

## **Who When Wow, Season 2, Episode 3**

### **The Dancing Plague**

**Carly.** Psst! Hi. It's me. I'm back with another edition of my super-secret podcast that we cannot talk about. Now if you know anything about me, you know I love a good mystery almost as much as I love pie. (and that's saying a lot) But did you know I also like dancing? Well, today's mystery has both. I'm Carly Q, and this is Who, When Wow, The Mystery Edition!

(Theme song)

**Carly.** So you know I work at BUTTHEAD -that stands for Bureau of Universal Time Travel Historical Exploration Division... it's okay, you can laugh at that. I'm a Junior Temporal Analyst, but that just pays the bills... What I *really* do is investigate history's mysteries through this secret - yet very exciting - podcast. I repeat, what you're listening to is a SECRET. You never heard the words you're hearing me say right now.

(Sound bite dripping water)

**Carly.** My desk is in the basement of the BUTTHEAD building. There aren't many benefits to being in the basement, but it DOES mean I get to eat as much of the complimentary candy as I want. I am the keeper of the candy dish!

(Soundbite of candy unwrapping)

**Carly.** And my job is to catalog random historical events. They send down audio files from upstairs on little thumb drives.

(Sound bite of Thumb drive falling down the vacuum tube)

**Audio File.** Nellie Bly, investigative reporter, first person to travel around the world, completed in 180 days.

**Carly.** Then it's my job to tag it with a case number, note it on the master file, cross reference it with the time frame, and blah blah blah blah blah blah.

**Carly in background.** Aaaaaaannnnndddd cataloged!

**Carly.** (Continued) It's boring work, but sometimes.

**Audio File.** Event: (BLEEP) STRASBOURG, FRANCE (BLEEEP) JULY 1518,

(BLEEEEEEP) DANCING PLAGUE.

**Carly.** Dancing? Okay! This one was definitely worth investigating! Why would they time seal a plague? I HAD to know more. I know a plague is a serious contagious disease. Lucky for us, the Bureau has a really cool time traveling elevator that I've been using to investigate these mysteries. What kind of plague involves dancing? But I don't exactly have clearance to use it, so I have to pick my moments. I was about to head to the elevator when,

**Lewis.** Heeyyy Carly Q.

(Soundbite of Lewis clanking down the metal stairs)

**Carly.** Ugh, Lewis. This is my nosy coworker who's always coming downstairs to bug me. What's another word for enemy? Nemesis ? Antagonist...? Yes, Lewis is my antagonist and, as usual, the first thing he did was grab a bottle of fizzy water from the fridge.

(Soundbite of Opening and slamming of refrigerator)

**Carly.** And a handful of complimentary candy.

**Lewis.** (chewing) Soo Whaaatcha doing Carly Q? Ooh! This candy-dish is less than 1/3 full, and that's a no-no. Maybe somebody's been enjoying the company perks a little too much?

**Carly.** What? That is not true Lewis. I fill it up every morning.

**Lewis.** Well, there's only a third left and you're down here by your lonesome, right? Who ate the other two thirds of the candy?

**Carly.** I will only admit this here, but Lewis had a point. Well, I *have* been sharing with my friend Nibbles. And I hate it when he uses fractions against me.

**Lewis.** Oh Carly, tell me you haven't been feeding the rats again.

**Carly.** What? No! Nibbles is the..Delivery lady.

(Soundbite of faint rat squeak)

**Carly.** (covering the squeak) weeee! I love this candy so much it makes me wanna squeak!

**Lewis.** I just think you want to be careful about how much of this stuff you eat.

**Carly.** (mouthful) Well, iff nop goob for ooo eeeverr!

**Lewis.** (spits candy out) Ewww. Lemon. Who likes those?

**Carly.** (with mouthfull) I know, right?

**Lewis.** Well, anyway... you might wanna think about refilling that thing. Or moving away from your desk. Or maybe both? But I gotta go. Someone's gonna be late for a meeting -- but it's not gonna be *me*! Bye Carly Quuuuuuuuuue!

(Soundbite of Lewis' footsteps grow quieter as he exits)

**Carly.** Ugh! Talking to him is like eating an old potato! But back to the Dancing Plague. I had to focus. I pulled out my Handheld Digital Assistance Device H-dad.

**H-dad.** Ready for action!

**Carly.** and plugged in the clues from the time- sealed file.

**Carly.** H-DAD is *supposed* to have useful information for me, but all I got was...

**H-dad.** Strasbourg, A city located in Alsace, a cultural region in what is now Eastern France on the Rhine River's west bank next to Germany.

**Carly.** Right. OK. But.. DANCING. DANCING STRASBOURG 1518.

**H-dad.** Dance: the activity of body movement for pleasure or in order to entertain others.

**Carly.** No, H-DAD I want to know what happened in Strasbourg, in July 1518 , that *included dancing*.

**H-dad.** Dancing woman emoji. French flag emoji! German flag emoji!

**Carly.** H-dad.

**H-dad.** Analyzing. Analyzing. Analyzing.

**Carly.** UGH. While H-DAD did his thing, I shared another candy or two with Nibbles the rat. She was in her usual hang- out, behind the fake plant behind my desk. Sometimes, I wish she could talk all the time and not just when we time travel.

(Sound bite of rat squeaking)

**Carly.** Yeah, I literally have no idea what you're saying to me right now.

**P.A Voice.** Attention, Butthead employees: It is my pleasure to announce, Lunch.

**Carly.** Oooh! But you *can* hop into my bag and join me for another mystery if you want? Lunch break is the perfect time to sneak into the time traveling elevator!

(Soundbite rat squeaks)

**Carly.** Nibbles hopped into my bag, I grabbed H-DAD and the candy dish, and the three of us took off for the elevator operated by Odie. Our next time travel adventure awaits.

**Odie.** Oh look, it's my basement companion again.

**Carly.** Odie! I missed you, friend.

**Odie.** We are friends?

**Carly.** Absolutely! Look ... I have a gift for you!

**Odie.** You brought me an empty candy dish?

**Carly.** Uhhh... yeaah. It's for you to use when you have candy. Obviously.

**Odie.** Thank you, I guess.

**Carly.** Odie, you're gonna love this. I found another time-sealed file this morning: July 1518 , Strasbourg, and it has something to do with ... dancing and a plague!

**Odie.** I do not like dancing. Or plagues.

**Carly.** Really? Well I mean nobody likes plagues, but no dancing? At all?

**Odie.** I said what I said.

**Carly.** You dance right Nibbles? I made a mental note to take Odie dancing someday. Get her out of this elevator. Hit the dance floor. Just a couple of gals.

**Odie.** You are most likely referring to the famous dancing plague of 1518 , where people actually danced themselves to death.

**Carly.** What? Why would people do that?

**Odie.** You tell me. You're the detective.

**Carly.** Yes.. I am.

**Odie.** Well, remember Detective basement companion, sometimes too much of a good thing can be a very bad thing.

(Soundbite Wind chimes)

**Carly.** I don't underst--

**Odie.** You need get going, you don't have all day. Remember the time-travel rules? You may observe and ask questions, but do not meddle. You will automatically speak and understand the native language of everyone within range of the elevator..

**Carly.** Got it.

**Odie.** And always wait at least 30 minutes after you eat before swimming.

**Carly.** Is that a time travel rule?

**Odie.** No. But it's important... When you arrive back in time, a card reader will remain where you came in. You **MUST** return to it before the end of your lunch break.

**Carly.** Since the file's time-sealed I know I can't go back *during* the event.

**Odie.** Correct. For this file, the closest I can do is get you there a few hours *after* the event.

**Carly.** Great! Then I can ask questions while everything's still fresh.

**Odie.**Then here you go. But whatever you do, don't dance.

(Soundbite ding and traveling sounds then landing)

**Carly.** Wow! I'm here! I traveled all the way back to Strasbourg in 1518 .

**H-dad.** Strasbourg, A free city located in Alsace, ,a cultural region in what is now Eastern France, on the Rhine River`s west bank, next to Germany.

**Carly.** Yeah, you said that already.

**H-dad.** French flag emoji, German flag emoji,handshake emoji

**Carly.** My highly trained extremely sensitive detective eyeballs noticed a few important details right away: First - people were everywhere, but no one was on their phone. Not cars, but lots of horses and carts.Sleepy people. Most people looked...really tired, even though it was a beautiful day.

(Soundbite rat squeaks)

**Nibbles.** (muffled from inside backpack)...and it's HOT!

**Carly.** Fields of Flowers over there and...Oh, Nibbles! Yeah, you can probably peek your head out here. Something tells me these folks are used to rats... and it IS a little steamy. I think it's the middle of summer.

**Nibbles.** And I'm basically wearing a full-length fur coat in here.

(Soundbite a group of people talking over each other nearby)

**Carly.** You hear that? Sounds like something's going on in town. Come on Let's check it out!

**Nibbles.** And maybe find us some water while we're at it? All that candy made me parched... Maybe a Sports Drink! I like the blue kind.

**Carly.** Uh, I don't think they, Woah. Look at all those people sleeping on the ground. Wait! Is that how sleeping was done back in this time? When were beds invented?!?

**Nibbles.** You know, I actually think they're just unconscious. Look You see those people fanning them? Maybe they passed out from the heat... It's so important to hydrate. Forrea.l

**Carly.** I'm gonna to talk to this woman. H-dad activate the time elevator`s translation feature.

(Soundbite fast steps skid to stop)

**Carly.** Uh, excuse me. Can you tell me what happened here? Why are so many people on the ground? Was it the heat? Or the plague thing? Or are they meditating?

**Townsperson.** Are you the inquisitor sent by the parish?

**Carly.** Yes! Yes I am. Sure.

**Townsperson.** It's about time. The people are sick because of the dancing. So much dancing! They couldn't stop!

**Carly.** That many people? They all just started dancing at once?

**Townsperson.** No, no... It was Frau Troffea first. We all thought she must have gotten some good news when we saw her dancing in the street. See, we've been suffering from a horrible famine, after bitter winters and scorching hot summers damaged most of our crops.

**Townsperson.** No one stopped Frau Troffea from dancing because we all could use some fun. Whoo.

**Carly.** I get that.

**Townsperson.** But then, she just kept at it, and her family got worried. After almost a week she started to look quite bad, and then she collapsed.

**Carly.** After a week? Wow... I start to sweat after one song!

**Townsperson.** The people gathered around, gave her water to drink, fanned her face from the heat....and then, a few moments later she GOT BACK UP! And actually started dancing again! Like it had never happened!

**Carly.** Did she say anything while she was dancing?

**Townsperson.** Not that I could understand. Mostly just mumbling.

**Carly.** Ok So that was Frau Troffea. When did other people start doing it?

**Townsperson.** Well....each day more and more people would join in. It was almost as if the dancing was...CONTAGIOUS! Before we knew it, there were over four HUNDRED people dancing! Twirls and jigs! Stomps and swaying! I'd never seen anything like it!

**Carly.** Four hundred people?! What do you think is causing this?

**Townsperson.** I...I don't know if I should say. You should speak with the doctor.

**Carly.** I would love to speak with the doctor. But...c'mon, you can tell me! I'm the inquisitor, remember?

**Townsperson.** (lowers voice) Well....I suppose...here...come closer.

**Carly.** Yeeeeessss??

**Townsperson.** (Sudddenly loud and panicky) I think Frau was possessed! By the devil!

**Carly.** Uh. Ok. That's... a lot...

**Townsperson.** Maybe she read or saw something that got inside her head and told her to keep dancing! And then it jumped from person to person! You must beware, it can take over anyone's mind. WE'RE NOT SAFE HERE!

**Nibbles.** Yeeeeeaaah, maybe we should leave Devil lady here with her sleeping friends and go find that doctor...?

**Carly.** (whispering back) Good idea.

**Townsperson.** AHH! You have a talking rat on your shoulder! NOW THE ANIMALS ARE POSSESSED?!? AHHHHHH!!!!

(Soundbite of the townsperson running away)

**Nibbles and Carly.** Rude.

**Carly.** But maybe you should try and stay hidden for now.

**Nibbles.** Get me a blue sports drink and I'll lay low forever.



**Carly.** Well, Let's find that town doctor first.

**Nibbles.** Fine. But then a drink of some sort. Any sort. I'll even drink the light green stuff.

**Carly.** Will you quit it with the sports drinks?! I have to concentrate on finding a doctor in this crowd?

**Nibbles.** (shouting) Medic! Medic! We need medical attention over here!! We need a Gatorade IV and a side order of pie, stat!

**Carly.** Nibbles!

**Nibbles.** What? I'm just trying to help find the doctor!

**Carly.** That's not how you do it. We're detectives. We use the power of observation. Look. See that guy over there with the bag and the hat?

**Nibbles.** He looks like he's helping somebody on the ground.

**Carly.** Right, so maybe.

(Soundbite of Carly's footsteps, noise of townspeople chatter)

**Doctor.** I want you to rest and absolutely no tensing.

**Carly.** Excuse me. Umm, I'm looking for the doctor!

**Doctor.** Why, yes. I'm the doctor.

**Carly.** Oh, great! How did I know that?

**Doctor.** Are you suffering symptoms?

**Carly.** No, no. I was just passing through and saw all these people passed out -- and the commotion...

**Doctor.** Yes, we've had quite the scare. Half the town has come down with the most confusing affliction. I can only describe it as some sort of dancing mania.

**Carly.** But what's caused it?

**Doctor.** I wish I knew, I've never seen anything like it. When it took over the first dozen people, I prescribed "more dancing."

**Nibbles.** (from the backpack) He did what??

**Doctor.** Did you hear that voice?

**Carly.** No! I did not hear that voice! But hold on, what do you mean, you told people who couldn't stop dancing to keep dancing *more*?

**Doctor.** Well it was either "keep dancing" or my usual go-to cure... Here, let me just reach in here and get my-

(Soundbite Wet, squishy sound)

**Doctor.** LEECHES! Ahh!

**H-dad.** Screaming face emoji!

**Doctor.** Now that time I definitely heard something.

**Carly.** Nope that was just me, I'm just extremely...screaming face?

**Doctor.** But whatever for? Five out of six medieval healthcare professionals recommend using leeches. It's very simple, you just let the slimy creatures latch onto your skin, then they get to work sucking out all of your blood. The bad blood anyway.

**Carly.** Well, that is a wonderful image I'll be able to carry with me through the rest of the day. And perhaps my entire life

**Doctor.** Well, I must be off to help my patients. Back in the bag, my dear friends..Blood Blood plenty of blood

(Soundbite of Wet, squishy sound as leeches are shoved back in the bag. Then, footsteps as the doctor leaves)

**Carly.** Okay Nibbles, so far we know that one person started dancing and then others joined in. For some reason hundreds of people started dancing and then didn't - or couldn't stop...H-DAD is there any chance that you've finished--

**H-dad.** Analyzing... Analyzing... Analyzing

**Carly.** No, come on H-DAD, we're running out of time!

(Soundbite Carly shakes the metal device and smacks it against her hand)

**Nibbles.** Hey! Don't hit it! That only works in movies and- .

**H-dad.** Full analysis complete!

**Nibbles.** Or...never mind.

**H-dad.** Multiple scientific theories were later presented to explain the dancing plague. Theory one: Irgotism, a fungal infection causing people to convulse and hallucinate, resulting from a mold that grows on damp rye.

**Carly.** Yuck!

**Nibbles.** Now that sounds promising.

**H-dad.** This theory has been disproven.

**Nibbles.** Alright, I'm just going to stop talking now.

**H-dad.** Many of the townsfolk here would not have consumed rye at this time, making this theory irrelevant...

**Carly.** Ugh,that one sounded so good too!Well , I mean it sounded gross, but you know,viable.

**H-dad.** Rye wasn't available to many of the townspeople at the time due to poor crop output...Theory two: Stress- induced mass hysteria. Wild eyes emoji!

**Carly.** Mass *hysteria*??!

**H-dad.** This can result from prolonged psychological stress, causing victims to enter an involuntary trance state that can be highly contagious.

**Carly.** Wait -- H-DAD, can you replay what the townsperson said about the hardships they've been facing?

**H-dad.** Searching... Searching... Replaying transcript of random townsperson:

**Townsperson.** *"We've been suffering from a horrible famine, after bitter winters and scorching hot summers damaged most of our crops."*

**Carly.** That's it! They've been suffering from very hard times which opened them up to stress-induced mass hysteria! I think We did it! We cracked the case!

(Soundbite of Carly dancing on the dirt road)

**Nibbles.** Are you...is that supposed to be dancing?

**Carly.** Yes? I'm dancing with joy what's the problem?

**Nibbles.** You are doing JUMPING JACKS! That is NOT a dance move!

**Carly.** It is to me! It's my HAPPY dance!

**Nibbles.** But what if the "plague" here was simpler, what if it was just a case of following the leader?

**Carly.** Huh?

**Nibbles.** I mean, times are tough here. These folks have been suffering for a long time, right? Suddenly, it looks like someone in their town is actually having fun. Maybe everybody else wants in on the fun?

**Carly.** I guess that could make sense.

**Nibbles.** Maybe people here are so stressed out, they can't tell the difference between enough and too much.

**Carly.** Kind of like us with that candy dish.

**Nibbles.** Only without all of the annoying physical activity.

**Carly.** I wonder if this has ever happened before. H-DAD, have there been other times in history with dancing plagues?

**H-dad.** Affirmative! Dancing mania has occurred in numerous German towns: Kölbick in 1021, Erfurt in 1247, Aachen in 1384, Trier in 1437, Mars Colony Beta

**Carly.** So this wasn't a unique thing!

**H-dad.** Incoming message from Butthead- quarters.

**P.A Voice.** Lunch time is over. Finish chewing and get back to work.

**Nibbles.** So, all these instances of dancing mania could have completely different explanations, right? Some could be the hysteria, some could be the mold thing... some people might love jumping jacks

**Carly.** Ah ha Alright so there could be more than one explanation, you're right.

**Nibbles.** Well at least we know more about what exactly happened here. And we avoided the leech thing.

**Carly.** True. Maybe Odie will have some advice.

**Nibbles.** And maybe a drink of water! Or Iced tea. Oh Iced Tea would be nice.

**Carly.** And how! Alright, here's the elevator. Let me just get the key card and --

(Soundbite of key card beep, time travel noises -- and then another DING)

**Odie.** Welcome back, basement companion. Did you find what you were looking for?

**Carly.** Sort of? It sounds like the dancing mania in Strasbourg was probably caused by stress-induced mass hysteria. But it happened lots of other places too, and Nibbles pointed out that it could have a totally different explanation each time it occurred. I guess the short answer is, no one really knows for sure. And I think that's Okay

**Odie.** That *is* OK. Your rat drinking out of my thermos is not.

**Carly.** Excuse me, Nibbles! Stop that!! Sorry... yeah, there's still a lot we don't know about what happened in Strasbourg, but you know nowadays we have a lot of ways to solve these kinds of problems, so I don't think there's another dancing plague in our immediate future.

**Odie.** That sounds like good detective work.

**Carly.** I just really wish I found out why all those people started dancing in the first place.

**Odie.** (Soundbite shaking full candy dish) Candy?

**Carly.** Oh, no thank you. I've already had way too much.

**Odie.** Ah! Then you have learned something important.

(Soundbite of Wind chimes)

**Carly.** Ohhh! "Too much of a good thing can be a very bad thing..." Dancing... Candy... Yeah Okay, Now I see what you mean!

**Odie.** Have a pleasant rest of your day, basement companion.

**Carly.** You too, Odie. And we need to go dancing soon.

**Odie.** I said GoodBye.

**Carly.** Too much of a good thing huh? Even candy. I walked back to my desk thinking about what Odie had said. And I decided to take the long way back, moving all of the extra candy from the basement to the break room upstairs. Sorry Nibbles, its for the best, at least I got you your sports drink. And atleast I can still do my happy dance.

(Soundbite of liquid being poured into a cup, then rat drinking it up)

**Carly.** (Continued) The mystery of the Dancing Plague is still a mystery, but we learned a whole lot today and we had an amazing adventure. Until next time, my friends! This is Carly Q signing off from our super-secret podcast. And remember: you never heard this!