

THE MYSTERIOUS BAG

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This book is dedicated to all students who like cooperating, dreaming, inspiring, imagining and looking for new things, ideas, challenges in their life....and believe that

'Every cloud has a silver lining'.

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CHAPTER I

Arvaniti Vasiliki - Patrinoi Theodora

It was the 15th of June and luckily I was given the last and most important certificate of the English language. So, my English teacher suggested to my classmates and me that we should go on a trip to London not only to celebrate our success, but to practise our English, as well. When we heard the news, we felt fascinated and thought that it would be a great chance to visit London without parents. I was going to spend a whole week with my friends Vicky, Theodora, Kate, Anda, Bill, Thanos, Alexia, Maria, Demy, Popi, Alex, Stelios and Rosa. Our dream team in London! What else? And the great day came. I woke up bright and early. My mother seemed concerned, because it was the first time I would travel alone. After I got dressed, I hugged my mother and told her: ‘Don’t worry, mum, I’ll be all right.’ She smiled and said: ‘I’ll miss you Nikos. Remember to call me, when you arrive in London.’

Then, my father drove me to the airport. After a while, we arrived there and I saw my friends and my tutor waiting for me. When we had our baggage checked, I saw a man talking on the phone nervously. I heard him saying: ‘I can’t travel to London and leave my family now. However, if I don’t, I will certainly lose my job. This bag must be transported to London.’ When he finished the call, he started staring at me and approached me. Then he said: ‘Hey, little boy! Look, I really need to go to London, but problems with my family here, don’t allow me to travel. I would be grateful if you could take this small, light bag with you. I wouldn’t ask you something like that if it wasn’t so important’. ‘I beg you, do me this favour!’ ‘I’d really like to help you, but I have no idea, what to do.’ I answered worried.

I

‘The only thing you have to do is to visit the Tower of London carrying this bag on Monday, at 11 o’clock in the morning. A man with a beard, wearing a suit and a black hat will find you and take it.’

‘Well, OK then! I’ll do it, if I can help you, in this way.’ I said without thinking. ‘Thank you, very much, but don’t forget to be very careful and look , don’t tell anyone about the bag.’ he pointed out.

After that the stranger gave me the bag and left the airport quickly.

During the flight, I was so nervous that my friends thought I was afraid of airplanes. I was wondering what was inside the small, black bag. At first I thought I was helping a man in a difficult situation and now I was confused. What was I going to do if he was a criminal and I was carrying something illegal because of him? When we arrived in London, we took our luggage and went to our hotel to rest. I was sharing the same room with Bill. While we were alone in our room, he noticed the extra bag and asked me whose it was. I told him the whole story and he said to me loudly: ‘Are you insane? How could you be so naïve as to trust him? What if the man is crazy and there is a bomb in the bag or if he’s a criminal and you transport illegal money or drugs? Don’t you know that you may get into trouble with the police?’ Bill made me realize, how fool I was and persuaded me to open the bag, but it was locked. We also tried to break it, but we could not, because it was made of a very resistant material. It was only Saturday and I had to wait for two days to figure out what was in the bag. Until then, everything could happen!

CHAPTER II *Aggo Adriana- Papachristopoulou Catherine*

We spent Saturday going sightseeing. Only Bill and I were very scared and anxious. We had tried to open the bag just to be sure there was not anything strange inside, but it was so diligently manufactured that we did not manage to open it. Bill had been accusing me of being foolhardy and gullible all night.

II

It was Sunday morning and we went downstairs to the restaurant of the hotel to eat something with Kate, Anda, Theodora and Thanos while the other guys were still sleeping. Bill and I were very quiet, despite the fact that we were always the soul of the company.

The guys noticed it and they asked: 'What is happening, boys, is there any problem? I thought what the man had told me ... 'Don't tell anyone about the bag...' but Bill revealed everything to them, and it is needless to say, that they all were as guilty as we were. They were shocked and they accused me of being very ignorant and stupid, and I said to them: 'I see, I have already heard these things, do you have any ideas, now?' Everyone was very gloomy after this and they kept asking me about the strange fellow. 'I don't know his name, but he looked very friendly and he persuaded me to take the bag. That's all'. 'Oh, my God, what were you thinking?' said Kate. 'Relax guys,' said Anda 'there is no problem, we are going to go to the meeting point together on Monday, give the bag and then everything will be OK!' So, on Monday, we woke up and met at the reception of the hotel. We were very nervous. At 10 o'clock, we went sightseeing again, according to the schedule. The tour around London was marvelous, unforgettable and it lasted two hours. Then, we went to the Tower of London as we had planned. We had been waiting there until 2 o'clock, but no one appeared. I noticed that two men had been staring at us for a long time. They seemed rather anxious. While we were going back to the hotel, we saw them following us, speaking English with a foreign accent. That's why we couldn't understand what they were saying. When we arrived at the hotel our tutor asked us where we had been. She was very worried and said to us: 'You will never go out without me again, is that clear?' We agreed nodding our head. At nine o'clock someone called me saying: 'There is a change in our plans, I will meet you at 12 o'clock behind the London Eye' and he hang up abruptly. I didn't even have the time to ask who he was. At the same

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time Theodora asked: ‘Who was on the phone?’ ‘I don’t know’, I murmured, repeating what he had told me.

Nobody said anything until it was midnight. Nobody wanted to go to the new meeting point, but finally, we went.

As soon as we arrived, we saw a black jeep with two black men outside. It was obvious that they were waiting or looking for something. At the same time our teacher was spying on us; she had noticed that we were in trouble, but we had not realized that she was aware of our situation and our movements.

Meanwhile, the two men saw us and moved towards us, so that we could meet half-way. We were shaking with fear and I am sure that it could be easy for someone to hear our heartbeat. Out of the blue, we heard a deafening sound and we saw the lights of a police car stopping in front of us and a handful of policemen with guns coming out shouting: ‘Don’t move! Leave the bag on the ground and hands up!’”

We were horrified. Before realizing what was going on, the police had arrested all of us, but not the criminals, and handcuffed we were taken to the police station.

CHAPTER III *Vasilis Aggelopoulos-Thanasīs Thomopoulos*

While we were at the police station, I was so nervous that my legs were shaking with fear. Bill was afraid too, he could not stop crying all the way towards the police station. I knew that something was going wrong. I was suspicious, since I received the message to change the day of the delivery. But what worried me the most was what would happen to my classmates and my English tutor. My heart was going to break. Any minute that passed was very excruciating. When we arrived at the police station two policemen led me and Bill to a dark room.

III

There were only three chairs and one table in the middle of the room and in front of us there was a large glass partition that looked like the one we see in the detective series. It was beyond my imagination that we could be in a place like this! Poor Bill, as the time passed, cried more and more and there was nothing I could do to make him feel better. I felt so guilty!

After a few minutes a police officer, named Mark entered the room. At first he introduced himself and then he started asking us various questions about the bag. We did not answer at all, because we were both, too scared and nervous. Besides, we did not know what to say. Mark continued to ask for the bag trying to get some information. Suddenly, I heard Bill's voice. He managed to hold back his tears and talk. He told Mark that a stranger gave me the bag at the airport. He said that we did not know what was in the bag. He described the story with all details. Then the police officer looked at us with indignation and in wonder, because he could not believe that I had been carrying a stranger's bag for so long, without knowing what was inside it.

After that he gave us our testimonies, written by a secretary, to sign at the bottom of the page. After we had signed those papers, Mark brought two mobile phones. He told us that we could call our parents. My hands were trembling. I did not know what to say, I was embarrassed and ready to faint.

When I heard my mother's voice all the anxiety I felt went away. I explained to her what had happened. My mother was very soaked and afraid, too; I could feel it from the tone of her voice. She told me that she would come to England the soonest she could and she tried to encourage me to stay strong. After that, having suffered a lot, I fell asleep at the chair, extremely tired.

Fortunately, I could not imagine what was going to happen!

The following morning I woke up having a splitting headache. I couldn't understand where I was. I was lying in a dark room, with grey walls, a small window, only one table and a door with iron bars. And then ... everything was clear. I was in jail! I suddenly remembered the previous day and I started crying. I couldn't believe what had happened and what I had done. Then a policeman opened the door and said: 'Your parents are here'. I immediately jumped to my feet and I followed him. He led me to a room, where I saw mum and dad standing upset. They rushed towards me, hugged me and my mum said: 'Baby, don't worry, everything will be fine. After these words, I was finally relieved. I didn't want to leave the hug of my mum, but the policeman who came into the room said that I had to be taken back to the cell.

With tears in my eyes, I left my parents and I went back to that dark room. While I was leaving, dad told me that he would take care of everything and he advised me to take a nap in order to relax. When I arrived at the cell, I followed my father's advice and I lay on the bed. I was so exhausted that although I had woken up one hour before, I closed my eyes and I fell asleep right away. Some hours later a policeman drove me to the Detective Chief Inspector Williams' office. When I got in, I saw my friends and I felt really pleased.

They looked fine, but I could see the fear in their eyes. The policeman came out of the office and we stayed alone with the chief. At the beginning we looked at each other embarrassingly. Suddenly, the chief broke the silence and said in a loud voice: 'All right children, I know you are in a difficult situation and if you want to help yourselves tell me only the truth,' and he continued: 'I want to know who, really, carried the bag from your country.' I couldn't do anything except for admitting again, that I had carried the bag. I was very furious, because they did not believe me and I shouted: 'I was the person who carried the bag, are you crazy?' and I added 'Why don't you want to believe me?'

IV

As he was ready to say something the telephone rang. The chief went out quickly. We couldn't understand what was happening and we were very suspicious about the phone-call. All guys were telling ideas about it, at the same time, I thought that I was too naïve to have taken that mysterious bag from that man and I felt that I had to apologize to my friends for doing so.

Suddenly, the door opened and the chief told us something really good. He said that the police investigators identified the man's fingerprints; the stranger's who had given me the bag at the airport. Finally, they had opened the bag, too. We felt relieved and I asked what was in the bag. The chief became as white as a sheet and he told us that he didn't really know. I was sure that he knew, but for some reasons he did not want to let us know. It was a complete mystery for us the content of the bag. Now, I was very curious. Was there something valuable or something forbidden? Something dangerous or something illegal?

CHAPTER V

Avgeri Dimitra - Giannakopoulos Cassiope

Anyway the police officer let us go back to our hotel and informed us that everything would be fine. But, we were still anxious and scared about what would happen next. After waiting for a few minutes that, we felt as if it was a century, our tutor came in with the other students. We went out of the police station and got into the excursion bus. Thanos, Bill and I weren't talking at all; the other guys were chatting about what had happened. We were ready to cry, that's why we could not talk. After half an hour we arrived at our hotel and our tutor suggested to us that we should take a nap in order to relax! But when we went to our rooms, I received a strange message from an unknown number. It said: 'you've made a great mistake that you informed your friends and your tutor about our meeting! Now, you must be afraid of what is going to

V

happen.’ I understood immediately that it was the guy from the airport. I was absolutely scared, terrified because of the threat!

This time I was sure that I had better not to talk to anyone about this upsetting message. At about 8pm we went to the hotel restaurant, had a tasty meal and after we had finished, we went to our bedrooms. Some friends were trying to guess what the bag contained. Anda said:

‘I think that the bag contains drugs. What do you think?’ ‘I think that it contains money from a robbery.’ said Maria. There were a lot of other suggestions, too. Two hours later, we went to sleep, but I was so nervous that I decided to go out for a walk. I needed some fresh air.

While my friends and our tutor were sleeping, I was so desperate that I thought it would be a good idea to go away in order not to get them into trouble again!

CHAPTER VI *Armodelis Stelios- Maniatis Alexandros*

I left the hotel and I almost knew that I would receive another message soon, as that guy’s fingerprints had been found by the police. He was in a very difficult situation. As I had thought, I received another message. This time it said: ‘We’ll meet at the park near the hotel. Come alone and we’ll resolve the issue quickly’.

So, he knew where I stayed and apparently that the police was aware of what the bag contained. I was determined to finish things out, so I decided to go there. But, as I recalled the man’s face and the black guys with the jeep that we had seen on Monday, I realized that he could not be the only criminal and he would probably have some more partners. I burst out crying for having been such a fool.

VI

The police had already called my parents and informed them that there was no problem. At least my parents were relieved just like the rest of my mates, I guess. The police must have already known what was inside this strange bag. It was Wednesday afternoon.

Thursday was the day when we were supposed to go back to our country and our ‘unforgettable trip’ to London would be over. Perhaps I should have ignored the last message, but I did not. I felt like having learnt nothing from my adventure, as I pushed myself into trouble again. Lost in my thoughts, I almost did not realize that I had reached our meeting point. It was the big moment! It had already been dark, so I could not recognize the face of that man coming out from a black jeep which had just arrived. It was the same jeep I had seen that day. He approached me and when he came close enough, I saw his face. He was the tall, thin man I had met at the airport. ‘Glad to see you again’, he sneered. ‘So, who are you, what’s your name?’ I asked. ‘It doesn’t really matter. You didn’t do what I said and my bag fell to the wrong hands. I want the bag and anything inside it back.’ ‘You are responsible for it.’

Suddenly, he drew a gun out of his black cloak and aimed at me. Then, more men came out of the jeep. ‘You will pay for your mistakes,’ he shouted! At the time I was about to faint, all of a sudden, I saw a lot of car lights around me.

Fortunately, it was the police! In less than three seconds dozens of policemen appeared. They shot the guy down, but the others managed to run away. When he fell dead a policeman came to me. I recognized him at once. It was Mark! ‘You are brave, little boy,’ he said. ‘We’ve been searching for this dangerous criminal for years. We were glad to get his fingerprints, but we didn’t know where to find him.’

‘Sorry, but we used you as a decoy to catch him. We were sure that he would try to come in touch with you and we kept watching you.’

VI

I was speechless, but I finally managed to open my mouth and ask: ‘So, who is he?’ and I added ‘It doesn’t matter now. It’s over.’ ‘But, don’t you want to know what was inside the bag?’ the policeman asked.

‘No, I just want to go home,’ I cried.

The police took me back to the hotel and they left.

And there, just outside the building in the dead of night, I finally realized what I had been through during our ‘exciting and recreational’ trip to London!

I was never going to be the same person again.

The following day I found myself back home, in Greece. At last, I was relieved and calm and as I was having lunch my phone rang. I was very happy thinking that it would be one of my friends. But, when I picked up the phone I heard what I would never wish to hear.

‘I know where you live...’ a male, familiar, creepy voice said. The phone fell from my hands and I was petrified with terror as I recognized that voice. It was that strange man again! He himself, or his ghost?

At that moment, I was completely sure that this story had not finished. In fact, it had just begun....and I only prayed that it was an appalling nightmare that would suddenly vanish at dawn!

THE END

