

Neves Wishes

Chapter 4

“Nothing happened,” said Joe with a touch of disappointment.

“Not nothing,” answered Jess, who had felt the box vibrate, a gentle tingle of acknowledgement. Jess liked to think she had warranted such a response by being both polite and respectful in her request. Unlike her brash brother, she was attuned to the ways of fairy tales and knew how to correctly address the magical realm.

“Right then,” said Joe, rubbing his hands together, “time to test it.”

“No chance,” said Jess, jumping up and lifting the box high out of reach of her impulsive sibling. “This time, we’re going to think it through. If that last wish wasn’t granted and this is our last wish, we need to make sure it is something important; something that can make a difference, not just for us, but for Mum and Dad, too.”

Despite the pained expression across Joe’s face, he remained where he was, making no attempt to snatch the box and steal the wish. “What do Mum and Dad talk about?” he asked, not particularly to Jess, but to anybody listening.

“Money,” the twins said in unison, both laughing the same recognisable nasal giggle they were known for.

“That’s it, then,” said Jess. “We need to ask for the right amount, though. Not enough to seem too greedy; we can’t ask for unlimited money! We need to say how much, but not like a trillion zillion or whatever.”

“You’re making this up,” said Joe.

Jess scrunched her face at her brother to indicate that it was in fact he who knew nothing. Once more she opened the box, feeling the magic. “I wish for a million pounds,” she whispered into its depths.

The box trembled then shook. The movement was too strong for Jess to hold and she dropped it onto her bunk next to Frisk. The spaniel jolted awake as if shocked by an electric fence and leapt to the floor. The twins backed away from the box, which was vibrating at an almost alarming rate. Then, from inside, came a single bank note. It projected out, as if shot by a cannon from within, flew into the air and fluttered slowly towards the ground. Joe caught it.

“That’s never real money,” he said, a hint of annoyance in his tone. “Who’s that guy in the wig? Where’s the Queen?”

“Of course it’s real money,” said Jess. “Look, it says ‘Bank of Scotland’ on it. It’s a hundred pounds. This is fantastic. Joe, we’re going to be rich!”

A second note shot out of the box, twirling through the air. A third followed, then a fourth and fifth. The speed at which the money was produced got faster and faster, until the air was full of swirling hundred pound notes.

The children laughed and danced around as money rained down upon their heads. The notes fluttered around the twins and began gathering in messy piles at their feet. The twins kicked at the notes as if they were dry leaves on an autumn day. They scooped up great armfuls, throwing the cash up high above their heads.

Frisk, his queasiness long forgotten, found himself caught up in the excitement, barking joyously, leaping about and snapping at the cash. He jumped and twirled, twisting in amongst the endless notes as the children laughed in harmony.

They lay on their backs making snow angels in the money, watching as more and more bank notes fluttered down on top of them. Joe jumped up and danced about. “We’re rich!” he shouted. “We can buy anything!”

“I’m going to buy a mansion with a pool and invite everyone round for a pool party,” said Jess.

“I’m going to buy a chocolate factory,” said Joe.

“I’m going to buy a plane and get the pilot to take me anywhere I want,” chirped Jess.

Frisk barked.

“What are you going to buy, Frisk?” asked Joe.

“He’s going to buy his own field of bunny rabbits.”

“Or a forest filled with squirrels.”

Frisk cocked his head to the side and whined slightly, looking intently at the twins. All Joe and Jess could do was laugh; the word ‘squirrels’ always had a strong impact on Frisk! The spaniel ran to the door, scratching at it and whining some more.

“Frisk’s right,” said Joe. “We need to take this money to Mum and Dad.”

“They’ll only do something boring with it, though, like mortgage or insurance or bills or whatever. Let’s hide some just for me, you and Frisk.”

Joe looked at his sister in surprise, but wasted no time in helping her to stuff some of the money into drawers, under their mattresses and into pillowcases.

“That will do,” Jess said. “Let’s go get them.”

Frisk's tail went into helicopter mode when he realised the door was about to be opened, and eagerly followed Jess and Joe, who had rushed out with fistfuls of cash and overflowing pockets. A trail of loose notes marked their route as they walked along the hallway. This was going to be life-changing; how happy Mum and Dad were going to be. What an amazing birthday!

Just as they got to the door of the living room, hands outstretched ready to surprise their parents on the other side, Jess and Joe stopped. There was no point; the money had vanished.

Jess opened her hands, stretching her palms up and turning them over. She had felt the notes go; disappear from her grasp. Frantically she checked her pockets, looked on the carpet that had been previously covered in money. Gone. All of it, every last note had disappeared.