

← PART FIVE →

WE CARRY OUT SOME
DARING NIGHT-TIME
 DETECTION



1

On Friday afternoon I arrived in the cloakroom rather before Daisy. I had decided, for the time being, to forgive her – at least until I had seen more of her plan. I was hunched up behind a thick grey row of coats, rubbing my ankle, and was just beginning to feel nervous about what we were about to do when I heard Daisy's voice say, 'Psst! Hazel!'

'Here!' I whispered, sticking my head round the end of my coat rack.

'Well lurked, Watson,' said Daisy, sitting down next to me with a *thump*. She pulled the little bottle out of her bag with a flourish and held it up in front

of us. 'Now, are you ready to begin investigating?'

We both looked at the bottle. I was quite ready to investigate, but not sure whether I wanted to go to San first.

'We must be careful not to take too much,' said Daisy. 'I remember Nanny saying that it could be dangerous.'

'How much is too much?' I asked.

'I've no idea,' said Daisy cheerfully. 'We'll just have to swig it and hope. Well, bottoms up!'

She took a gulp, made a face and handed the bottle to me. I sipped at it nervously. It tasted sticky and sugary-sweet, not at all the way I thought it would.

'Now water from the taps, quick,' Daisy said. I hurried after her and drank. Afterwards my mouth still felt gluey with sugar.

'What do we do now?' I asked.

'We wait. It shouldn't take too long. Don't worry, it's not so bad.'



That was a lie.

I had barely sat down in French before my stomach began to make the most extraordinary jumps and heaves inside me. I clapped my hand over my mouth in horror.

'Oh, Mamzelle,' cried Daisy dramatically from next to me, 'I think I'm going to be sick!'

And she was, spectacularly. After that, so was I, but since most people were already crowding round Daisy it was not so noticeable. We were both rushed to San, leaving nasty splotches behind us as we ran, and when we arrived Nurse Minn took one look at us,

stuck our heads over two buckets and left us to it.

'At least we're missing Department,' I said between heaves, an hour later. I hate Department, which is an hour of walking about with piles of books on your head.

'I don't mind Department,' said Daisy hollowly from within her bucket.

'I know you don't. *I* do,' I said, and heaved again.

But even missing Department was little comfort. I heaved for hours, all the way through tea and dinner, without wanting them at all. My stomach felt as though it had been turned inside out.

'I must say, this is rather worse than I remembered,' gasped Daisy. 'What I wouldn't give to stop so I could have a bun.'

The thought of that made me heave again, and then Daisy heaved too. It was all very miserable, and I decided in the middle of a particularly nasty retch that after this we deserved to find some really excellent clues.

'The two of you had better stay the night, I think,' said Minny, coming in to look at us. 'I've some things you can use to sleep in. Goodness, you did eat some-

thing that disagreed with you, didn't you?'

At last, after hours of being ill, the heaving stopped, and I was able to get up and put on the pyjamas Minny had left out for me. They managed to be both long in the legs and tight in the waist, and I saw in the San mirror that I looked like an enormous, ill baby, with a pale round face and ugly damp hair. Daisy's pyjamas, of course, fitted her perfectly, and being sick had only made her cheeks pink and her eyes bright, like a nice china doll.

I dragged myself into my cool white-sheeted San bed. I felt as though someone had squeezed me through a mangle. All I wanted to do was sleep, for years and years.

Daisy, though, had different ideas.

'As soon as Minny's asleep we can begin,' she whispered to me from the next bed, sounding not at all like someone who had just been sick for six hours straight.

'Yes, Daisy,' I said, and I turned over and went to sleep.



3

It only seemed a moment later that I was woken up by someone shaking me hard. I opened my eyes to see Daisy's shadowy face looming over mine.

'Get up, you lazy thing!' she hissed. 'It's time!'

Grumbling, and still feeling mangled inside, I got up and pulled on the dressing gown that Minny had helpfully laid across the foot of my bed.

'I already have Jones's spare keys,' said Daisy, dangling them before me. 'I went and picked them up while you were waiting in the cloakroom. He never notices they're gone – I've taken them heaps of times before.'

'How nice for you,' I said. I was still struggling not to argue.

'Sourpuss,' said Daisy, sticking out her tongue. 'Don't be. Let's get on with it.'

It was quite easy to escape San. We unlocked the main door and crept out, holding the torches that Daisy had hidden for us in the bottom of her bag.

'Where do we go now?' I glanced about the dark corridor and couldn't stop myself shivering. For the moment it was empty, and we were alone, but what would we do if the murderer – made nervous by Daisy's rumour – appeared?

'We're off to the Gym, of course,' said Daisy. 'Scene of the crime. Careful – keep your torch low. We can't afford to have someone notice the light.'

I shivered again, but off we went.



The skin on the back of my neck prickled. We were heading towards the Gym, to the place where the murder had happened. In the dark night, it was not only the murderer I found myself afraid of – all my silly, babyish fears appeared again, stronger than ever. Verity's ghost still lurked in the Gym, and who knew whether Miss Bell's had joined her? I stayed just behind Daisy and did not look round. I kept my eyes fixed on the little puddle of moving light cast by her torch, because I was terrified that it was too bright. Would someone else notice it?

At last we arrived at the door to the Gym, but instead of going out onto the floor, Daisy turned right and started up the steep flight of wooden stairs that led to the balcony. Soon the empty Gym was stretched out below us.

I didn't like it. I am not fond of heights at the best of times, and the Gym at night was a horrid place. It was dim and murky, and black shadows crouched at its edges. This was how Miss Bell had seen it, I thought, just before she fell. The ground suddenly seemed very far below me, and the narrow balcony with its rows of wooden benches swayed in front of me.

'Why are we up here?' I asked, clutching the railing.

'Don't be slow, Hazel,' said Daisy. 'We're going to reconstruct the crime.'

'But we know what happened,' I said. 'Someone pushed Miss Bell off the balcony. You – you don't want ...?' For one dreadful second I actually thought that Daisy was asking me to jump off the balcony while she watched.

'Don't be a chump, Hazel,' said Daisy. 'We're not actually going to push anything off. Goodness! I want you to go downstairs and show me exactly where you found Miss Bell. I'll stay up here and look.'

I went back down extremely thankfully, but going into the Gym again made my skin crawl worse than ever. It was exactly the way it had been on Monday night – although, of course, without Miss Bell lying there. I went over to where I had found her and looked up to see Daisy peering down at me from the balcony. All I could see was her face with her blonde hair hanging down around it and her eyes staring at me. For a moment she looked horribly like my idea of Verity Abraham's ghost. My heart jumped.

'Are you ready?' Daisy called. 'How was she lying?'

'Her arm was back, like this,' I said, trying to demonstrate. 'And she was a bit curled up—'

'Oh, for heaven's sake,' said Daisy, 'lie down yourself and show me. I'll never be able to understand it otherwise.'

I did not like the idea at all. Pretending to be Miss Bell felt all wrong and quite horrible, but Daisy was glaring down at me and I knew there was nothing

else for it. Reluctantly, I lay down on the wooden floor and stretched myself out in an imitation of Miss Bell's position. I closed my eyes and Daisy's torch flickered across my eyelids.

'Is that all right?' I asked after a while.

'Perfectly,' said Daisy from next to my ear. My eyes flew open. She was crouching down next to me, staring up at the wall and the edge of the balcony above.

'This was exactly how she was lying?' Daisy asked, peering at me.

'Exactly,' I said. 'So?'

'So, from the way she was lying, she must have gone over the balcony railing backwards.'

'She was facing the murderer,' I said, shuddering. I had a sudden image of a pair of hands reaching out and shoving Miss Bell off the balcony.

'Exactly, Hazel. So, to continue with our reconstruction. You've just murdered Miss Bell. She's lying on the floor, dead. What do you do next?'

'Find somewhere to hide the body,' I said.

'Yes indeed. The fact that the body was still there when you came in does rather suggest that the deed had only just been done. And the fact that the body

was gone when we came back again – well, that suggests that the body and the murderer were hidden somewhere very close indeed. They really *must* have been in the Cupboard, like we said – and, golly, that must have been where the murderer hid when you first came in too!

My mouth went dry. I remembered running into the Gym. It had seemed so empty and quiet – and the murderer had been just a few feet away from me!

‘But the body couldn’t have *stayed* there!’ I said.

Daisy rolled her eyes. ‘Of course it couldn’t,’ she said. ‘The girls changing in there before first lesson on Tuesday morning would’ve noticed a *dead body* among the gym slips. But all the same, it *must* have been used as the temporary hiding place. Nothing else makes sense. And remember that smash-up yesterday? I’m sure I’m right that it was caused by that trolley, the one that Jones keeps in there. So all in all, the Cupboard is crucial to this case. We can’t put off looking inside it any more. Come on!’

She dug her fingers into my arm and dragged me, stumbling, across the floor towards the musty store-room. I felt clammy and cold all over, as though I was

going to be sick again. I did not want to look in the Cupboard.

But Daisy left me no choice. She threw open the door and flashed her torch about inside. I had to admit that it looked just the same as it always did – spiderwebbed white walls and piled-up mounds of fencing whites, badminton rackets, croquet mallets, calisthenics mats and gym slips – but all the same I was terrified.

Daisy leaped straight for the trolley, which was standing innocently beside the door, draped in discarded clothes, and began throwing things off it with frantic excitement. I turned away and dug through what I hoped was a harmless old pile of gym slips, of the sort that we hardly wear any more.

Unfortunately, the pile tipped over and spilled across the floor, and I saw that one of the gym slips had a long, dark smear all down its front. I shone my torch on it, and it came up rusty in the light. While I was still standing there, hoping that what I was seeing was not really true, Daisy gave a yelp.

‘View-halloo!’ she cried. ‘As suspected, blood on the trolley! I say, Hazel, *look!*’

I turned round, holding up the bloodied gym slip.





Daisy could not understand why I was not more excited.

‘Watson!’ she cried, poking me jubilantly in the ribs. ‘The game’s afoot! We’re closing in!’

I bit my lip. The Case of the Murder of Miss Bell was feeling far too real. Miss Bell really was dead and was never coming back. I was holding a gym slip with real blood on it – the gym slip that the murderer must have used to mop Miss Bell’s blood off the Gym floor – and Daisy had found the trolley the murderer had used to transport Miss Bell’s body to its hiding place.

But Daisy was still galloping on, as excited about this case as she had been about The Case of The Mysterious Tuck Box Thief – as though Miss Bell was just another missing bag of bull’s eyes. ‘We’re close!’ she cried. ‘We’re very close! We’ve got the scent, and now we must run with it. Here’s the trolley, and a bloodied gym slip, and here *isn’t* Miss Bell’s body. So, where was she moved to? The murderer must have stowed the Bell somewhere at school between Monday evening and Tuesday night, when they came back to move it to a safer hiding place, away from the school. So now we need to be clever; we need to put ourselves into the mind of the killer. If you had a body to hide *in* Deepdean, what would you do with it?’

‘I wouldn’t kill anyone in the first place,’ I said.

‘All right, *don’t* be clever,’ said Daisy. ‘Think. It needs to be somewhere safe, and it needs to be somewhere secure.’

‘That doesn’t sound much like anywhere in Deepdean,’ I said. Honestly, I couldn’t think of a single place that would fit. A safe and secure place in Deepdean? If I’d been in a rude mood – instead of feeling

frightened – I'd have said, *Not likely*.

Daisy frowned. 'Yes, I know,' she said. 'It doesn't, does it? Not for years, anyway. *Years!* Ever since they closed up the—'

She froze. I could see an idea occurring to her, like a firework going off in her head.

'Hazel! We've been the most utter chumps! Imagine us not thinking of *that!* Oh, I could kick myself!' And without any more explanation, she took my hand and dragged me out into the Gym again, so that I had to gallop after her or fall over.

'Of what?' I asked, gasping as we jolted along. 'What?'

'You'll see!' shouted Daisy. 'Come on, come on, quick!'

She towed me out into the corridor, then immediately dragged me left into a little passageway behind the Hall. When Deepdean was first built there used to be an underground tunnel between the Hall and Old Wing, so that when it rained girls could go to Prayers without getting wet. It was bricked up long ago, though, when Library corridor was built, and now that little passageway only leads to a locked

door.

At last I understood where Daisy was taking me.

'Oh!' I said, stopping so quickly that Daisy nearly jerked my wrist off before she noticed.

'Now do you see?' asked Daisy, wheeling round and letting go of me. 'It *has* to be! There's nowhere else even half so perfect.'

'But no one can get into it!'

'Jones can, and anyone who knows the school at all could take his spare keys, just like I did. I think this is really it, Hazel! We've found it!'

I thought of Miss Bell again. 'You're sure she's not still down there?' I asked uncomfortably.

'I've told you she isn't. She's been moved out of the school by now,' said Daisy. 'But even if she is – well, I've seen lots of dead animals and they're not so bad. They just lie there.' I nearly reminded her that I had seen Miss Bell's body quite recently, and it had not been like a dead animal at all. But Daisy was already trying Jones's keys in the door. I thought it would be difficult to unlock, but when Daisy found the right key it turned with a neat little well-oiled *click* and the door swung inwards.

'See?' asked Daisy smugly. 'Someone's been here recently.'

She flashed her torch into the open doorway and we saw brickwork, broken bits of cobweb and steps going down into darkness. They were dusty, but instead of lying in a smooth layer, the dust had been scuffed up and smudged about, and in the middle it had been rubbed away altogether in a sort of snaky track.

Daisy took my hand and squeezed it. I squeezed back. Her palm was cool and dry, and I remember being terribly worried she might notice how much I was sweating. She said nothing, though, and we went down into the tunnel hand in hand, both of us shining our torches into the dark.

'Do look at this floor,' said Daisy, stepping daintily through the dust. 'That drag mark must be from Miss Bell.'

She sounded so casual about it! I flashed my torch around the scuff mark, trying to avoid it, and that is when I caught sight of the sideways print of a shoe, just clear of the track. 'Oh!' I said, pointing, and Daisy sprang at it with a yelp of excitement.

Drawing a bit of string and a pencil from the pocket of her dressing gown, Daisy crouched down over the print. I knelt next to her, shining my torch at it while she laid the string over the print and deftly marked it off with the pencil. It was the print of a flat shoe, and it was very long. When Daisy held up the string in the glare of my torch, it looked longer than ever.

'A man!' I exclaimed. 'The One, it must be! Didn't I tell you he had something to do with it?'

Daisy looked at me pityingly. 'Don't you ever notice anything, Hazel? This print isn't from a man's shoe at all. Look at the heel, and the toe. Ugly as sin, but it's made for a woman, and I know exactly which one.'

'Who?' I asked. 'Miss Bell?'

'Hazel,' said Daisy, 'that is the stupidest thing I have ever heard you say. I shall pretend I didn't hear it. Haven't you ever noticed those boats of Miss Tennyson's?'

My stomach lurched. That was exactly what I had *not* wanted to find – real evidence to back up Daisy's Miss Tennyson theory.

'Miss Tennyson?'

'Just you look at her shoes tomorrow. They're simply enormous. She only has two pairs too. This is from one of her blue monstrosities. *You* know, the ones with the pointless bows.'

'But – someone else might have put on her shoes?' I suggested. I had felt so *sure* it must have been The One.

'Oh, don't be an ass, Hazel. That sort of thing is too silly to happen in real life. Unless you think they crept into her boarding house and stole her shoes just to wear them in a passageway that no one ever uses?'

I blushed. I felt like an idiot, and I was glad it was so dark.

'We ought to get on,' said Daisy, getting up and tucking the curl of string back into her pocket. 'We can't be away from San too long. Besides, we need something else to prove what happened. That footprint's no good on its own.'

She started off down the tunnel again, walking carefully along the drag line in the dust, and I followed her.

That night, everything seemed to be going Daisy's way. She wanted another clue, and she found exactly what she was hoping for. I heard her give an exclamation, and saw her flash her torch onto a little wisp of whiteness that had been caught low down on a rough part of the tunnel's brick wall. It was a little scrap of white fabric, plain and coarse, and we both recognized it at once.

'This is from the Bell's lab coat!' whispered Daisy. 'Now we *know* she was left here for a while. Oh, and look!' When she had rushed forward to snatch up the bit of coat she had stirred up the dust on the floor, and now something glittered in the torchlight. 'An earring! A lovely long gold one. Clues rain down upon us! *This* isn't from Miss Bell.'

Grudgingly, I shook my head. Miss Bell would never have worn a delicate gold earring like the one Daisy was holding.

'It must be Miss Tennyson's,' said Daisy.

'It might be almost anyone's,' I pointed out. Although Miss Bell didn't wear earrings, almost all of the other mistresses did. This earring was a pretty gold double teardrop – I could quite well imagine

Miss Lappet, Miss Parker or Miss Hopkins all wearing something like it, as well as Miss Tennyson.

‘It looks quite new,’ said Daisy, examining it. ‘Good quality too. You can’t prove it’s *not* Tennyson’s, and if you put it with the shoe, things begin to look awfully bad for her.’

I wanted to protest that she was still not being open-minded, but the sight of all that evidence kept me quiet. Daisy was right. I could *not* prove that Miss Tennyson was not the owner of the earring, while Daisy might well be able to match that string to the length of her shoes. I told myself that it did not matter who had done it, as long as we unmasked them, but I still had a nagging worry in the back of my mind.

We went down the rest of the tunnel, but found no more clues, and, much to my relief, no body either. Miss Bell had gone.

I wrapped the string, the bit of lab coat and the earring in the stained gym slip, while Daisy held the torches, and we began to creep back to San. I thought that the night’s adventures were over.

They weren’t.

We had just turned into Library corridor when something flashed away to our right, down New Wing corridor.

‘Daisy!’ I hissed. ‘Hold the torches down! They’re reflecting on something, look!’

‘Don’t be stupid, Hazel, I *am* holding— Hazel. Hazel, *that isn’t a reflection from our torches.*’

All the hairs on my neck stood up in horror. She was right. That light was not being made by us at all. It was from a different torch, being held by someone walking down New Wing corridor. There was someone else prowling around Deepdean in the middle of the night.

‘Oh Lord, Hazel,’ gasped Daisy, flicking off our torches, plunging us into darkness and making the other light seem suddenly much larger and more menacing. ‘Run!’

I did not need to be told twice. We ran, scuffling and bumping into each other, our bare feet slapping on the marble tiles. I was shaking. The murderer was here, in Deepdean, now! Because, of course, it *had* to be the murderer. Had they seen our light? Worse, had they seen *us*? I’d thought we were in danger

before, but it was nothing to the danger we were in now.

We ran all the way back to San, as though the murderer was panting at our heels, and when Daisy dragged the main San door to and locked it, my knees gave out beneath me, and I slumped down on the floor. It was only then that I noticed that my ankle was hurting fearfully again.

'Up!' said Daisy firmly. 'Wash! Or Minny will smell a rat.'

So we went to the washroom to scrub off our filthy hands and feet, and then we crept back to our beds. I thought I should never get to sleep. I thought I might never sleep again. I said so to Daisy and she said, 'Lord, I know!' and then began to snore. Even though I was frightened, somehow I must have slept as well, because the next thing I remember was Minny knocking on our open door and saying, 'Rise and shine, girls! How are we feeling this morning?'



6

We sat up, and Minny felt our foreheads and looked down our throats with that flat stick nurses always have. Then she told us we seemed far better today.

It was Saturday. At Deepdean, we have lessons on Saturday morning – really, we do – but luckily Minny did not let us out of San until the morning was halfway through. Daisy managed to wangle us a perfectly heavenly San breakfast before we went, too – three slices of toast instead of two, strawberry jam instead of marmalade *and* a mug of cocoa, and we were let out of San just in time for bunbreak. It was almost enough to make me forget what had hap-

pened the night before.

Almost, but not quite.

‘Oh!’ Beanie squealed when she saw us, moving back so we could slip into the biscuit queue. ‘I was so worried!’

‘She was sure you were dying,’ said Kitty, putting an arm round Beanie’s shoulder.

‘I was not!’

‘Jammy of you, getting out of Latin like that,’ said Lavinia as she pushed the shrimp in front of her out of the way. ‘Some people have all the luck.’

‘We missed Department, though,’ said Daisy regretfully. ‘Oh, I wish those shrimps would hurry up! I’m starving.’

Once we had collected our biscuits – only squashed fly on Saturdays, which I think is hardly worth it, though Daisy loves them – Daisy and I shook off the rest of the third form and went in search of Jones, to make certain that our night-time quest had gone undetected, and to return the borrowed keys. We found him out by the flowerbeds, telling off one of the gardeners.

'Hello, Miss Daisy – and ... ah,' he said when he caught sight of us. 'Feeling better today?'

'Nothing ever gets past you, Jones,' said Daisy in her best admiring voice. 'However did you know we were ill?'

'Who do you think mopped up after you? Nasty mess you made. Feels like I've been cleaning up messes all week, though, so yours wasn't so much of a bother.'

'Oh, have you?' asked Daisy. She sounded terribly sympathetic, but I could feel her arm tense up next to mine. Had we left dirty footprints behind us?

Jones huffed down his nose. 'Indeed. Those smashed windows were the worst of it, but all week I've been finding little things out of place. This morning I come in and everything's a mess in New Wing, the Gym cupboard's all untidy and these flowerbeds have been turned over. Look at them! All scratched up and the flowers ruined. We only put the new winter beds in on Monday too. If it *is* those shrimps, they need a good talking to.'

'Poor Jones,' said Daisy. 'How awful for you. Here, look, you've dropped your keys.'

'It is awful,' said Jones forcefully, taking them from her without even looking. I admired Daisy's cunning all over again. 'Not that anyone else thinks of me. I complained to Miss Griffin again this morning and she told me it was nothing to worry about. Nothing! I ask you.'

The bell rang as he said that, and we had to run. We left him still scowling at his dirty flowerbeds.

'Good,' said Daisy, as soon as we were out of earshot. 'He doesn't know it was us.'

'But Daisy,' I said, 'it *wasn't* us. Not all of it! We messed about in the Gym cupboard, but we weren't anywhere near New Wing last night, were we? And we never went outside, so the mess in the flowerbeds wasn't us either. It must have been the murderer ...'

Daisy stopped suddenly, her mouth open. 'Lord, I know exactly what they were doing to make that mess! That earring we found – I bet they discovered they'd lost it, so they've been coming back in the evenings to hunt for it.'

She looked delighted. I still felt horrified at our narrow escape.

'Well, it's a good thing we got to it first,' said Daisy, making the best of things as usual. 'This is getting quite exciting, isn't it? Now come on, we'll be late for Prep.'

Saturday Prep is a Deepdean institution, something that is meant to be good for our character, like boiled vegetables and Games. We go into our form rooms and struggle away at all the week's undone work, which of course none of us except Daisy could ever finish – and she makes sure not to.

As luck would have it, we came into Prep to see that Miss Tennyson was taking it that day. I froze in the doorway, and Daisy had to kick me from behind to get me to move.

I realized that Miss Tennyson was staring at me. I also realized that we were so late that the only two seats left were the ones directly in front of her desk. I slid into the left-hand one, feeling as though her eyes were burning into the middle of my forehead. Was she really the murderer? I didn't want her to be. But there were her big blue shoes, peeping out at me from under the desk. I got a sinking feeling in my stomach, as if the ipecac sickness was coming back.

I tried to focus on my Latin translation. *The queen was in the woods*, I wrote. But, almost as though they were not under my control, my eyes kept sliding up off my work to stare at Miss Tennyson.

The third time I did it, I found her staring back at me. It gave me a nasty shock. Was Miss Tennyson remembering seeing our torchlight by the Gym? Did she know it had been us, and was she plotting to kill me and Daisy, as she had Miss Bell? I shuddered. But then I really looked at her, and what I saw surprised me. For a moment she did not look like an evil murderer at all, or even a mistress, but just someone who was terribly, terribly afraid. She had dark rings under her eyes, which were red-rimmed as though she had just been crying.

Was this what a guilty conscience looked like?

But just then there was a scuffle, a scraping noise and something thumped against my leg. I glanced down and saw – Daisy. She was wriggling across the wooden classroom floor between the desks, her hair in disarray and her arms outstretched. The marked bit of string was clutched in them, and she was inching determinedly towards Miss Tennyson's feet.

I looked up at Miss Tennyson in horror. What if she noticed that Daisy had gone from her desk next to me? What if she glanced down and saw what Daisy was doing? But she didn't. Her eyes were on the book she was reading, and she was crying again. Her tears scattered across the pages.

Meanwhile Daisy had reached her goal. The piece of string was stretched out against one of Miss Tennyson's shoes. It was exactly the right length. Daisy squirmed round triumphantly to look at me, and as she did so her hand bumped against Miss Tennyson's leg. Miss Tennyson jumped.

'Good grief!' she said, looking down at last. 'Daisy! Whatever are you doing?'

'Oh, Miss Tennyson—' said Daisy awkwardly, from the floor. 'Oh, Miss Tennyson – I'm feeling, er, most dreadfully strange. I think I might be sick. Hazel and I were frightfully ill last night, and I don't seem to be quite over it. Can I go back to San?'

I was terrified that Miss Tennyson would work out what Daisy had been doing, but she only put a hand over her eyes.

'Whatever you like,' she said wearily. 'Hazel, take her. Just go to San, both of you.'



We did not go to San.

‘Why did you do that?’ I whispered to Daisy once we were safely out in the corridor. ‘What if she *is* the murderer, and she realizes that we’re on to her?’

‘How on earth would me writhing about on the floor with a piece of string make Miss Tennyson realize that we’re on to her?’ Daisy whispered back scornfully. ‘Don’t be silly, Hazel. You’re always worrying.’

I didn’t think that was fair at all. I was perfectly right to worry. We were on the trail of a killer. How could Daisy be sure that we were safe?

‘Anyway,’ she went on, ‘Miss Tennyson’s given us the most perfect opportunity. This is our chance to do some detecting without her around.’

‘What sort of detecting?’ I asked. It sounded as though Daisy had dreamed up another one of her ideas, and after the ipecac I was beginning to be suspicious of those.

‘Can’t talk here,’ said Daisy. ‘Come on – cloakroom.’

Once we got there, though, Daisy did not seem very eager to tell me the details of her new plan. She lay down on one of the benches and pulled the coats down around her, until she was buried under them with only her feet waving about outside.

I sat down next to her. ‘Are you all right?’ I asked.

‘Hazel,’ said Daisy from under the coats, ‘I know I shouldn’t, but I can’t help feeling a bit overwhelmed. After all, we’re about to catch a *murderer*. That’s quite serious, isn’t it?’

I kept silent. I was already too worried to feel overwhelmed as well. After a moment the coats rose up in a mountain and Daisy’s head burst through them to stare at me accusingly. ‘You still don’t believe that it’s Miss Tennyson, do you?’ she asked.

'No,' I said. Despite the evidence of the shoe, I simply could not imagine Miss Tennyson actually pushing Miss Bell over the Gym balcony, no matter how much she might want the Deputy Head job. 'There are so many other possible solutions! What about The One and Miss Parker's row? What about Miss Hopkins sneaking back down to school? And what about Miss Parker? She lied about her alibi and she's been acting ragey all week. What if she lied because she argued with Miss Bell and then killed her? Miss Tennyson fits the facts, but so do three other people! We can't be sure!'

Daisy sighed. 'I didn't think you'd be so jealous about this,' she said. 'Just because I worked it out before you did, and I'm the President and you're only the Secretary. Honestly, Hazel.'

'No!' I cried. 'This is important, Daisy. We can't make a mistake.'

'Look, Hazel,' she said, standing up. 'I'll give you more proof, if you like. When Miss Tennyson moved Miss Bell's body out of Deepdean on Tuesday evening, she must have used that ugly little rattle-trap motor car of hers. I'll bet you there's still evi-

dence in it. That's what I want to investigate while we know that Tennyson's stuck in Prep. Oh, come on! Why won't you get up?'

I was still sitting there because I was suddenly stingingly furious at Daisy. I know I've said that there is no point being angry at her, and there is not, but I resented what she had said about her being the President, and me being only the Secretary. After all, there was no reason why Daisy should be a better detective than me. We were looking at the same clues, weren't we? Daisy liked rushing headlong into things and triumphing, and I liked waiting and thinking – but why should that make her right and me wrong?

But Daisy was staring at me appealingly, her big blue eyes wide, and so I clenched my teeth, stood up with a jerk and went to inspect Miss Tennyson's blasted automobile.

It was parked beside the North Entrance gate, a little blue car all scratched and peeling paint, and quite covered in dirt.

'She really does look after it disgustingly,' Daisy commented. 'Just look at that crankcase. I know

they're dreadful on these old Sevens, but still!

'Daisy,' I said, 'how—'

'My uncle,' said Daisy briefly, as though that explained it. She went up to the car and peered inside. I climbed up on the running board to stand beside her.

'If anyone asks us,' said Daisy without looking at me, 'we're looking for our exercise books. Miss Tennyson thought she might have left them here so she sent us down to see.'

I stared into Miss Tennyson's car. It was very like Miss Tennyson, I thought – odd and shabby and rather tragic. I didn't know what Daisy was looking for. As I said, I don't know much about cars – and even less about the inside of Daisy's mind.

Daisy had pulled a hairpin out of her plait and was fiddling with the door handle. Suddenly she said, 'Aha!' thumped the handle and pulled the door open. I wondered how on earth we would explain ourselves if one of the mistresses noticed what we were up to, but Daisy was already burrowing inside. She wriggled almost her entire body into Miss Tennyson's car and her legs, poking out from the bottom of her pinafore, waved around in the air as she

searched.

'Hazel, do come here,' she hissed in excitement. I was reluctant. The car seemed very full of Daisy. But when I finally stuck my head in after her, she rolled over and gestured triumphantly at something on the back seat.

It was a stain on the leather as large as my face. It looked as though someone had tried to clean it – the leather was all scratched up and whitish around it – but the stain had soaked in.

'That,' said Daisy to me smugly, 'is blood.'

'It might be anything,' I protested, though I knew that she was right. It looked dark and rusty, exactly like the stains I had found on that gym slip. 'It might be from anything. Perhaps she cut her hand six months ago, Daisy! We can't be sure.'

Daisy snorted. 'Lord!' she said. 'You're difficult. All right, then, I'll find *more* evidence.'

She withdrew from the depths of the car so quickly that she trod on my foot. Then she leaped down from the running board, and began to scrutinize the wheels and front bumper. She sidled crabwise around it, peering intently at every little bit

of mud, and I watched her sourly, thinking that the mud looked very much like mud to me.

It obviously meant something more to Daisy. Halfway round the front left wheel, she gave a little shriek of excitement. 'Look!' she cried. 'Look what's stuck in this spoke!'

I looked. 'It's a leaf,' I said.

'It's not a *leaf*, Hazel,' said Daisy. 'Honestly, didn't you ever *see* the countryside before you came to England? It's lichen, you silly, and I know exactly where it's from. It's that funny orange stuff that only grows at the edge of Oakeshott Woods.'

'Only?' I asked. It still seemed to me that lichen was lichen.

'The only place for fifty miles at least,' said Daisy. 'The only place where Miss Tennyson might go. Whenever I go on hunts there, it gets all over my boots. Now, this stuff isn't new, but it hasn't been here long. I'd say two or three days – taking us back to Tuesday night. Oh, Hazel, what luck! Now we know where she's hidden Miss Bell's body! We've got enough to accuse Miss Tennyson now.'

'But what if she drove over there on Tuesday or Wednesday to go for a walk?' I protested.

'Of course she didn't!' exclaimed Daisy in exasperation. 'We know that after school on Tuesday and Wednesday she was helping Miss Griffin! She wouldn't have been able to go out on her own before it got dark – and who goes for a walk after dark, unless they're doing something nefarious? Look, the only thing we can possibly do now is accuse her. We've really and truly solved the murder!'

She was more excited than I had seen her in a long time. I knew that I ought to feel excited too, but I only felt sick to my stomach. To me, the evidence still did not seem conclusive. There were so many other explanations for everything we had found! I said gruffly, 'Come on, let's go up to House before we get caught.'

'Oh Hazel,' said Daisy, throwing her arms round me. Evidently she had forgotten all about our argument. 'Isn't everything wonderful?'

I wanted to tell her that I did not think things were wonderful at all.