

ROBIN HILL

MUSIC CAMP MYSTERY

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CHAPTER 1



THE JUMBLED MESSAGE

ROBIN was alone in the practice room at Music Camp. She tingled with excitement as she stared at the jumbled words printed on a scrap of yellow paper she'd discovered in her music folder.

Wow! she thought. Could this be a secret message? I wonder what it says? The letters are mixed up, so it must be written in code. How mysterious! I wonder if anyone else got a secret message like this. I need to show it to Susan right away.

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Too excited to practice for that evening's program, Robin ran from the practice room to find her best friend, Susan. The nine-year old girls took piano lessons from Mrs. Thomas. Today was their first day at Mrs. Thomas's Music Camp at Chestnut Creek Lodge. Mrs. Thomas held Music Camp for two weeks each summer. She chose eight students to attend, and Robin and Susan were glad they were chosen this year.

Robin found Susan in their room. "Look what I found—a secret message! I hoped Music Camp would be fun, but I never expected this." Robin's fingers trembled as she showed Susan the scrap of yellow paper.

"Where did you find it?" asked Susan.

"It was in my music folder in the practice room."

"Let me see it," Susan begged. She grabbed the folded paper and read the outside. "ROBIN M. HILL. I guess that's your name all right, Robin. What does the *M* stand for?"

"Nothing. They made a mistake. I don't have a middle name," replied Robin, puzzled.

The girls opened the paper and studied the message. It was printed in black ink. It read:

FRUHU QG Y JRF RT SRNV YR FRU ULV RT FRU KYQLXKC

THE JUMBLED MESSAGE

“Is that some kind of a foreign language?” asked Susan.

“I don’t think so. I’m quite sure it’s in code, but I don’t know how to do codes. I’ve watched my brother, Jeremy, figure them out with his scout book.” Suddenly, Robin had an idea. “Hey, Jeremy’s here at camp, too. I wonder if he brought his scout book. Let’s go ask him.”

The girls ran to find Jeremy, Robin’s brother, who was eleven years old and a Boy Scout. They found Jeremy and Stewart, another student at Music Camp, in front of the lodge staring at an eagle circling high above. Stewart was thirteen years old, and played the piano and the violin.

Impatiently, Robin tapped her brother’s shoulder and asked, “Jeremy, did you bring your scout book?”

“No, why?”

“Oh, nothing,” replied Robin.

“Susan, come here a minute.” Robin pulled Susan to the end of the porch and whispered, “Jeremy didn’t bring his scout book. Now, what can we do? We can’t decode the secret message without help.”

“You’re right,” said Susan. “It looks like we’re stuck.”

“Not necessarily. Maybe Jeremy and Stewart can help us decode it even though Jeremy doesn’t have his scout book,” said Robin. “Let’s ask them to hike to Hidden Falls

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with us, and then we can show them the note on the hike when no one is around.”

The girls agreed and ran back to join the boys.

“You guys want to hike to Hidden Falls?” asked Robin.

“Sure, when do you want to go?” answered Jeremy.

“Right now,” said Susan.

“Great, I’ll bring my binoculars, and maybe we can see something interesting,” said Stewart.

“Oh, you’ll see something interesting, all right,” said Robin. She patted her pocket and winked at Susan.

• • •

The trail to Hidden Falls started at the end of the parking lot on the other side of Chestnut Creek. The four hikers ran over the footbridge and up the trail that followed along the creek. Stewart took the lead, but Robin passed him so that she could be the leader. The hikers followed the trail into the forest, and then slowed their pace to cool off in the shade and enjoy the breeze that started to blow. When they were quite alone, Robin felt it was safe to show the boys the secret message.

“Have you guys found any secret messages at camp, yet?” she asked.

“No, why?” replied Stewart, becoming curious.

“Because, I have. Do you want to see?” bragged Robin.

THE JUMBLED MESSAGE

“Yes, of course, let’s see it,” said Jeremy.

Robin found a large flat rock and spread the yellow paper on it. They all crowded around.

“Let’s see that,” said Jeremy, as he moved in a little closer.

“Very interesting. Very interesting,” Stewart said to no one in particular.

“Well, what do you make of it?” asked Robin.

“It sure looks like it’s in code,” observed Stewart.

“We wrote messages like this in scouts. Yes, it *is* in code. We just have to decode it to find out what it says,” said Jeremy.

“Yeah, but you didn’t bring your scout book, so how can you decode it?” replied Robin.

“I can decode it,” Stewart stated.

They all looked at Stewart, and Robin smiled. “Good, you’re the one to help us decode it then,” said Robin. She ignored her brother and offered Stewart the job. “How will you do it?”

“I’ll find out what each letter stands for in the real alphabet,” Stewart replied. “It will probably take some time to break the code, but it’s obvious I’m the best one here to do that.”

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“Oh, yeah? I could do it, too, if I had my scout book,” mumbled Jeremy, as he grabbed the yellow paper and turned it over to examine it more closely.

Jeremy saw “ROBIN M. HILL” written on the outside. “Robin, what does the *M* stand for in your name? You’re my own sister, and I didn’t know you had a middle name.”

“I don’t,” snapped Robin. She grabbed the note from his hands and stuffed it in her pocket. She was cross because she couldn’t decode the secret message without help, and because her name was printed wrong on the note.

“Let’s go,” she yelled, starting up the trail at a brisk pace. The others quickly ran to catch up with her. Robin crossed her fingers and made a silent wish, *I hope Stewart can decode the message real fast. I can’t wait to find out what it says!*

CHAPTER 2



HIDDEN FALLS

“WOW!” exclaimed Robin. “I’ve never seen anything like this.”

She was the first of the four to see Hidden Falls as they hiked around the last bend of the trail. She stopped abruptly to gaze at the beautiful waterfall. It poured over a ledge thirty feet high and fanned out like a clear sheet of glass. A fine mist rose as it fell into a large clear blue-green pool surrounded by a narrow sandy beach.

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“Look, a rainbow, and it’s not even raining,” exclaimed Susan. Robin and Susan stared in wonder at the rainbow shining in the fine mist.

“There’s no one else here but us,” said Robin. She was glad. Maybe they could decode the message since they were alone.

Jeremy and Stewart pushed their way past the girls and raced down the trail to be the first to reach the pool. Robin and Susan bounded down after them. Susan stooped down at the edge of the pool and wiggled her fingers in the cool water. She kicked off her tennis shoes, and waded in.

Robin and Jeremy wore their swimsuits under their clothes—something they did all summer to their mother’s dismay. They quickly pulled off their T-shirts and shorts, kicked off their tennis shoes, and leaped into the pool. They laughed and splashed each other until they were both soaked.

Stewart sat on a rock, removed his shoes and socks and waded in the cool water a little distance from the others so he wouldn’t get his clothes wet. He called to Robin, “Hey, can I see the secret message?” Robin splashed Jeremy one more time and ran over to her clothes. She got the note from her pocket and handed it

HIDDEN FALLS

to Stewart. He sat down on the sandy beach and stared at the jumbled message.

“I wish I had a pencil and my code book, but I don’t,” he sighed. “Oh, I’ll just write in the sand,” he mumbled. With his finger he wrote the alphabet in one long line.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Then he wrote the alphabet again under the first one shifting the letters one place to the right.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y

Robin and the others were curious when they saw Stewart writing in the sand.

“I’m going to help Stewart,” said Jeremy, and he ran to Stewart’s side.

Robin and Susan also ran to them and plopped down in the sand by Stewart. “Are you decoding the message?” asked Robin.

“What else would he be doing?” chided Jeremy in his know-it-all voice.

“I wasn’t talking to you,” scolded Robin.

Stewart tried to decode the message using the top alphabet as the real alphabet and bottom as the code. No luck. Then he reversed the procedure. Still, no luck.

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“I have an idea, but I need to be at the lodge to work it out,” Stewart said to the others, bluffing. He didn’t want to admit that he was stumped. He folded the secret message and put it in his pocket. “May I keep the secret message so I can decode it later?” asked Stewart. Robin pulled a face and reluctantly agreed.

Jeremy jumped to his feet and headed around the pool toward the falls. “Hey, you guys, let’s follow this path along the beach and see where it goes.” The others ran after him.

As he ran ahead of them, he turned and shouted, “Hey, come and see what I’ve found.” Jeremy had discovered a cave behind the waterfall. The trail led behind the falls into a cavern about the size of a large room.

They all joined Jeremy in the cave. The waterfall covered almost all of the cave’s opening like a shimmering curtain and let in enough light to see comfortably. In the cave they found an old crushed Coke can, an empty film canister, and an old forgotten tennis shoe. The best thing about the cave was that it was cool.

“Let’s bring our lunch up here sometime and have a picnic,” suggested Robin. They all liked the idea, but the mention of food reminded them that they were hungry for dinner. They ran from the cool cave to the warm sandy beach and quickly dressed.

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They were pulling on their tennis shoes when a bottle whizzed over their heads and splashed in the pool. It bobbed to the surface and floated about ten feet from shore. Jeremy waded in the water, getting his tennis shoes and shorts wet and grabbed the bottle.

Robin quickly looked around to see if she could see who threw it. She saw no one.

“Hey! There’s something in the bottle!” exclaimed Jeremy. He dropped the plastic bottle cap on the beach and shook the bottle vigorously. A rolled-up paper fell next to the bottle cap. The children all tried to pick up the paper at once.

Stewart got it first. He quickly unrolled the paper and read:

FORWARD AND BACKWARD
BACKWARD AND FORWARD
WHAT’S IN A NAME
WHAT’S NOT IN A NAME

The message was written with black ink on yellow paper just like the other note. Stewart quickly took the other secret message from his pocket and compared the two. “They were written by the same person,” he said. “I’m sure they go together.”

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“Me, too,” said Robin. “Another secret message! I wonder what’s going on?”

“Don’t worry. We’ll find out, but I’m hungry, and it’s getting late,” complained Jeremy.

“Yeah, we should be getting back,” added Susan.

“OK, we’ll just have to decode the secret message later,” said Robin. She sighed, and started back to the lodge with the others.