



CHAPTER 1


THE OLD WINEGROWER AND THE CHARCOAL CIGALE

It was as dark as pitch. With just a small lantern to light up the inside of the stone military pillbox, the old winegrower stirred into an open-topped oak barrel grape juice and the dye from the petals of Provençal wildflowers. Before he added a sprinkling of his secret ingredient, he pulled a small book, sealed with mystical cigale and forest folklore charms, from his jacket pocket, which he then placed inside the barrel of sparkling bubbles.

The old man smiled happily, bowed his head and wiped his brow with the back of a weather-beaten hand. He stooped as he poked his head through the doorway; there was one last gust from the Mistral wind and the forest became calm.

In the barrel, the mix splattered and popped sending spirals of glitter towards the pitted roof of the old, grey building. Owls screeched overhead as the winegrower pushed the six-wheeled oak barrel, with its sparkling, enchanted mix, onto the limestone pathway. Coils of apple wood smoke from the winegrower's house






danced along the valley of vines and pines, circling both the barrel and the pillbox.


Whoosh! The mix with its violet, purple and gold sparks soared high above the pine tree forest, streaming glittering flakes up towards the stars. The cigale folklore charms released a beam of golden light that shone brightly against the sapphire blue sky. The book spun in the air and with one final swirl drifted downwards, where it landed close to a stack of pinecones at the entrance to the pillbox.

With a dazzling explosion of colour, the sparkling glitter tumbled like a horsetail firework through lofty, green-leafed pine trees, casting its mystical, violet-coloured dye over the cover of the winegrower's pocket-sized book.



Years later in a Cornish stone cottage, twinkling fairy lights that decorated the conservatory windows sparkled like a star on a Christmas tree. December 25th had long been and gone, but the brightly shining lights remained in place. The fairy lights not only lit the conservatory with a warm glow, but also shone across the hallway into the reading room with its aged buckled walls and polished wooden floors.

A pair of brown eyes raced along the rows of books that filled eight wooden shelves. The shelves were set inside a deep alcove with the eighth shelf almost touching the sloping, beamed ceiling. There was so much choice, but which one? Sevi's eyes suddenly stopped skating over the rows of hardbacks and paperbacks when they fell upon a small pocket-sized



book with a violet cover. As she looked closely at its spine of purple letters, it appeared to jiggle and wiggle before her eyes. ‘Whoa,’ she said, stepping forward to take a closer look.

Sevi blinked hard and then reaching out she pulled the book towards her. Her tummy fluttered with excitement just as it would have done had it been Christmas Eve.

The sparkling purple letters on the narrow spine spelt the words – *The Mix for Provençal Snuffle-Buzzers*.

‘Umm, what is this all about? I don’t know what Provençal Snuffle-Buzzers are, but I do know we are going to Provence on holiday. This could be a good book to take with me,’ Sevi said.

In an armchair next to the bookshelves, Sevi sat quietly holding the book under the light of a table lamp. Eagerly she flicked open the glittering pages, but to her disappointment each page was full of codes, symbols and what looked like a foreign language. Frustrated, she held the book so tightly her knuckles turned white. ‘Oh my days! I’m going boss-eyed,’ whispered Sevi. ‘I know a little French, but this is not French. All these weird codes and words I do not understand. How annoying.’

Page after page of glittering, golden coded letters twinkled before her eyes. She curled further into the soft, springy armchair and tried to decode the letters and symbols. Sevi was completely bewildered yet fascinated by the wonders of the violet book. ‘What does it all mean and how long have we had this book?’ Sevi asked herself. ‘I’ve never noticed it before.’

Evening had turned to night. Feeling tired Sevi closed the book and looked at the violet cover. Drawn in charcoal was a sketch of a winged bug on a pine tree. Brushing her fingers gently over the bug she thought for a moment that its wings flickered, releasing a dash of glitter. 'Whoa, glitter! What's going on?'

Sevi's eyes widened. 'That's weird. I only touched the drawing for a split second, where's the bug gone?' All that remained on the front cover was a hand-drawn stack of pinecones and a mound of miniature twigs of fresh thyme.

'I'm definitely taking this book on holiday and I'm going to solve the mystery of the sparkling letters and symbols. Maybe the clue is in the title and I will find the answer in Provence,' Sevi said, very excitedly.

Sevi looked at her hands and saw tiny fragments of glitter coiled in circles on her palms. She discovered not only the coils of glitter, but also that her fingertips were lightly smudged with charcoal. Red-faced she pulled a hairband from her pocket and roughly pulled her hair into a short ponytail, leaving traces of glitter amongst the fine wisps of her wavy hair. Then without much success, she tried to wipe the charcoal from her fingers by rubbing them onto her jeans. 'Oops, better not let Mum see me do that!' Sevi said, swallowing her words.

Sevi clutched the book firmly in her hands and looked at it one last time before carefully placing it inside her backpack, which she had left by the doorway.

'How did I remove the hand-drawn bug? I only touched it for a second. Umm, and as for the wings flickering, did I really imagine that? What's more,

where did the glitter come from?’ said a very confused Sevi, as she went in search of her parents.

The conservatory lights twinkled a little longer before the timer switch turned their starry sparkle to sleep mode. The book jiggled at the bottom of Sevi’s backpack; the bookshelves of the cosy stone-walled cottage had been its home for many, many years.

That night, Sevi’s dad loaded his camper van with luggage for their family holiday. He picked up the backpack from outside the reading room on his final sweep for holiday items and tucked it underneath a rear passenger seat.


‘Did you find a book to take?’ Sevi’s dad asked her.

‘Umm, yeah, I did,’ replied Sevi, with the feeling of butterflies in her tummy.

Later that night the family set off. Sevi’s head nuzzled into a squishy cushion, and with her body wrapped in fleecy blankets she slept propped up on the rear bench seat next to her mum, who gave back seat directions to Sevi’s dad whenever the satnav took them the wrong way.

During many dream-filled miles, the violet book with its jumble of letters and symbols flashed behind Sevi’s sleeping eyes. Tiny bugs weaved in and out of butterfly nets in their efforts to escape capture, and the image of the winged bug from the front cover buzzed in and out of Sevi’s dreams, but never stayed longer than a nanosecond. Buzzzzzz.

Sevi and her parents travelled for several hours before they reached the undersea rail tunnel, which took them by train to France. When they arrived at



a northern French town, they rested properly. The town had a large square, several cafés, shops and a church with a bell tower.

After their rest, Sevi and her parents continued their journey south. They stopped at an old medieval village that was perched on a hilltop and overlooking a river. Later they visited walled cities with fairy-tale moated castles that clung to cliff tops sprinkled with tiny mauve flowers. They drove along country roads where light beige mottled plane trees folded their green-leafed branches like a tunnel above the camper van as it chugged along.

The family found their small holiday house nestled in a valley of grapevines and pine forests. It had terracotta roof tiles, cream outer walls, green wooden shutters, black coach lights and a pergola. There was a sweet-water stream with a row of plane trees behind it and a circle of four-hundred-year-old olive trees at the front.

Sevi, in her crumpled clothes and with fingers of faded charcoal, slept soundly as her dad carried her from the camper van to the soft feather mattress of the holiday house.

As Sevi turned in her sleep, tiny flecks of golden glitter tumbled over her pillow. She dreamt of warm adventure-filled days that started with fresh pastries, soft berry jams, fruit juices and bowls of piping hot chocolate. All too soon, a tiny glimmer of sunlight peeped through the edges of the closed shutters as she stirred from her sleep.

With a start, Sevi's eyes opened wide as she remembered the violet book. Jumping out of bed,

she unlatched the shutters to get her first daylight view of white limestone mountains and poppy-filled meadows.

Blue chaser dragonflies hovered outside the window, their wings making a cracking noise as they dipped in the air.

With the book grasped in her hands, Sevi rushed to the terrace hoping to join her parents for breakfast. Her mum sat at the table drinking coffee from a cup, which Sevi thought looked not much bigger than an egg cup. Sevi's dad, who had already eaten, stood by the olive trees admiring the view. Smiling, Sevi waved at her dad. She sat and stared out towards the grapevines with her hands clutching a bowl of piping hot chocolate.

Ants marched their way up the wall of the terrace and went in search of pastry crumbs that had fallen from the family's breakfast napkins.

As Sevi's fingers opened the book's violet cover, a cuckoo broke into song from a pine tree branch and cigales buzzed nearby. Sevi looked at the gold-edged pages and wondered if she would ever decode the violet book.

CHAPTER 2

CHARLIE AND HIS FOREST FRIENDS

The pheasant stood on the dusty dirt track with his head raised. His black head, with a dash of red, looked as striking as the poppies that grew in the nearby meadow. With the rising of the sun Corinne, a common cuckoo, made her early-morning call across the valley, waking her sleepy forest friends.

‘Sore, soooo sorezzz! My throat is sore,’ buzzed Charlie.

Charlie, an adventure seeking, sneezing, flying bug with bulging eyes and lattice wings was one of a couple of dozen rare breed cigales who suffered greatly with allergies. Charlie’s distinctive nose set him apart from regular cigales, not only did he have a nose that was most noticeable, it usually glowed raspberry red and apple green.

Charlie spent his days sneezing, snuffling and daydreaming of faraway places. Although Charlie had never flown further than the stream that flowed alongside the row of plane trees behind Sevi’s holiday house, it never stopped him daydreaming of one day spreading his wings and seeing the world.

Charlie's allergies had kept him awake all night, his eyelids felt heavy and his nose was very sore. With a yawn he flew down to pick up a sprig of thyme from a store he had at the base of his favourite pine tree. He used the tiny leaves of this delicate herb as tissues to wipe his allergy-prone nose.

Gisele, a lime-green grasshopper, had just completed ten press-ups at the "Limestone Grasshopper Gym". She desperately needed help with her breathing exercises. The heat sapped most of her energy; she found it a struggle to exercise. She had also eaten too many blades of grass recently; her "hourgrass" figure needed toning up. 'Heh, Charlie, don't tell the hoppers, but I need help with my breathing exercises and there is no bug better qualified to teach me than you, so will you help?' Gisele asked.

'Help! You want me, a cigale, to help? Buzzing bananas! I'll have to think about it, Gisele. I'm a bit busy at the moment,' said Charlie, with a glowing face and even rosier nose.

'You are "Master Cigale" after all,' replied Gisele, looking rather disappointed.

Charlie made incredibly fast breathing movements in warm weather and this is how he won his title of Master Cigale. Whenever he breathed fast he buzzed and clicked very loudly.

When crowned Master Cigale twelve months ago at the "Bugsect Multi-Buzz Championship" the Committee for Cigales suggested Charlie competed against Spanish cicadas. His training had gone remarkably well until he collided belly-first with a

plane tree. With badly bruised muscles, Charlie was unable to compete.

Charlie needed to start re-training for the following year's competition, but as the weeks went by, he spent more and more time in the forest, daydreaming about travel and adventure.

'Buzz, achoo, buzz, achoo.' Charlie's buzzes and sneezes were evenly spaced, which made him sound like a one-bug band.

Out of all the allergy-prone cigales or Snuffle-Buzzers (as they were also known), Charlie was the most tuneful. Sometimes his forest friends called him Sneezlybuzzlebug, because he often combined a sneeze with a buzz.

Charlie's throat still itched and felt like it was under attack from a pine needle.

'Deliciouszzz,' Charlie said, as he slurped his breakfast sap hoping that it would soothe his throat. 'Still sore, soooo very sorezzz,' said Charlie, with a little flushed face. 'If only the old winegrower was here, I am sure he could help me and the other Snuffle-Buzzers. Achoo!' Charlie flapped his wings and sorrowfully shook his head.

Charlie's trusty friends watched his frenzied actions as he wiped his eyes with his delicate wings.

After a night of foraging for mushrooms, berries and fruits, Hervé, a wild boar, and his family returned to their den (a disused military pillbox). Olivier, a graceful owlfly dressed in yellow and black, stretched his wings and flew towards his unflappable friend, Stephanie, a stick insect. Stephanie stirred from her

branch and scooped a drop of water from a dampened lush-green leaf.

Charlie and his friends lived happily together within the forest, where the smell of yellow broom bushes and the sound of birdsong filled the air.

Orange and auburn coloured butterflies zigzagged along the forest pathways. Crickets dived into a pile of parched leaves near to three white fluffy dandelion heads that swayed gently in the breeze. Black millipedes, like strips of liquorice, tiptoed soundlessly over earth and stone. Blankets of cobwebs sprinkled with dust clung to the rough edges of the dirt track where the pheasant had stood earlier that morning.

‘Buzz, achoo, buzz, achoo,’ spluttered Charlie, as the sweet scent of wild orchids made his nose twitch.

‘Poor old Sneezlybuzzlebug. Look here, you will make the pine leaves quiver, quiver I say,’ said Corinne, flying down from a pine tree. She pecked a thyme leaf from Charlie’s supply and wiped his nose for him.

‘I’ll miss you, Corinne, when you leave for British shores,’ sniffled Charlie. ‘No one looks after me like you do!’

‘Oh, Charlie, you have many friends here and I will return to see you. I promise I will come home to my beloved friends,’ chirped Corinne.

Suddenly an idea popped into Charlie’s head, but it was at the same time as an allergic sneeze developed. ‘Can I achoovel with you?’ Charlie blurted his request so fast that Corinne turned her head to one side.

‘I say, I didn’t quite catch that,’ said Corinne.

‘I would like to achoovel with you?’ said Charlie, sneezing and snuffling.

Corinne still looked confused.

‘Can I travel with you? Pleasezzz,’ buzzed Charlie.

Charlie crossed his wings over his raspberry red and apple green nose, hopeful that Corinne would take him with her.

‘Oh, Charlie, Master Cigale, it is far too dangerous, far too dangerous. No, no, no. What would your ma-cigale or grand-cigale say? No, no it is quite out of the question. Impossible, no!’

‘It’s because I’m a sneezing cigale isn’t it?’

‘No, no, not at all. You have your whole life to experience adventure flights, no rush, no rush I say. I’ll discuss it with your ma-cigale another time,’ chirped Corinne.

‘I’m already middle cigale-grade, and I haven’t flown further than the streamzzz or the row of plane trees. Talking of plane trees, if I hadn’t collided belly-first with that pesky plane tree I would have gone to Spain. I would have shown them cicadas a buzz or two. Instead, I messed everything up because next time they are coming here. How is a Snuffle-Buzzer ever to spread his wings?’ grumbled Charlie.

‘Charlie, Charlie, it has nothing at all to do with your sneezing and snuffling, let alone your buzzing, or clicking or messing anything up. It is because you are my dearest friend. I say my dearest friend and I want you to keep safe. That means staying here where thyme leaves and pine trees are plentiful. This is your home,’ explained Corinne. ‘Besides, Charlie, there

is plenty of time for you to travel once you have re-trained for the Bugsect Multi-Buzz Championship against the Spanish cicadas.'

'Bugsect Multi-Buzz Championship!' repeated Charlie, with a sinking heart and a loud gulp.

Charlie stood still, head low and wings by his side. He had spent so much time daydreaming he had forgotten all about the re-training. 'Buzzing bananas! Rare breed cigales only live for a few years, I think I'd rather spend my time travelling not training,' said Charlie with a heavy sigh, as he flew towards an opening in the soil where his grand-cigale lived.