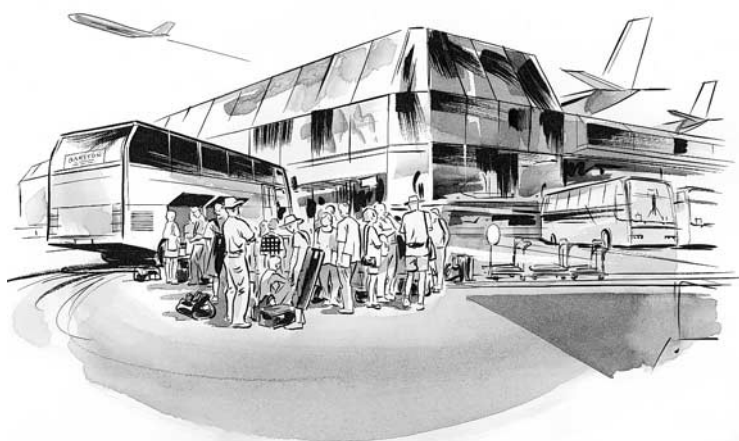


Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-65613-9 - The Double Bass Mystery  
Jeremy Harmer  
Excerpt  
[More information](#)

## Chapter 1 *A bit of a problem*



We came out of the airport building. All eighty-five players from the Barston Symphony Orchestra in England. The sun was shining. It was hot.

‘Welcome to Barcelona!’ Frank Shepherd said to us all. ‘Come this way. The coaches are waiting.’ We followed him. Somebody took a photograph.

The coaches left the airport and started on the motorway into Barcelona. Frank Shepherd came and sat next to me. Frank is the manager of the Barston Symphony Orchestra.

‘Penny,’ he said (that’s my name). ‘We’ve got a bit of a problem.’

‘What kind of a problem?’ I said.

‘Well, it’s your double bass,’ he said.

‘My double bass? What’s wrong with my double bass?’

‘It isn’t here. It isn’t in Barcelona.’

‘What? Where is it?’

‘I’m afraid that I just don’t know,’ Frank said.

Oh, sorry. I must tell you something about me because, well, this is my story. Actually that’s not quite true. It’s the story of a double bass too. People take things and somebody dies. But that’s for later. Now I’ll start at the beginning.

My name is Penny Wade. I am twenty-six years old. I play the double bass in the Barston Symphony Orchestra. There are eight double basses in the BSO. I am number eight. I got the job six months ago. The other seven players are all older or better than me. The trip to Spain was my first time with the orchestra in a foreign country.

‘What’s the problem?’ my friend Adriana said from the seat behind me. Adriana plays the violin in the orchestra.

‘It’s my double bass,’ I said. ‘Frank can’t find it.’

‘I’m sorry,’ Frank said. ‘We put it in the BSO truck in Barston and it wasn’t in the truck when it arrived in Barcelona.’

All the big instruments came by road. It was cheaper than taking them in a plane.

‘He says someone’s taken it,’ I told Adriana.

‘I said *perhaps* someone’s taken it,’ Frank said.

‘That’s no help at all,’ I said. I was angry. ‘*Perhaps* isn’t any good. Perhaps it fell off the truck. Perhaps someone wanted wood for their fire . . .’

‘Look,’ Adriana said. ‘This is stupid. Double basses are big. They don’t just fall off trucks.’

‘This one did,’ I said. I looked out of the window of the coach. We were arriving in Barcelona. My first foreign trip. Wonderful, don’t you think? But that’s just the problem. It wasn’t wonderful at all.