

THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



STEVEN WALTON

THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

STEVEN WALTON



CANDY JAR BOOKS · CARDIFF
2023

The right of the Steven Walton to be identified as the Author
of the Work has been asserted by them in accordance
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

The Twelve Days of Christmas © Steve Walton

Characters from The Web of Fear © Hannah Haisman

& Henry Lincoln 1967, 2023

The Lucy Wilson Mysteries

© Shaun Russell & Andy Frankham-Allen 2018, 2023

Doctor Who is © British Broadcasting Corporation, 1963, 2023

Range Editor: Shaun Russell

Edited by Keren Williams

Cover: Steve Beckett

Licensed by Hannah Haisman

Published by

Candy Jar Books

Mackintosh House

136 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 1DJ

www.candyjarbooks.co.uk

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system, or transmitted at any time or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise
without the prior permission of the copyright holder. This book is
sold subject to the condition that it shall not by way of trade or
otherwise be circulated without the publisher's prior consent in
any form of binding or cover other than
that in which it is published.

FOUR CALLING BIRDS

Christmas is a time for giving, a time for getting. Hang on, that's Cliff Richard!

What I'm trying to say... Oh, how shall I put this? I know... Christmas isn't about receiving a big pile of presents. Some people don't have that luxury.

You may have heard that some people get nuts and an orange for Christmas, but some people are worse off than that.

Lucy's grandad knew of the struggles of fighting in an army, but even he couldn't imagine what those poor soldiers went through in the First World War. But his granddaughter is about to find out for herself...

Anoxious fog filled the air and blinded Lucy as she stepped out into the field. The ground beneath her feet was stodgy and stuck to her boots. The rain had fallen heavily, leaving puddles bigger than Lucy everywhere.

She took another step; her thighs hurt from the force. Dawn had arrived and the sun was slowly starting to peep through the clouds and fog. It was so cold that Lucy could see her breath.

She couldn't work out where she was, but she was aware of the four bundles of letters in her satchel. Each one had to be delivered and it was her job to do so.

The mist covered much of the landscape. She had seen very few trees and bushes, not to mention indigenous creatures. The mud smelt like wet clothes mixed with stink bombs, and the grass – what was left of it – seemed to be gasping for air.

Some rocks were piled up a few metres to her right. She could make out the shape, just. There was also the broken stump of a tree, but apart from that, there was nothing else.

Lucy wiped her brow. It was hard work carrying the heavy satchel around. The winter air pierced the atmosphere, scratching at Lucy's face and making her nose tingle. Her clothes were thick, but she was still cold.

'Oi!' a man shouted. Lucy turned but couldn't quite make out the figure through the mist.

'Oi, get out of there!' the voice said.

'Where are you?' Lucy called back.

'Get down!'

Lucy heard something whistle above. It shot

through the sky, before hitting the mound of dirt where she had previously been standing. Lucy had managed to crouch down just in time. Apart from a few flying stones catching the back of her hands, she was unharmed.

A few seconds later, another whistle flew through the air, and another, and another. Mounds of dirt, mud, stones and earth exploded into the air and then embedded themselves in the wet mud.

Lucy held her hands over her head. The barrage of bombs and bullets fell around her for what felt like hours. In truth, it was only a few seconds.

She waited a short while before raising her head. Everything was quiet. The dust had mixed with the mist and created brown clouds. Nothing was visible now. She appeared to be surrounded by an acrid pea soup-like mist.

She spluttered as she took deep breaths, her lungs struggling to fill with clean air. This only made her cough more.

A round of gunfire cracked through the sky.

She ducked.

All went silent once more.

Lucy didn't want to get up. The world around her stank of blood and gunpowder. She didn't know who was firing at her, or why, but she was too close to want to find out.

She kept her eyes closed.

'Take my hand,' a young man said. The voice sounded friendly.

Lucy stopped shaking for a moment; she was just about to start crying when the man's hand rested on her shoulder.

'We need to get out of here. Come on, there isn't much time.' The young man's hand tugged on Lucy's jacket. 'Come on!'

Lucy didn't have much time to think. With a few stumbles, she managed to control her feet and follow the man, but her bravery was short-lived. With a scream, she was thrown to the ground by heavy gunfire.

The young man took her hand, smiled, and helped her up. As a bullet shot past, he dragged her behind a large fallen tree trunk. It was taller than both of them, and provided enough shelter for them to rest.

Although Lucy felt relatively safe, despite the bullets still hitting the bark on the opposite side. A bullet flew dangerously close to her ear and she jumped in fear.

'What *is* this?' she asked, slightly whimpering.

The young man stared at her. 'You must be concussed. Don't worry, I'll get you back. What platoon are you with?'

Lucy didn't know what to say. 'Erm...' she spluttered.

The young man grabbed something from his inside pocket. Lucy couldn't quite make it out, but it shone in the morning sun. Whatever it was, it looked sharp.

Lucy took a step backwards, but the puddle hid a layer of thick, slippery mud. She stumbled and fell to ground. Her face was now caked with mud.

'Who are you?' the young man asked.

Lucy didn't know what to say. Nothing was making any sense. She edged towards the tree, trying to keep upright. As her hand rubbed across the bark, it knocked the satchel on her shoulder.

'I'm Lucy. I have post,' she said.

'What?'

'In my satchel, I have post. That's who I am. I'm a postie!'

'Show me!' the young man ordered.

'No. It's illegal to tamper with the post before it has been delivered,' Lucy protested. 'Until it has been delivered, it belongs to King George V.'

'What if the post is for me?'

'Name?' Lucy sounded authoritarian as she barked the question.

'Conall... Conall Wilson.'

Lucy looked at the man. From his straight hair, to his flat fingernails. It all seemed familiar.

'Do I know you?' she asked.

‘I’m asking the questions. Do you have a letter for me?’

Lucy didn’t know what to do. She was a little upset at being threatened. She reached into the satchel and rummaged around for a moment, before producing a small bundle of letters.

Conall snatched them from her. He flicked through them, discovering the names were for his platoon.

‘What is this?’ A thick German accent came from above them. As they looked up, Lucy and Conall saw a German soldier pointing a weapon directly at them. They tried to run, but they were surrounded.

The German trench was just as filthy. It stank and was waterlogged. Soldiers sat on piles of wet mud in sodden clothes. Wooden doors lined one side of the trench, although they looked more like broken gates that had been dumped.

As they passed one door, they could hear a man scream in pain. Lucy and Conall couldn’t stop to see what was happening. Their captors marched them further down.

The water from the trench spilled over into Lucy’s boots, drenching her socks. With Conall being taller, it did not reach inside his.

Conall started to speak but was hushed by a soldier who prodded him with his rifle.

*

Minutes later, they were marched into a bare room at gunpoint. There was very little furniture, except a desk and chair. The floors were boarded; no water leaked in, and there was a fire, albeit small.

‘Halt!’ ordered a small man behind the desk. ‘What do we have here?’ He got up and circled Lucy and Conall.

Lucy clutched her satchel to her stomach, hoping the small man wouldn’t be interested in it.

‘Remove the bag!’ the small man ordered.

‘No, I can’t,’ Lucy protested, but before she could do anything it was wrenched from her arm. She wanted to rub her shoulder, but was ordered to stay still.

‘Letters? How remarkably interesting,’ the small man said, resting his gun on the table. ‘You will read them.’

‘Do I really need to explain this again? You can’t tamper with the Royal Mail. Until they are delivered, they are the property of King George V.’ Lucy realised what she had said.

Conall rolled his eyes. ‘Can I be held prisoner with someone else please?’ he asked.

‘King George V!’ The official-looking German soldier replied. ‘So these are messages from the King of England?’

‘No... what?’

'Silence!'

Lucy put her finger up to her mouth.

The small man then barked some orders in German at one of the soldiers behind her. The satchel was passed over and the soldier exited the room with a salute.

'What were you doing in no man's land?' the small man asked.

Lucy didn't know what to say. She could see the mountains of medals on his chest and assumed he must be quite important.

'We had some letters. You know... for the men,' Conall explained, telling a half-truth.

'Yeah. Letters from back home. All that lovey-dovey stuff.'

The small man appeared to ignore Lucy's response. 'What's your objective?'

'To deliver the letters.'

'Who gave them to you?'

'I don't know. I just have them?'

At this moment, the soldier returned and whispered in the small man's ear.

'Why did you have some letters for German troops?' the small man asked.

Lucy looked shocked, but Conall appeared mortified. 'I should have known you were a spy!' he shouted. Conall lunged himself backwards, knocking the guard over. He grabbed the gun from

the table and slowly edged backwards out of the room. 'Don't try to follow me, Lucy.'

Lucy tried to follow him, but she wasn't as quick, and the water in the trenches slowed her down. It didn't help that she could hear the small man in the distance calling for her blood.

A young boy grabbed her sleeve; he was not much older than her. 'Did you bring these?' he asked, holding up an envelope.

'Yes, but I had—'

'Thank you,' interrupted the young boy, who wrapped his arms around her and gave her a big hug. He then handed her a pile of envelopes. In one, there was a card inside that was decorated with Christmas patterns. Lucy rummaged in the bag. Some of the letters were in English. Others were written in German.

The young boy, despite wearing wet and muddy clothes, had a big smile on his face. Lucy watched him as he ran off to distribute the mail.

And then the atmosphere changed.

Some men sang Christmas carols, despite their injuries. Other men, who looked like they hadn't washed for months, joined in the fun too.

The mist cleared slightly, opening up the trenches, and allowing the fresh morning air to seep in.

Lucy smiled as she wandered down the waterlogged trenches, her feet still soaking wet. After a few minutes, she came across Conall.

He was surrounded by other men, none much older than Lucy. They were laughing and crying, offering him hugs and back pats. Conall, for all of his hatred of the opposition, struggled to resist the reverie.

From the deathly echoes of no man's land, this moment hung in the air like a long musical note.

Then a cold hand squeezed her shoulder. She turned to see the official-looking German. His face was different, less broken. A line of skin appeared where a tear must have washed away the dirt.

He didn't say a word, but instead held out two bundles of letters.

Lucy understood. Together with Conall, she stepped over the top. They were probably the only people ever to go over the top and survive, but there was no doubt that something had changed in their souls that day.

A chorus of 'Silent Night' echoed across the wasteland; the words were in German but this somehow added to the dreamlike state of things. It was almost too much when the other men started joining in. This time, the words were English.

It wasn't Lucy who looked back at the German trench

that night. After all, I removed her from this place. Not for any good reason, just to tease her elsewhere. But I left Conall to watch the sunset later that day.

As the sun disappeared, so did the singing.

Conall stepped down the ladder and into a nearby room. There wasn't much in there, but he did have a bed. On the wall, there was a small calendar. His Christmas letter was pinned next to it.

He took out a pencil from his breast pocket and crossed out the date.

25th December 1917.

So you see, children, we can take away the presents, food and Christmas TV. But in the end, we can't take away the love. It was right there, in the middle of one of the dirtiest, death-ridden and rotten wars in our history. Love stopped the war for a few hours.

Those soldiers didn't have special Christmas PJs, or a big Christmas dinner, but they did have those letters. The knowledge that there were people at home who loved them.

Oh, hey, talking of Christmas Dinner, that gives me an idea...

To be continued in Three French Hens...

Available from Candy Jar

**The Mystery of Lucy Wilson: Apocalypse Tomorrow
by Steven Walton and Shaun Russell**

Lucy Wilson's adventures in time have taken her to some strange places. Dangerous places, faraway places... But none so strange and alien as where she finds herself now... The 1990s.

Pokémon battle in the schoolyards. Tamagotchi roam the streets. And a giant spider from a ruined future looks to spark an apocalypse that, technically, has already happened.

Timelines converge and realities shattered as Lucy's exile in time reaches its epic climax. And in the end, it all comes down to one question: who's better, 2Unlimited or Adamski?



Also available from Candy Jar

**The Lucy Wilson Mysteries:
The Best Christmas Ever by Chris Lynch**

Christmas is the busiest time of the year, but this never seems to be a problem for the monsters and aliens that visit Lucy Wilson over the festive period!

Alongside her best friend Hobo, Lucy discovers one of her grandad's old secrets, investigates a creepy haunted mansion, and gets a visit from a mysterious goatman called Krampus, who takes bad children away.

This is a collection of three stories set over the Christmases of 2018, 2019 and 2020. Defending Earth doesn't stop for anything, not even Christmas! But which Christmas is the best one ever?





Listen to the Spotify Christmas list. Updated daily.

