**The Planet Rescue Club – Book II**

**The Cottage that Disappeared**

## By Ruth Lillegraven

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CHAPTER 1

*FRIENDS ON THE FARM*

Sivert and Mo are visiting Vanja. It is spring. They have four days off from school so they have plenty of time to make plans for the Planet Rescue Club.

«We need headquarters. All real detective agencies have headquarters,» Mo says.

«I might know a good place,» Vanja says. «A place where Sivert and I have spent a lot of time. But do you want to come and see the bottle lambs first?»

«Bottle lambs? What’s that?» Mo says.

Vanja can’t help giggling. It is clear Mo grew up in a city.

«Bottle lambs are lambs that are nursed from a bottle because their mother is sick or dead,» she explains.

On the way over to the barn they hear strange noises. Knocking and banging sounds can be heard from up in the forest. They stop and look in the direction of the noise.

«What’s that?» Sivert asks.

«No idea,» Vanja says.

The noise dies down a little and they start walking again.

«This year there are four bottle lambs,» Vanja tells the others. They walk into the barn and over to the bottle lambs.

«Look how tiny they are!» Mo says.

«And how cute!» Sivert says.

The lambs come running over immediately.

«Bottle lambs are so used to people that they’re not scared at all,» Vanja says. «Say hi to Salt and Pepper.»

«Come on, let’s go see the cows,» she says after a while.

It is warm and cosy in the cowshed too. And quiet, except for the sound of animals chewing and moving about. Vanja leads the others over to a cow deep inside the cowshed.

«Wilma is so sweet and good,» Vanja explains and pats the cow. «She’s my favourite cow.»

«You’ve had her for a long time,» Sivert says.

Vanja nods.

«There sure is a lot to see here on the farm,» Mo says.

Vanja and Sivert exchange glances.

«But we have something else that’s even more exciting,» Vanja begins. «A lovely cottage in the forest here, by the path leading up into the mountains. I don’t know who the owner is, I’ve never seen people there. There are some great climbing trees beside the porch…»

«Yeah, and Vanja and I know where the key is,» Sivert claims. «So sometimes we let ourselves in and hang out there for a little while.»

«But doesn’t anyone notice?» Mo marvels.

Vanja shakes her head.

«No, like I said, there’s never anyone there. That’s what’s so strange.»

«We actually feel like it’s our cottage,» Sivert says. «We usually lie on the couch under a blanket and read old comic books … But it’s a secret.»

«Boy, you two are nuts,» Mo says.

It is not far to the cottage, but the path is steep. The noise they heard earlier has stopped. Although the cottage is in the middle of the forest, it offers a view of the whole village. Vanja loves sitting on a branch in one of the climbing trees and thinking. Sometimes they hang up hammocks between the trees and lie in them.

«Uh oh,» Sivert says. He stops suddenly as they round a bend in the path and see the cottage. Or to be exact: they see what is left of the cottage.

«Oh no,» Vanja says. Her heart sinks like a stone. «Oh no, oh no …»

«Is this your cottage?» Mo asks and looks at a huge pile of boards, shingles, and bricks from the fireplace. Furniture is strewn across the ground. There is the couch they used to lie on. What in the world has happened?

CHAPTER 2

*THE VETERINARIAN*

They walk home in silence. Sivert sniffles a little, but Vanja is busy with her own thoughts. She couldn’t believe that someone would destroy their secret playhouse.

«What happened?» Vanja’s mother asks them when they arrive at the house.

«Somebody tore down our lovely cottage in the forest,» Vanja says. «Why do people do things like that?»

«I don’t understand it either,» her mother says and shakes her head.

«Who really owns that cottage? The owner must know about this?» Vanja asks.

«I have no idea,» her mother says. «Ask your father, he’s lived here the longest. I’ll go see him with you.»

They find Vanja’s father in the yard and tell him about the cottage up in the forest.

«Goodness,» Vanja’s father says. «So that’s where all the noise was coming from.»

«But who owns the cottage?» Vanja asks.

«A wealthy family with a strange name. Ferner-Fougner or something like that. They’ve had the cottage for thirty years but never use it. I’ve always wondered why. It’s a bit of a mystery.»

«What should we do?»

«Hmm,» father says. «I don’t know. We don’t own the cottage, after all. Let me think…»

«Can we go see Wilma again?» Mo asks. He and Sivert have come over to join the others.

«Of course,» Vanja says and smiles. But when they enter the cowshed, they find Wilma lying on the floor and breathing hard.

«Oh no,» Vanja says and bites her lower lip. «Not Wilma …»

«What is it?» Mo asks.

«Many of the animals have been sick lately,» Vanja explains. «We think maybe they’ve eaten something they can’t stomach. And we even had to put two cows down. Mummy and Daddy are losing money. But the worst part is that the poor animals suffer so much. We must tell Daddy. He’ll want to call the vet.»

Vanja’s father calls Torill, the veterinarian. She arrives right away. She happened to be at the neighbouring farm when she received his call. Now she looks pretty worried. «Another cow?» she asks.

«The best one I have,» Vanja’s father confirms.

«No, she’s not well, this one,» Torill says after having examined Wilma.

«I hope we won’t have to put her down as well?» her father says. He looks like he is about to cry.

Vanja can feel her eyes filling with tears.

«Let’s see if she can get through this,» Torill says. «I’ll give her some medicine. And she should get some air.» The veterinarian looks at Sivert, Mo and Vanja. «Maybe you would like to take her outside?» she asks.

All three of them nod. Father brings out a rope that he ties to Wilma and Vanja takes hold of the end of it. Wilma walks stiffly and unsteadily across the floor of the cowshed. After five minutes the veterinarian tells them to bring her back into the cowshed.

«What really happened to Wilma?» Mo asks.

«Well,» the veterinarian says. «Something that happens a lot is that people throw metal tins out of car windows and into the fields. The tins are ground up by harvesting machines into tiny pieces that get into animal feed. Nobody discovers it, not even the cows. They eat feed containing small, sharp pieces of metal. This can kill them.»

«How awful,» Vanja says.

«Shall we go for a bike ride?” Sivert suggests when the veterinarian has left. “We can try to find a new headquarters for the Planet Rescue Club, now that we don’t have the cottage?”

Vanja nods, even though she doesn’t feel like it. They ride their bikes around on the gravel roads. There are spring flowers everywhere and the sun is shining. But Vanja is sad about the cottage and Wilma.

“I have to go home,” she says after a while.

“OK,” Sivert says. “Mo and I can look a little more. Should we come by tomorrow and see how everything’s going?”

“Yes,” Vanja nods. “Come tomorrow. We don’t have school.”

CHAPTER 3

*VANJA FOLLOWS A HUNCH*

When Vanja gets home after her bike ride, she joins her parents to watch the lambs, who are outdoors for the first time and giddy with spring fever. They are so small and cute and frisky, leaping here and there. The sun is low over the hills.

«What a lovely evening,» Vanja’s mother says.

«Yes,» Father says. «I just wish I wasn’t so worried about Wilma.»

Vanja feels a jab in her stomach. She had forgotten about Wilma for a little while. But not for long. Poor Wilma. She must get better.

At that moment they hear a clattering noise from up in the woods.

«Oh no, not again!» Mother says. «So late in the day. My, my. Let’s go inside. Are you coming, Vanja?»

«In a minute, I just want to watch the lambs for a while. It’s so nice out now,» Vanja says.

She has an idea. The best thing would have been to ask Sivert and Mo to accompany her. But the boys have ridden their bikes home. And she’s only going to go for a short walk in her own forest. Nothing wrong with that.

There is a car in the car park for the cottages. That’s out of the ordinary. How strange.

She walks quickly up the path. The sun has set, and it is dark between the trees. The sounds from the cottage grow louder. A chainsaw. Something that sounds like a sledgehammer. Her body grows tense. What will she find? And should she do a little spying, see what these cottage people are up to? Or should she talk to them?

Then Vanja discovers that two lambs are following her. Salt and Pepper. Of course. That’s just typical of them, to follow on her heels. She turns around so she is facing them and whispers: «Salt and Pepper, go home. Now!»

But the lambs just look at her, cocking their heads.

«You’re not supposed to be here. You’re too far away from the farm. Scoot,» she says and waves her arms. Then finally they turn around and walk a little way back down the path.

Vanja reaches the final bend in the path before the cottage. She stops for a moment. She has walked here many times, alone, together with Sivert or with others. But now everything is different. It doesn’t feel like a game any longer.

Should she run back down to the farm? That would probably be the most sensible thing to do. But no, she can’t turn back now.

She walks the final steps around the bend and sees what is left of the cottage.

CHAPTER 4

*A MEETING IN THE FOREST*

Now even more of the cottage has been torn down. There is a big pile of debris on the ground. Two men with their backs to her are hard at work tearing down the remainder of the cottage with a crowbar and a sledgehammer.

Vanja doesn’t move. Her heart is pounding. It’s still not too late to turn back. Then she hears a bleating sound behind her. She spins around. Salt and Pepper are standing there. She turns to face the cottage again. And looks straight at the two men.

«Well, what do we have here?» one of them says, a man with a bushy beard.

«What are you doing here?» the other one says, a red-headed man.

«I live on the farm down below,» Vanja says. «We were wondering what was going on up here. My friends and I used to play in … uh, by this cottage.»

«That old shack? It’s gone,» the man with the beard says. «They’re going to build a much bigger and fancier cottage here.»

«But the cottage that was here was nice,» Vanja says.

The man laughs.

«The owners didn’t think so. Contact their company, Ferner-Fougner Ltd. Or don’t. You’re a child, what do you care?»

Vanja scans her surroundings. When she starts to speak again her voice is trembling.

«You should clean up here! This rubbish is dangerous for the animals!»

And then Vanja notices that they have chopped down her climbing tree.

«Oh no, my tree!» pops out of her mouth.

«Hey, Nancy Drew,» the bearded man says and starts walking towards Vanja. «I think it’s time for you to go home and play, stop snooping around here!»

«Are you hiding something?» a familiar voice says from behind her.

Vanja turns around. Sivert and Mo are standing there. She has never been happier to see them.

«A whole flock of spoiled brats,» the bearded man says. «Get out of here. This is private property.»

«Um,» Sivert says. «The forest is open to everyone. And Vanja’s father owns almost everything around here.»

«Not this lot,» the red-headed man says, glaring at them. «It belongs to

Ferner-Fougner Ltd.» The man starts up the chainsaw and points the sputtering blade at the Planet Rescue Club.

The loud noise makes Vanja jump and she nods at Mo and Sivert.

«Come on, let’s go,» she says.

«A good thing you came,» Vanja says to the others when they have rounded the bend. Salt and Pepper are still scampering at their heels. «But how did you know where I was? I thought you’d gone home a long time ago.»

«We heard something down in the village that we wanted to tell you about,» Sivert says. «So, we rode our bikes back. You weren’t there and your parents didn’t know where you were. We heard the noises coming from here and figured out the rest. But you came here alone. Shouldn’t you have waited for us? It could have been dangerous.»

Vanja nods. «Yes. Sorry … But what did you want to tell me?»

«We heard that a company wants to build a lot of big cottages around here. Without permission,» Sivert answers.

In each book in the series there will be 2 pages with environmental facts, as this in book 2:

Environmental facts

**OLE MATHIS MOEN**

Ole is a journalist and the author of “Green Things” (*Grønne greier).*

*WHY IS LITTER AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM?*

Trash is ugly and it hurts and kills animals. If a seagull eats pieces of plastic that are floating in the ocean, it will often die. When a wild animal cuts their foot on a broken bottle, the cut can become infected. Toxic waste can poison and kill many animals. Car batteries taste like salt, so animals lick them and swallow chemicals.

*WHY IS THERE SO MUCH LITTER IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?*

Either because people have thrown out or dropped garbage, or because the wind has blown it there. A lot of the litter on beaches in Norway was carried there from other countries by ocean currents. But Norwegians also throw trash into the natural environment. Take your trash with you when you leave!

*DOES IT HELP?*

Yes. If every fifth person in Norway bends down and picks up five pieces of litter on the street or in the forest and fields every day, together we will remove thirty-five tons of trash a day! A lot of what you see on the street – a plastic cup, chewing gum or a bag – will eventually end up in the ocean.

*WHY IS THERE SO MUCH TRASH?*

When we buy new things, we often throw out the old things. Norwegians buy more new things than everyone else in Europe. In the course of one year, we discard 740 kilos of trash, while a Swedish person only throws out 450 kilos.

*BUT OUR TRASH DOESN’T END UP IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?*

In Norway, people are good about delivering their trash to recycling, composting or incineration centres. A lot of countries do not have such a system and 40 percent of all waste in the world is discarded in the natural environment or burned illegally.

*WHAT KIND OF WASTE CAN I BURN OR BURY MYSELF?*

None. All waste is to be sorted and delivered to processing centres. It is strictly prohibited to bury or burn waste in a campfire or woodstoves. We are only allowed to burn branches and leaves.

*THIS IS WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU DISCOVER SOMEBODY BURNING OR BURYING WASTE:*

*1.*

Make a list of what you have seen or found. Write down the location.

*2.*

It can be a good idea to take a picture but don’t trespass on private property that is fenced in.

*3.*

Call the local authorities and ask to speak with the person in charge of environmental affairs. Tell them what you have seen.

*4.*

If the local authorities don’t do anything, you can send a complaint to the chief administrative officer in your county. Write an e-mail or a letter.

*5.*

If you discover that hazardous waste is being buried or dumped, you can also call the police. They have their own people who work with environmental issues.

Read the first book in The Planet Rescue Club series!

SIVERT MO

The Black Swans

When we meet The Planet Rescue Club for the first time, Mo has just moved to the village. A boat crashes into the quay next to the factory. Vanja, Sivert and Mo discover an oil spill in the fjord and the white swans are covered with black oil. Did the oil come from the boat or is somebody polluting the fjord on purpose?

GARDEN TIL

VANJA

BADESTRANDA

VESLE

BRYGGA

AVISA

SKULEN

FABRIKKEN

BRYGGA

POLITI