

THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



STEVEN WALTON

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FIVE GOLD RINGS

Lucy, Lucy, Lucy. Oh, the excitement of her adventures so far, but we are getting ahead of ourselves. Before we sit down and watch the evening dramas, we need to leave the grown-ups in the kitchen, ignore Grandpa and his moaning, and let the younger kids play with their toys. Instead, let's watch the big Christmas Day film.

When we last left Miss Wilson, she had found a bomb inside a Christmas pudding. Well, it is Christmas! If you can't have a goofy storyline now and then, when can you?

But for this story, we need to change things up a bit. For a start, she isn't going to do too well running around in that long dress.

Snap!

Look at that, just one click of the fingers and she's back in her winter coat. That cube looks a bit unimpressive too. Why don't we go for a Christmas present?

Lucy looked confused. It was just moments ago that she was with Mel in Downing Street. Now, rainy city streets surrounded her.

In the distance she could hear the beeps and honks of heavy traffic. She peered down a nearby alleyway and made out the bustle of a busy city centre. Large dustbins lined the wall of the alley, and something moved within one.

'Hello?' Lucy said, walking over to the mound of black bin bags. For a city full of cars and shoppers, it seemed awfully quiet. The thing in the bin didn't move.

She reached out, hoping to grab the top bag and reveal whatever was underneath. Her hand had just reached the plastic when something jumped up at her.

The force of the creature knocked her back and she almost dropped the bomb. The cold rain was now morphing into snowflakes, which dropped into her eyes, blurring her view.

Wiping her face, she laughed when she saw a fat white and tortoiseshell cat trundle across the alley to a different bin.

Her jeans were now wet and she had small patches of mud on her black coat too. She tried to dust herself down, but it did little good.

As she stepped into the street, no one paid her any notice. The bomb was decorated like a gift, even

with a giant bow. She looked just like every other shopper.

As she took in her surroundings, something occurred to her. This was definitely not Ogmores-by-Sea. The fact there was more than two shops proved that. In truth, this wasn't even London. As she turned, she realised exactly where she had found herself.

'New York!'

Times Square was noisy, bright and crowded. Not only were there New Yorkers, but shoppers and tourists too. The steps at one end were full of people wrapped in thick coats and scarves, taking selfies and photos.

Around her Lucy could see The Disney Store, Hard Rock Café, and other familiar brands. It made her feel slightly secure, taking comfort in the fact she recognised them and where she was.

'Lucy...' A familiar voice spoke in her ear. Startled, Lucy rubbed it, finding a small earpiece.

'Paula?'

'Lucy, it's so good to hear your voice,' Paula said. 'I knew you had something to do with this. I can't believe you're here.'

'Paula, it's fine. Where are you?'

'I'm not sure.'

'What are you near? Do you recognise anything?'

'I'm in a room, a dark room,' Paula responded.

'It's just me. I'm sat at a desk with a light and a map.'

'What's the map of?'

'Lucy, you are not going to believe this. It's New York!'

'Do you see anything you recognise?' Lucy asked, trying to hear her friend over the noise of the city streets. 'I'm at Times Square.'

'Hang on, yes, yes, I see it. There are five circles on the map. The first is right near you. Lucy, you need to head towards the Rockefeller Centre.'

With the gift-wrapped bomb in hand, Lucy ran in and out of the shoppers. It almost ended in tragedy when she stepped out into the road. A yellow taxi pulled out, the driver yelling at her from his window.

Lucy looked up at the lights. It showed a white man walking to the right. She cautiously stepped out again, others did at the same time which made her feel safer.

The trees on the sidewalk were decorated with fairy lights; each building was adorned with its own decorations, and the shop windows showed all the goodies available for Christmas.

Outside the Rockefeller, it was heaving with children and adults. Lucy could see a giant tree beyond a large ice rink. She watched some of the parents spin their kids, while a skinny guy was pirouetting and showing off.

‘Now where?’ Lucy asked.

‘The arrow just stops there. Hang on.’ Paula’s voice stopped for a moment. ‘Lucy, words are appearing on the map. They say... they say... the key is under the tree.’

Lucy looked around. The only tree was on the other side of the rink. She looked around to see how she could get to it. Guards stood at all entrances, except on the ice.

Catching sight of a teenager taking off her ice skates, Lucy leapt into action. First, snatching the skates, then quickly putting them on, and stepping tentatively onto the ice.

‘Lucy, what are you doing?’

‘Ice skating to the tree. I mean, how hard can it be?’

‘Be careful, people lose fingers.’

Lucy rolled her eyes. Paula was a sweet person and a good friend, but if she could put a negative spin on things then she would. She was quite a nervous girl, despite being a Defender of Earth.

‘Don’t worry, surely it’s just like roller-skating,’ Lucy said at the exact moment she slipped and fell to the floor with a thud and a very cold landing.

‘Are you okay? Lucy?’

‘I’m fine, Paula, honestly, its fine.’

It wasn’t fine, the ice was cold and the gift-wrapped bomb skidded out to the centre of the rink.

The music on the speakers turned into 'Run, Run Rudolph' by Kelly Clarkson. Lucy thought about the task at hand and rose to her feet. At least she now knew how slippery the ice was and how hard it would be to keep her balance.

As a gymnast, a keen roller-skater, and a determined Lethbridge-Stewart, it took her mere seconds to get into her stride.

She found the music helped, skating to the rock 'n' roll beat. She decided to abandon the bomb; she had the tree in her sights and instead thrust herself across the ice. She looked up at the mighty spruce, which was decorated in gold.

'Look out!' Lucy cried, as she skated into a young couple taking a selfie in front of the tree. 'I am *so* sorry!'

The couple tried to be polite as they rose back to their feet and dusted themselves down. They returned to their pose and was about to take a beautiful picture in front of the tree when they were distracted by movement in the branches behind them.

Lucy smiled, sheepishly when she realised they were frowning at her.

'Sorry, I was looking for um, my contact lens...'
With that, she skated off. She had finished looking anyway.

She decided to stay clear of them for a moment,

so skated across to a far corner, grabbing the bomb as she went.

Lucy waited for the couple to move on before heading back over.

She glanced from side to side, looking for anything to give her a clue.

A large teddy bear sat propped up against the tree. In his hands, he held four children's building blocks. Each had a different letter on it: 'Q', 'R', 'K' and 'S'.

Lucy skated over to the bear who grinned blankly. The box with the letter 'S' was nearest.

'Paula, I've found a box. I'm going to open it.'

'Be careful, Lucy.'

At the side of the box were two small gold hinges. Using the embossed pattern as a handle, she lifted the lid.

A large gold bell rose from the box and chimed loudly. The bomb in Lucy's hand rattled, the large number '5' on the gift tag turned into a number four.

'Paula, does the map say anything else?' Lucy asked.

'Hang on. Something's appearing. Um, it says, "a letter before you".'

Lucy thought for a moment.

'Of course, before "you". "You" being "me", "me" being Lucy. L, the letter before L is K.' As Lucy deduced, she opened the box with the letter

'K'. Another large golden bell rang out.

Once more the bomb shuddered, the number '4' morphed into a '3'.

'What? I wish Hobo were here. He'd solve the riddle before you've even read it, Paula.'

'Q.'

'What?'

'Try Q,' Paula suggested. 'Q comes before U, think about it.'

Lucy shrugged her shoulders. Even if she got it wrong the tag wouldn't get down to '0' just yet. She pulled open the box with the 'Q' on front. She waited for the loud chime, but this time nothing.

Lucy peered into the box. The snow continued to fall, with some snowflakes collecting inside.

She reached in and pulled out a small key.

'Was I right?' Paula asked.

'Yeah, although there's just a key inside, no instructions or anything,' Lucy said, holding up the key in front of her.

'Lucy, the map, the map is changing again.' Lucy waited while Paula watched another circle appear.

'Where to now?' Lucy asked.

'The big fountain in Central Park!'

'Which way is that?'

Lucy followed Paula's directions through the bustling streets of New York. She could see Times

Square once again, although she left in the opposite direction. She watched for traffic as she crossed the busy streets.

‘Paula, do you know what those big orange things are, the ones that blow out steam?’

‘No, do you?’

‘Nope. Anyway, I am just passing Tiffany’s and then there it is, Central Park. How far is the fountain?’

Within a few minutes, Lucy was standing in front of the fountain. The water had frozen over and a thick layer of snow settled on top, getting bigger every second.

‘Now what do I do?’

‘This is the Bethesda fountain. The statue in the middle is called Angel on the Water. Go to the other?’ Paula read more words that appeared on the map.

‘What does that mean?’ Lucy asked.

‘I suppose there must be another fountain?’

Before Lucy could reply, the box in her hand vibrated.

‘No, no, no!’ she cried out when the tag moulded into a number ‘2’. Above her, a giant golden bell chimed in the air.

‘That’s three rings, just two to go,’ Lucy said in panic. ‘We need to be more careful. Now before we

say anything else, think logically.'

'Sorry.'

'It's a statue, another statue in New York. The Statue of Liberty!' Lucy declared.

'Is the Statue of Liberty an angel?' Paula questioned.

The tour of New York continued for Lucy. This time she had no idea how to get to the Statue of Liberty. After asking a few New Yorkers, she headed to the subway. The snow had melted from the heat from the underground, and the water dripped down the drains and across the steps, making each one slippery. Lucy clung to the railing as she descended, hoping not to fall.

Despite the business of the city, the subway was eerily quiet. Other than an elderly man asleep against a trash can, the platform was empty. Lucy glanced around, trying to find the map or any information on how to get to the Statue of Liberty.

One of the lights flickered above the old man. It buzzed before correcting itself. Lucy approached it, passing the time before the next train arrived.

The buzzing continued, albeit slightly quieter.

As the train approached, a rush of noise and hot air whooshed into the station. It blew the ribbon around the gift-bomb, the tag fluttering in the breeze.

The train stopped ahead of her, the carriage full of shoppers, each one either on their phones, chatting with others or listening to music.

Many were standing, although there was enough space for Lucy to board easily and have a seat.

It didn't take long for the doors to close and the train to move off. As it picked up speed, the roar of motion rattled through the carriage. The lights flickered off but returned instantly.

Lucy glanced around at the other passengers; they were all in their own worlds.

Commuters joined and left as the journey continued. Some stood in front of Lucy which blocked her view of everyone. Other times, the train was almost empty.

By the time she arrived at the station, she was the only one left in her carriage. She stepped down and made her way to the Staten Island Ferry.

The queue for the ferry was quite long but everyone boarded with ease. The cold winter air blew across the deck and Lucy decided to sit inside.

As she watched the Manhattan skyline fade into the snow and fog behind her, something dawned on her. She rushed to the right-hand side.

Through the condensation-covered window, she watched the statue pass by.

'Excuse me?' Lucy asked a friendly-looking woman next to her. 'Does this ferry go to the statue?'

'Oh, honey, this is the Staten Island Ferry, it goes to Staten Island,' the woman replied. 'But I always think you get a better view of the old girl from here. Have you been to the Empire State Building? Well, you should go to the Chrysler Building, it has the best view of the Empire State.'

Lucy appreciated the advice, and if she were on holiday then it would have meant more.

Trust me, I have been to New York and that woman was giving sound advice. I never been to Madison Square Gardens, but maybe next time.

Anyway, Lucy panicked as she watched the large statue pass by.

At the other end of the journey, Lucy felt deflated. The snow was now beginning to pile up.

Lucy watched as the crowds stood in line for the return ferry to Manhattan. She chatted with Paula, trying to keep occupied.

'This is an announcement for all passengers travelling over to Manhattan.' It was a friendly guy's voice that came over the Tannoy. 'Due to the build-up of bad weather, the ferry leaving at 6:55 will be the last until further notice. Please ensure that you make other arrangements for your return journey. You can always check on the New York Travel app for further updates.'

With that, the large crowds rushed onto the loading bay and onto the ferry. Lucy once again took a seat on the lower deck. She had only been there for a moment when a man sat down next to her. She shuffled slightly uncomfortably.

‘Miss Wilson?’ the man asked.

Shocked at the fact he knew her name, Lucy wasn’t sure how to respond.

‘Who are you?’ she finally asked, turning towards him.

‘You have two options,’ he said, ignoring what Lucy had just asked. ‘You could continue on your way, trying to reach the statue in this weather, or you could get the clue right now?’

‘What? How?’

‘I will swap you. The clue for one chime of the bell.’

Lucy thought for a moment, she had no idea who this man was. She didn’t know if she could trust him. It’s fair enough to not trust a stranger. At this point, the man was a stranger to Lucy.

But you will know who it was. After all, he is telling you this story right now...

Lucy took the clue. As so many tourists do, she was at a loss for how to reach the Statue of Liberty.

‘In the Big Apple, McDonald’s isn’t the only big “M” in the city but this one is a star.’

With that, I walked away.

The next bell chimed and the tag twirled around, leaving the number '1'.

Lucy couldn't work out the riddle, even Paula was at a loss. Lucy gave suggestions as Paula searched over the map in front of her.

'It could be Madison Square Gardens, or Macy's,' Paula said. These were the only two things she could find on the map.

'If I get it wrong, that's it,' Lucy said, the panic started to kick in.

'Which one should we choose?' Paula's voice had a slight panic too. Lucy knew what her friend would be doing right now. She would be pacing up and down, rubbing the back of her hands.

'I wish Hobo was here,' Lucy said once again.

'Oh, thanks,' Paula's voice came through loud and clear. 'It's always Hobo, isn't it? I know I'm not brave enough. I know I might not be as sci-fi clever as him, but I'm still your friend. For what it's worth, I think it's Macy's. There is no "M" on the front of Madison Square Gardens, but Macy's does have one, and it has a giant star on the front.'

'Really?'

Lucy waited for the response but nothing came.

'Paula?'

'Just save the day, Lucy, just save the day.'

Paula went silent once more. Lucy felt bad. She didn't realise that she was leaving Paula out of

things. It was true, she was a scaredy cat, but she was sweet and kind. She was also very clever. Sure Hobo knew the difference between sci-fi and fantasy books, but Paula knew when to ask for help. She knew about geography and how to make things.

As Lucy began her long apology, she made her way to Macy's. She knew she just had to trust her friend. She had no idea what was happening to her, but she did know each adventure paired her with someone she loved, or cared about, or someone who cared about her. Paula was here for a reason, so if she said Macy's then Macy's it was!

Inside the store, it was almost impossible to move. Each area had gaggles of shoppers. Lucy didn't really know what to do. There was no fifth ring in the air, so she must have reached the correct place, but she had no idea what to do now.

She watched the shoppers. Some were silent and determined with their Christmas shopping. One woman rushed straight up to a large display of dressing gowns and picked fifteen up in one go. She piled them in her baskets and dashed for the adjacent slippers and PJ stands.

Others floated around like fish in a tank, wandering aimlessly from stand to stand. Many were alone or had a friend with them. And then

there was one family that took over the store. The mum and dad grabbed various different items, using the older children as their personal trollies. They piled up clothes and accessories on the teenagers' arms.

The younger two children, a pair of twins, wandered around bored. One played on his phone while the other drank from a McDonald's cup.

'Hang on, Paula, is there a McDonald's in Macy's?'

'Check near the escalators. If there is, then surely there will be a sign.'

Lucy made her way through the shoppers, hoping to find some kind of lift or escalator. She tip-toed to try and see above the crowds but it was difficult. She had memories of getting out of a concert after it had finished. It took so long to just get anywhere.

It also occurred to Lucy that Paula had just broken her silence. She smiled.

She made slow progress but it allowed her to take in some of the Christmas beauty around her. Macy's had decorated their store with so many Christmas trees, with baubles hanging from the ceiling and garlands adorning the shelves and displays.

'I wish you were here with me,' Lucy said.

'You don't need to say that, Lucy.'

‘I do, because it’s true.’ Lucy stopped still. ‘I don’t think I’m going to be able to lead a normal life. I enjoy the thrills too much, but I forget about things like this. I’m in New York at Christmas. I’ve heard live bands playing, the decorations are beautiful, all over the top but still beautiful, and it’s snowing. I’ve been so caught up with my challenges that I forgot that I’m here. Plus, out of all my friends, you are the one I want to spend time doing real-life things with. You don’t need to be brave, science-y or anything else. You are *you*, maybe when this is all over we can go grab a bubble tea?’

There was no reply.

‘Paula?’

Paula’s voice eventually came back. ‘I’m okay! I’m not crying. It’s you that’s crying!’

‘See, this is what I need. You are one of my best friends.’

Lucy had found the escalator and was making her way through the levels. McDonald’s was smaller than she thought it would be. And it was packed!

Through the masses of hungry shoppers, Lucy could see a giant ‘M’. Squashing herself through the crowd she dashed over to the sign. As soon as she touched it, the world around her went quiet.

She turned; the store was empty.

‘Paula, where has everybody gone?’ Lucy asked

but no answer came.

She glanced around the tables and chairs but she was the only one there. She even did a full circle to check if anyone was in the store. It was completely deserted.

When she returned to the giant 'M', she realised that there were two doors on either side. One door had a keyhole, while the other had a large letterbox, just big enough to for the present.

A note appeared on the 'M'. Lucy took it and read:

Your choice, one door has Paula behind. The key will open it but the fifth bell will ring. The other door will defuse the bomb.

Lucy looked at the present, the number '1' glistened in the fairy lights. She had to save all of those people, there was no doubt about that. But, she also didn't want to lose a friend.

She stood motionless for what felt like hours, unsure which option to take.

As she stared at the doors before her, she realised that they were only doors. There were no rooms beyond them, not in her dimension anyway.

She took the key from her pocket and took a firm grip on the present. She prepared herself for a fast move and a big decision.

She pushed the key into the lock and turned. Paula was no longer tied to the chair and Lucy pulled her friend through the door to safety. She then, almost simultaneously, threw the present bomb into the room. She pulled the door shut and locked it.

Paula was shivering and Lucy gave her a big hug. A large rumble filled the air and smoke appeared from the door frame. It crumbled into dust, as did the second door.

‘Lucy, how did you know that would work?’ Paula asked.

‘I didn’t. But I knew I needed to save my friend,’ Lucy replied, honestly.

‘You wouldn’t have had to rescue Hobo.’ Paula looked at her shoes.

‘That’s not true. Anyway, Hobo isn’t here!’

She foiled the plan, this is true.

What more can be said?

Well, let’s see what she’ll do,

With gunfire above her head.

To be continued in Four Calling Birds...

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?



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**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.

