**CHAPTER 18.**

**Down the Chocolate River**

‘Off we go!’ cried Mr Wonka. ‘Hurry up, everybody! Follow me to the next room! And

please don’t worry about Augustus Gloop. He’s bound to come out in the wash. They

always do. We shall have to make the next part of the journey by boat! Here she comes!

Look!’

A steamy mist was rising up now from the great warm chocolate river, and out of the mist there appeared suddenly a most fantastic pink boat. It was a large open row boat with a tall front and a tall back (like a Viking boat of old), and it was of such a shining sparkling glistening pink colour that the whole thing looked as though it were made of bright, pink glass. There were many oars on either side of it, and as the boat came closer, the watchers on the riverbank could see that the oars were being pulled by masses of Oompa-Loompas – at least ten of them to each oar.

‘This is my private yacht!’ cried Mr Wonka, beaming with pleasure. ‘I made her by hollowing out an enormous boiled sweet! Isn’t she beautiful! See how she comes cutting through the river!’

The gleaming pink boiled-sweet boat glided up to the riverbank. One hundred Oompa-Loompas rested on their oars and stared up at the visitors. Then suddenly, for some reason best known to themselves, they all burst into shrieks of laughter.

‘What’s so funny?’ asked Violet Beauregarde.

‘Oh, don’t worry about them!’ cried Mr Wonka. ‘They’re always laughing! They think everything’s a colossal joke! Jump into the boat, all of you! Come on! Hurry up!’

As soon as everyone was safely in, the Oompa-Loompas pushed the boat away from the bank and began to row swiftly downriver.

‘Hey, there! Mike Teavee!’ shouted Mr Wonka. ‘Please do not lick the boat with your tongue! It’ll only make it sticky!’

‘Daddy,’ said Veruca Salt, ‘I want a boat like this! I want you to buy me a big pink boiled-sweet boat exactly like Mr Wonka’s! And I want lots of Oompa-Loompas to row me about, and I want a chocolate river and I want … I want …’

‘She wants a good kick in the pants,’ whispered Grandpa Joe to Charlie. The old man was sitting in the back of the boat and little Charlie Bucket was right beside him. Charlie was holding tightly on to his grandfather’s bony old hand. He was in a whirl of excitement. Everything that he had seen so far – the great chocolate river, the waterfall, the huge sucking pipes, the minty sugar meadows, the Oompa-Loompas, the beautiful pink boat, and most of all, Mr Willy Wonka himself – had been so astonishing that he began to wonder whether there could possibly be any more astonishments left. Where were they going now? What were they going to see? And what in the world was going to happen in the next room?

‘Isn’t it marvellous?’ said Grandpa Joe, grinning at Charlie. Charlie nodded and smiled up at the old man.

Suddenly, Mr Wonka, who was sitting on Charlie’s other side, reached down into the bottom of the boat, picked up a large mug, dipped it into the river, filled it with chocolate, and handed it to Charlie. ‘Drink this,’ he said. ‘It’ll do you good! You look starved to death!’

Then Mr Wonka filled a second mug and gave it to Grandpa Joe. ‘You, too,’ he said. ‘You look like a skeleton! What’s the matter? Hasn’t there been anything to eat in your house lately?’

‘Not much,’ said Grandpa Joe.

Charlie put the mug to his lips, and as the rich warm creamy chocolate ran down his throat into his empty tummy, his whole body from head to toe began to tingle with pleasure, and a feeling of intense happiness spread over him.

‘You like it?’ asked Mr Wonka.

‘Oh, it’s wonderful!’ Charlie said.

‘The creamiest loveliest chocolate I’ve ever tasted!’ said Grandpa Joe, smacking his lips.

‘That’s because it’s been mixed by waterfall,’ Mr Wonka told him.

The boat sped on down the river. The river was getting narrower. There was some kind of a dark tunnel ahead – a great round tunnel that looked like an enormous pipe – and the river was running right into the tunnel. And so was the b oat! ‘Row on!’ shouted Mr Wonka, jumping up and waving his stick in the air. ‘Full speed ahead!’ And with the Oompa-Loompas rowing faster than ever, the boat shot into the pitch-dark tunnel, and all the passengers screamed with excitement.

‘How can they see where they’re going?’ shrieked Violet Beauregarde in the darkness. ‘There’s no knowing where they’re going!’ cried Mr Wonka, hooting with laughter.

‘There’s no earthly way of knowing

Which direction they are going!

There’s no knowing where they’re rowing,

Or which way the river’s flowing!

Not a speck of light is showing,

So the danger must be growing,

For the rowers keep on rowing,

And they’re certainly not showing

Any signs that they are slowing …’

‘He’s gone off his rocker!’ shouted one of the fathers, aghast, and the other parents joined in the chorus of frightened shouting. ‘He’s crazy!’ they shouted.

‘He’s balmy!’ ‘He’s nutty!’ ‘He’s screwy!’ ‘He’s batty!’

‘He’s dippy!’

‘He’s dotty!’

‘He’s daffy!’

‘He’s goofy!’

‘He’s beany!’

‘He’s buggy!’

‘He’s wacky!’

‘He’s loony!’

‘No, he is not!’ said Grandpa Joe.

‘Switch on the lights!’ shouted Mr Wonka. And suddenly, on came the lights and the whole tunnel was brilliantly lit up, and Charlie could see that they were indeed inside a gigantic pipe, and the great upward-curving walls of the pipe were pure white and spotlessly clean. The river of chocolate was flowing very fast inside the pipe, and the Oompa-Loompas were all rowing like mad, and the boat was rocketing along at a furious pace. Mr Wonka was jumping up and down in the back of the boat and calling to the rowers to row faster and faster still. He seemed to love the sensation of whizzing through a white tunnel in a pink boat on a chocolate river, and he clapped his hands and laughed and kept glancing at his passengers to see if they were enjoying it as much as he.

‘Look, Grandpa!’ cried Charlie. ‘There’s a door in the wall!’ It was a green door and it was set into the wall of the tunnel just above the level of the river. As they flashed past it there was just enough time to read the writing on the door: STOREROOM NUMBER 54, it said. ALL THE CREAMS – DAIRY CREAM, WHIPPED CREAM, VIOLET CREAM, COFFEE CREAM, PINEAPPLE CREAM, VANILLA CREAM, AND HAIR CREAM.

‘Hair cream?’ cried Mike Teavee. ‘You don’t use hair cream?’

‘Row on!’ shouted Mr Wonka. ‘There’s no time to answer silly questions!’

They streaked past a black door. STOREROOM NUMBER 71, it said on it. WHIPS – ALL SHAPES AND SIZES.

‘Whips!’ cried Veruca Salt. ‘What on earth do you use whips for?’

‘For whipping cream, of course,’ said Mr Wonka. ‘How can you whip cream without whips? Whipped cream isn’t whipped cream at all unless it’s been whipped with whips. Just as a poached egg isn’t a poached egg unless it’s been stolen from the woods in the dead of night!

Row on, please!’

They passed a yellow door on which it said: STOREROOM NUMBER 77 – ALL THE BEANS, CACAO BEANS, COFFEE BEANS, JELLY BEANS, AND HAS BEANS.

‘Has beans?’ cried Violet Beauregarde.

‘You’re one yourself!’ said Mr Wonka. ‘There’s no time for arguing! Press on, press on!’ But five seconds later, when a bright red door came into sight ahead, he suddenly waved his gold-topped cane in the air and shouted, ‘Stop the boat!’