



THE SCIENCE TRIP

TONI Yes.

MRS C Lost him? What do you mean lost him?

TONI You know, lost him. We don't know where he is.

MRS C I don't understand. How long has he been missing?

TONI Good question Mrs Cole, very good question.

MR C Well?

TONI Since the last school trip.

MRS C To Les Miserables?

TONI Oh was that the last one? No, the one before that. The Science Museum.

MRS C The Science Museum. That was two months ago.

TONI Yes, about that.

MR C He's been missing for two months and you're only just telling us.

TONI Yes, sort of.

MR C What do you mean sort of?

TONI Well we did issue every child with a letter to post home to their parents to ask them to let us know if they happened to see Thomas. You obviously never got it.

MR C Well maybe that was because our son who should have posted it has gone missing.

TONI That could be a reason.

MRS C Well have the police had any leads?

TONI No, they haven't.

MR C Have they done searches, put up posters?

TONI No. Absolutely useless.

MRS C How come?

TONI How come? Exactly.

MR C Well?

TONI We haven't told them.

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MRS C                   What!

TONI                    The school budget is under considerable strain at the moment  
Mrs Cole and I'm afraid that phone calls have been one of the  
things we have had to cut back on...

MR C                    I'm sorry?

TONI                    If Thomas had gone missing at the start of the financial year  
then naturally we would have called the police straight away.

MRS C                   It's free to call 999 Mrs Eve.

TONI                    Is it?

MRS C                   Yes.

TONI                    Oh, well I didn't know that. Now I know that, I will give them  
a ring. First thing Monday.

MR C                    No, call them now!

TONI                    Mr Cole, I hardly think it is polite of me to make a phone call  
in the middle of a meeting.

MRS C                   What are you talking about? This is our son. Call the police.

TONI                    Mrs Cole, if I interrupted meetings to call the police every time  
one of our pupils went missing then I can assure you I would  
spend most of my time on the phone and would get no other  
work done.

Mr C                    What do you mean? How many other pupils have you lost?

TONI                    I don't know. Off the top of my head... four from year 5, eight  
from year 7, year 9...

MRS C                   Yes, how many from year 9?

TONI                    No. All of year 9.

MR C                    What? Look if you don't call them right now then I will.

TONI                    There's no need to raise your voice Mr Cole. Let's not get this  
out of proportion.

Mr C                    Out of proportion? You've lost our only son on a school trip  
and have failed to do anything about it for two months. How  
much more proportion do you want.

TONI                    I'm sure he's fine.

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MR C                    How can he be fine? He's nine years old and lost in a city of 7 million people.

TONI                    He may have been taken in by a family of wolves.

MR C                    What?

TONI                    It's happened before. Kipling's Jungle Book springs to mind.

MR C                    No Mrs Eve, the only thing springing to mind at the moment is Dostoevsky's The Idiot.

TONI                    Well, clever you.

MRS C                  Look Mrs Eve. Do you have any idea whatsoever what might have happened to Tom? Who was the last person to see him?

TONI                    Right... I wasn't going to tell you this but as you have asked me out straight. One of Thomas' classmates said he might – and I stress might – he might have seen Mrs Forbes giving Thomas to a museum official in exchange for a bundle of fifty pound notes.

MR C                    And who the hell is Mrs Forbes?

TONI                    Thomas' class tutor.

MR C                    So what you are trying to tell me is that one of Thomas' classmates saw Mrs Forbes sell our son to the Science Museum?

TONI                    No I said 'might' have seen. I did stress that Mr Cole.

Mrs C                    And what does Mrs Forbes say?

TONI                    She can't remember.

Mr C                    Have you asked her?

TONI                    No.

Mrs C                    This is appalling.

TONI                    Listen, I appreciate that all of this may be a bit of a shock and in certain ways you may feel we have let you down. By way of apology I would like to make you an offer. It is the least we can do. Just a sec. [SHOUTS OFF] Miss Townsend, can you come in now.

Miss T                  [she enters] Hello Toni.

TONI                    Hello Sarah. This is the couple.

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Miss T Hi there, Sarah Townsend.

Mr C So what? What's the offer?

TONI She is.

Mrs C What?

TONI Yes, I would like to offer you Miss Townsend as a replacement for your son who we may, and I stress may, have sold to the Science Museum for £3000. Miss Townsend will simply imitate Thomas' mannerisms and behaviour and pick up where he left off. She will attend school here and live with you in the holidays, just as Thomas would have done. I think you will barely notice the difference.

Mrs C She's nothing like Thomas.

TONI No, not now, but pop a cap and a tie on her and give her a Spiderman lunchbox and I can assure you, the resemblance is spooky.

Mrs C But she's a woman.

TONI Yes.

Mrs C She's got breasts.

TONI Yes.

Mrs C Not insignificant ones at that.

Miss Townsend Yes.

Mrs C It's the most ridiculous suggestion I ever heard in my life.

TONI Mr Cole, any thoughts?

MR C Well. Maybe it's worth a try.

**[BLACK OUT]**