

TEN WORD TALES EASTER SPECIALS

The Panama Frog

by The Story Spinner

CHAPTER 3



The next morning Priya rang Sasha, already on the way to Devon, telling her about the leg, the police and the robbery until Sasha's train went into a long tunnel and the signal completely disappeared. The police arrived and began clambering over her bedroom and on to the roof to examine the hole in daylight and search for clues.

Downstairs the sergeant, Sam, was telling her mum that she had been right last night. Panama Antiques had been robbed.

“What’s been stolen?” asked Amira.

“Pre-columbian treasures apparently,” said Sam, “but no details yet.”

“What does Panama Antiques *do*?” asked Priya.

“They specialise in finding valuable objects from Panama owned by dealers, collectors and even museums, in Europe and elsewhere,” said the sergeant. “Then they buy them and send them home to Panama.”

Priya’s mum was impressed. She and Priya had seen an exhibition called *Art and Ownership* and now they were both very keen on countries being able keep their own treasures.

Priya passed the Panama Antiques warehouse every day. It had always looked alarming, with its sharp spikes, but if it was gathering Panamanian objects to send back to their rightful home then the spikes were doing a good job. She made a mental note to check an atlas or look up on Google where Panama actually was.

She set off to do George’s shopping, hoping she could carry everything on the way home. George was an elderly neighbour. Her

mum called him a hidden gem because he was so kind (and an antique because he was so old); he had eccentric shopping requests. He did not buy a bit of everything, like Priya's mum. George would have projects that needed quantities. He might ask for thirty onions because he was making pickle. Today it was oranges. Forty oranges for marmalade.

Priya had taken her rucksack and Jack. It began raining when she was almost home, managing well because Jack was behaving. As the path diverted down to the muddy bank of a small stream that fed into the Wandle, three things happened at once. Jack caught sight of a dog he did not know and started pulling and barking, Priya stumbled on the rain-wet pavements and the rucksack fell off her back, oranges flying in all directions.

After this slow-motion moment of madness, Priya acted quickly. She took Jack home and went back to gather the oranges. She could wash them and explain to George. There were three out of reach through the railings. She put her hand through and retrieved them but caught sight of something else. Something was glittering, even in the rain, very brightly. She stretched her very furthest. Her fingertips grasped it.

It was cold and heavy in her hand, a golden frog.