



Chapter 1: The Last Night

The crowds outside London's Royal Albert Hall were very noisy. People were shouting, laughing and opening bottles of champagne. Others were waving flags and singing either "*Rule Britannia*" or "*God Save the Queen*". Some were sitting or lying on the grass, eating sandwiches and *staring at* the giant screen. Hudson, a Scotland Yard detective inspector, gave a deep *sigh of relief* and *headed north*. The Last Night of the Proms was over and finished for another year. Thank God! It was a strange kind of ritual that the British celebrated each year in the summer. For several weeks, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, among many other national and international orchestras, had played all kinds of music, mostly classical. Sometimes, the audiences at the concerts were relatively small, but the last concert was always a major event. People stood, sat and even slept in a *queue* for days, just to get tickets for the Last Night.

The Promenade Concerts (Proms) had become a British institution. In 1895, Sir Henry Wood, the English *conductor*, had had a brilliant idea. He wanted to make ordinary people more interested in classical music and so he organized a season of concerts for the "Promenaders", for Londoners who took a walk through Hyde Park after a day of hard work. Over the years, the Promenade Concerts became more and more popular. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to get tickets for the last concert. That's why the organizers *erect* a giant screen in Hyde Park for all the fans without tickets. In fact, the Last Night of the Proms is almost like a football match, a World Cup game with a public viewing area.

Hudson walked towards the bridge over the Serpentine, the large lake in the middle of the park. He felt proud, *grateful* and *relieved*. Proud, because he was part of a community that was essentially British. *Grateful*, because he did not have to pay for the ticket. His



boss at Scotland Yard, Sir Reginald, received four free tickets every year and was quite pleased to *distribute* them among his staff. Also, Hudson was *relieved*, because nobody had got too drunk and nobody had placed a terrorist bomb nearby. In half an hour, he would be back at home in Baker Street, drinking a glass of fine *port* and telling his housekeeper, Miss Paddington, how the first violinist had *made a fool of himself* during the second *movement* of Beethoven's 5th.

The weather was not too good and Hudson was glad that he had brought an umbrella. When he reached Bayswater Road, he *hailed* a taxi and, five minutes later, he was standing in front of his house, trying to find the key to the front door. But Miss Paddington was already waiting for him.

"James! Come in and tell me all about it! Did they really wave those huge flags? I saw bits of it on TV. Go into the living room and I'll bring you a glass of *port*."

Hudson, as always, had no choice. He was the most successful detective at Scotland Yard, but at home he was just James, totally under the control of Miss Paddington. She cleaned the rooms, she cooked the meals and she made the beds. In this house in Baker Street, Miss Paddington, quite simply, *ruled the roost*. Hudson hung up his coat and sat down in his armchair.

"Bring a bottle of *port*, Miss Paddington. If I tell you everything, it might take a bit longer. Unfortunately, it's always the same procedure – it's like a *fancy dress party* gone mad. They behave like fools, throw balloons up in the air, make silly noises – you know. And then, when everything's finished, Hyde Park is like a *cemetery*. Deadly quiet."

"But what about all those people, young children, as well? What were they doing? I'll get the *port* and then, you must tell me more!" Hudson sank back in his favourite armchair and closed his eyes. He *desperately* wanted to go to bed. It had been a long week. But Miss



Paddington wanted her report and Hudson was good at giving reports. It was part of his job.

After midnight, Hyde Park was quiet. Cars were still driving along the Ring, one of the main roads through the park, but the crowds had disappeared. The Serpentine shimmered in the light of the moon. The rain had stopped and there was no wind. Lancaster Walk was deserted. Standing there, you could hear the distant roar of traffic from Bayswater Road and Knightsbridge. But Daphne was not standing and she heard nothing. Daphne would never hear anything ever again. Daphne was dead. The leaves *rustled* gently; under the trees and bushes one or two flies were *buzzing*. They knew that a *corpse* was lying there; very *still*, very dead and not quite cold yet.

When Miss Paddington returned with the *port*, Hudson continued... “... and then the first violin *sneezed*, right in the middle of the second *movement* of Beethoven’s 5th. The *conductor* ignored it, but then the poor *fellow* started to *sneeze* again. Most unfortunate; obviously an attack of *hay fever*. The crowd standing right in front of the orchestra began to laugh and then began to sing that old children’s song – you know: ‘Ring-a-Ring o’Roses, a-tishoo!, a-tishoo!, we all fall down’. The *conductor* stopped the music, gave the first violin a large, red handkerchief and then asked him to leave the stage. The audience laughed and clapped, but finally everybody was quiet when the *conductor* tapped his *baton*. ‘Da-da-da-doom, da-da-da-doom’ – and then we were back at the beginning.”

Miss Paddington smiled.

“The poor dear. He must have felt simply terrible. I hope he hasn’t shot himself or jumped into the Serpentine. I can just see tomorrow’s headlines – ‘FIRST VIOLIN COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER SNEEZING ATTACK’.”



Hudson yawned and *heaved* himself out of his armchair.

“Anyway, Miss Paddington – that’s the end of my report. Tomorrow’s Sunday – your day off. Going anywhere special?”

“Nothing special, James. Only my sister, so I’ll be back late.”

“Fine. I have to be in the office early on Monday morning to write more reports, including the one about that robbery in Bond Street. The Bulldog’s been waiting several days for it and I hate to *disappoint* him. You know what he’s like.”

Miss Paddington smiled again. “Yes, only too well. Sir Reginald really does look like a bulldog. Go on, James, you run along upstairs to bed. How would you like your breakfast eggs on Monday?”

But Hudson did not even hear the question. He was already out of the room and halfway up the stairs.

On Monday morning, Miss Paddington marched into the dining room as Hudson was about to crack his second boiled egg. Triumphantly, she placed the paper on the table and stood in front of him, arms folded. Hudson looked from the egg to the paper, to Miss Paddington and back to the egg. Then, he sipped some tea.

“They’re a bit overdone this morning, Miss Paddington. About sixty-five seconds too long, in my opinion. But it doesn’t matter – *not in the slightest*.”

“Yes – and you know why, James? Look at the paper!”

Whenever Miss Paddington stood like that, her arms folded and her face very red, Hudson knew that he must *obey*. He looked at the headlines and almost *choked on* his tea.

“A body in Hyde Park? Discovered early in the morning by a park attendant. They must be joking!”

“No, they aren’t! Read the report, James! An unidentified body was found near Lancaster Walk. I told you! It must be the first violin! Obviously, he *was* so *ashamed* that he waited until the concert



Exercises

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Exercise 1: Listen and repeat.

Exercise 2: Odd one out.

Exercise 3: Spelling.

Exercise 4: True or false?

Exercise 5: Asking questions.

Exercise 6: Listen and write.

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Exercise 7: Negative form.

Exercise 8: Reading comprehension.

Exercise 9: Fill in the right word.

The park attendant had informed the police _____.

The woman was middle-aged and her body had not yet been identified. It seemed that she had been strangled and, so far, the police had no further _____ and no further evidence. The rather expensive handbag they had found nearby was _____. Perhaps it was a mugging that had gone _____.

Exercise 10: Prepositions.

Exercise 11: Listen and repeat.