CHAPTER NINE

Grandpa Joe Takes a Gamble

The next day, when Charlie came home from school and went in to see his grandparents, he found that only Grandpa Joe was awake. The other three were all snoring loudly.

‘Ssshh!’ whispered Grandpa Joe, and he beckoned Charlie to come closer. Charlie tiptoed over and stood beside the bed. The old man gave Charlie a sly grin, and then he started rummaging under his pillow with one hand; and when the hand came out again, there was an ancient leather purse clutched in the fingers. Under cover of the bedclothes, the old man opened the purse and tipped it upside down. Out fell a single silver sixpence. ‘It’s my secret hoard,’ he whispered. ‘The others don’t know I’ve got it. And now, you and I are going to have one more fling at finding that last ticket. How about it, eh? But you’ll have to help me.’

‘Are you sure you want to spend your money on that, Grandpa?’ Charlie whispered.

‘Of course I’m sure!’ spluttered the old man excitedly. ‘Don’t stand there arguing! I’m as keen as you are to find that ticket! Here – take the money and run down the street to the nearest shop and buy the first Wonka bar you see and bring it straight back to me, and we’ll open it together.’

Charlie took the little silver coin, and slipped quickly out of the room. In five minutes, he was back.

‘Have you got it?’ whispered Grandpa Joe, his eyes shining with excitement.

Charlie nodded and held out the bar of chocolate. WONKA’S NUTTY CRUNCH SURPRISE, it said on the wrapper.

‘Good!’ the old man whispered, sitting up in the bed and rubbing his hands. ‘Now – come over here and sit close to me and we’ll open it together. Are you ready?’

‘Yes,’ Charlie said. ‘I’m ready.’

‘All right. You tear off the first bit.’

‘No,’ Charlie said, ‘you paid for it. You do it all.’

The old man’s fingers were trembling most terribly as they fumbled with the wrapper. ‘We don’t have a hope, really,’ he whispered, giggling a bit. ‘You do know we don’t have a hope, don’t you?’

‘Yes,’ Charlie said. ‘I know that.’

They looked at each other, and both started giggling nervously.

‘Mind you,’ said Grandpa Joe, ‘there is just that tiny chance that it might be the one, don’t you agree?’

‘Yes,’ Charlie said. ‘Of course. Why don’t you open it, Grandpa?’

‘All in good time, my boy, all in good time. Which end do you think I ought to open first?’

‘That corner. The one furthest from you. Just tear off a tiny bit, but not quite enough for us to see anything.’

‘Like that?’ said the old man.

‘Yes. Now a little bit more.’

‘You finish it,’ said Grandpa Joe. ‘I’m too nervous.’

‘No, Grandpa. You must do it yourself

‘Very well, then. Here goes.’ He tore off the wrapper.

They both stared at what lay underneath. It was a bar of chocolate – nothing more.

All at once, they both saw the funny side of the whole thing, and they burst into peals of laughter.

‘What on earth’s going on!’ cried Grandma Josephine, waking up suddenly. ‘Nothing,’ said Grandpa Joe. ‘You go on back to sleep.’