



CHAPTER 32

**SILVER'S
SECRET**

Daniel had not visited the room of Secrets since the night he first scribbled it into the book. He feared that it might have crumbled away, and he was relieved to find it still standing. Most of the snow globes were still empty, but there were a few, scattered here and there, that had been filled by customers. Their secrets lay inside the glass domes: a single white flower, a torn love heart, a clockwork bird, waiting like lost treasures.

"So every one of these is a secret?" said Ellie, plucking a globe from the column and stuffing it straight back when she realised that it contained a miniature skull.

Daniel began to climb the steps, winding up and

around the column, searching the secrets with his eyes.

"Yup," he said.

"So what are we looking for?"

"I don't know exactly. I'm hoping I'll know it when I see it." He had forgotten just how many snow globes there were; thousands of them twinkled in the dim light. His eyes scanned every one of the glass spheres as he wound up the steps, careful not to miss anything.

And then, there it was, nestled among hundreds of empty globes. When Daniel's eyes found it he knew that it was right. He reached up and gently lifted the secret from its place, then carried it back down the steps. He held it out in an open palm.

"We're looking for this," he said. "It belongs to Mr Silver." He held the globe up. "You saw the film in the Memorium. Silver doesn't want anyone to know what happened the night he went after Sharpe. I'll bet that's the secret he left in this globe."

Daniel raised the globe above his head, and brought his hand down as hard as he could, throwing the glass orb to the floor, where it bounced and rolled away. He went after it, and picked it up, examining every millimetre of the glass.

"Not even a scratch," he said. He tried throwing Mr Silver's secret against the walls. He stamped on the thin glass. He even tried smashing two secrets

together. Nothing worked. The globe remained whole. Daniel yelled in frustration and tossed the secret away.

"Daniel, stop!" said Ellie, stepping in front of him before he could try to break anything else. "Just stop."

Daniel's shoulders slumped. He looked around the room.

"I'm sorry. I just thought there was a chance, with the Emporium losing its power, that the secrets might not be safe any more. That the snow globes would be weak." He sat down, still out of breath. "We need to find out what happened that night, Ellie. It's the key to everything. I feel it."

Ellie's grey eyes suddenly opened wide. "Of course!"

"Of course what?" said Daniel.

"We've totally missed something," said Ellie. "We've been thinking about Papa's secret all wrong, approaching it as if he's the only one who knows what happened. But he's not, is he? There were two people involved."

Daniel stared up at her, feeling a wide smile spreading across his face. She was right: whatever Mr Silver was hiding, Vindictus Sharpe knew about it too – and that meant they could use Sharpe's memories to unlock the mystery.

"You know what?" he said. "I was wrong earlier. You are a genius."

"I know," said Ellie. "One problem though: we need a hair from Sharpe's head to make this work."

Daniel had to admit, this was a sticking point. It wasn't as if Sharpe would pluck a hair from his own head and hand it over with a smile.

"We'll figure it out," he said, and they headed for the door. "By the way, I've been meaning to ask: in the Memorium, when we watched Mr Silver's past, it showed a baby being dropped off on the doorstep of the Emporium. Was that ... that wasn't..."

"Me?" said Ellie. "Of course it was."

Daniel paused, confused. "But ... all that seemed to happen a long time ago."

Ellie nodded. She smiled, although it was not a happy smile.

"You know the birthday ball Papa threw for me – the one celebrating my twelfth birthday?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, that was the 121st time I've turned twelve."

Daniel blinked.

"You've been here that long?"

"I have."

"And you've never ... there's never been ... you haven't got any older? Not even a single day?"

"Papa let me grow up just enough that I wouldn't be under his feet all the time. But he didn't want me to go out into the world on my own. Now we know why. As long as I was in the Emporium he could protect me from Sharpe. So he put the shop in its own little bubble, with its own rules, its own time,

totally separate from the world outside. And that's why I've been the same age for so long. People don't age here."

"That means ... me too?" said Daniel. "If I stay here I'll never get any older?"

"Time only passes normally when you go outside," said Ellie. "It'll take you ages to grow up."

"I can't believe Mr Silver didn't tell me!" said Daniel. "I mean, he mentioned that he hadn't aged for a long time but ... He should have told me!"

Ellie frowned. "Would it have changed your mind? Would you have come to work here if you'd known?"

"If I'd known I'd turn into Peter Pan?" said Daniel. "The boy who never grew up? I don't know. Maybe."

A deep growl reverberated around the place, like the rumbling belly of a hungry giant. The floor trembled, and the snow globes rattled in their places. Several secrets fell from the column. Daniel wondered how many Wonders had just disappeared forever.

Together they scurried away, leaving the door to the room of Secrets to click quietly shut.

Chapter 32 Silver's Secret

1. A deep growl reverberated around the place. What do you think 'reverberated' means?
2. How do you think they could get a hair from Sharpe's head?
3. Do you think Ellie enjoys not growing older? Why?
4. Do you think Daniel would have stayed at the Emporium if he knew he wouldn't get any older? Why?
5. The next chapter is titled 'Splitting Hairs'. Predict what may happen in the next chapter.
6. Explain why the author gave this chapter the title 'Silver's Secret'.
7. What was Daniel looking for in the secrets room?
8. Why couldn't Daniel find out what Silver's secret was?
9. Why did they need a hair from Sharpe's head?
10. How many times has Ellie turned twelve? Where does time pass?
11. Summarise this chapter in no more than two sentences.