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CHOC SHOCK



SASUAHNN MAFCELARN



FRO ADD



Chapter • 1

Emma Jacks adored animals. She loved them more than chocolate and that was really saying something. She had a dog, a very fluffy and very cute husky puppy called Pip, and an equally cute but not as fluffy jet-black kitten called Inky. Emma loved Pip and Inky, even though they didn't always love each other.

She did think, however, that there could be a lot more animals in the Jacks family. Although she agreed that a horse was probably unrealistic, she thought that there could be bunnies, budgies, guinea

pigs, fish, even frogs...Emma's list of possible pets was long but her mum's answer was short: no more animals. Emma reminded her mum that when *she* was a little girl she had one dog, five cats, three budgies, two terrapins, eight mice, a dove (which, her mum noted, only stayed while its wing was getting better) and, for a short while, two lambs. Emma's mum said that wasn't the point. Emma rather thought it was.

While she was working on her long-term master plan of persuading her mum to allow her to have more pets, Emma spent a lot of time reading about animals. She read about how to care for them and how to help animals both at home and all over the world. She and her friends Isi, Hannah and Elle had all become junior supporters of the local animal shelter and were planning to do dog-walking there when they were a little bit older.

One day all the girls were over at Emma's house. They had taken Pip to the park and had been climbing trees and running everywhere. They were exhausted but not as exhausted as the little husky,

who was now fast asleep on the sofa.

While the girls were having a cool drink, Emma's mum read them an article from the local paper. There had been a fire in the kitchen at the animal shelter. Thankfully, none of the animals had been hurt but the offices were destroyed. The director of the shelter said that it might have to close if they couldn't raise enough money for the repairs.

'This is awful!' exclaimed Emma. 'We have to help. We can't let the shelter close.'

'What would happen to all the animals?' asked Elle, looking worried. 'We have to do something.'

'Maybe we can do something at school?' proposed Hannah. Hannah could always be counted on to have sensible suggestions.

'That is a fantastic idea!' shouted Isi. Isi could always be counted on to be very enthusiastic. 'And we have a Community Service meeting this week.'

Emma and Isi were on the school Community Service committee together. The committee helped plan how the school could raise money to help others. Every class chose two students each year. Emma

and Isi were so proud when they were picked—and thrilled that they were picked together. Each term, the committee chose a new project. *Maybe this term it could be saving the animal shelter?* thought Emma. She hoped so.

Emma liked saving things and she had saved quite a lot already. At least, as Special Agent EJ12 she had.



Emma Jacks, codename EJ12, was a special agent in the under-twelve code-cracking division of the **SHINE** agency. **SHINE** was a secret, international spy agency that stopped evil deeds being done, particularly evil deeds carried out by the **SHADOW** agency. **SHADOW** liked making trouble and making money, ideally both at the same time. **SHADOW** agents were very interested in money and didn't seem to mind how they got it. Or what got damaged when they did. They didn't mind cutting down rainforests if it meant they could build a new spy

satellite dish or melting the polar ice cap if they could sell water. Luckily, there were **SHINE** agents to stop them, agents like EJ12.

SHADOW communicated with its evil agents via secret messages. **SHINE** used its agents and clever inventions to intercept those secret messages and then stop the evil plan. **SHADOW** could send messages in nearly everything: texts, emails, letters, even songs. **SHINE** had to be forever on the lookout.

There was also another problem. **SHADOW's** messages were often in code and that meant **SHINE** needed to be able to decode them. That was where the code-cracking agents came in. **SHINE** didn't mind if some of their agents were quite young. They had a motto (actually they had lots of mottoes, they liked mottoes)—'Judge the agent not the age'. They thought their younger agents often gave the grown-ups a real run for their money. Indeed, some of the younger agents, EJ12 included, were their top performers, leading the **SHINE** Shining Stars Spy of the Year competition.

When she was recruited, EJ12 wasn't completely convinced that **SHINE** had made the right decision. But **SHINE** had been right. EJ had stopped lots of *SHADOW* plans. Once she had saved a rainforest, another time she had saved the **SHINE** energy plant. She had also saved baby penguins that were separated from their parents and saved a team of huskies (which is how Pip came to be with Emma). Yes, EJ12 liked saving things and she was good at it.

And now there was the animal shelter, something to save in everyday life. Would she be able to do it as plain, non-secret agent Emma Jacks? She hoped so.

Chapter • 2

It was Thursday morning at school and Emma and Isi were sure the clock in their classroom was broken, possibly even going backwards. It hardly seemed to be moving at all and they were desperate for the lunch bell to ring. The Community Service meeting was at lunchtime and they couldn't wait to talk to everyone about the animal shelter.

BWAAAAAAAAHH!

The lunch bell, at last!

The girls grabbed their lunch boxes and rushed towards the library where the meeting was being

held. Isi almost ran into Nema on her way. Nema had once been a good friend of Emma's. They had been to Kinder together and spent lots of time together having fun. But over the last year, Nema had changed. She didn't like doing the stuff she used to like doing. All she seemed to want to do now was flick her hair, a lot, and make up dance routines. And be mean to most people, most of the time. Emma felt sad about that sometimes, but often she just felt cross, especially when Nema was mean to Emma's friends. Emma had learnt to stand up to Nema but sometimes it was better to just ignore her. Today was going to be one of those times.

'Hey watch it Dizzy, you nearly knocked me over!' said Nema.

'Oh sorry, Nema,' panted Isi, ignoring the fact that Nema had used her nickname in an unfriendly way. 'We're just running to the Community Service meeting.'

'It's a community service having you two at the meeting,' she said, laughing in her mean, fake laugh.

Emma ignored her. She knew Nema actually really

wanted to be on the committee. The thing was—and everyone realised—that Nema thought the vote was a popularity competition and that's why she wanted to win it. It wasn't though and she didn't. And when Nema didn't get something, well, she would decide that that something wasn't any good anyway and make sure everybody knew it.

Emma and Isi didn't have time for any of that today. They ignored Nema and took off again for the library, where the meeting was just starting. Ms Tenga, who was Emma and Isi's class teacher, also helped the Community Service committee. She smiled as two of her most enthusiastic members ran in.

As people ate their lunches, they talked about what projects they might do that term but when Emma and Isi began telling them about the animal shelter, everyone wanted to talk about that. Everyone wanted to help.

'Okay, it seems we know *who* we want to help,' said Ms Tenga, 'so let's talk about *how* we'll do it.'

'People could bring a gold coin,' suggested Lily.

‘We could also have class stalls,’ said Kate, one of the older girls. ‘It would be like a mini fair.’

‘Yes! We could cook things and then sell them!’ exclaimed Isi. ‘How much fun would that be!’

‘Perhaps we should have a theme,’ suggested Ms Tenga.

‘Oh, I know!’ said Emma, nearly shouting with excitement. ‘Chocolate!’

‘Chocolate what, Emma?’ asked Ms Tenga.

‘Chocolate everything!’ replied Emma. ‘We could have a Chocolate Lovers’ Day!’

It was unanimous. After all, who doesn’t love chocolate? Every class had to make something, anything at all, as long as it contained chocolate.

When Emma and Isi went back to their class after lunch and told them about Chocolate Lover’s Day, everyone was excited. The class decided to make cupcakes, chocolate cupcakes.

Isi, being Isi, was perhaps the most excited. ‘How good is this, Em?’ she cried. ‘Helping animals and eating chocolate! Does it get any better?’ Before Emma could answer, Isi started talking again.

‘Hold on, it *can* get better!’ Isi cried. ‘Let’s make the cupcakes together! I’ll ask my mum if you can come for a sleepover so we can practise this weekend. See—helping animals, eating chocolate *and* having a sleepover!’

Emma smiled at her slightly mad friend. She had to agree with her.



Early the next Saturday at Isi’s house, Isi and Emma were in their pyjamas, trying to find a good cupcake recipe.

‘Imagine if we could make this one,’ said Isi. She was looking in a magazine at an ad for Madame Ombre’s Chocolate Cake Sensations shop. Madame Ombre was a celebrity chef and famous chocolate baker, known all around the world for her signature cake, the Triple Chocolate Ripple and Choc-chip Mousse Cupcake. It was the ultimate chocolate cupcake. It started with dark, dark chocolate at the base working to a milk chocolate centre and then a

white chocolate peak. Each layer had chocolate ripple mixed through it and, if all this was not enough, the centre of the cupcake was hollowed out and then filled with chocolate mousse. As a final touch on an already ridiculously chocolatey cake, there was chocolate icing with three wedges of chocolate—one dark, one milk and one white—arranged on the top.

‘Imagine how much money we could raise if we made these,’ said Isi.

‘You don’t think they might be a little bit complicated for us?’ said Emma, who also wondered if it would be wrong to have a poster of a cupcake on your wall. ‘And anyway, the recipe is top-secret. Madame Ombre has never written it down or told it to anyone.’

Isi giggled. ‘We could try making it up.’

‘Maybe,’ said Emma, still flicking through pages in way that she hoped said ‘maybe not at all’.

‘Knock, knock,’ said Isi randomly.

‘Huh?’ said Emma. ‘Oh, I get it. Who’s there?’

‘Imogen,’ replied Isi.

‘Imogen who?’

‘Imogen a life without chocolate!’ shrieked Isi.

Emma laughed then saw something in the cookbook. ‘Hey, how about this one, Is. “Really Simple Double-choc Cupcakes”’.

‘That sounds more like us,’ said Isi. ‘I know! We could decorate the cupcakes to look like cats and dogs, and use smarties for eyes and icing to make whiskers!’

The fact that neither Isi nor Emma had made cupcakes before didn’t worry her in the slightest. In fact, Isi saw that as an exciting challenge rather than a problem. Emma loved the way her friend could do that and was a little bit jealous. Emma seemed better at thinking about the things that could go wrong, so much so that sometimes she could convince herself not to do something at all. In fact, she was just starting to think that whiskers might be rather tricky when her friend interrupted her thoughts.

‘What are we waiting for?’ said Isi with her head halfway into one of the kitchen cupboards. ‘I know

there's a bowl here somewhere.'

The girls got out the ingredients and got stuck into cooking. The recipe may have been called really simple but they had a few problems. Isi's mum looked less and less excited about the whole project as more and more sugar, flour and chocolate ended up on the girls, the kitchen bench, the floor, even on Isi's younger brother's nappy. Some mixture, however, had stayed in the bowl and was ready to go into the cupcake pans. Or was it?

'Hey Is,' said Emma, checking the recipe. 'It says to beat the mixture until smooth.'

'Hmm,' said Isi, spooning through the mixture a bit.

'What does "hmm" mean?' asked Emma looking up from the book, a little worried.

'It means "hmm, our mixture isn't very smooth",' replied Isi, giggling.

'Isi, that's not funny,' said Emma a little too crossly. 'We might have ruined the whole thing.'

'Lighten up, Em!' said Isi. 'A few lumps will be fine. Don't stress. We can call them Chocolate Surprise

Cakes with surprise lumps of chocolate in every one!'

'Hmm,' said Emma but her hmm was grumpier than Isi's had been.

Emma was good at lots of things but 'winging it', going with the flow and seeing what happened, wasn't one of them. She liked things to be planned; she liked things to turn out as they were supposed to turn out. Like maths. Twelve times ten would always be 120, and 354 plus 122 would always be 476. That was why she liked numbers so much and it was why she didn't like unexpected things, things like a cupcake mixture that was supposed to be smooth having lumps in it.

'Oh no, now these look really weird!' cried Emma as she spooned some mixture in the cupcake pans.

'Well maybe a little, Em, but they'll taste yum and we've had fun doing it,' said Isi, licking her chocolatey fingers. 'Don't beat yourself up. Hey do you get it: beat yourself up, beating the mixture! I'm a riot!'

Emma smiled at her friend's bad joke and stopped thinking about the lumpy cupcakes. 'I get it Isi, I get it!'

'Well, anyway, It's not worth getting upset over, like it's something really important,' Isi went on. 'We don't have to decorate them as cats and dogs.'

Isi is right, thought Em, *some things are more important than others*. And she knew that her friend knew what she was talking about. Isi's rabbit had died a few months before and *that* was something to get upset over. Back then Isi hadn't been her normal bouncy self for a while. Now Emma felt silly as well as cross about the cupcakes. Luckily her friend knew a quick way to cheer her up.

'Come on, let's get Mum to help us put these in the oven. Then we can lick the bowl and watch some TV while they cook.'

Licking the bowl. That lightened Emma's mood. A lot.

Little did she know that Isi and her cupcakes weren't the only thing heating up. Evil agency **SHADOW** was also cooking up something, something a lot worse than a few lumpy chocolate cupcakes.

Chapter • 3

'And now, a special word from Madame Ombre...'

The girls had changed out of their pyjamas and were watching TV when an ad came on for Madame Ombre's hugely popular cooking competition show, 'Choc Chef'. Contestants on the show would come to Madame Ombre's bakery and compete for the title of Choc Chef.

'*Bonjour* friends of *chocolat*, as we say in France,' said Madame Ombre, a tall, skinny and slightly cross-looking woman. Emma wondered how you could possibly look cross when you baked chocolate cakes