

TEN WORD TALES EASTER SPECIALS

The Guava Palava

by The Story Spinner

CHAPTER 5



Back in London, Nick was overjoyed to see all his plants. He rang Kew to make an appointment and set off with Norma to deliver the seeds and cuttings without delay.

While Nick went to the scientists' offices, Norma waited on a bench. She looked at the trees around her. They weren't tropical but the bright flowers and fruits were still amazing.

A robin sat singing nearby and she could hear a woodpecker. Suddenly she heard another sound, the sad sound of someone crying. Looking round, Norma saw someone in a Kew Gardens uniform sitting under a tree, sobbing.

“Are you OK?” she asked.

“Not really,” he replied.

“What’s wrong?” Norma’s voice was gentle.

“I work here but I’m going to lose my job. I used to be so good at it, guava care, even winning prizes. Then someone else began winning. I felt a failure and eventually I did something really wrong,” said the stranger. “I found out the person who kept winning the guava competitions was going away on holiday. I decided to sneak into his greenhouse.”

Norma thought she knew where this story was going.

“Were you going to steal his guavas? Or wreck his trees?” she asked.

“I would never harm a guava! I was looking for ideas.”

“Stealing ideas is still stealing,” said Norma.

“I know,” said the stranger. “I nearly got caught and that gave me a shock, a shock I needed. The next day I told my boss my worries

about being a failure and he was great. He said not to worry, that winning prizes wasn't everything. But today I've had a call to say the guava man is coming to see me! I panicked and came out here. I'm sure he knows I broke in. I might be arrested!"

"What's the name of this terrible guava man?" asked Norma.

"Nick Mole. He's not terrible really. He's the only person I know who loves guavas as much as me."

"If the guava man is Nick then you must be Ken."

Ken, for it was indeed Ken, was amazed as Norma explained who she was and then even more amazed when she invited him to tea.

"You'll feel better if you talk to Nick," she said. "Not here when you're at work. Tell him later."

Nick could not understand why Ken's eyes filled with tears when he met him and handed him the guava cuttings and greetings from the tropical scientists. Norma signalled with her eyebrows to Nick not to ask too many questions.

"Ken's coming to tea today," she said. "You can chat to him more then."

Norma made several cakes and a fruit salad. She laid everything out in the garden. Mick and Melanie were also invited. They gazed at the

cakes and the fruit salad with sunshine-orange mango, strawberries, oranges, bananas and chunks of guava. “Yum,” they said.

At that moment Nick came round the corner with Ken. “Hey!!” shouted Melanie and Mick, recognising the intruder. Ken looked very frightened but Norma told him to explain to everyone.

Ken explained and apologised, then explained and apologised again. He was completely forgiven. Nick took Ken into the greenhouse and showed him his trees. Ken promised to give them all a special tour of Kew Gardens.

For a while everyone sat in the evening sun, finishing off the fruit salad and watching the reflections of light from the river on the greenhouse windows.

“We’d look after things you know, “ said Mick, “if you ever go on holiday again. ”

Norma looked across the garden at Nick, expecting him to be laughing at such a crazily impossible idea. “Maybe next year,” he said.

