

Chapter 7 *Secrets*

'It's going to be strange without Frank,' Adriana said.

'Yes,' I agreed. 'Very strange.'

We were sitting in a café. Adriana was drinking an orange juice and I was drinking my third cup of coffee. We both felt very sad.

'You've been in the orchestra for two months,' Adriana said. 'I've been in it for three years. Frank was like a father to me. He was a nice man.'

'Yes,' I said. We talked about Frank. We didn't talk about his body in the street, but I remembered everything. I remembered the screams. I remembered the people in the street, people running in the hotel, Martin, Candida, Adriana. Pictures, pictures. In my head. I sat up. Some coffee fell on to my T-shirt. Something in the pictures was wrong.

'Are you OK?' Adriana asked.

'Yes. No.' I needed time to think. I didn't want questions from Adriana.

'Listen, Penny . . .' she began.

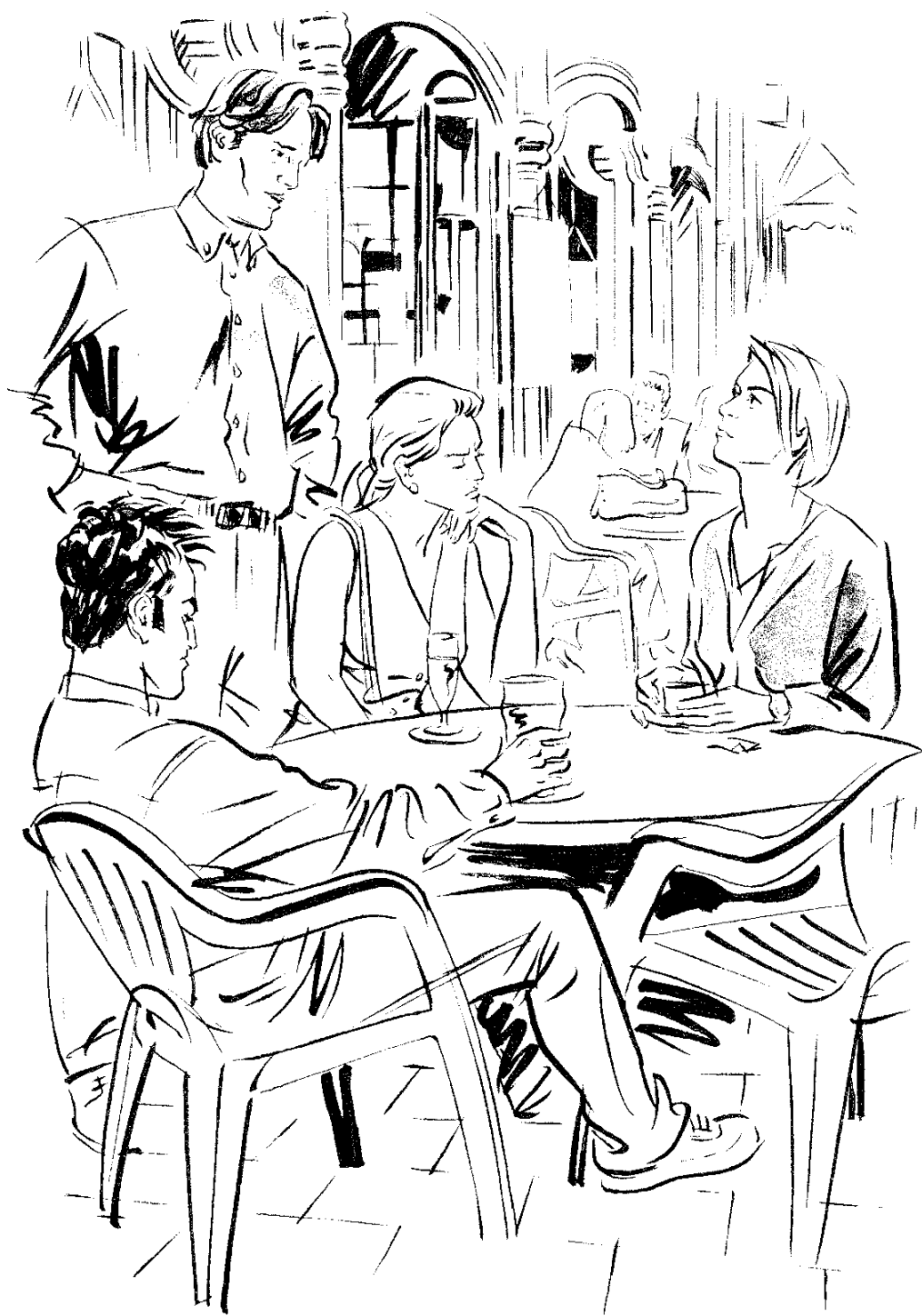
'Yes?' I said.

'Oh, nothing,' she replied. Then she looked up at someone behind me. I turned round.

'Simon!' I said. 'Hello. Where have you been?'

'Oh, here and there,' he replied. 'I was talking to some of the orchestra players. About Frank, of course.'

'Of course,' I said. 'Do you want to sit down?'



‘Sure.’ Adriana smiled at him. He smiled back. It was a special smile. They had a secret. Just the two of them. Something that I did not know. That nobody knew. I turned away.

Simon asked for a beer. When it came he drank it very quickly.

‘What do you think’s going to happen?’ Adriana asked.

‘About what?’ Simon said.

‘About our concerts – tomorrow here in Barcelona, then Madrid, Bilbao,’ Adriana said.

‘What do you mean?’ Simon asked.

‘Well,’ my friend explained. ‘Frank’s dead. He was our orchestra manager. He’s been with the orchestra for twenty years. How can we play tomorrow night without him?’

‘But it’s an important concert tomorrow night,’ I said. ‘More than two thousand people are coming.’

‘Yes, that’s a problem,’ said a voice next to me. I looked up. Martin Audley was standing there.

‘Martin,’ said Adriana. She looked uncomfortable. ‘What are you doing here?’

‘I’m looking for Penny, actually,’ Martin told her.

‘Me?’ I said.

‘Yes,’ Martin said. ‘Inspector Portillo wants to speak to you again.’

‘When?’ I asked.

‘Now. This minute.’

‘I’ll go then.’ I looked at Simon. He wasn’t smiling at all now.

I got up and walked away from the table. I looked back. Martin was sitting with them now. The sun was hot but I began to run. I was running away from the picture in my head. The picture of last night in the hotel.

But I couldn’t stop the picture. I was back in the hotel, back in my room. I heard the screams. I ran out of my room. Other people ran out of their rooms. Other players.

Adriana, for example. Her room was six doors down from mine. I could see her, but now I remembered something else. She came from her room, but she wasn't the only one there. Somebody was in the room with her. I saw him in the dark, but I couldn't see him well. Who was it?

I thought of Adriana in the café. Smiling at Simon. Was that their secret?

I ran into the hotel. Inspector Portillo was waiting for me.

'I am very sorry,' he started. 'But I have got some more questions.'

'So have I,' I said. 'Did somebody kill Frank?'

'Maybe.' He smiled a secret smile.

'What do you mean by "maybe"? Have you found Frank's killer? What do you know?' I asked.

'Miss Wade,' he said. 'There's something the police here always do, something we have always done.'

'What's that?' I asked, stupidly.

'Well, *we* ask the questions, *you* give the answers.' I think he was laughing at me. 'Is that all right with you?' he asked.

I didn't say anything.

'That means yes, I think. Now Mr Simon Hunt is your boyfriend, you said?' asked the inspector.

'Yes,' I answered.

'And he plays the double bass too, I believe?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Is he a good bass player?'

'Oh yes,' I said immediately. 'He's better than me. He's the number two. The second best in the whole orchestra.'

'Yes,' the inspector said. 'Somebody told me that.'

‘Why are we talking about Simon?’ I asked, but he didn’t answer me. He just looked and looked. ‘Sorry,’ I said, ‘I remember. *You* ask the questions.’

‘You are a quick learner Miss Wade.’ Now I was sure. He was laughing at me. ‘Mr Hunt didn’t play in the concert last night, did he?’ he said suddenly.

‘No,’ I told him. ‘I played in his place. He lent me his double bass. Because I haven’t got mine with me.’

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘I haven’t forgotten.’

‘Sorry, of course not,’ I said. Was he angry with me?

‘Did Simon Hunt go to the concert?’ he asked.

‘Oh yes. He was at the front,’ I told him. I was thinking of Simon’s handsome face.

‘Was he at the front all the time?’ Inspector Portillo said.

‘No. In the second half he sat at the back.’

‘Did you see him at the back?’ His voice was cold again.

‘Yes. I mean, no.’ I wasn’t sure. ‘It’s a big theatre.’

‘And after the concert?’ the inspector asked. ‘What did Mr Hunt do then?’

‘He went to a bar – well, he went to three or four bars I think,’ I told him.

‘Did you see him at the hotel?’

‘No . . . look, why are you asking all these questions about Simon? You should ask me about Candida,’ I said.

‘Candida?’ he said.

‘Yes, Candida Ashley-Morton,’ I said. ‘The leader of the double basses.’

‘What about her?’

‘I think . . . I think that perhaps she killed Frank,’ I said. ‘Well, perhaps she didn’t kill him, but she knows something. I’m sure.’

‘Why do you say that?’ he asked.

‘Well, because I heard something. She was very angry with him yesterday morning.’ I told Inspector Portillo about the conversation between Candida and Frank in the hotel bar.

When I finished he sat back in his chair.

‘That is most interesting, Miss Wade,’ he said. ‘Most interesting.’

‘Well, yes. So you must talk to them.’

‘Thank you,’ said the police inspector. ‘I will think about it. And Penny – I mean, Miss Wade – I am sorry about all the questions.’

I got up and walked out of the room. Candida Ashley-Morton. Yes. Perhaps she killed Frank. Did the inspector believe that? Did I? What was the truth?

Twenty-four hours later I had the answer.