

# THE LUCY WILSON MYSTERIES

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS



STEVEN WALTON

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LUCY WILSON  
MYSTERIES**

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# SEVEN SWANS ARE SWIMMING

*Have you ever enjoyed something on TV and it gets to a good bit, maybe something emotional, but then the adverts come on? Before we follow a Coca-Cola truck to Toys R Us, before crying at John Lewis, there's one advert that will be the biggest hit...*

*I know this is a book, but let's pretend for a moment that you are watching TV.*

*Now, be prepared to have your reading experience interrupted by an ad break...*

'But, Mum, all my dog does is bark, and it's raining outside.'

'Jimmy, you wanted the puppy and we warned you about taking good care of it.'

'But, Mum!'

Does this look familiar? Who needs a dog anyway, when you can get the brand new super fully computerised Super Mechanical Swan? Elegance... grace... swims on any water, flies, guards the house, and has over thirty

different authentic swan sounds.

'Mum, can I get one, please?'

'I don't know how I ever lived without one.'

Super Mechanical Swan is available in all good toy stores. Batteries not included, cannot fly, not suitable in water, or for children under fourteen. Collar and Santa Hat sold separately.

**L**ucy and Hobo stood in the centre of Cardiff, the busy streets packed with shoppers desperately trying to get the latest toys or last-minute gifts. Two teenagers walked past, giggling with hot chocolates. Hobo wore a knitted headband and earmuffs, while Lucy's hat was so long the bobble reached her shoulders.

A man dressed as Santa rang a bell and collected money in a bucket. Lucy tried to see if it was Grandad, but it wasn't.

They took a stroll down the high street, catching glimpses of window displays, carol singers and a Christmas Market.

Standing proud in the shopping arcade was a silver plinth with three different-shaped robots: a dinosaur, a dog, and, the biggest, a swan. All were said to be the technological replacement of their respective creature.

'Is it just me or is that the best toy you have ever seen?' Hobo said, moments before he disappeared

into the shop. Lucy sighed and followed him.

It turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

‘Dean!’ Lucy called out, recognising the man looking at the DVDs lined up on shelves near the tills. He put down his copy of *Dune* and hugged his sister-in-law. ‘How are you? I haven’t seen you in ages. You haven’t been avoiding me, have you?’

‘No, it’s just—’

Hobo interrupted them. ‘Hi, Dean.’ He was holding a plastic container filled with various bits from a dusty old TV show. The yellow car was the only thing that remotely interested Lucy. The rest looked like tat. Hobo had this habit of liking old programmes that were embarrassing. From *Blake’s 7* to *Day of the Triffids*, none of it lived up to the standards of today.

Dean, unfortunately, was also a fan. He joined in the conversation so enthusiastically that it was almost a relief for Lucy when the shop window smashed. Bits of glass flew out into the street. The torn window decals blew in the wind and some of the shoppers screamed.

Lucy instinctively ran to the door. Hobo handed the container to Dean.

‘Whatever you do, don’t put these down. They’re the last ones in the shop.’

Dean was a man of his word, but should have realised he was shoplifting when he followed Lucy

and Hobo out into the street.

As Lucy looked down at the glass scattered in the light snow, Dean grabbed Hobo by the arm.

Turning his attention to Dean, Hobo was directed to the sky. 'Erm, Luce...'

'This window was smashed from the inside,' Lucy said.

'That's nice, but I really think you should look at this.'

Lucy looked up into the sky, just in time to see a gaggle of robotic swans dive through the air. It was like a Red Arrows display as they swooped and looped through the cloudy and frosty sky.

The spectacle stopped the shoppers in their tracks. Mums and dads dropped their bags of presents, and kids looked up from their phones!

But as they watched the mechanical birds dance in the sky, they were serenaded by carol singers and Salvation Army bands, and surrounded by the twinkling fairy lights. And then everything took a turn for the worst. The toys launched into attack mode and began their sharp descent into the crowds. Chaos followed.

Everyone ran in all directions. Hobo tried his best to stick with Lucy, but was separated after mere seconds. Dean tried to defend himself by swatting the swans with the only thing he was holding, Hobo's toys. With every hit, Hobo winced.

Lucy couldn't see Hobo, but could make out Dean being pecked by plastic birds. She snatched his hand and pulled him into a small alleyway. The toys darted around the city streets, smashing windows, and attacking anyone they encountered. A man, who was being attacked by a toy bird while drinking a glass of mulled wine, couldn't take any more. He sniffed at his glass, assuming the drink was too strong for him, then poured it away and left.

'We need to think of a plan,' Lucy said.

Dean, who was slightly shocked by it all, just stared blankly in front of him.

'When I was younger, I only wanted a yoyo. I was told they were too dangerous. That seems a little over the top now...'

'Dean, please. Come on, we need to get out of here, the quicker the better.'

She looked around for Hobo but couldn't see him. Then something seemed to just click in the air.

All of the swans just fell to the floor and stopped. Lucy prodded the nearest toy, but it remained still.

As normality returned to the city, Lucy continued to tap the toy.

'What made it do that?' she asked.

A black van pulled up next to the Christmas market. The back doors opened and it transformed into a small stage. A tall woman with a high beehive climbed the newly placed steps and stood on top of



the van. She held a small microphone and tapped it a few times to check if it worked.

‘Attention shoppers! I represent the Frosteq company. We’ve unfortunately had a small issue with our guard swan demonstration. We would like to sincerely apologise. As a huge gesture for any inconvenience, we would like to offer all shoppers here today a half-price voucher for one of our Super Mechanical Swans. Just present them to any shop and we’ll sort the rest.’

With that, the woman climbed down and a huge cluster of shoppers crowded around the van to get their vouchers.

‘That was more than just a demonstration...’ Lucy decided. She expected Dean to be standing next to her, but when she glanced up he too had headed towards the van.

Weirdly, for a split second, time slowed down. The lights blurred and when they came back into focus, Lucy found herself in her bedroom holding Hannah’s Christmas present.

There were two parts to Hannah’s gift: the first was a book and this was on the official Christmas list, and could be opened in front of her parents. The second was a gemstone, the size of a fist, which she had acquired.

With both gifts in her backpack, she joined her parents in the hallway, and all three left together. Her

mum and dad were still mid-argument, but there was nothing new there.

Lucy felt this was familiar, like she had been here before. It was a feeling she couldn't shake.

Dad climbed into the car and let out a grumpy huff. He then got out of the car, walking around to the passenger's side.

Only an hour earlier, he had been attempting to put fairy lights up around the house. He didn't particularly want to climb the ladder, but didn't want to look stupid either. He decided to brave it. As he climbed, he slipped, fell, and hurt his arm. Mum assured him it was just swollen, but he was not having any of it. He insisted it was fractured, but funnily enough, didn't want to see a doctor.

Mum drove.

Minutes later, they arrived at Conall and Dean's house. Lucy shook her head in confusion. She was sure that they still lived in London, but it was obvious from the outside that this was definitely their house.

Other houses in the street had the odd fairy light up in the window or across porches. Some had icicles hanging from their roofs. But Conall and Dean had everything! From icicles to an outside tree decorated with bright multi-coloured baubles and lights, to a huge wreath on the door that covered the entire top half. Even the letterbox on their door had a small piece

of cotton wool sticking out of it, to make it look like it was covered in snow.

Lucy pressed the doorbell and laughed when it played 'Jingle Bell Rock'. Even Dad smiled, despite previously saying it hurt to smile. What a smile had to do with a swollen arm was anyone's guess, but he had gained a hot mince pie out of his trauma, so he wasn't doing too badly.

No one answered the door. Mum stepped back to look at the upstairs windows.

'Press the bell again, Lucy,' she said. 'There's a light on upstairs. Maybe they didn't hear it.'

There was no movement from the house, other than the flashing fairy lights. Mum and Dad glanced up at the window again.

Lucy pressed her ear up against the door.

'I can hear "Last Christmas" playing. They must be in,' she said.

'They've probably left it unlocked,' Mum said. 'Go on, Lucy. Turn the handle.'

Lucy did as she was told and the door creaked open.

'They really should get some WD40 on that,' Dad said, smiling.

Lucy and Mum crept into the house, leaving Dad staring up at the roof.

'I think they've even decorated the solar panels,' he said.

\*

Inside, the house was a magical Christmas palace. Down the hallway, a long festive garland hung from the ceiling. A variety of baubles and ornaments hung down from it, all in matching red, green and gold. Candles floated in mid-air, most likely hung by a thin wire. Lights glittered all around them. On the floor, there were statues of nutcrackers, bells, reindeer and snowmen. One of the trees was beautifully decorated in white and silver. It looked like a tree you would find in an enchanted forest. The second tree (*Yes, there were two trees in the hallway*) was pastels and looked as if little elves lived inside.

‘They do go a bit over the top,’ Dad said. ‘Look at that snowman wearing a mask.’ Dad pointed at a little hanging snowman on the banister. It had a blue mask on it and a little message under saying, “Have a safe Christmas 2020.”

‘It’s a bit old, isn’t it?’ Mum said. ‘Conall!’ she shouted up the stairs. There was nothing.

Lucy headed for the kitchen. If there was one place to be in this house at Christmas was the kitchen. Everything was decorated in gingerbread or candy cane. However, the *piece de la resistance* was the old oak table full of Christmas treats. Lucy did not hesitate to help herself to a homemade mince pie. Bliss!

‘Conall, Dean!’ Mum shouted.

‘They’re not in the kitchen,’ Lucy said between bites.

'Be a good girl and check upstairs,' Dad said.  
'Okay,' agreed Lucy.

Albert and Tamara walked into the living room. Again it was filled to the brim with decorations. Three trees, an archway and hanging garlands all made the room look like a grotto. One of the trees had the usual Disney ornaments on, some new, some old, and some that simply took Mum back to her own childhood.

The archway had ornaments in the shape of toys, while the third had various coloured baubles all over, each one looking like a giant marble. Next to it, a Santa statue about the size of Hannah stood holding gifts.

'Where are they?' Albert asked.

Lucy couldn't find anybody upstairs.

'Nope, not up here!' she shouted down the stairs.  
There was no reply.

'Mum?'

She ran downstairs to find her parents standing in shock. Mum couldn't speak, while Dad simply pointed at the tree.

Beneath the jolly boughs of pine, a large mechanical Swan hissed. Its plastic eyes were bright red, shining brighter than any of the fairy lights. The feathers on its wings were razor sharp.

As it stepped forward, its webbed feet clawed into the laminate flooring, splintering bits as it crushed the

pathetic pieces of wood in its grip.

Once more it hissed.

Dad grabbed the nearest thing – a Santa statue, and held it like a lion tamer.

‘Lucy, get out of here!’ he ordered, but the Swan just hissed and launched itself at the three of them. Before the metal beast could do any damage, a large wreath swung in front of it and wrapped around the thing’s neck, restraining it. It was Dean to the rescue.

‘Thank you,’ she said sincerely.

‘Do you reckon the shop will take it back? It’s out of its box?’ he said.

Lucy didn’t have time to answer. She ducked, avoiding baubles that smashed against the wall and ornaments that fell to the floor. She grabbed Dean and threw them both at the front door.

A giant hiss echoed from the living room; the giant swan soured across the hallway and crashed into the front door, jamming it shut. It scratched across the walls, knocking more pictures down.

Lucy and Dean ran into the kitchen, but again they were pursued. The only sanctuary they could find was the coat cupboard under the stairs.

They crouched down, hidden amongst the ironing board, Hoover, and old coats.

‘If I had known we would be coming in here, I would have at least sprayed away the smell of sweaty shoes,’ Dean said, embarrassed. ‘What do we do now?’

'Think!' It was easier said than done, especially as the toy was now clawing at the door, trying with all of its might to break through.

'We could take the batteries out,' Dean suggested.

'We wouldn't get close enough,' Lucy said.

'Maybe the batteries will run out. Oh no, hang on, they're Energizers!' Dean sighed. 'It will still be working this time next year.'

Do you find that kids today only play with loud toys?

'Yes!'

And do you long for a day when they just break?

'Yes!'

Well, there's no need to wait. With the Peacemaker 2000, you can instantly short-circuit any toy with one quick blast.

'Wow, now I can get the peace I need.'

Peacemaker 2000 is available at selected retailers for just £9.99. Plus, if you buy now, you will get the Peacemaker 2000 clean-up cloth. Peacemaker 2000s are not suitable for non-electronic toys. Water not included. Please read safety instructions before use. May cause fire.

Lucy had an idea. She grabbed the iron and checked to see if there was any water inside.

'That thing works on batteries, so if we just get it wet...'

'Oh no, we can't do that. It isn't suitable for water.'

'It's a swan!'

'Yeah, but it will affect the warranty.'

'You're married to a lawyer. You'll be fine.'

Lucy remembered the tap in the kitchen. Dean had insisted they get an extendable tap. 'We can use your extendable tap like a hose,' she said.

Dean agreed and on the count of three, they burst through the door.

Dean hit the toy with the iron, while Lucy ran ahead to the kitchen. At the front door, her parents were desperately trying to get back in.

Dean backed into the kitchen.

'Now!' he shouted, but before Lucy could drench the beast, her parents succeeded in breaking down the door.

The swan turned to them and launched its attack. Lucy turned on the tap.

'Lucy, come on!' Dean shouted.

'The pressure isn't strong enough,' she cried, 'the water won't reach.'

As the swan attacked her parents, they ran to the front garden for safety.

Lucy looked around for some way to help but it was Dean who came to the rescue. He picked up a handful of snow, moulded it into a snowball and threw it.

'Direct hit.'

'I didn't know he could throw...' Dad commented



to Mum, who gave him a sharp whack on his bad arm.

The swan hit the snow and bits of plastic broke away. Lucy, meanwhile, filled the washing-up bowl with water. She came running out and threw it over the toy.

Sparks flew everywhere before the red demonic eyes slowly faded away.

Lucy ran to Mum, who held her arms out for a hug. But their joy was cut short as a long car pulled up beside them.

As the window wound down, Lucy noticed it was Hobo.

‘Where have you been?’ she called over.

‘Luce, you need to get into the car,’ he said.

‘What?’

‘We need to see the prime minister.’

Lucy looked at him before somehow floating into the backseat of the car.

Without another word, it sped off down the street.

*To be continued in Six Geese Are Laying...*

*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.

