time, amiably enough. “And your transition to full-boarding? The Priory School can be a somewhat confined environment if one does not have the occasional means of escape.”

“Fine also. Your key does come in handy every now and then.” The master key, hidden for several years in Chapel after Magnus graduated, opens all the doors on campus. She uses it sparingly.

“And the good Mr. Ormiston is still Acting Head?” Though there was an inflection at the end of the sentence, it was not a question.

“The search for a new Headmaster continues, though I gather the Board is pedalling slowly while the scandal of how the position became vacant fades.”

“Quite,” he intoned. “Suicide remains the accepted version of what took place here six months ago?”

Six months. Almost to the day.

“Yes. Both the public account and the version gossiped about by students and teachers alike.”

“And no further contact with the woman, Sophia Alderman?”

Again, not really a question; she would have told him. Or he would have known. Her non-response served as an



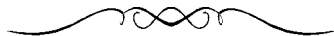
answer. “I assume that your own various efforts to track down Miss Alderman came to nothing?”

His irritation showed only in the slight increase in the force with which his shoes hit the gravel. “Candidly, I confess to some admiration for the woman,” he said at last. “As someone who has spent many years cultivating alternative personae online, I acknowledge a fellow practitioner.” A certain graciousness, uncharacteristic of her brother. But irritation also.

They walked on for a full minute without speaking, the crunch of gravel supplemented by a wind tugging at the last autumnal leaves.

“And mother?”

Both of them had spoken at the same time. Both stopped. The movement of the air alone broke the silence.



“You remember nothing at all about how this device came to be strapped to you?” She has asked this before, but any information would be useful—and getting Henry to focus on something other than Magnus’s furrowed brow might calm him down. Calm them both down.

“Like I told you,” Henry says quietly, still trying not to move, “I didn’t feel well after lunch—woozy, like I was drunk or something. I went back to my room to lie down and then must have passed out. When I woke, this was attached to me.”

“And the room was empty?”

“Yes. And the door locked. But my phone was next to me on the bed and it seemed fairly clear that I should call you.”

She and Magnus were near the end of their walk when the call came. Henry’s breathing communicated fear even before he spoke. “Arcadia,” he said. “I think I need some help.”

The device is a metal box strapped to her classmate’s chest. The straps wrap around his body and have multi-coloured wires running from the box sewn into them, suggesting that removing them may cause it to... activate? It would have taken a couple of minutes to attach. Lunch was served at noon. “You must have been unconscious for at least four hours. You didn’t eat or drink anything strange?”

“No, the usual Sunday fare at Hall. Roast beef and potatoes.” His eyes widened. “Oh God, it’s not mad cow disease, is it?”

“Highly unlikely,” Magnus looks up from removing the third screw on the front of the box. “Bovine spongiform encephalopathy is quite rare these days and takes years before the brain begins to deteriorate. This sounds more like flunitrazepam.”

“Fluniwhat?” Henry’s eyes dart back to hers.

“A fancy name for Rohypnol,” she says. “Also known as ‘roofies’—you might have heard about it used as a date-rape drug. It knocks you out and can cause brief amnesia.”



“I was drugged?”

“So it appears. You are sure your door was locked when you lay down?” She looks around the room. Window closed against the cold. No evidence of tampering on the door.

“Yes.” He pauses. “Actually, how did you two get in?”

While she weighs whether to tell him about the master key, Magnus looks up once more: “The lock was not very difficult to bypass. A credit card did the trick.” It might have, but she doubts it would have been as quick as the master key.

Henry digests this. “When will the bomb squad get here?”

Ah. After Henry’s brief phone call had shared the vital information—device, his rooms, anxiety—she prepared to call the police but Magnus stopped her. “Let us at least know what we are dealing with, first,” he said. His curiosity piqued, evidently. Yet it was reasonable to check that Henry was not simply the victim of some kind of a hoax.

Once in the room it was obvious that this went beyond a student prank. The device itself appears to have been manufactured with considerable care. A glow can be seen through vents in the side of the box, indicating a power source. The front panel was attached with four screws. Intended to be removed? Probably. She carries in her bag a Swiss Army knife with a Phillips-head screwdriver, but hesitated.

“Is it possible that unscrewing it will set off the

device?” she whispered to Magnus, hoping not to alarm Henry further.

“Yes, it’s possible,” her brother replied. “Though it does appear to be a package intended for you to open.” For the dark metal panel has been engraved with an elegant script, positioned so that Henry could see it when he regained consciousness:

To Arcadía, with Love.

And so they have not yet called the police.

She is more likely to get information from Henry than Magnus and so her brother has taken the screwdriver while she questions her classmate. In the four—no, five minutes they have been in the room, that has yet to yield anything useful. Drugging suggests access to food or drink, though with the low security at school almost anyone could have snuck into the kitchens. Or something could have been dropped in his drink in Hall. Entry to the room points to a master key, a copy of his, or some basic locksmithery. Hard to trace. The device itself is the most likely clue. Magnus has touched no more of it than required, though given the apparent care that has gone into its design the chance of fingerprints is small.

And if it is a bomb and detonates then that chance reduces to zero.

The third screw comes out and Magnus places it on the bedside table. One more.



“You don’t recall,” he says, starting on the last screw, “a bitter taste in your drink? Flunitrazepam—‘roofies’, if you must—are sometimes said to taste slightly bitter when mixed into drinks, especially alcoholic ones.”

“No,” Henry replies. “I only had orange juice to drink. The stuff they serve at Hall is never particularly good, but I didn’t notice anything strange.”

“Pity.” Magnus is working on the final screw when his phone rings—a full choir singing “Land of Hope and Glory”—causing Henry to start.

Magnus removes it from his pocket and looks at the screen. “Sorry old chap,” he says to Henry, passing the screwdriver to his sister. “I have to take this.”

Henry’s mouth opens but no words come out as Magnus steps outside the room. With a brisk smile, she turns her attention to the metal panel and the final screw. It turns easily—Magnus’s perspiration was highly misleading. Theatrical?

As the last screw comes out and she lifts the front panel from the box, there is the gentle click of a pressure-switch being released. Inside the casing, there is a simple LED timer. Its red digits were the source of light visible through the air vents. That light had been stable, the digits fixed on “3:00”. But now it emits a beep and begins to count down. “2:59”, “2:58”.

Henry has been holding his breath but now gasps out: “Arcadia, what’s happening? What can you see?”

“Magnus?” she calls, but her brother must be beyond

earshot. No time to run for help. Time to run, perhaps? But not an option for Henry. Again, she tries a brisk smile at Henry. “So, at least we can now see what we’re dealing with. There’s a timing device with three wires—red, blue, and green—connecting it to a fist-sized lump of what looks like playdough.” Smells faintly like crayon. Curious.

“Timing device? What does it say?”

“2:48.”

“A clock? So it’s almost two hours slow. Is that good?”

“Not exactly. It says two minutes and forty-eight—sorry, forty seconds.”

Henry’s mouth starts to form a word and stops as tears well in his eyes. But she must focus.

Three wires. Red, blue, green. The timer and the doughy substance are fixed into the box, though the wires seem to invite cutting. But which one? Or all of them?

A note addressed to her. “To Arcadia, with Love.”

She lifts the front panel and looks at it more closely, turning it over. On the side facing the interior of the box there is more engraving.

Dear Arcadia,

Cutting one of the wires—one and only one of them—may stop the timer. I promise that this much is true. Next I can assure you that one and only one of the following statements is true: green when cut will stop the timer;



*snipping the blue will not stop the timer;
or it might be that green when cut will not stop
the timer. Onward now—never say die!*

M.

M? Surely not Magnus. His absence is odd but in any case he would never address any missive “with love”. Other Ms? No time. File for later.

Two minutes, ten seconds.

“Magnus!” she calls again. She could go to the corridor but abandoning Henry might cause him to panic. And lose precious time.

So think. A puzzle, addressed to her. Another code? Not quite.

Cut one wire. Swiss Army knives have been made for over a century, but acquired their name only after the Second World War because American soldiers couldn’t pronounce *Offiziersmesser*—“officer’s knife” in German. Scissors are not always one of the tools included, but hers has a pair. She folds the screwdriver back and extracts the scissors. Small, but certainly capable of cutting a low-voltage electrical wire. So which one?

Two minutes.

Cut one and only one wire. If that is untrue then the whole riddle makes no sense. But only one of the next three statements is true. Green stops the bomb. Blue does not stop the bomb. Green does *not* stop the bomb.

The first and third cannot both be true: green cannot stop and not stop the bomb.

What about red? What happens if you cut the red wire?

One minute, forty-seven seconds.

Remain calm. Be systematic. One and only one can be true. There are only three statements.

If the first is true, that green stops the bomb, then it is false that green does *not* stop the bomb, so the third statement is false. But the second statement, that blue does not stop the bomb, would then be true. Two statements are true so that cannot be it.

Henry is trying to sit up, seeing something in her expression. “Be still,” she says, a little more loudly than intended. He is still.

One minute, thirty-two seconds.

If the second statement is true, then blue does not stop the bomb. So it could be red or green. But just as the first and third statements cannot both be true, they also cannot both be false. If the first statement is false then green does not stop the bomb—but if the third statement is false then green *does* stop the bomb. Contradiction again, so that can’t be the answer.

A familiar buzzing noise. Not from the device, but her phone, vibrating within her bag. Not the time to answer it.

One minute, five seconds.

Calm. Systematic.

If the *third* statement is true, then green does not stop



the timer. So blue or red. But the other two statements must be false. If the first statement is false, then green does not stop the bomb. So far, so good. And if the second statement is false...

She reaches into the box and carefully separates the wires with her fingers. Holding it between the thumb and forefinger of her left hand, she holds her breath also and cuts the blue wire with the Swiss Army knife scissors.

Forty-seven seconds.

She watches the timer for a full five seconds, but it does not change. Then it emits an ascending series of beeps in what is presumably intended to be a cheerful tune and the three digit display briefly registers "OFF" before going dark.

Exhale.

A more genuine smile at Henry. "I think we can try to take this off now."

He wipes his eyes and sits up, as she reaches around his torso to unclip the straps. Wires are sewn into the canvas straps, but the plastic clips that secure them have no metal contact points. Curious.

Straps loose, the device is light in her hands. Henry looks inside it for the first time and catches his breath again. "Is it safe now?"

"I think so," she says, placing it carefully on his desk.

They are sitting on Henry's bed. Knees just touching. Yet somehow it does not feel awkward.

A buzzing noise again. Her phone. She retrieves it and

sees that it is Magnus calling. The previous call was him also. She picks up.

“Arcadia?” He sounds agitated.

“Yes, Magnus? What’s wrong?”

“They won’t let me into Hall. I’ve explained that I’m an Old Boy but they say I must be accompanied by a current student. If you’ve finished up there, perhaps you could come and join me? By all means invite what’s-his-name also.”

“Henry.” Her brother’s appetites often drive his behaviour, but this is extreme even for him.

“Yes, Henry,” he repeats. “So I’ll see you soon?”

“Very well.” She puts the phone back in her bag, trying to work out what she missed. To Henry: “Magnus is in Hall. Do you feel like some afternoon tea?”

“No thanks. But I’ll walk out to the quad with you. I think fresh air might do me some good.”

They stand and she retrieves her coat from the chair as Henry takes his down from a hook on the wall. Only now, she sees that Magnus must have picked up his own when he left to answer the telephone. Not planning to return.

“Wait,” Henry says. “Do we need to stay here until the bomb squad arrives?”

“I don’t think we will be needing a bomb squad,” she replies, putting the engraved front panel from the device in her bag and opening the door.

“Why?” Henry follows her into the corridor that runs the length of the dormitory.



“I need to speak with Magnus first,” she replies. “Though I think the danger has now passed.”

Henry is about to say something when they reach the stairs and almost collide with Mr. Pratt. The science teacher was absent from school for a month after a car accident the previous school year, but is now back in rude health. He appears to be on his way to yell at another student for some infraction, though he seizes the opportunity to accost them also.

“Miss Greentree,” he says. “Would you mind explaining what you are doing on the boys’ floor of the dormitory building? You know very well that boys and girls are to remain on their own floors after 5pm on Sundays.”

“Yes, Mr. Pratt. It’s not quite five yet, and I was just inviting Henry to join my brother for high tea.”

“Ah Magnus is back? A good egg, that boy.” A momentary smile, which fades as his face becomes stern again. “If our Acting Headmaster hadn’t taken down half the school’s CCTV cameras we would be able to check your story. But I’m watching you, Miss Greentree. I won’t be forgetting about this morning either, so you had best mind your step. Move along.”

A dismissive wave and he is gone. She has not seen Mr. Pratt all weekend and spent the morning in her rooms and the library. Possibly the onset of mental illness? Mad cow disease, perhaps.

They reach the bottom of the stairs and step out into the twilight, the winter sun already dipping below the

horizon. She promises to catch up with Henry for cocoa in the student common room, then heads past Chapel and up to Hall where Magnus is waiting inside the foyer. His irritability will dissipate when he eats something; yet more evidence that he labours under some kind of metabolic problem.

As she swipes her card to let them both into Hall, her brother glares once at the timid member of staff stationed at the entrance, past whom he apparently failed to talk his way. She herself avoids making eye contact as they head through the huge oak doors and find a table in the corner.

Once there, she takes the metal panel from her bag and drops it on the table between them with a dull clang that echoes through Hall. "When did you realise that the 'bomb' was fake?"

Magnus is craning his neck looking for the trolley. "What?" he says absently. "Oh surely it was obvious from the moment we stepped inside the room. The smell of the playdough took me back to my toddler days when Mother would try to get us to sculpt with the stuff." A flicker of a smile. "Unfortunately my attempts to preserve one or two sculptures by baking them in the kitchen oven led to concern on her part and new rules that one had to be at least six before one could operate the gas flame appliances in the kitchen. I think she discarded much of the family playdough after that, but surely it must have been inflicted on you at pre-school also?"



The smell. But hardly conclusive without more? Magnus is still looking for the trolley.

“Of course that’s hardly conclusive without more,” he continues. “So I kept an open mind. When unscrewing the front panel, however, I saw that the wires ostentatiously sewn into the straps did not actually connect to any kind of detonation mechanism. Someone had gone to a reasonable amount of trouble to make it appear that they were linked to a tamper-proof switch, but they did not. *Ergo* elaborate hoax.”

More. But not enough. She presses: “How does a faulty tamper mechanism prove that the bomb itself is not dangerous?”

“Well, ‘prove’ is a very strong word. I was thinking in terms of probabilities. All this added to the fact that the ‘bomb’ appears to have been more of a letter to you suggests that this was a way of gaining your attention rather than blowing you or what’s-his-name up. I figured, as it was addressed to you, that I would let you read the note in private.”

“Henry,” she corrects absently. Still not enough. Magnus could be coldly rational, but even a low probability of his sister being killed would encourage him to act rather than walk away. Something more.

“The phone call,” she says.

Magnus has spotted the trolley and is waving it over eagerly.

His phone ringing was the ostensible reason for his

departure but she did not see the number. He went outside to answer it and did not return. Whose call would be sufficient to leave his sister with a bomb, even if it may be fake?

“So who called?”

“All in good time, sister dear,” he replies as the trolley approaches. “I am cultivating a lead, but have promised to be discreet.”

A lead into what? Six months ago, Arcadia discovered that she was adopted. The following day, her father was murdered and her mother left in a coma, where she still lingers. As the months pass, the chances of a recovery diminish, though the doctors—and the reams of medical literature she has consulted—still hold out small rays of hope. The late Headmaster of the Priory School confessed to the attack, but his connection to Sophia Alderman and the “professor” of whom they spoke remains unclear. Headmaster’s death and Miss Alderman’s flight have left few clues.

Is it coincidence that her brother’s arrival is the same afternoon that an elaborate hoax presents her with a puzzle similar to the ones Headmaster used to pass to Mother? “Magnus, why did you say I had invited you to visit me? You arrived without any notice.”

“You said that I was always welcome.”

“It was a figure of speech, Magnus.”

“It was an invitation.”

The trolley has just pulled up beside them. “In any



event,” Magnus says, reaching for a plate of scones, “I was correct, yes? A fake bomb and a letter for you?” A globule of strawberry jam falls from the overburdened spoon he is ferrying towards the scones. “So what did the letter say?”

She declines a scone proffered by the server and looks down at the metal panel. Turning it over reveals the odd instructions for defusing the “bomb”. Only now seeing that the instructions were to stop the timer. A clue missed.

Magnus glances at it as he reaches for the clotted cream. “Those people in Devon don’t know what they’re talking about,” he mutters. “What’s the point of clotted cream if it isn’t on top?” A plum-sized dollop is carefully balanced on each jam-smeared half-scone. “So how many seconds did it take before you cut the blue wire?”

“I was also dealing with Henry by myself at that point.” She sounds defensive.

“Yes of course.” He is deciding which of the scones to eat first. “But surely less than a minute? Not that it mattered, since the inscription makes it clear that this is only about stopping a timer. You wouldn’t have missed that clue, surely?”

She is accustomed to her brother trying to get a rise out of her and does not respond to the bait. “I was rather wondering if you had any idea who ‘M’ might be.”

“No idea,” he responds, a tad quickly. “Though I guess we’ll know soon enough since he is ‘coming soon’.” He laughs at what he appears to think was a little joke, then looks at her in mock concern. “Oh dear dear,” he says.

“You’ve had this for half an hour and you still haven’t seen the message within the message? Heavens, this school really is sapping the intellect from you. ‘M’. Initial. Punctuation?” He feigns exasperation: “No one signs off with a single letter and adds a full stop. Hence the clue to look at first letters and punctuation marks. Take the first letter of the first word after each punctuation mark and you get: ‘Coming soon’.”

A code within a code. An echo from the past. “But who, who is ‘coming soon’?”

“I’ve absolutely no idea,” Magnus replies, lifting the first of the freshly-baked scones to his mouth. His eyes close as he bites into the scone, its covering of strawberry jam and clotted cream brimming to the edge. For the first time today, he gives her a full and genuine smile. As he licks stray jam from his fingers, a fleck of cream is left adorning the end of his nose. She could tell him, but he will discover it soon enough.

At least by the time he returns to his rooms in Cambridge.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Photograph by Isabelle Delcourt



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