

## Chapter 4 *The concert*

Concerts start late in Spain. It was half past nine and the theatre still wasn't full. My face was red because of the day's sun and it was very hot in the theatre.

At five to ten we walked on to the theatre stage and sat down. The audience stopped talking. Our conductor, Philip Worth, walked on to the stage at ten o'clock. He lifted his arms and we started to play a piece of music called 'In the South' by the English composer Edward Elgar. I looked at all the people in the audience. Simon was near the front. He smiled at me. I was playing very well. I was really happy – except for Simon's poor hand, of course.



After 'In the South' we played a guitar concerto by the Spanish composer Rodrigo. The guitarist was a young Catalan player. She was very good and everybody loved her. Then there was a break of twenty minutes before the second half of the concert. The orchestra went into a room behind the stage. We drank some water. Simon came in.

'That was great,' he said. 'You're playing very well.'

'Thanks,' I said. I was very happy. 'It's because of your instrument. It's because of you.'

'Don't say that,' he laughed.

'Why?' I asked him.

'It's not true.' For a minute he didn't look happy.

'Sorry,' I said.

He smiled at me. 'I'm going to sit at the back of the theatre for the second half,' he told me. 'OK?'

'Why?' I asked.

'To hear a different sound,' he answered. 'To hear you from the back of the theatre.'

'Oh, right. I understand.' Except I didn't really understand. Then he kissed my hand and I felt happy. Simon wasn't always nice to me.

'See you later,' I said.

We played Rachmaninov's Third Symphony after the break. It is difficult music, but I think we played it well. The audience were very happy, anyway.

I left the stage with Simon's double bass. I put it into its big white case and closed it. Then I looked for Simon, but he wasn't in the theatre. I went to the room behind the stage. Many of the orchestra players were there. They were talking happily. I waited for Simon. But he didn't come.

'Have you seen Simon?' I asked Adriana.

‘Me? No. Why?’ She was a bit red in the face. I told you. It was a very hot night.

‘I can’t find him,’ I said, looking at her. ‘He was at the front of the theatre for the first half. Then he went to the back. Now he isn’t there.’

‘He’s probably at the hotel.’

‘I hope so,’ I told her.

‘And another thing,’ she said. ‘Where’s Frank?’

‘Isn’t he here?’ I asked.

‘I don’t think so,’ she said. ‘I can’t see him, anyway.’

I left the theatre with her. We talked about the concert. She said that everybody loved it. Yes, I agreed, it was really good.

We walked along the Ramblas. There were people out with their friends. Men and women. Boyfriends and girlfriends. Children. It was a lovely night. There was a man with a guitar. A woman was dancing to his music. People sat in the open-air cafés and drank beer and wine.

‘It’s a bit late for children,’ I said.

‘Not here,’ Adriana said. This was her third time in Barcelona. ‘Here everybody goes to bed very late.’

‘Well, I can’t understand it,’ I answered. ‘I’m very tired. I want to go to sleep.’

Ten minutes later we got to our hotel.

I didn’t say goodnight to Simon. I couldn’t find him.

‘Do you want a drink?’ Adriana asked.

‘No thanks. I really am very tired.’

‘OK,’ she said, ‘see you tomorrow morning.’

I got into the lift and went up to my floor. I thought about the concert. I thought I played well.

When I got to my room I went to the telephone. I tried

a number. No answer. I put the telephone down. I thought something was wrong. I wasn't happy. Simon wasn't with me. My lovely double bass wasn't with me.

'Oh well,' I thought. 'Maybe tomorrow will be better.'

Some people think the double bass is a funny instrument. They say it just goes *plonk plonk*, but it's not true. Double basses are wonderful. They look lovely and they have a warm sound – like a friend. They are different from other instruments, too. I mean, one violin looks a lot like another violin. Cellos all look the same too. (Well, maybe they're different colours, but most people think they look the same.) So do trumpets. But not double basses. Some are tall and thin, some are short and fat. Each one is a different person. Each one has its own sound.

My double bass is a dark rich brown. It's very old. It looks really beautiful. If you play it well it makes a special sound. And it is worth a lot of money. I love it more than anything else. It's a Panormo. Made in 1798. My parents bought it for me.

'What am I going to do without my beautiful Panormo?' I thought. 'And where is Simon? What is happening to me?'

I was very tired. I fell asleep.