

Chapter 2

Secret of the Wolf

7th September · 05:40am

Who could it be, I thought? A couple of burly policemen? That would be helpful. Or one of the neighbours? Maybe they'd heard the banging and come to see what's up?

I flung open the door, ready to jump

into the waiting arms of my rescuer. But it wasn't my neighbour or a policeman. It was a man I'd never seen before. He was tall, with fierce eyes like a lion's, and a scar running down his cheek. He wore dark-green army style clothes and a wide-brimmed hat. He grinned, the kind of grin a crocodile gives to its prey just before gobbling it up.

"Are your mum and dad about?" he said in a growly voice. He glanced behind my shoulder, then seemed to think better of it. "Actually no, kids are better to talk to." He thrust out his hand at me. "I'm

Stamper.” It was like the touch of a cold reptile. “Have you seen or heard anything strange overnight?”

Behind him, I could see feet shuffling in the dawn light. Two younger men stepped forward, dressed in similar clothes and carrying long steel poles. “Oh, these are my, er—”

“-brothers,” chipped in one of them.

“-cousins,” said the other.

“-associates,” said Stamper, snapping at them with his eyes.

“Strange?” I asked innocently, as if the strangest thing in the world had NOT just

been happening to me. This night could not get any stranger! Not only was there a wolf trapped in my coal shed, but now, at 5 o'clock in the morning, strange men were at my door.

“Yes, strange,” said Stamper looking wary. “Seen any large dogs or heard any howling?”

I could have just told him about my gran and the imprisoned wolf, but there was something about him I didn't trust. Not one bit. And those gleaming poles his two men carried, along with their nasty

faces, put me right off sharing my secret. They both wore arm patches with a picture of a wolf's head, its tongue hanging out and its eyes rolled up, the words 'DEATH TO WEREWOLVES' scrolled round it. Besides, there was something nagging away at the back of my mind.

I shook my head.

"Are you sure?" he asked. "We've had reports."

"Does that mean we have to wait until the next full moon to destroy it? Ahh!" hissed one of his men.

"Sorry, gotta go! I've got the dishes to wash!" I said.

Stamper screwed his face up and looked at his watch just as I slammed the door shut.

06:30am

After getting rid of Stamper, I dashed through the house to the back door. I put my ear against the wood and listened. Everything seemed to have gone quiet. I tore down the barricade, then peered outside.

The shed door creaked open and a shadowy figure stumbled out, groaning

and rubbing her head. It was Gran! Her hair was all straggly, with bits of hay and grass sticking out. And she was wearing a large piece of tarpaulin wrapped around her.

“What happened?” she asked weakly, then licked her lips. “And what is that awful meaty taste?”

I glanced down at the empty pack of mince she clutched in her hand. That nagging doubt at the back of my mind did more than just nag. It jumped up and gave me a haircut. My gran and the wolf are

one and the same!

07:00am

“I’m going to have a nice cup of tea, dear,” said Gran, once she had got into her dressing gown and tidied her hair. “Then, I’m going to have a lie down. After that, I think I’ll make a vegetable risotto for lunch. I can’t face meat today.”

Pff! I’m not surprised!

07:30am

Mum came breezing in the door with a cheery smile. “Morning love!”

You wouldn’t think she’d been up all night driving a fork-lift truck. Mum loves

the night shift – she says it’s brilliant being up when everyone else is asleep. After the night I’ve had, I can’t agree! I didn’t tell Mum anything, and I’d tidied everything up so she wouldn’t ask. If I tell her, she’ll just think I’m mad! Gran doesn’t remember a thing. I’m the only one who knows Gran is a werewolf.

07:45am

I’m upstairs in my room. I watched the footage that I caught on the tablet (Yesss! Mum finally gave me her passcode). That creature is definitely Gran. It even looks like her, a bigger, hairier, more ferocious

version. The fur around the eyes was lighter, where Gran’s glasses usually sit. It had knobby knees, and a slight lean to the left to match Gran’s wonky hip.

Stamper and his men are hunting her. I know werewolves only turn into wolves at the full moon, once a month. That means I have another month before she turns into a werewolf again. What am I going to do?

URGHH! Time for school....

2:45pm

Fell asleep during art lesson! It

wouldn't have been so bad, but I was in the middle of doing a painting at the time. It took ages to mop up!

7.30pm

Gran seems a bit better this evening after her rest. Her breath stinks like three-day old rotten meat. And you should see all the hairs in the bath. It's like someone shaved a gorilla. I need to figure out what to do!

8th September · 4:00pm

Went to the library after school. After lots of searching I tracked down a book called *Jacob Galleon's Werewolf Almanac*.

The picture of the author on the back cover shows a smug-looking man with dark hair and a goatee beard. There's a deeply serious look on his face and his fingers are clasped in a steeple under his chin. This is the kind of man I need to speak to!

7:00pm

I googled Jacob Galleon on Mum's tablet. Turns out he is giving a talk next Tuesday evening about his new book, which is called *Secret of the Wolf*. I've decided I'm going to ask this Jacob Galleon for help.

9th September · 2:00pm

Something very odd happened with Gran today! She went to a posh restaurant for afternoon tea with her two best friends, Madge and Julie. I went with them. They know I love afternoon tea! After everyone had finished their tea and scones, the waiter brought the bill. Gran placed her hand down on it, saying, "I'll get this."

Madge slapped her hand away and pinched the bill. "No, I'll get it."

Julie plucked it from Madge's hand.

"Allow me!"

"No, no, no," they all argued in a very polite kind of way, trying to snatch the bill out of each other's hands. That is, until Gran's face changed. It curled up into the strangest expression I'd ever seen.

A snarl. And her eyes, they flashed red. "I'LL GET IT!" she growled.

Madge and Julie screamed and fell backwards, taking the tablecloth, the empty plates, the half-eaten scones and the cold tea with them.

Gran paid the bill.

12th September · 6.30pm

Jacob Galleon's talk was in a local theatre. I got Mum to drop me off. I told her it was a Scout meeting. Inside, I took a seat and waited for the rest of the audience to show up. I soon discovered that I pretty much was the audience. Me, along with an old man and his dog, and two tourists who were lost and thought they were in a pizza restaurant. Oh, and three old ladies sitting down the front, who were wearing t-shirts with Jacob Galleon's face on it. Clearly his fan club.

The lights went down and the man

walked onto the stage. There was rapturous applause from the three fan club ladies. They chanted his name.

“JA-COB, JA-COB, JA-COB!”

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he yelled, theatrically. “Tonight, I am going to talk to you about werewolves.”

And that's exactly what he did. He talked and talked and talked. I thought it would be boring but I actually learnt a lot. For instance, I now know that werewolves can infect people with a single bite. Gran had a bite on her hand. Was that how Gran

became one? She said it was a cat bite but I wonder...

Then, Jacob brandished his book and asked if anyone wanted to buy it. The old man coughed. So did his dog. The two tourists looked at their watches. Only the three ladies at the front volunteered. “Ooh, ooh, we’ll buy it, Jacob!”

8.30pm

Afterwards, I sneaked backstage and knocked on the door marked ‘DRESSING ROOM’. The door edged open and Jacob Galleon’s face peeked out.

“PHEW!” he said, when he saw me. “I

thought you were my fan club for a horrible minute.”

“No,” I said. “I’ve come to ask for your help.”

“Oh yes,” he said, opening the door wide. “For a school project, is it?”

“Not exactly. I think my gran is a werewolf,” I blurted out.

“PAHH!” he said, laughing. This wasn’t the reaction I was expecting.

“No, really,” I said. “Look.” I pulled Mum’s tablet out of my bag and showed him the footage of the werewolf in the kitchen. He practically fainted.

“Wh... What’s that?”

“A werewolf,” I said.

“Th... that’s horrible! Why did you show me it?”

“Because I need your help. You’re Jacob Galleon, after all.”

Jacob’s face was as white as a sheet as he shoed me out. “Oh, no no no! I’m sorry, I can’t help you.” He slammed the door in my face. I couldn’t believe it. Why would he turn me away? What am I supposed to do now?

Just then, I heard a lot of shouting in

the main theatre. I peeked through the door at the end of the corridor. Stamper and his two goons were strutting between the seats, heading for the backstage door. The one I was currently peering out from.

“Where is this Jacob Galleon?” Stamper was shouting. “I want a word with him.”

And now you decide...

What should Jess do?

A) Climb out of a window in the corridor and run away

B) Hide in another room and find out what Stamper wants from Jacob Galleon

C) Get to Jacob Galleon before Stamper does

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