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*Look out for more in the
Time Travel Twins series!*

**Time Travel Twins:
Roman Invasion**



I hate the Vikings.

I hate the Vikings.

I hate the Vikings.

They're so boring.

Scarlett read these words over her brother's shoulder and laughed.

‘That’s it?’ she said.

‘That’s all you’ve written?’

‘I’ve only just started,’

Thomas said.

‘You’ve been
working on it
for two hours!
What have you



been doing all this time?’

‘Thinking,’ Thomas said.

Scarlett couldn’t believe it. During those same two hours, she had written three more pages of her own history project. It was now eleven pages long, and she had illustrated it with a map which she had downloaded and printed out, plus six sketches that she had drawn herself. Her homework wasn’t finished yet. She was intending to add another map, several more drawings, and at least five further pages of information about the Vikings.

‘You’d better get a move on,’ she advised her brother.

‘I’ll be fine,’ Thomas replied. ‘I’ve got ages.’

‘No, you haven’t. We have to hand them in the day after tomorrow.’

‘Like I said, I’ve got ages.’ Thomas stood up, yawned, stretched his arms, and wandered out of the room.

‘Where are you going?’ Scarlett called, but



Thomas didn't reply.

It was Saturday afternoon, and the twins were staying with their grandfather. Both of them should have been finishing their history projects this weekend, so they could deliver them to their teacher, Miss Wellington, first thing on Monday morning.

Miss Wellington had told them that there was going to be a prize for the best history project in their year. Scarlett was determined to win it.

She carried on with her project. Her brother didn't come back. Scarlett was so absorbed in her work that she didn't even wonder where Thomas might have gone or what he might be doing.

When she finished another page, she finally lifted her head and looked around, but she couldn't see him.

'Thomas?'

There was no answer. His project was still



on the table, exactly where he had left it. He hadn't written another word.

She called again, louder.

'Thomas? Where are you? Hello?'

Again there was no answer.

She went to search for her twin brother. She couldn't find him upstairs in the bedroom that they were sharing, or the bathroom, or anywhere else in the house, so she went outside to the yard, where she noticed that the door of their grandfather's workshop was wide open.

Scarlett went to investigate.

Grandad lived in a small house in a forest, more than a mile from the nearest neighbour.

He had chosen to live in this particular house for two reasons. Firstly, he liked privacy. And secondly, opposite the house was a large barn, which he had converted into his workshop. On the door was a handwritten sign which read

DANGER



DO NOT ENTER

Scarlett opened the door and looked inside. She saw Thomas standing with his mouth wide open, and Grandad peering at his teeth, and poking around with a little screwdriver and a pair of pliers.

‘What’s wrong with Thomas?’ Scarlett asked. ‘Has he got toothache?’

‘No, his teeth are perfect,’ Grandad said with a laugh. ‘I’m fitting the translator.’

Thomas and Scarlett’s grandfather had straggly hair which stuck out in every direction. Today he was wearing odd socks, and trousers with holes in the knees, and a jumper with holes in the elbows, and two pairs of glasses, one on the top of his head, the other hanging on a piece of string around his neck. If you met him, you would never have guessed that he was a brilliant scientist who had created several extraordinary devices which had the power to change the world.



Grandad didn't have a job. Instead he spent all his time thinking, dreaming, and working on his inventions. For the past few years, he had been building a time machine, an immensely complex and sophisticated piece of machinery which currently occupied most of the space in this big old barn.

No one could know what he was building here, Grandad always said. His work had to be completely secret. *If anyone asks what I do, say I work with computers. They won't ask any more questions.* And he was right, they never did.

Another of Grandad's brilliant inventions was a tiny machine which you fitted to your mouth, clipping it behind your front teeth, so you could speak any language. He had also invented a tiny earpiece which would allow you to understand anything that anyone said to you. Scarlett had seen both these inventions, but she couldn't understand why Thomas





should be wearing them right now.

‘I’m sending him back to have a look at the Vikings,’ Grandad explained. ‘He needs some inspiration for his homework.’

Scarlett was shocked. ‘You can’t do that! It’s much too dangerous. What if he never comes back?’

‘He’ll be fine,’ Grandad said. ‘He’s a very sensible young man.’

‘No, he isn’t.’

‘I am,’ Thomas insisted.

Scarlett said, ‘If you want him to travel through time, Grandad, why don’t you go with him?’

‘Someone has to stay here and operate the machine,’ Grandad said.

‘I could do that,’ Scarlett said.

‘You don’t know how to,’ Grandad said. ‘But you can go with your brother if you want. You’ll learn a lot about the Vikings too.’

‘You must be joking,’ Scarlett said to her



grandfather. Then she turned to her brother. 'Don't do this, Thomas. What if you get stuck in the past? Or murdered! What if the time machine sends you into the future by mistake? Or disintegrates you into a million pieces?'

Thomas nodded. 'You're right,' he said. 'It is very dangerous. Anyone sensible would stay here and read a good book instead.'

'Exactly,' Scarlett said.

'See you later,' Thomas said. He walked towards the doorway at the centre of the machine. 'OK, Grandad. I'm ready to go.'

Scarlett thought through her options. Could she really let her brother travel through time alone? Didn't she have a duty to look after him? If she couldn't stop him, shouldn't she go with him to make sure he didn't suffer some terrible accident?

She would have liked to sit down and consider the matter properly, maybe writing a list of pros and cons, thinking through all



the alternatives, and discussing all the issues before reaching a conclusion and deciding on the most sensible course of action. Unfortunately, she didn't have time for any of that, because Grandad was already touching a screen on his time machine, spinning a dial, choosing the year where Thomas would end up. He moved the dial back a thousand years, then another thousand, but wasn't sure where to stop it. He looked at his grandchildren.

'When were the Vikings?' he asked.

Thomas shrugged his shoulders. 'I haven't a clue.'

'You don't even know that?' Scarlett couldn't believe it. 'We've been studying them all term!'

'It's not my fault if I'm not interested in history.'

Grandad was still waiting for an answer. 'Come on, kids. Tell me. When were the Vikings?'

Scarlett knew the answer. 'Roughly between



the year 800 and the year 1000, although you could say the Age of the Vikings started earlier than that and ended after that.'

Grandad touched the screen again, and moved the dial to 800, then nudged it forwards a few notches. For no particular reason, he settled on the year 859. Then he turned the machine's main switch from OFF to ON. A low hum filled the workshop. Lights flashed. Tubes gurgled. Cylinders shook.

Discs spun. Fluid pumped.

The ground beneath their feet trembled as the enormous machine shuddered and whirred.



Thomas walked towards the door. It was open, but on the other side, there was nothing but darkness.

'Stop!' Scarlett yelled to her brother. 'You can't do this.'

‘You can’t tell me what to do,’ Thomas replied. ‘You’re not my mum.’

‘I am your big sister,’ Scarlett said.

‘You’re not bigger than me.’

‘I’m older than you.’

‘Don’t be silly.’

‘It’s a fact.’

Scarlett *was* older than her brother. And much more sensible. That was what she thought, anyway, and most people seemed to agree with her.

According to Thomas, they were the same age, but of course he was wrong. She had been born before him. Not very long, it was true. But twenty minutes was more than nothing, wasn’t it? So she was the oldest, and he was the youngest, and so he ought to do whatever she said. Unfortunately, he never did.

Now he gave her a little wave.

‘See you later,’ Thomas said, and stepped



through the doorway.

‘Wait,’ Scarlett cried, but she was too late. He had already disappeared. One moment, he had been there, and the next he was gone. The darkness had swallowed him up.

Scarlett turned and looked at her grandfather.

‘You really shouldn’t have done that,’ she said.

‘Sorry,’ Grandad replied with a cheerful grin. He clearly wasn’t sorry at all, merely delighted that his machine had worked so well.

‘Tell me one thing,’ Scarlett said. ‘How is Thomas going to get back again?’

‘Oh, you don’t have to worry about that. It’s very simple.’ Grandad held up a small device about the size of a phone. ‘You see this button? He simply presses it once. That’s all. Pressing the button activates the wormhole, which sucks him straight back again, and delivers him to this moment in time.’



Scarlett said, 'He presses that button right there?'

'Exactly.'

'While you're holding it?' Grandad stared at the object in his hand.

'Oh, dear,' he said. 'I must have forgotten to give it to him.'

'Grandad!'



Ten minutes later, Scarlett was ready. She was wearing two tiny translators of her own, one fixed to the back of her front teeth, the other tucked behind her right ear, so she could

Speak and understand any language. She had the device safely tucked in her pocket. She simply had to find Thomas, hold his hand, and press the button, then the two of them would be whisked back through the wormhole and delivered to their own time.

Scarlett felt nervous, but she knew she had no choice. She couldn't abandon Thomas in the year 859.

Grandad nodded to her. The machine was ready. As soon as she stepped through the doorway, the wormhole would link together two points in time and space, and deliver her from one to the other.

Scarlett would have liked some information about the time machine, the wormhole, and how they worked. Would she be safe? Had her grandfather used the time machine himself? If not, why not? And if she was trapped in the year 859, with or without Thomas, what was she meant to do next? Would they both have to

spend the rest of their lives in the time of the Vikings?

She did try to ask some of these questions, but Grandad refused to answer them. He would tell her more about the time machine when she returned with Thomas, he promised.

‘Good luck,’ Grandad said.

‘Thanks.’

Scarlett took a quick breath, then strode quickly to the doorway, and stepped into the darkness.