

Gadget Girl

Trouble in the Tropics

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Chapter 1

Dream Island

“It’s been a long, hard year,” Mum declared over breakfast one wet, grey morning. “We need a holiday.”

“We certainly do!” said Dad.

Alexandra James, known as Alex to her family and friends, looked up from her cereal.

“Where will we go?” she asked, hoping that Mum wasn’t going to say Motomoto Caravan Park, their usual destination. Despite the fact that her parents ran a very successful business, called Gumshoe Gadgets, they never seemed to take exciting holidays.

“What about a tropical island resort?” said Mum, smiling.

Alex could not believe her ears. “A tropical island resort!” she squealed. “Yes, please.”

Two weeks later, Alex was sitting on a deckchair beside the pool at Dream Island Resort, applying sunscreen to her shoulders and staring out towards the ocean. Her attention had been captured by a perfect cone-shaped island that seemed to almost float on the sparkling turquoise water.

“Isn’t this just wonderful?” said Mum, distracting Alex from the view. Mum took a sip of her green super-juice and added, “You know, I haven’t felt so relaxed in –”

But Mum’s words were cut off by the buzzing of her phone. She looked down at the number on the screen and frowned.

“Mum!” said Alex in her best indignant voice. “You said you were going to leave the phone in our room.”

“I thought your dad might need to contact me,” responded Mum.

Alex rolled her eyes. Dad had gone on a snorkelling day trip. It wasn’t likely he would be using his phone.



An anxious look crossed Mum's face. "But I will have to take this call," she continued. "It's the director."

The director that Mum was referring to was Director Jones, the head of NICE, the National Institute for Counter-Espionage. NICE was a government spy agency. Alex's parents, who were former spies and inventors of incredible gadgets and amazing formulas, were sometimes called on by the agency to do freelance work.

Alex held her breath as Mum answered the call. She hoped this wasn't going to mean what she thought it was going to mean.

"Yes. Yes. Mmmm. Really? Wow! Oh, no! All right. Yes. Yes," were the only words that came out of Mum's mouth, until the very end of the call when she said, "Send me the details."

Mum glanced remorsefully at Alex. She didn't need to say a word for Alex to know that their perfect tropical island holiday was about to come to an abrupt end.

As they took their towels and books from the deckchairs, Alex glanced out to sea again. A low mist had settled on the horizon and the cone-shaped island could barely be seen. *Just like this holiday*, she thought grumpily. *Beautiful one minute, covered in grey clouds the next.*

When they got back to their room, Mum called Dad. "You need to come back straightaway. We have some NICE work to do. You know, NICE, not nice."

When Mum ended the call, Alex asked, "Does this mean we have to go home now?"

Mum shook her head. "Well, yes and no."

Alex, puzzled, wondered how they could be here and at home at the same time. Maybe her parents had been working on some new super-invention? Perhaps it was a being-in-two-places-at-once device. That could be handy.

"Um, what I mean is," said Mum, "we will have to leave the resort, but we won't be going home."

Chapter 2

NICE Work

Just then, Dad burst through the door. “I’m back!” he cried.

“You were quick!” said Alex.

“I was already on my way when I got your mum’s message. The snorkelling trip didn’t turn out so well. I took my turbo-charged flippers, but they were too fast and I kept whizzing past all the underwater sights and scaring the fish. It was rather embarrassing, actually.” Dad let out a sigh. “Anyway, what’s with this NICE business?”

“There’s trouble in the tropics, and Director Jones needs our help,” said Mum. “A container ship carrying exertainium, a rare and precious substance that is essential to almost all our cutting-edge technology, has been hijacked on the sea not far from where we are now. NICE is pretty sure the Ecks Gang is behind it. As you know, it is one of the Top Ten Most Wanted crime gangs.” Mum’s voice rose in excitement. “Imagine, we have a chance to stop them.”



“But how can we do that?” asked Dad uncertainly. “I’ve only brought holiday-related tech with me, like my super-flippers and that beach umbrella that folds down into a pen.”

“Well, as luck would have it,” Mum replied with a smile, “NICE has its super-yacht not too far away, which can sail here in the next few hours and pick us up. It has all the latest technology on board, incredible communications and tracking abilities, and a lab. We’ll have everything at our fingertips. It will be almost as good as working from our place.”

“Hmm,” said Dad, his eyes lighting up. “Maybe even better.”

It took only a couple of hours for the NICE super-yacht to reach their resort on Dream Island.

“Wow!” said Alex, watching as it sailed in to dock. “It’s enormous.”

A man dressed in a naval uniform came down the gangway to greet them. He introduced himself as Captain Collenz.

“We have a pool, a games room, a library and a cinema here, too, so you won’t get bored while your parents are working,” he told Alex as they walked onto the ship.