



CHAPTER TWO



"We need a plan," I said as I poured myself a bowl of economy chocolate rice pops the next morning.

Margot put down her latest copy of *Aeroplanes Monthly* magazine. "What we need is money."

"Do you think the local shop will give me a paper round?" I asked.

"No, and we need more money than that anyway," she said.

I crunched my cereal miserably. "What if I chain myself to the electricity meter? They can't make us leave then."

"You might get fried," said Margot.

Fabien poked his head around the door. "What's getting fried? Is it bacon?"

"No, Luna's head," replied Margot.

"Yuck," he said, and then skated across the lino in his worn-out socks. "I've found us somewhere to live."

"Where?" I asked.

He threw a newspaper across the table at me. It was the free one that got delivered every week. I knew Fabien was good at papier mache, but even *he* couldn't make a house out of this.

"Read page five," he said.

I found the page and read the article aloud.

Bonkers business man gives away island

Eric Harding, founder of Rhino Technologies, is giving away his Scottish island.

The lonely billionaire has gifted dozens of things over the past ten years, including a helicopter to a man from Norway, a Hollywood sushi restaurant to a monk from Tibet, and a herd of highland cattle to St John's School in Hythe. He also arranged for pensioner Betty Eccles to fulfil her lifetime dream of abseiling down Big Ben naked.

When asked to comment on his latest giveaway, Mr Harding said, "My daughter used to love Rook's Island, but I haven't visited it since I lost her. I hope somebody will fall in love with it, just like my Cassy did, and bring joy to the island again."

This is one of Mr Harding's biggest and most eccentric giveaways, topped only by the donation of his Borneo estate to two university students. When last heard of, the pair had put their accountancy studies on hold to raise orangutans in the jungle. It's believed they have since branched out into gorilla breeding.

As part of the competition's terms and conditions, the island can never be sold by the winner. Anyone who

enters should therefore be prepared to live in the middle of the ocean for the rest of their natural life.

To enter the competition, simply email assistant@ericharding.com or write to PO Box 828, London SW19, stating why you want to win.

About the closing date, Mr Harding simply said, "How long is a strand of spaghetti?"

Below the newspaper article was a colour photo of the island, with a big, wonky house and a herd of goats. It looked beautiful, the sun melting into the sea, and the waves all shimmery shiny.

"Look!" I said, shoving the article under Margot's nose.

She laughed. "Nobody actually wins these things, you two."

"Someone must!" said Fabien.

"He's right," I replied. "Wouldn't it be amazing to live on our very own island?"

Margot shook her head. "No, I think the whole thing sounds awful. We'd have to move away from our friends. And who wants to live in the middle of the sea?"

"I do," I replied.

"Me too," said Fabien. "There are animals!"

The whole thing sounded amazing. We'd have our own beach, and could go swimming in the sea every morning. Even better, the island looked big enough to have a hundred pets. I could probably get a whole drove of donkeys and Mum wouldn't even notice.

My heart fluttered with excitement. Dad would be so happy if we won the island. It would be like being on a permanent holiday. There was no way he could still be sad then.

I grabbed a sheet of paper, and began to write a letter to Mr Harding in my neatest handwriting. Maybe Margot was right and nobody did win these things, but it was worth a try.

Dear Mr Harding,

I read in the newspaper that you're giving away your island. That's really kind of you. I bet you're the most generous person in the whole world - much more generous than the Queen, or Angelina Jolie, or Mr Phoon from the takeaway (although he does give us free chips on a Wednesday, which is very nice of him)...

I explained all about Dad losing his job, and

how we were being evicted, and how I'd finally be able to get my own pet if we won the island. It was the longest letter I'd ever written. My skin got goosebumpy with excitement as I folded it up, and tucked it neatly into an envelope.

"Now I just need to post it," I said.

Fabien pranced over to me with something blue and fluffy in his arms.

"You can send him these as a present," he said.

"What are they?" I asked.

"Knitted dolphin slippers, of course," said Fabien.

I nudged the knitted monstrosities. The "slippers" were grey with blue flecks. The toes were knitted into a pointed nose, and there were strange sticky-out bits, which I assumed were the flippers. On the top, a pair of googly eyes jiggled about.

"I'm not sure if he'll need new slippers," I replied carefully.

Fabien's face dropped. "Don't you like them?"

"Of course I do!" I said quickly, trying to undo the hurt look on his face. "They're very ... different."

He beamed. "Limited edition."

“Thank goodness,” whispered Margot.

Fabien squeezed the slippers into a Jiffy bag, and sealed my letter inside. I hoped they would magically un-knit themselves in the post.