Chapter 1

It was Saturday. The last Saturday in April. No school. A perfect spring day in Vancouver. The houses on Twenty-First Avenue were quickly drying off from the morning rain. Wendy Appleton walked along thinking of the people living there: Mr. and Mrs. Beale, Mrs. Creech and Mrs. Haddock. Funny, she thought, the way houses start to look like their owners. At the end of the street she saw her friend Zachary Plummer waiting for her in front of his house. They were taking the number seven bus to Granville Island like they did every Saturday.

"Say, it's going to be a hot day today. Let's get ice cream," suggested Zach.

"Do you have money?" asked Wendy.

"Yeah, my mom gave me five bucks. Let's spend it!"

When the bus dropped them off, they walked as fast as they could over the causeway to Granville Island. Up ahead they heard a steel-drum band playing loudly. Wendy led the way to the boardwalk triangle in front of the French bakery. They skipped right up to where a crowd was laughing and swaying in time to the music.

"Let's stop and listen," said Wendy, pushing in closer.

"What about our ice cream?" Zach complained.

"Music is the food of the soul, Zach. Forget about your stomach for once."

Zach groaned but followed his friend.

There were five musicians standing behind their steel drums. Their shoulders bounced. Their feet tapped. Their drumsticks moved in a blur. Two of the drummers wore strange hats with bright-blue and orange feathers. The audience was swaying, stomping and smiling to the music.

"Look. There's crabby Mrs. Creech." Zach pointed to the one unsmiling face in the crowd.

"She's not crabby," said Wendy.

"She's always yelling at me," said Zach.

"That's because you always cut across her lawn," said Wendy.

Wendy wanted everyone in the world to be as happy as she was right now. If only she could do something to make Mrs. Creech happy. She watched Mrs. Creech moving about at the back of the crowd. She thought the old woman looked confused.

"She's waiting to cross the street to the market," said Wendy. "But look at that traffic. I bet she's been waiting there for ages. It must be tough being old."

The cars were not moving very fast, but they were bumper to bumper.

"Let's help her across," said Wendy. She walked right in front of the musicians and out through the crowd. Zach sighed and followed her.

Wendy marched right up to Mrs. Creech and grabbed her by one arm. "We'll help you, Mrs. Creech," she said. "Come on, Zach." Zach grabbed Mrs. Creech's other arm, and they started to steer her carefully through the continuous stream of cars.

"Wha...!" cried Mrs. Creech in alarm, struggling feebly.

"It's okay, Mrs. Creech. It's me, Wendy Appleton. I live two doors down from you, you know."

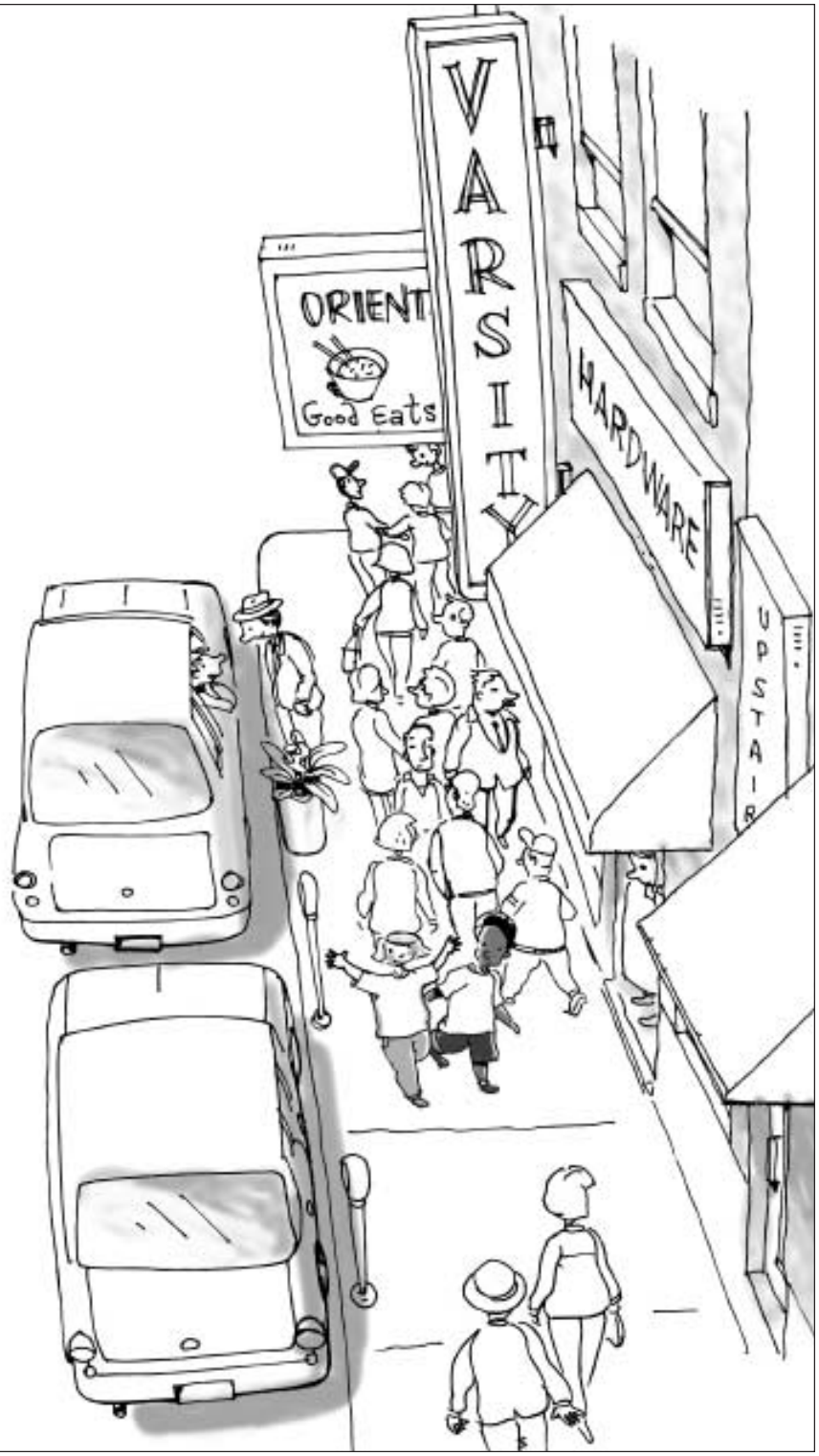
They carried the old woman across the street. Mrs. Creech weighed only about as much as a seagull. Then they placed her gently and safely on the other side near the potted plants and sweet-smelling flowers outside the market entrance.

"B-but..." spluttered Mrs. Creech, waving her skinny arms about like wings. "Take your hands..." She pushed backward, trying to escape. "Arrgh! You b-boys!"

"I'm a girl, Mrs. Creech," said Wendy. "But that's okay. Don't feel bad about it. It's probably my short hair and these old jeans. We're glad we could be of help."

Free at last, Mrs. Creech muttered and cursed and shook her fist at Zach. Dodging skilfully

through the traffic, she went back across the street into the crowd and the happy music.

Sheesh! Zach thought. *She didn't really want to cross the road after all. She was just listening to the band.*

"Come on, Zach, let's go get that ice cream," Wendy said. "And then we'll take the bus up to Point Grey to look for other folks to help out."