

Prologue

If you ever have the good fortune to visit the city of London – and I rather hope that you do – you will find a great many things to see there.

You might amble along to the Landseer Lions in Trafalgar Square, wind your way around the cobbled streets of Covent Garden, or marvel at the swans as they skid along the Serpentine in Hyde Park. As you hurry your way through the magnificent city, there's every chance you'll rush past a very important building without giving it so much as a second glance.

At 104 Pall Mall, just a brisk stroll from Buckingham Palace if you are in the right shoes, you'll find the Reform Club of London. The building, like its members, takes itself rather seriously. The white stone facade stands rigidly to attention. Dark windows peer down disapprovingly at passers-by, and the front door remains firmly shut to all but a select few.

It was in this very building, on a dreary day in 1872, that

something extraordinary happened. Somewhere between the wobbling chins, ironed newspapers and loud guffaws echoing down long corridors, sat a man named Phileas Fogg. By the end of the day, Mr Fogg would place a bet and gamble his fortune on the notion that he could travel around the world in eighty days. Being so sure of this fact, Mr Fogg set out that very evening to prove it.

Coincidentally, or perhaps not, on that very same Wednesday, the second of October, an orphan named Maggie was on her way to deliver a slightly crumpled letter to a mysterious stranger called Monsieur Passepartout.

This is her story.



In Which a Girl Almost Disappears

Maggie Appleton had lost track of how long she'd been shivering in the shadows opposite No. 7 Savile Row. She stared up at the red bricks and neat iron railings, desperate to catch a glimpse of the man inside.

She'd chased him all the way from Green Street that very afternoon. Even though he'd been laden with bags and, oddly, clutching a bright copper saucepan, he'd been too fast to catch. He'd disappeared inside No. 7 before she could even get close.

Maggie had watched and waited, eyes watering in the blustery autumn wind. But when he didn't reappear, she slid back into the shadows and searched for the courage to knock on the front door.

Remember, she told herself firmly, *not to rush in and make a mess of everything.*

Now that darkness had fallen, she hoped the man wouldn't notice her best woollen dress was missing a button or that her dark hair was tangled with knots.

Stuffing her frozen hands into her cloak pockets, Maggie reached for the belongings inside. Her soot-stained fingers found the neatly folded drawing first and the feel of it calmed her pounding heart. Even in the dim shadows, she could picture the bright brushstrokes Maman had painted, remembering every detail.

Next, she felt for the silver shilling and clutched it tightly in her fist. The image of their neighbour Mrs Copthorne slid into her mind. Her bony hand in their savings tin, swearing blind that Maman had not left a penny. Her lying face pressed against the window, steaming up the glass as the workhouse matron dragged Maggie away.

Swallowing down the memory, Maggie pulled out her most treasured possession, a soft white envelope. She traced a finger over the swirling letters Maman had written in jet-black ink:

Monsieur Jean Passepartout

27 Green Street

Mayfair

Maman's hoarse whisper echoed in Maggie's ears. 'My love, you must deliver this letter. Tell this man your name and that you are my daughter. He will help you.'

Maggie never had a chance to ask how the man would help, or why. The coughing had started again and this time it did not stop. Maman was gone by morning and the workhouse matron had come knocking that very same day.

Maggie's throat tightened. It had taken weeks to plan her escape from the workhouse, but it wouldn't take them long to find out she was missing. The matron would surely know by now that she'd run away. Maggie stared at the door, willing the man to come out so she could thrust the letter into his hand, letting Maman's words say all that was needed.

The moment the handle moves, I'll run to the door, hand him the letter, and say –

‘What are you up to, child?’

Maggie spun round so quickly, she almost toppled over. A man had appeared from nowhere, as if conjured from the shadows.

‘I asked you a question.’ The man's voice was as sharp as a shiver. ‘What business do you have here?’

His face was thin and pale; he looked as if he'd never once smiled in his life. His jacket was the colour of a rainstorm and hung loosely from hunched shoulders. Yet it was his eyes that struck Maggie. They were watery grey, like a river in winter.

Maggie's mind screamed at her to run, but she couldn't risk losing sight of the man inside the house. She thrust out the envelope, and her chin for good measure.

‘I'm delivering this letter to number seven Savile Row,’ she said firmly.

The man eyed first the envelope, then Maggie suspiciously. ‘This letter is addressed to Green Street not Savile Row.’ His eyes narrowed. ‘Tell the truth, child.’

Maggie's cheeks flushed. ‘That is the truth. I was at Green Street, but the person I need to see came here and –’

The man reached out and plucked the letter from her fingers. It took all of Maggie's willpower not to snatch it back. She hadn't let it out of her grasp since Maman had pressed it into her hand.

'The man who resides here is Phileas Fogg, not a Mr . . .' He studied the name, but did not attempt to pronounce it.

'The letter is for my . . . relative.' Maggie stumbled on the lie. 'It's very important. I have to make sure –'

'What business does he have with Mr Fogg?' the man cut in, still staring at the letter.

'I don't know,' Maggie replied truthfully. 'The man inside is Maman's friend –'

'Friend?' His cold grey eyes returned to Maggie. 'You said relative. Which is it?'

When Maggie didn't reply, the man stepped closer. 'Perhaps I should introduce myself. I am Detective Fix of Scotland Yard.'

Maggie's heart stopped beating. Maman's terrified face flashed into her mind. 'You must stay away from the police,' she'd begged. 'They'll take you straight to the workhouse.'

Fix pulled out a notebook and flicked it open. 'I suggest the next words out of your mouth are the truth. What do you do for Phileas Fogg? Deliver messages? Run errands?'

Maggie's eyes darted to the door of No. 7. 'I don't know Mr Fogg. Maman said –'

'Does your mother know Fogg?' His eyes scanned the street. 'Is she here?'

Maggie shook her head, not daring to speak another word.

‘Very well. I shall keep hold of *this* –’ Fix tapped the letter – ‘until you decide to tell the truth.’

‘But it’s mine,’ Maggie croaked. Maman’s letter would explain everything.

Fix slid the letter inside his notebook. ‘Your mother can bring you to Scotland Yard and I’ll discuss it with her. Now go.’ He waved a hand as if shooing a fly.

‘No!’ Anger flared in Maggie’s chest. *I won’t break my promise to Maman.* ‘The letter belongs to me. Give it BACK.’

Fix grasped hold of her wrist. ‘Be quiet!’ he hissed. His eyes darted to No. 7, as if expecting someone to burst out the front door. ‘I will not have you interfering with my investigation.’

Panic surged through Maggie, hot and urgent. She tugged with all her strength, but Fix’s grip was too strong. He started forward, dragging her away from No. 7. Away from Monsieur Passepartout.

Desperate to free herself, Maggie lurched towards the detective and sank her teeth into his wrist.

With a strangled yelp, Fix released her and reeled backwards, tripping over his feet. A second later, he tumbled to the ground, sending his notebook skittering into the street.

Maggie darted forward, about to snatch it up, when a door slammed shut behind them.

Whipping around, she saw a man stride out of No. 7. But not the man she’d been waiting for. This one was tall

where the other was stout, and he wore a neat top hat rather than a well-worn bowler.

Monsieur Passepartout was still inside. She had to find him NOW!

Maggie snatched up the notebook and bolted towards No. 7, narrowly missing a thundering carriage. She skidded to a stop outside the front door, then wheeled round, sure the detective would be tearing after her.

But Fix still sat where he'd tumbled, his wide eyes locked on the man in the top hat who was now striding away. Then he scrambled to his feet and hurried after him without so much as a backward glance.

Fix was about to round the corner when Maggie noticed something clutched in his hand.

Something white.

Something that looked very much like Maman's letter.



In Which a Letter is Not Delivered

NO! Hot prickling panic rose in Maggie's throat. She tore open the notebook, flicking through every page. Fix couldn't have Maman's letter. She'd watched him tuck it inside the notebook. *It must be there!*

But the only thing she found between the well-thumbed pages was a playing card.

Maman's letter was gone.

A fist of grief thumped into Maggie's stomach as she slapped the notebook shut. The words she longed to read, the chance to hear Maman's voice one last time. *Gone.*

How could she tell Monsieur Passepartout that she'd lost Maman's letter? *His* letter. Worse still, that she'd stolen from a detective and bitten him!

Maggie glared down at the notebook. She wanted to toss it into a flower bed and forget she'd ever laid eyes on it. But the detective was certain to want it back. Better to keep it safe for a fair trade – the notebook for Maman's letter.

Unwrapping her cloak, she jammed the notebook

into her pocket, trying not to think about Fix's yowl of pain. She'd had no choice; she would never go back to the workhouse.

Maman would understand, Maggie convinced herself. She remembered the time Maman had broken into a neighbour's garden in the dead of night and returned cradling a whimpering pup that was just skin and bone.

'Sometimes,' Maman had said, kissing the dog's snuffling nose, 'rules need to be broken in order to do the right thing.'

Maggie took a deep breath, hoping it would steady her trembling legs. The only thing that mattered now was Monsieur Passepartout. She had to speak to him, with or without the letter. He was the only one who could help.

Without giving herself time to think, she straightened her cloak, grasped the brass knocker and rapped hard three times on the door of No. 7 Savile Row.

A muffled cry came from inside the house, followed by a flurry of footsteps. Then the door swung open so suddenly Maggie stumbled backwards, tripped off the doorstep, and landed with a *thump* on the path.

'MON DIEU!' a voice bellowed.

Strong hands lifted her effortlessly into the air and placed her back on her feet. The face staring back at her was most peculiar indeed. It was covered with creamy white soap, all except for a black bushy moustache that seemed to twitch with a life of its own. More surprising was the man's state of undress. He wore a shirt with no waistcoat or jacket, and his trousers were rolled up to the knee, revealing a large pair of stockinged feet.

‘I am sorry, mademoiselle!’ The man’s French accent rolled softly in his mouth. He bent down, sending blobs of shaving soap sliding off his chin. ‘Are you hurt?’

Maggie shook her head, trying to ignore the painful ache in her knee.

The man pulled a large yellow handkerchief from his pocket and began wiping suds from his face. ‘I thought you were Monsieur Fogg returning. I did not have time to shave before my interview and he is très particular.’ The man spoke very quickly, all his words tumbling out. ‘He said if I wanted the job, which I do, of course, I must always be sure to . . .’ He trailed off, dabbing away the last of the soap. ‘But you are not Monsieur Fogg.’ He wagged his eyebrows. ‘So, how may I help?’

Maggie’s tongue refused to move. If only she still had Maman’s letter, there would be no need to say the words. Maman would’ve explained everything, made him understand.

‘I-I’m here . . . I need . . . I had a letter but . . .’ Her heart hammered against her ribs as all her words slipped away.

The man smiled warmly. ‘I always find it best to take in the air *before* I speak.’ He sucked in a deep breath and puffed out his chest. ‘In with the air, out with the words. Oui?’

Maggie took a deep breath, then blurted, ‘Are you Monsieur Jean Passepartout?’ She pronounced the name precisely, sounding it out as Maman had.

Pass-Par-Too.

A broad smile spread across the man’s face, making

his eyes dance. ‘Mais oui! I am he; that is me!’ He bowed so deeply, Maggie felt sure his nose would bump into his knees. ‘Passepartout, at your service.’ He straightened and held out his hand.

Maggie shook it firmly, just as Maman had taught her. ‘My name is Magnolia,’ she said, trying to keep her voice steady. ‘Maggie, if you please.’

‘Bonjour, Maggie. You are a friend of Monsieur Fogg?’ He beamed so cheerfully Maggie felt her own lips twitch in reply.

‘No, sir. I came to deliver a letter to you.’

‘For me? Here?’ Passepartout shook his head. ‘It is not possible. I board at Green Street whenever I am in London, at the house of my friend.’ His brow crinkled. ‘Not even I knew I would be in Savile Row until this morning.’

‘I-I came to Green Street first,’ Maggie stammered. ‘But you left so quickly, I didn’t have time to –’

‘You followed me here?’ The crinkle deepened. ‘All the way from Green Street?’

‘Yes, sir.’ A sinking feeling began in Maggie’s stomach and didn’t stop until it reached her shoes. ‘Because of the letter. It’s from my . . . maman.’

Passepartout bent down until his face was level with hers. ‘And may I ask your maman’s name?’

‘Her name . . .’ Maggie’s nose prickled and then the prickle travelled to the roof of her mouth as she forced the words out. ‘Was Elenora Appleton.’

Passepartout became very still, apart from his eyes, which blinked and blinked again. ‘P-pardon?’ he whispered.

Maggie swallowed hard. ‘Elenora Appleton,’ she repeated, a little louder.

Passepartout straightened. He took a shaky step forward and stared into the street. ‘Nellie,’ he croaked. ‘She is here?’

Nellie? Maggie had never heard anyone call Maman that name before.

‘Where is she?’ Passepartout spun towards Maggie. ‘Please, take me to her.’

The sadness leaking from his voice made Maggie’s heart clench. ‘Maman fell ill, her lungs . . . a few weeks ago, and . . .’ She couldn’t say the word, not now, not ever. ‘She’s gone,’ was all she could manage.

Passepartout rocked on his heels. His hands flew to his face and he stared at Maggie with wild eyes. Then, quite suddenly, he collapsed in a crumpled heap at her feet.



*In Which Maggie
Can Make Neither Head Nor Tail
of the Curious Passepartout*

‘Monsieur!’

Maggie dropped to her knees beside Passepartout. His face was deathly pale. His mouth wobbled open but all that came out was a faint strangled noise. Voices murmured in the street behind them, but Maggie didn’t dare turn round.

‘We should go into the house, monsieur.’ *Before someone calls the police*, Maggie didn’t add. When Passepartout didn’t budge, she tugged at his sleeve. ‘The man who lives here, the one in the top hat. Mr . . .’

What did Fix call him? Mr Flor . . . Mr Faye . . .

‘Mr Fogg,’ Maggie remembered. ‘He might not like it if people were to see –’

Mr Fogg’s name had the effect of a bucket of ice water and Passepartout scrambled to his feet. Maggie had no time to see if the prying eyes in the street belonged to Detective Fix before she was hustled into the house and the door slammed shut.

Glancing down the hallway, Maggie found none of the

fuss or frills that she'd expected in such a grand house; just a plain wooden table, a stern-looking grandfather clock and a spotless top hat, hanging neatly on a stand. When she dared to breathe, she could smell only woodsmoke and polish.

She stood very still, waiting for Passepartout to break the deafening silence. *Trust this man*, Maman had said. *He will help you, I promise*. Maggie looked down at his stockinged feet, splattered with soap, and hoped Maman was right.

'I think,' Passepartout finally croaked, 'that I should read la lettre.' He held out a trembling hand.

Maggie's fingers longed to reach into her pocket and pull out Maman's letter. Instead, she balled her hand into a fist.

'I lost it.' The lie tasted bitter on her tongue. 'It was in my pocket but now it's gone.' That, at least, was the truth.

Passepartout eased himself down on to one knee, his wide eyes studying her face. 'Of course you are Nellie's daughter.' His mouth tugged into the saddest smile Maggie had ever seen. 'You are so much like her.' He swallowed, his smile fading. 'Perhaps you would like to tell me what happened?'

Maggie bit her lip. She'd pushed those memories into a dark room at the back of her mind. Maman's pale face, the hand she'd held until it was as cold as stone. She wanted to lock it away forever.

'It is just that I cannot bear the thought of her suffering.' Passepartout's voice cracked. 'Please, tell me that she –'

‘Maman was ill, then she was gone,’ Maggie cut in, not wanting to remember that final day, even for a second. ‘It happened so fast.’

So fast, it feels like a terrible dream, but I can’t wake up.

She stared down at her dusty shoes, unable to bear the look on Passepartout’s face. ‘Maman made me promise to find you. She said your friend in Green Street would know where you were.’ Maggie swallowed hard. ‘Maman said you would help.’

Passepartout was silent for a moment. ‘And you have no other family?’ he asked quietly. ‘No school that might miss you?’

Maman always said the same thing when Maggie asked about family. *Money does strange things to people, my dearest*, she’d reply, blinking away tears. *Sometimes hearts harden so completely, they cannot be helped.* Then she’d squeeze Maggie tightly and tell her they had all the family they ever needed.

Maggie shook her head. ‘Maman taught me everything at home and I don’t have any family.’ She swallowed hard. ‘Or anywhere else to go.’

When Passepartout made no reply, Maggie knew what would come next. She waited for the mumbled apology and the hasty farewell as he bustled her out of the door.

Instead, a warm hand settled on her shoulder.

‘My English friend once told me that tea fixes everything,’ Passepartout said thickly. ‘Come this way, ma chère.’

Maggie followed him down the hallway without another

word. They made their way up the stairs, past several closed doors, until Passepartout pushed one open. ‘This room, c’est moi.’

Maggie peered inside. There was a neatly made bed beside a polished desk, and a sturdy wooden wardrobe in the corner. Grand bay windows looked out on to the dark street below, framed by a pair of thick velvet curtains.

Then she noticed three bags stacked in the corner; the ones he’d carried away from Green Street, the copper saucepan balanced on top.

‘D-do you live here now?’ Maggie stammered. ‘With Mr Fogg?’ Maggie had dared to hope Passepartout might take her in, at least for a while, if she promised to be no trouble.

But if he lives here, in Mr Fogg’s house . . .

Passepartout nodded enthusiastically. ‘I am so relieved. Monsieur Fogg was my last hope. I have had many jobs, but I am not everyone’s pot of tea.’ He smiled sheepishly. ‘Monsieur Fogg said his valet must live in the house, so I gave up my room in Green Street and hoped for the best!’ He beamed triumphantly. ‘Et voilà! No. 7 Savile Row is my new home.’ His smile faltered. ‘Ah,’ he said quietly, finally catching on.

Maggie didn’t know what to say, so she said nothing at all.

‘We need a little time to think.’ Passepartout tried to smile. ‘And that pot of tea to think with, oui?’

Maggie eyed the door. If Mr Fogg suddenly returned, what would Passepartout tell him? Worse still, what if Mr Fogg returned with Detective Fix. What if they came back

to Savile Row together and found her in Passepartout's quarters?

'Do not worry,' Passepartout said, following her gaze. 'Monsieur Fogg's schedule never changes; the time he eats, sleeps, goes to his club. Even the temperature of his shaving water. Eighty-six degrees precisely.' He gave a baffled shrug. 'I am certain he will not return from the Reform Club until midnight.'

Far from being reassured, Maggie's heart sank like a stone. Mr Fogg didn't sound like the sort of man who would be happy to discover an uninvited guest having tea in his house. Especially one with nowhere else to go.

'You rest and I will make un petit pique-nique. The best ideas come with a little food, yes?' Passepartout's stomach growled in reply. 'I will return tout de suite!'

Before Maggie could answer, he hurried out of the door and thumped down the stairs. Soon the clatter of plates and loud, tuneful humming echoed through the house.

Maggie slid into an armchair as her eyes politely investigated the little room. She counted three polished brass carriage clocks and one small grandfather clock sitting quietly in the corner. Their hands all pointed neatly to thirty-six minutes past seven, ticking together in perfect unison.

Counting down the seconds until Mr Fogg returns.

Passepartout barrelled back into the room and set down a tray laden with treats. He handed her a plate of bread and butter cut into neat triangles, thick slices of pink ham, a slather of sticky brown pickle and a delicious-looking jam tart.

‘Voilà!’ he said breathlessly. ‘Bon appétit!’

Maggie wanted to say that she couldn’t remember the last time she’d eaten, and it certainly hadn’t been a feast like this. But it was rude to talk with your mouth full, and she’d already crammed in a doorstep of bread and an entire slice of ham.

‘I had an idea in the kitchen.’ Passepartout handed her a cup wisping with steam. ‘Would you like to hear it?’

Maggie nodded eagerly; her mouth still full.

‘I think I know of a way that you could stay here, in Savile Row. If you wish to, of course,’ he added quickly.

Maggie choked her mouthful down. ‘Stay here with you and Mr Fogg?’

‘Oui!’ Passepartout’s eyes twinkled. What would be better for Monsieur Fogg than un valet?’ He wagged two fingers in front of her nose. ‘Two valets. Les deux!’

Maggie thought now was probably not the best time to ask what a valet was.

Passepartout fidgeted excitedly. ‘For the same money, Monsieur Fogg will have double the help! We just ask for a small bedroom and some time for your schoolwork. How can he possibly say no?’

All too easily, Maggie thought. But Passepartout beamed at her so brightly that it made something small and delicate flicker in her chest.

‘Do you really think I could be a valet?’ Maggie had never even met one before today, let alone knew what they were supposed to do.

Passepartout set down his cup. ‘Ma chère, you are the

daughter of Nellie Appleton. I am already sure you can do anything you set your mind to. We will valet all night until we can valet no more and when Monsieur Fogg returns, he will be astounded!’ He took a triumphant bite of his jam tart, sending a shower of crumbs on to the floor.

Maggie nodded. She *was* a fast learner, Maman always said so. She would watch everything Passepartout did, follow every instruction, anything to make sure she’d never have to go back to the workhouse again.

‘A toast!’ Passepartout grasped his cup. ‘To les valets!’ He bumped his cup against hers, slopping a little of the liquid on to his socks. ‘Santé!’

Maggie had just taken the first delicious gulp of sweet tea when she heard a horse whinnying in the street. A carriage clattered to a halt and a moment later, there came a scratching sound.

She froze, her cup in mid-air.

Passepartout heard it too. He became perfectly still, his head cocked to one side.

The sound came again, louder this time.

The unmistakable sound of a key turning in a lock.



*In Which Maggie
and Passepartout Receive
a Most Unexpected Arrival*

‘Passepartout?’

The voice was not loud, but Maggie and Passepartout jumped as if they’d heard a thunderclap. Passepartout stared at the nearest clock; it had just gone half past seven.

‘But it cannot be!’ Passepartout leaped off the bed. ‘The schedule, it does not change.’

But it had changed. The footsteps echoing in the hallway below told them so. Any minute now, those footsteps would start up the stairs.

Hide! Maggie’s mind bellowed. *Now!* She flung herself to the floor and tried to squeeze under the bed, but the gap was too small.

Passepartout grasped her hand and pulled her to her feet. Rushing to the wardrobe, he wrenched the door open. ‘Here,’ he whispered, helping her scramble in. ‘Do not be scared.’

The last thing Maggie saw was Passepartout’s frantic

face before he pushed the door closed, plunging her into darkness.

‘Passepartout?’ Mr Fogg’s voice came again.

Pressing her ear to the door, Maggie heard Passepartout’s breathless reply as he barrelled out of the room. ‘Oui, monsieur. J’arrive!’

‘I have called for you twice already.’

Maggie flinched at the sharpness in Mr Fogg’s voice. If he caught her hiding, he would surely fire Passepartout on the spot. Then Passepartout would have no job, no home, no way of helping anyone.

I have to get out and fast!

She gave the wardrobe door a gentle nudge. To her relief, it inched open without a sound. If Mr Fogg was distracted, even for a second, she’d have a chance to slip away. She would leave a note and wait outside in the shadows until Passepartout joined her.

‘Forgive me, monsieur.’ Maggie heard Passepartout’s rattled reply. ‘The schedule says you attend the Reform Club every night until –’

‘The schedule has changed,’ Mr Fogg replied flatly. ‘I require a carriage to Charing Cross in time to make the last train to Dover.’

‘Dover, monsieur?’

‘Correct.’

‘Tonight?’

‘That’s what I said.’

Maggie slid out of the wardrobe and tiptoed to the door. Peering through the gap, she saw Passepartout

standing in the doorway to Mr Fogg's quarters, scratching his head.

'And you would you like me to . . . prepare you a bag?' he ventured.

'Quickly, please. The train leaves at quarter to nine.'

Maggie glanced back at the clock. Mr Fogg would be gone within the hour. *All the way to Dover!*

Peeking out the door, she saw a slender hand jut out from Mr Fogg's doorway holding two travelling bags. Gold patterns swirled across the thick red fabric and a large bronze clasp kept them firmly shut.

'Pack only the essentials,' Mr Fogg instructed, handing them to Passepartout. 'The bare minimum, please.'

'How . . . long will you be staying in Dover, monsieur?'

'I am not staying in Dover. I will be travelling around the world.'

Maggie heard the bags thump to the floor. She inched out a little further. Passepartout was staring at Mr Fogg, his mouth hung open like a hooked fish. When he managed to speak, his voice was barely a whisper.

'Around the . . .' he bent down and snatched up the bags, 'world, monsieur?'

Maggie was certain she'd misheard. She leaned as far as she dared into the hallway, desperate not to miss a word.

'That is correct,' Mr Fogg replied. 'And I shall complete the journey in eighty days.'

Eighty days? Maggie couldn't believe her ears. She remembered her geography lessons with Maman; the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* spread out in front of them,

tracing their fingers across continents and oceans. There were so many places to explore, so many cities to visit. *Eighty days isn't nearly enough time.*

'M-monsieur,' Passepartout spluttered. 'Eighty days? C'est impossible!'

Eighty days! Maggie's mind whirled as she tried to count in her head. That meant Mr Fogg wouldn't return until . . . nearly Christmas!

There would definitely be enough time for her to learn to be a valet. When he returned, Mr Fogg was certain to say yes to two valets when he saw how useful she had been!

'I assure you it is quite possible, Passepartout,' came Mr Fogg's reply. 'And it is *our* journey. You will be coming with me.'

All the air suddenly vanished from Maggie's lungs. Without Passepartout, there was nowhere else to go, no one else to help.

They'll find me. They'll drag me back to that terrible warehouse and I'll never escape.

The floor beneath her felt as though it had dropped away. Maggie tried to catch herself, but it was no use. Pitching forward, she tripped over her feet and staggered head first into the hallway.

A second later, she found herself staring into the solemn, unblinking face of Mr Fogg.

'Passepartout,' he said coolly. 'Would you care to tell me why there is an unannounced visitor in my house?'

Maggie tried not to look away from the perfectly

polished gentleman with sea-green eyes who was surveying her from head to toe.

‘Monsieur, I can explain,’ Passepartout spluttered. ‘It is a little complicated.’

‘We do not have time for complicated.’ Mr Fogg’s gaze flicked towards the nearest clock. ‘Just the facts, if you please.’

Passepartout began to speak very fast. ‘This afternoon after you left, Maggie came to find me. She had a letter . . . Well, non, she did not have it, but she once had it but now it is gone. The letter was not from her but from her maman who, I am very sad to . . .’ He took a deep, shuddering breath. ‘She –’

‘Maman told me to find Monsieur Passepartout,’ Maggie interrupted, not wanting him to say the words. ‘I ran away from the workhouse to find him at Green Street but –’

‘The workhouse?’ Mr Fogg interrupted.

Passepartout let out a gasp. ‘Y-you were taken to that terrible place?’ he stammered.

Mr Fogg turned back to Passepartout. ‘And your plan was what exactly? To hide her in my house and hope I would not notice?’

Passepartout eyes widened. ‘Non, monsieur! We came just to rest. I did not expect you until tonight but then you returned suddenly and . . . here we are.’

‘Indeed. Here *you* are.’ Mr Fogg pulled out his pocket watch. ‘We must leave on the quarter to nine train to make the steamer to Calais. Please go and pack our things.’

‘B-but . . .’ Passepartout’s eyes darted between Mr Fogg

and Maggie. ‘Monsieur, I cannot leave. She has nowhere else to go.’

‘I am very sorry to hear it,’ Mr Fogg said quietly. ‘But we really must leave at once.’

Passepartout did not move. ‘My apologies, monsieur. But I must stay,’ he said firmly. ‘If not, Maggie will be sent back to the workhouse. I cannot allow that to happen.’

Mr Fogg’s eyes flitted again to the clock, his expression darkening. ‘I cannot secure another valet at this hour,’ he said sharply. ‘You have put me in a most difficult –’

‘I could come with you,’ Maggie blurted, before she had time to think. ‘I-I could help, on your journey. Two valets are better than one.’ She nodded at Passepartout who stared blankly back at her.

‘Ah, oui, les deux valets,’ he said, catching on. ‘It will be a difficult journey, monsieur. As we used to say when I was a sailor, all hands on deck, non?’ He forced a smile.

‘I could . . . carry your bags.’ Maggie grasped one of the carpetbags from the floor and lifted it high in the air. ‘I can do chores and run errands. You wouldn’t have to pay me a penny.’

‘Oui,’ Passepartout added quickly. ‘We will share my wage between us.’

Mr Fogg stared at them both, but did not speak.

‘Please, Mr Fogg,’ Maggie whispered. ‘Without Monsieur Passepartout . . . I have no one.’

The corridor became very still. The only sound came from Passepartout who took short, sharp breaths. Maggie glanced at Mr Fogg’s elegant grey suit and his shoes that

shone like a polished mirror. He was just like the gentlemen Maman always tried to avoid.

Sometimes hearts harden so completely, they cannot be helped.

Maggie gritted her teeth and waited for him to say no. She just hoped he didn't call for a policeman to haul her away. *If he tries, I'll be out of the door before he can even –*

'Answer me truthfully.' Mr Fogg fixed her with a stare. 'Have you travelled before? Are you certain you have the stamina for a journey of this magnitude?'

Maggie tried to think fast. In truth she'd only ever been as far as the seaside a long time ago. *But all that matters is that he hasn't said no.*

'Yes, sir, very certain,' she blurted, answering the second question rather than the first. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Passepartout nodding eagerly.

'And what is your name, young lady?' he asked crisply.

'Magnolia.' She did not dare to blink. 'But everyone calls me Maggie, unless I'm in trouble.'

Mr Fogg's eyebrows gave the slightest twitch. 'Very well, Magnolia. As my new valet refuses to leave without you –' he shot Passepartout a sharp look – 'it appears I am left with no choice. You will make yourself useful and do as you are asked. You can start by packing one bag that you will share between you. We leave at precisely eight o'clock.'

With that, Mr Fogg turned on his heel and disappeared down the stairs.