

## Two

It was a hot Friday afternoon, the last day of school before half-term. Sesame Brown sat in class, doodling in her notebook. Her best friend, Maddy Webb, was sitting next to her watching her doodle. Neither was concentrating much on what their history teacher, Mrs Wilks, was saying.

One reason was because Sesame and Maddy had just started riding lessons. Their riding instructor Miss Luck had suggested they come and help at the stables during half-term.

“You’ll learn a lot about ponies that way,” she’d said.

But there was another reason. Ever since her adventure in Karisma, Sesame kept thinking about what had happened there.

Mrs Wilks turned away to type something into her computer, and Maddy passed Sesame a note:

What’s that?

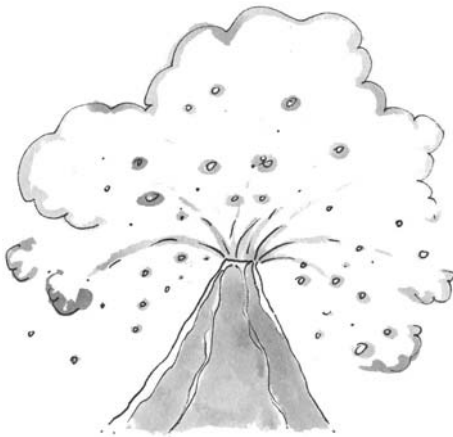


“Something I found,” whispered Sesame. “When I went to . . .”

She stopped. Mrs Wilks had turned round and was looking straight at her!

“Who can tell me the name of the city?” she asked, pointing to an image she had just downloaded onto the white board. “Sesame. How about you?”

Sesame’s class had been learning about the Romans, and Mrs Wilks had been telling them about a volcano, which had erupted and covered a city in hot ash.



Sesame panicked and out popped what she had been going to say to Maddy.

“Karisma!”

“No,” said Mrs Wilks, giving Sesame a quizzical look. “I’ve never heard of *that* place. You must tell us about it sometime!”

The class giggled and Sesame wriggled in her seat.

“Anyone know the right answer?” said Mrs Wilks.

“Pompeii,” said Olivia, who always paid attention.

Luckily for Sesame the bell went, and everyone hurried outside.

“Phew!” she said, as she and Maddy walked across the playground. “Supposing Mrs Wilks had made me talk about Karisma?”

“Well you’ve got to tell *me* about it,” said Maddy. “You promised. Remember?”

It was true. Sesame had promised but, since then, she hadn’t found the right time. And it couldn’t be now because her gran, Lossy, and Mrs Webb were waiting to collect them from school.



“Tell you at sleepover tonight!” she said, giving Maddy their secret sign:

= True. I’ll keep my word!

“Remember to bring your riding stuff for tomorrow,” said Sesame. She knew how forgetful her friend could be.

“I will,” said Maddy. “See you later!”

That evening, Maddy arrived at Sesame’s house with a bulging bag. She had packed pyjamas, wash kit, food for a feast and all her riding gear. Unusually for Maddy, she hadn’t forgotten a thing!

Mrs Webb and Sesame’s dad chatted on the doorstep.

“Sorry, Nic,” said Mrs Webb. “Looks like Maddy’s come for a week not a night!”

Nic grinned.

“That’s fine,” he said, helping Maddy with her bag.

“They’ll probably spend half the night gossiping,” said Mrs Webb. “You know what they’re like.”

“I do!” said Nic. “Anyway, I’ll drop them at the stables in the morning, on my way to work. That’s if they’re up in time.”

“I heard that, Dad!” shouted Sesame, as she and Maddy struggled upstairs with the bag. “*We* will be ready way before *you*. So there!”

Their parents laughed.

“They probably will,” said Nic. “Ready to ride at the crack of dawn!”



Sometimes Sesame and Maddy had sleepovers with their friends, Gemma and Liz. Those times were fun but tonight was extra special because it was just the



two of them; actually four with the kittens, Chips and Pins, who’d crept up to Sesame’s room to be with the girls. Sesame and Maddy loved spending time together. They would tell each other secrets they’d never tell anyone else. Although for Sesame there was her dad, and her gran Lossy. Ever since Sesame’s mum had died, Lossy had been like a mother. But still, there were some things Sesame felt she couldn’t talk about, even to her. Like going to Karisma! It was a secret she would share only with Maddy – for the time being.

Sesame picked up her teddy, Alfie, and held him tight.



“Remember that day I was waiting for you outside TIP TOPS?” she began.

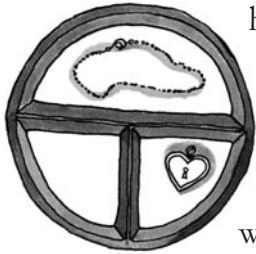
“Mmm,” said Maddy, chewing a sweet. “I was late, as usual!”

Maddy sat spellbound as Sesame told her how she had fallen into a strange world called Karisma. How she had met and helped two tunganoras<sup>★</sup> called Fig

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<sup>★</sup> **Tunganora** – a small ape-like animal with long, pink shaggy hair, found only in Karisma. Their natural habitat is the Dark Forest, where they feed on the blue-spotted leaves of the tuntree

and Hob, who lived in the Dark Forest. How she had found a beautiful silver bracelet, with one heart charm, which belonged to Queen Charm. And finally, how Hob had helped her escape from a ghastly creature called a gribbler. By the end, Maddy's eyes and mouth were open wide in astonishment.



“Ses!” she whispered. “Did all that *really* happen? Honestly?”

“Yes,” said Sesame. “Look.”

She plonked Alfie on the pillow and picked up the jewellery box she always kept by her bed. First she showed Maddy the curious painting on the lid.

“Is it a code?” asked Maddy, examining the strange symbols.



“Yes,” said Sesame, excitedly. “It took me ages but I cracked it. It spells ‘CHARM BRACELET.’” Then she opened the box and revealed her biggest secret of all. There, on a tray, was Queen Charm's silver bracelet. And in a little section by itself, a heart charm with a tiny lock.


“Oh,” gasped Maddy.

“The thing is, I've *got* to go back,” said Sesame. “Twelve charms are still missing.”



When Maddy looked more closely at the bracelet, she saw the empty rings where the other charms should be.

“I wonder what they are?” she said.

Sesame told her about the hedge she'd seen   
around Charm's palace gardens; it had shapes of all  
the charms clipped into it. She shut her eyes and   
tried to remember them.

"I saw a cat and a dolphin, a moon and star . . . a   
seashell, cloverleaf and . . . butterfly."

"That's seven," said Maddy, silently counting as   
Sesame spoke.

"Right," said Sesame, thinking hard. "I'm sure   
there was a horseshoe and a snowflake . . . a lantern  
and . . . a round one that could have been a coin.  
Oh, and a key!" 

"That's twelve," said Maddy.

"And the heart makes thirteen!" said Sesame.  
"I've got to go back and find the missing ones. It's  
important Queen Charm has them back. Anyway, I  
want to know what happened to Hob. Supposing  
that gribbler . . ."

"How?" asked Maddy. "I mean, how will you get to  
Karisma?"

"That's the trouble," said Sesame. "I don't under-  
stand how I got there. So I haven't a clue how to get  
back!"

