

Jacqueline Harvey

KENSY
AND MAX
— CHASING DANGER —

PUFFIN BOOKS

CHAPTER 1

**WDEWDADRINNIGN
BGEKLNLESLALNS**

Kensy and Max charged upstairs, jostling each other as they raced to the kitchen. The fact that Kensy had beaten her brother at cross country this afternoon and teased him mercilessly about it afterwards only heightened the contest. As Max stumbled on the top step, he realised she was about to finish first again.

‘I win!’ Kensy shouted, dumping her bag on the floor. Her blazer landed beside it, quickly followed by her tie. ‘Bit of a theme this term don’t you think, Max?’

‘Get lost,’ the boy grumbled.

The sound of an upbeat country and western tune blaring from the butler's pantry accompanied by the crooning of Song Li alerted the twins to the man's whereabouts. The butler momentarily stopped singing to call out hello to the children and let them know he was making hot chocolate for their afternoon tea.

Wellie, one of their grandmother's West Highland terriers, hopped out of his bed in the family room to investigate Kensy's cast offs, sniffing the pile. The other, Mac, wasn't remotely interested – he hadn't even woken up.

Max looked at the mess his sister had made and shook his head. 'Mum will be up here in a second you know.'

'Do I look worried?' Kensy replied.

Max had found Kensy more annoying than usual lately – not least because she seemed to win at everything. She'd scored half a point more than he had in their most recent Pharos review and landed herself a Headmaster's Gold Award for Excellence for her regular academic work. Max had been really proud of her, but was gutted when he only achieved a Silver

Award for himself. It was so disappointing, even though their parents made a similar fuss of both of them.

Song walked out of the pantry holding a small saucepan. He'd turned the music down too. Max glanced at the man and rolled his eyes, pointing at Kensy's mess. The gesture was returned by a frown and shake of the butler's head.

'Good afternoon, Master Maxim, Miss Kensington,' Song said, pouring the hot chocolate into two mugs. A batch of freshly baked scones sat on a large white plate on the island bench, with a pot of jam and another of cream beside them.

'How was *your* day, Song?' Max asked. 'Hopefully better than mine.'

'Perhaps,' the man replied. 'I have made some progress on your coded note by deciphering the word "Cordelia". Unfortunately, it was in yet another code – so while it is a clue, it is not a terribly helpful one. There are likely more codes and important words that will indicate Magoo's meaning.'

‘Well done,’ Max said. ‘Though you’re right that a code that’s only used for one word doesn’t really help much with the rest. And given Kensy and I are named, and you as well, I suppose it shouldn’t be a surprise that Granny is included.’

Max hadn’t had time to decipher anything more since they returned from their summer holiday in Portugal, and was feeling somewhat deflated. The first term of the new school year had been super busy, with a particularly taxing Pharos review on top of their regular work. Plus there was the need to keep an eye on Mrs Vanden Boom to see if she really was ‘a danger to them all’ – a phrase they’d discovered in the note. So far nothing about the woman seemed amiss, so maybe it was just nonsense. Max had begun to think that maybe the whole note was.

‘May I interest you in a scone?’ Song asked, looking at Max and gesturing at the plate.

Kensy reached out too, but the butler pulled it away.

‘How come he can have one and I can’t?’ the girl groused.

‘Because, Miss Kensington, your mother has had a long day at work, and the last thing she needs is conflict over trivial matters such as the mess you have now made on the floor. Confucius says respect yourself and others will respect you. I believe the quotation roughly translates to pick up your belongings and you will make your mother, brother and this grumpy old man very happy.’

‘You know, you don’t always have to be so wise, Song. Sometimes it’s really annoying,’ Kensy said, grunting as she grabbed her things. ‘And does that mean I can have two scones when I get back?’

‘Only if I find your clothes hanging up. Could you see if there is any mail while you are there? I think I heard something being pushed through the slot earlier,’ Song called after her.

Anna Spencer was a few minutes behind the children, having answered a phone call as she and the twins had pulled into the underground garage. Anna had been happy to let them go on ahead – she and Kensy

were clashing lately. The twins had recently turned thirteen, and Anna couldn't help but notice that Kensy had grown increasingly moody and disagreeable. It hadn't helped that Kensy had got her first period the day before their celebrations. Max had been terribly understanding, trying to get her to talk about how she felt, but she'd screamed at everyone that it was so unfair.

It was a rare treat for Anna to be home this early. The twins had been surprised when she'd called to say she was going to pick them up as they were leaving school. Working at the Pharos clinic was proving a lot less arduous than her private practice, and she was quite enjoying being home before dark. Today, she had completed her orientation just in time for Dr Foster to head off on holidays for two weeks with her young children. The woman had promised that when she got back she'd share several exciting research projects with Anna. It was something to look forward to.

By the time Anna reached the kitchen, Song had a cup of tea waiting for her.

‘What are we going to do when you have to return to Alexandria?’ Anna said with a smile as she sat down on the stool beside Max. ‘I’ve become very used to having you around, spoiling us.’

The man grinned back at her. ‘Please do not worry. Dame Spencer has asked that I stay here until you are settled into your new role. Mr Fitz and Mr Edward are both very busy at work, so it is important that you have help – and with the half-term break upon us, someone has to entertain the twins.’

‘You mean keep an eye on us,’ Max said, putting his mug down.

Anna ran her finger across her top lip. ‘Milk moustache, Max – though I think it suits you, which is a horrible thought. I can’t imagine my baby shaving.’

‘Neither can I,’ Max said, wiping his face. Surely the day would come when he’d acquire a deeper voice and other things would start to change, but up to now – nothing. Unlike his friend Carlos, who was proud to have grown two curly hairs on his chest already – at thirteen!

At the rate Carlos was going, the boy would have a full beard by his next birthday.

‘Well, we’re very lucky to have you, Song,’ Anna said, sipping her tea. She turned to Max. ‘Where’s your sister?’

‘Putting her things away,’ Max said, raising his eyebrows.

‘Thank you, Song,’ the woman said. ‘I don’t think I could stand another argument today. It’s all we seem to do at the moment.’

The sound of footsteps on the floor above alerted them to Kensy’s imminent return.

‘Who do we know that’s getting married?’ the girl called out as she stomped downstairs to the basement kitchen, waving three large white envelopes. She placed two of them down on the bench.

Anna frowned. ‘No one that I can think of.’

She looked at Song, who shrugged.

Kensy slid her nail under the flap of the one she was still holding. ‘This one’s for Mr and Mrs E. Spencer and Miss K. and Master M. Spencer and,’ she continued, ‘those two are for Fitz and you, Song. The paper looks like

it has real gold on it. Maybe it's a royal wedding and we're invited because Granny's friends with the Queen?'

Anna pulled a face. 'I can't imagine so, but go ahead, darling – open it.'

Kensy pulled out an embossed piece of paper that was every bit as fancy as the envelope.

She scanned the words and gasped. 'No way!'

'What? Who is it?' Max jumped up and snatched the page from his sister's hand. She was staring at the wall as if in shock.

Her brother's eyes widened too.

'Edward, Anna, Kensington and Maxim are cordially invited to the marriage of Rupert Dominic Spencer to . . . Tinsley Eloise Chalmers,' the boy read, then passed the paper to his mother.

'Well, this is unexpected,' Anna said. 'Although Rupert has been spending a lot of time with Tinsley since the drama in New York. Your grandmother said recently that Rupert had decided to base himself in Sydney for a while. I guess this is why.'

‘Urgh,’ Kensy moaned. ‘It’s my fault – I predicted it. I can’t believe it’s coming true!’

The sound of footsteps on the stairs from the garage interrupted the family’s musings. Ed and Fitz walked into the room.

‘You two are home early,’ Anna said.

Ed walked over and pecked his wife on the cheek while Fitz said hello and walked to the sink for a glass of water.

‘We’ve got dinner with the Commissioner of Police and the mayor, remember, darling. There’s a new safety campaign they want *Beacon* support for. We’ve come home to change,’ Ed said.

‘Oh, yes, of course. I’m glad it’s you two – the mayor is lovely, but I find the police commissioner a little bit scary,’ Anna said.

‘You’re not alone there,’ Fitz said with a grin.

‘Dad, did you know that your brother is getting married?’ Kensy demanded.

‘Your grandmother told me an hour ago,’ Ed said, shrugging off his suit jacket.

‘You don’t seem that surprised,’ Max said. ‘Did you know he and Tinsley were dating?’

Ed nodded. 'I did. Rupert let it slip that was the reason he couldn't join us in Portugal over the summer, but he asked me to keep it quiet in case things didn't work out. I was stunned he told me in the first place. Your uncle has never been big on sharing details of his love life.'

'You must be excited at the prospect of new cousins,' Fitz said, looking at Kensy and Max.

At the mention of the Chalmers' children, Kensy groaned. 'You can't be serious, Fitz. I'm sure there must be a rule about Van and Ellery being invited to be part of Pharos. Can you imagine how painful Van will be if that happens?'

'At least he's less likely to try and be your boyfriend if he's your cousin,' Max said.

Kensy rolled her eyes.

Song tapped his finger against his lip in a moment of contemplation. 'It seems Mr Rupert is destined to remain tied to the Chalmers family in one way or another.'

Some years ago Rupert Spencer had been engaged to Abigail Chalmers, daughter of Cordelia's best friend. Sadly, Abigail had

drowned in an accident before the wedding. Rupert had been devastated at the time and recently relived his despair upon learning that Abigail's older brother, Dash – former husband of Tinsley – had been responsible for her death.

Last year, on a mission in Sydney, Kensy and Max had discovered that Dash had not only killed his sister, he had also orchestrated the fire in Paris in which Anna Spencer's scientist parents were believed to have died. Instead, he'd kidnapped the couple and held them hostage for twelve years, forcing them to create the most ghastly diseases and their cures, which Dash then sold. In doing so he'd made billions for the pharmaceutical company that his parents – completely unaware of his diabolical behaviour – had founded.

'Surely Uncle Rupert could find someone else to marry other than Tinsley Chalmers,' Kensy said.

Max shrugged. 'I think she's lovely – even if we're not fond of her kids. We know she's nothing like her dead husband, that's for sure.'

Max said, then noticed a strange look pass between his father and Fitz. ‘She was terrified of Dash. Remember, that’s why she took Van and Ellery and went on the run.’

‘Well they didn’t run far enough from me,’ Kensy quipped.

Max ignored the comment. ‘Why are you looking like that, Dad?’ The boy asked before turning to Fitz and Song who were sporting similarly odd expressions. ‘What’s going on? What aren’t you telling us?’

Kensy realised what her brother was getting at.

‘Dash *is* dead,’ the girl said. ‘Isn’t he? We all saw him get poisoned right there at Granny’s gala, and she went to the funeral.’

‘Um, yes and no,’ Ed replied.

The twins’ eyes widened. Anna’s did too.

‘What do you mean?’ Kensy demanded. ‘He’s either dead or he isn’t. You can’t have it both ways.’

But their conversation was interrupted by the television screen in the corner of the kitchen flickering to life. It was Cordelia on

the secure Pharos line. She only used it on rare occasions – usually emergencies.

‘Mother, what’s the matter?’ Ed asked.

‘Hello, darlings,’ the woman said. She spied the white envelopes on the bench. ‘I see you received your invitations.’

‘We’re still getting over the shock,’ Max said. He took another bite of his jam-and-cream scone.

‘Well, I’m afraid there likely won’t be a wedding,’ Cordelia said. They could see that she was in her office at the *Beacon*.

‘That’s a relief,’ Kensy replied.

‘I’m sorry, sweetheart, but I don’t agree,’ Cordelia said. ‘I think Rupert and Tinsley are perfect for one another. But there won’t be a wedding unless we find Dash Chalmers.’

‘What?’ Kensy, Max and Anna gasped in unison.

‘So he’s *not* dead,’ Kensy said, eyeballing her father and Fitz.

Ed frowned. ‘No. He’s been locked in a highly secure facility, from which we were

never going to let him out. Mother, what's happened?'

'There's been an earthquake. The prison has been badly damaged. As far as I can tell from the minimal communications I've received, Dash is gone – along with someone else I've been housing for a very long time,' Cordelia said.

'Who?' Ed asked. He couldn't recall there being any other current inmates.

'Percy MacGregor,' Cordelia said.

There was stunned silence as the woman's words sank in.