

Unsolved

Prolouge

"I'm afraid it's true." Officer Aspen Greene confirmed.

Head Officer Julian Drake sighed. The whole affair had been too much.

"Well then, what are we to do? You are sure you are resigning? I know you will be an officer, but you were a good detective. Officer Greene, you have made it clear that there is no one left to trust, and therefore no one to solve this case." He said.

Aspen smiled. "That, sir, you may leave to me. I know exactly what to do." He replied.

Officer Drake wasn't very suspicious, only intrigued. After all, Aspen had solved most of the cases single handedly(though he should have been suspicious of *that*).

The case with the missing airplane parts? Solved. Henry Jackson was going to end his prison sentence next month.

The stolen donation money? Retrieved. Kole Erickson had another year.

Not to mention the countless shoplifters and addicts he had brought in.

Officer Drake dismissed Aspen, and he leaned back in his chair and thought for a while. Then he got up abruptly, walked to the door, turned off the light, and exited.

The Second Headline

There were two headlines that morning. The first one: 'SUNSET CRYSTAL STOLEN, MANY OFFICERS SUSPECTED '

The second one? 'RENOWNED OFFICER ASPEN GREENE OFFERS A CHANCE FOR ASPIRING YOUNG DETECTIVES TO SOLVE NEWEST CASE'.

It was hard to say which one was met with more surprise and enthusiasm.

But for the Berek family, it was quite clear.

"I always knew that Sunset Crystal meant trouble! A good piece of history, all the children know the story. But even when Smithsonian-for goodness sakes, Smithsonian!- asked specifically for it, they put it in a library!" Mr. Berek said over breakfast.

"And those officers were anyways always shifty!" Mrs. Berek added.

That was all they had to say about the first headline.

"But that's a new take, I mean, Officer Greene has always solved the cases himself. Anyway, Mom, you do know that there is nooooo way we can stop Jade from going." Their oldest sister, Cori, said.

Mrs. Berek shook her head. "You're right." She mumbled.

Jade was practically jumping up and down with joy. She was pretty much the definition of "aspiring young detective" and of course she wanted to go.

Cadence, a middle child, was a few years older than Jade but not as old as Cori.

"I think Jade shouldn't go. She's too young." She said loftily.

Her twin, Jayson, agreed.

"She might not like it. Also, seeing Officer Greene is a danger to her, she'll faint if that happens. Jade has practically worshipped him since she was three. That's 8 years now." He said.

At this, Cori snorted. "Like I said, even if we try to convince her for ages, set a strict rule, and don't allow her to go, Jade will sneak out in the middle of the night and run away." She said.

There was a general murmur of agreement. Only the happy squeals of Jade broke through.

"Can I go? Can I go?" She repeated.

Mrs. Berek shook her head in amusement. "Of course." She said.

Right before the great explosion of excitement took place, Cori jumped up quickly and told Jade to go to her room and prepare. The whole Berek family, barring Jade, breathed a huge sigh of relief. Unspoken thanks was given to Cori for her quick thinking. If Jade had stayed, they would be stuck here listening to her joyful and excited comments, thank you's, and squeals for at least an hour.

"Now," Cori started, "I think we should decide who should go with her. I think I should go."

Cadence started to protest.

"But- But Cori- Just- Just because- It's not- That's not fair!" She sputtered.

Mrs. Berek gave her a disapproving look. "I think that Cori should go. She's oldest." She said.

Mr. Berek spoke up at that moment.

"Cadence could go. Cori might be too busy this week." He said.

"I'm not." Cori replied crossly.

"VOTE!" Jayson called. "Close your eyes. Okay, who thinks Cadence should go?"

Cadence and Mr. Berek uncertainty raised their hands. Jayson took out a small notebook and made two marks next to the word CADENCE.

"Who thinks Cori should go?" He spoke after he finished writing. Mrs Berek and Cori raised their hands. He made two marks next to the word CORI in his notebook. He ripped out the page and put it on a spot in the middle of the table so they could all see.

"What about you, Jayson?" Cori piped up.

Giving an apologetic glance to Cadence, Jayson made a third mark next to Cori's name.

Cadence sighed, and gave a tiny nod to Cori. Cori beamed, and went to her room to get ready.

The Selection

Both Jade and Cori were riding their bikes to the town square. Though Jade's blue mountain bike went at a moderate pace, Cori's hybrid was only a silver blur. The two of them arrived at the same time since Cori had started several minutes later than Jade. There was a long line winding through several sidewalks. One by one, the people filled out a form, folded it, put it in an envelope, and put that through the slit on a huge safe. Cori and Jade parked their bikes and joined the line.

After a few hours, the two girls were in front of the safe. An unknown officer gave them their forms, which asked for things like their name, address, age, and signature. They filled out the forms and deposited them in the safe. Their forms were in the same envelope. Cori and Jade stayed in town getting ice cream and shopping at the various small shops there. At 5:00, the officers opened the safe before a huge crowd, stirred their hands around, and picked out 12 envelopes. They read the names out loud.

"Eliza Bretney."

"Jon Jacobsen."

"Silvia Grespin."

"Alexander Sterling."

"Arabella Brasswind."

"Lukas Fierro."

"Jolie and Rick Birkeland."

"Kristopher Skrinak."

"Rian Likely."

"Spencer Hartland."

"Lilian Turtle."

Finally, Aspen Greene himself pulled out the last envelope.

"And our final envelope..." He ripped it open.

"Jade and Cori Berek."

They two girls didn't move to join the others. They stood still. After all, they must have imagined it, right? It couldn't have happened. Then they heard him again.

"Jade and Cori Berek?" He called again.

Slowly, as if sleepwalking, the two girls walked up to join the others. As cameras clicked and flashed, the disappointed crowd slowly dissipated. The 14 chosen were the only ones that remained aside from Officer Greene.

He invited them to a conference room in the library. There he presented them with the facts of the case.

The Sunset Crystal was stolen, it happened yesterday. It was on display in the lobby of the library and was apparently stolen after hours. No intact fingerprints were found on the pedestal. Arabella Brasswind asked if they had checked the fingerprints near the lock on the entrance. Officer Greene said that they had, and they had found one intact. They were still trying to match it.

Then he left them, saying they could figure it out by themselves. He added that anyone who wanted to was free to leave. When he left, the 14 children stood there.

Then four left. They were Eliza Bretney, Jon Jacobsen, Silvia Grespin, and Rian Likely.

"Hopeless." They muttered.

Then Jolie and Rick left. More people left, finally leaving only Arabella, Lukas, Spencer, Cori, and Jade.

"How about we check the security cameras?" Lukas suggested.

"Good idea." Spencer replied. The others just nodded. They asked for permission and took the key, then they traipsed upstairs. They unlocked the door. They scanned the shelves, full of tapes. There was no empty spaces, so they knew nothing was missing.

"How about we each view the footage separately? We each take an hour." Arabella suggested. They all agreed, so Arabella went first. She spent her hour, then came out. She shrugged, tossing her white blonde hair.

"I can't find anything." She said. "Maybe you guys will have better luck?"

The others went in, coming out with nothing. Lukas and Spencer both found footage of someone locking the door.

Then it was Cori and Jade's turn. They went in together. They searched through the tapes. They found the footage of someone locking the door. Then they found something else.

They found a space.

Someone had found the footage. That same someone had stolen it.

And it was one of them.

Solved?

Jade and Cori needed no words. They both knew it had happened. They walked out where the others were waiting eagerly. All of them were calm except for Spencer, who seemed a little bit nervous.

"Nothing." Jade said glumly. Cori nodded. All the others heaved a sigh- though was there a sigh of relief in there? Cori narrowed her eyes a little, but said nothing.

"How about we ask Officer Greene if he matched that fingerprint?" Lukas suggested.

We all agreed.

"I think only one of us should go. I volunteer myself." Spencer said. Jade thought that this was suspicious, but, like Cori, she said nothing. The others agreed with him. He left the room.

"Well," Arabella started. "I'm going to go over to the vending machines to get something.

Anyone joining me?" Cori and Jade jumped up, but Lukas stayed.

"I'm not hungry." He replied. The three girls walked over to the vending machines. Cori and Jade glanced at each other. Jade nodded at Cori.

“Arabella?” She said. “Hmm?” Arabella replied.

“We actually saw a space when we went up there to see the footage.” Cori said. “We think someone took it, but it has to be one of us. And whoever took it probably had something to do with the case.”

Arabella nodded. “I get it. But we have to go look for it first, not find out who did it.” She said, brushing her white-blond hair out of her face. “Also, I think it might be Spencer. He was being really suspicious, and I think he went over to see about the fingerprint so he can mess it up.”

“That’s what I thought, too!” Jade and Cori said in unison. They had agreed that they needed to find the footage first, so they went looking for it. The footage was recorded on disks, so they searched everywhere for one. They finally found the disk in a trash can, and picked it up gingerly with a tissue.

“Okay. You guys go see the footage upstairs, I’ll find Spencer and Officer Greene. Check whether the sticky fingerprints on the table that Spencer left look like the dusty ones on the disk.” Arabella said. She raced off as Cori and Jade went upstairs. When they got in the room, they played the footage on the computer there. The fingerprints on the table did indeed look like the ones on the disk. The smaller case was solved. Now for the bigger one. On the screen, they saw a figure dressed in black race over to the crystal. The figure carefully picked it up with their gloves and dropped it in a bag. Then they locked the door and walked out. The figure could easily be Spencer, they had the same stature. Even the way they walked was the same. They were about to walk out and run to Officer Greene with the information. They had solved it! But then the two girls saw something that changed everything. As the figure ran, the girls saw a flash of long and white-blond hair.

Was this case really solved?

To be continued...