



# 1

I am writing in this new casebook because death has come to Deepdean once again.

I am not quite sure why I am so surprised – but I am. Perhaps it is because lightning (lightning, in this case, being dead bodies) is not meant to strike twice, let alone several times, in the same place. Perhaps it is because the murder has happened at a time when we have all been ordered to be on our best behaviour, in starched and pressed dresses, as good and polite and law-abiding as schoolgirls can be.

And, although in the world outside I had begun to feel quite grown up and bold, it is funny how easy it was to fall back into school life once we returned to Deepdean. Over the last two days, it has almost been an effort to behave like a detective again, rather than just a schoolgirl, and I can see that Daisy has struggled with that as well – although she knows even more than I do

that this weekend we *must* detect. This case matters terribly, and if we do not solve it the consequences will be dreadful. We may even lose Deepdean, the home we all share.

Of course, Deepdean has been in danger before, and we have always saved it, but now I really do worry that this mystery may be too much for the school. How can it stay open, now that it is the location of a *third* crime – and what will Daisy and I do if it does not?

This case has twisted itself into the most confusing thread Daisy and I have ever had to unravel. I feel as though *anything* might happen next.

While these thoughts are whirling about in my head, and while the answer to the mystery dances frustratingly out of my reach, I shall try to explain how everything happened, and how this case began when our friend Beanie told us that she had seen a murder.

## 2

I ought to say what has happened since our last murder investigation in London – which was really only two months ago, although it seems longer. I thought it might feel odd to be back at Deepdean after all the wild and grown-up adventuring we have done this year, but instead I feel as though we never left, not *really*. Daisy and I are Deepdean schoolgirls, and – no matter where we go – this school is in our blood and bones, the one constant place in all the wandering we do.

I had barely finished writing up the story of the murder at the Rue Theatre, and everything that happened with George and Alexander and Uncle Felix and Aunt Lucy and Bridget, when it was time to wave goodbye to them all and rush through the smoke of Paddington Station to catch the Deepdean train.

A car met us at Deepdean station, and when it pulled up outside House on the afternoon of Sunday

31st May, everywhere else in the world vanished like a dream. It could not possibly be true that just the week before we had been actresses, solving a terrible crime. As Daisy and I stepped through the front door into the dingy entrance hall, I knew that *this* was the only reality – the big clock and the dinner gong and the chipped, ugly staircase going up to the dorm rooms, every mark and dent and rip in the wallpaper familiar.

‘Good old Deepdean,’ said Daisy grandly, staring about at it. ‘Home at last!’

I stood next to Daisy and felt both too big and too small, delighted and bewildered all at once – and then I heard a chorus of shrieks, and Kitty, Beanie and Lavinia, our dorm mates, friends and fellow Detective Society members, came rattling down the staircase and flung themselves on us. After that, all I felt was overjoyed.

‘HAZEL! DAISY! YOU’RE BACK!’ Beanie shouted in our ears, and then we were squeezed in an enormous six-armed hug. They smelled of soap and pencils (Beanie) and grass (Lavinia) and perfume (Kitty, contraband), and I breathed in happily.

‘We missed you, we missed you, we missed you!’ Beanie shrieked, jumping up and down and jostling the rest of us. ‘We’ve been watching from upstairs, waiting for you to arrive!’

‘It’s not been much fun without you,’ agreed Lavinia. She said it grudgingly, but Kitty pinched her and she blushed, so I could see she meant it.

‘Oh, there’s so much to tell you!’ cried Kitty. ‘Come upstairs, come on, come on!’

Matron came out of her office and glared at us in a welcome-back way, as we left our bags for the maids and rushed up the stairs to our familiar dorm. Except—

‘We moved the beds round while you were gone,’ explained Kitty. ‘It’s fearfully cold by the window, you know, and since you weren’t here to feel it—’

‘We can move back!’ said Beanie anxiously. ‘We’re sorry!’

‘No, don’t do that,’ I said. ‘We’ll be all right, won’t we, Daisy?’

‘I suppose,’ said Daisy, shrugging.

Kitty gasped, and looked from me to Daisy and back again. Beanie was wide-eyed. Lavinia suddenly grinned.

‘You’ve changed, Hazel,’ she said. ‘Look at you, telling Daisy what to do!’

‘I have not!’ I said, blushing, because I thought she might be right.

‘Hazel and I haven’t changed!’ said Daisy. ‘That’s nonsense. I simply happen to agree with her assessment on this occasion. YOU, on the other hand – *look* at the three of you! Look at Beanie!’

‘Um,’ said Beanie, wriggling uncomfortably. ‘It isn’t my fault, it just *happened*.’

‘Beanie *grew*,’ said Kitty gleefully. ‘She’s not tiny any more! We’re still calling her Beanie, though, but now it’s short for Beanpole.’

It was true. Beanie’s hair was still done up in the same straggly plait, and her large eyes peered out of her face in the same shy way, but in the five months since we had seen her last she had shot up like a plant. She was now quite as tall as Kitty, but much thinner, and she stood as though she did not know what to do with all her arms and legs.

‘*And Lavinia has bosoms.*’

‘SO?’ said Lavinia furiously, crossing her arms over her now rather pronounced chest. ‘I hate them.’

‘*She’s on the tennis team too,*’ mouthed Kitty behind her. ‘She’s *fearfully* good at sport all of a sudden, but she *hates* it when we tell her!’

‘Oh, Lavinia!’ I cried. This was not the Lavinia I knew, the one who hid in goal next to me so we did not have to bother with hockey practice – but I could see that Lavinia was pleased with herself, and I was pleased for her.

‘Fancy!’ cried Daisy, with a funny look on her face. ‘Lavinia, a tennis ace!’

‘Well, Kitty’s got a boyfriend!’ Lavinia shot back.

Kitty simpered. ‘I met him at a dance during the Easter hols!’ she said. ‘His name is Hugo. *Don’t* tell Binny.’

‘How *is* Binny?’ I asked. Kitty’s little sister is in the third form, a year below us, and she played a large part in one of our cases last autumn.

Kitty scowled. ‘Hideous,’ she said. ‘She’s become quite obsessed with the new girl in the other fourth-form dorm – all the third formers are. They can’t talk about anything else. Her name is Amina, and she’s terribly glamorous. I wish my hair looked like hers!’

‘She’s very beautiful,’ agreed Beanie, sighing. ‘Everyone says so, even the mistresses. She can get away with anything she likes.’

Daisy sat down on the nearest bed, looking odder than ever. ‘New girl!’ she said weakly. ‘*Glamorous!* But – see here, why didn’t you tell us about all this before?’

‘We didn’t think you’d care,’ said Lavinia with a shrug. ‘You’ll see her later, anyway. *I* don’t think she’s worth much.’

‘Nonsense,’ said Kitty. ‘She’s wonderful. All the shrimps have pashes on her.’

‘Well!’ cried Daisy, cutting Kitty off and standing up suddenly. ‘That’s quite enough news. Stop it, please.’

‘But Amina—’ Kitty began.

‘No more about her!’ said Daisy. ‘It’s unnecessary. There *may* be a new girl, and *you* may all have changed, but *I* am just the same as I ever was, and so, thank goodness, is Deepdean School. I am back, and that is



that. And I have changed my mind about the beds. Move them back, if you please.'

And I understood then what Daisy's expression meant. Despite what she had said to the others, she *has* changed this year, in ways that she is not entirely ready to face up to. Nothing is the same as it was – not me, not her family, and not Daisy herself – and I realized then that she had desperately hoped to find Deepdean just as she had remembered it.

But unfortunately for Daisy, she found the rest of Deepdean just as changed as Kitty, Beanie and Lavinia.

# 3

Since January, without her there at school to keep it up, the myth of Daisy Wells had faltered, its light dimmed – and it was not easy for her to restore its glow now that someone else had stepped into the light.

It was just as Kitty, Beanie and Lavinia had said. In the middle of the spring term, while Daisy and I were away solving a terrible crime in Hong Kong, Amina El Maghrabi had arrived in the fourth form at Deepdean, from Hampden School for Ladies in Cairo.

Before Amina appeared at dinner that evening, Daisy and I had heard that she was a princess; the daughter of a sheik; betrothed to the new king of Egypt; the best equestrienne Deepdean had ever seen; and the rightful owner of the Koh-i-Noor diamond.

‘It’s all nonsense!’ hissed Daisy. ‘Most of that can’t possibly be true – after all, there aren’t any sheiks in

Egypt, and the Koh-i-Noor is most likely from India. Where did you hear this from?’

The replies were confused but adoring – but one thing was certain: Amina had captured every imagination, in much the same way as the Honourable Daisy Wells had done when I first arrived at Deepdean.

When Amina came through the Dining Room doors, arm in arm with Clementine from the other dorm, I thought she really did look like a fairy-tale princess from one of the stories my maid Su Li had told me when I was little. She had smooth pale brown skin and a glossy head of dark hair, a proud look on her pretty face, and feet as small as Cinderella’s. Deepdean’s baggy grey uniform hung beautifully on her.

I could see immediately that she was the sort of person that people make up myths about.

‘She was ten minutes late to every lesson for the first two weeks she was at Deepdean, and during those weeks she managed to convince all the mistresses that she had never learned to tell time,’ whispered Kitty. ‘She’s terribly wicked, but no one minds.’

‘Hush!’ said Daisy, a furious frown on her face.

As I watched, Binny Freebody, Kitty’s little sister, went hurrying up to Amina and whispered something in her ear. Amina beamed and blew Binny a kiss (Binny went purple with joy), and then she turned and gestured.

Up popped the Marys, holding out their hands – and Amina handed them her hat, scarf and school bag.

‘She’s *you!*’ I whispered to Daisy. ‘She’s making them carry her things just like *you* used to do!’

I admit, the sight of Amina had startled me. I am used to being the one girl at Deepdean who does not look like all the rest – and used to being gently looked down on for it. But here was darker-skinned Amina making all the pale English misses fawn around her. Was it simply because she looked as though she expected nothing less?

‘She is not anything like me!’ Daisy hissed back. ‘Only *I* am me. There is only one Daisy Wells. These foolish third formers will come back to the person they *truly* adore soon enough.’

‘Why should they?’ asked Lavinia, rather rudely.

‘Because . . . because people ought to have some respect!’ said Daisy furiously. ‘It’s not as though I’d *died*, is it? Everyone knew I was coming back! They’ll remember me, you’ll see.’

But her voice sounded rather thin and unsure.

‘Clementine and Rose and Jose tried to bully her at first,’ said Kitty, from next to me. ‘You know, Daisy, to pull the trunk trick you did on Hazel. But she refused to get in, and then she ordered a hamper full of tuck from Fortnum’s and only gave it to Sophie because

she'd been nice all along, and then everyone was nice to her.'

'I admit, that is brilliant,' said Daisy, her eyes narrowed as she studied Amina. 'Hazel – I don't like this girl in the slightest.'

Binny and the other third formers came to find Daisy just before Prep.

'We got your note,' said Binny to Daisy, standing up straight and crossing her arms, while the Marys, Martha and Alma all arranged themselves behind her looking nervous but defiant. 'And we don't care. We'll do what we like – and Amina is far nicer to us than you ever were!'

'Nonsense! What about – what about *loyalty*?' asked Daisy.

'Loyalty!' cried Binny. 'When you used us for information all last year, but never let us into your *secret* society?'

Daisy was so angry her eyes were flashing blue. 'Why, you – traitor! All of you!'

'Sorry,' said Marie.

'We still like you,' said Marion.

'But we don't want to carry your coat any more,' said Maria. 'We're carrying Amina's instead.'

They turned and walked away together. Kitty shouted, 'YOU'RE A RAT, BINNY!' after them, but it sounded hollow.

‘It’s the Marys that hurt the most,’ said Daisy, and she spent Prep slumped at her desk, staring miserably into space.

The next day she discovered that her place on the equestrian team had been given to Amina, and there were no more parts for the Anniversary play. She pretended to everyone else that she did not mind about it, but privately she slipped into a funk so black that I did not know quite what to do with her.

I had never seen Daisy like this before, for even when other dreadful things were happening to her, she knew in her heart that she had Deepdean. Now that she could not rule over Deepdean any more, it was as though a crucial part of her was missing.

# 4

I had to do something. I worried away at the problem for the next day, and then the answer came to me in a flash. It was a plan I could have never imagined carrying out last year, but, like everyone else at Deepdean, I have changed. I am more than the Hazel Wong I used to be.

After Prep was over that evening, during the muddle of toothbrushes, I climbed up through House and knocked on the very highest door. It opened, and there, in her pyjamas, was the Head Girl.

‘What do you want?’ she asked.

‘I’d like your help,’ I said, trying not to quail, for she looked very cross. ‘We – Daisy Wells and I, I mean – we helped you two terms ago, didn’t we?’

‘I suppose you did,’ said the Head Girl. ‘Go on.’

‘Can you make sure that Daisy is put back on the equestrian team, and gets a part in the play?’ I asked. ‘She’s . . . upset that she’s been taken off the team, and

she's a good actress, I promise she is. She won't let the school down.'

The Head Girl frowned. 'She had better not,' she said. 'You know it's a special one this year, for the Anniversary. It's a walking play, where the cast moves around the school and the audience follows. We can't have anything but the best.'

'Daisy's the best at anything she tries, you know that!' I said. 'She won't let you down, honour bright. And she's a real actress – she was in *Romeo and Juliet* at the Rue last month. In London!'

The Head Girl sighed and shrugged. 'All right, then,' she said. 'I'll have words.'

'But please don't tell *anyone* that I asked you!' I said hurriedly. 'She can't know.'

'Go away, Wong,' said the Head Girl, shutting the door on me – but I thought she said it good-naturedly, and, sure enough, the very next day it was discovered that Daisy had only been missed off the equestrian team list by mistake, and one more role was needed in the Anniversary play. A character called the Spirit of the School would watch over the proceedings as the company moved around the school and would bless the actors at the end.

'The prefects asked me specially!' Daisy told me blissfully. 'They said they couldn't do it without me, so of course I accepted.'



‘I’m glad,’ I said, straight-faced.

‘Thank you, Hazel Wong,’ said Daisy, with a wink. ‘Don’t lie, I know it was you really.’ Then her face fell. ‘All the same – oh, bother, but it shouldn’t have to be up to *you*! They ought to simply change the rules for me. That’s how it’s always been! This school has gone dreadfully downhill.’

‘You’re not the King, Daisy Wells,’ said Kitty, coming to sit on Daisy’s bed. ‘You just have to get used to being like the rest of us.’

‘But I’m *not* like the rest of you,’ said Daisy. She said it so emptily that it made my heart hurt.

‘Humph!’ said Kitty, and she jumped onto Daisy’s thin pillow, which made a crackling sound. Daisy went stiff all over and shoved Kitty away.

‘Ow!’ said Kitty. ‘Just because you can’t bear to hear the truth! What are you hiding under your pillow, anyway?’

‘Nothing!’ said Daisy. ‘Nothing at all.’

‘Show me or I’ll find out anyway, Daisy Wells,’ said Kitty, poking her.

‘It’s the programme from my play, if you must know,’ said Daisy, teeth gritted, ‘*Romeo and Juliet*. I am using it to inspire me in my role as the Spirit of the School. That’s why it has to stay under my pillow at all times and if you move it I shall hurt you very badly.’

I tensed myself too, ready for Kitty to prod at that quite obvious falsehood. But then . . .

‘That photo’s new,’ said Kitty, leaning over to look at the snap that was on my bedside table.

‘It’s of us with George and Alexander,’ I said quickly. ‘Uncle Felix took it just before we came back to school.’

Kitty peered at it, and I looked too. Daisy and I were standing together on the London pavement with our arms round each other, the two boys behind us with their hands on our shoulders. We were all four squinting into the sunshine.

‘Isn’t Alexander handsome!’ Kitty cried. I blushed without meaning to. ‘*So* tall. Ooh, *Hazel!* If I wasn’t absolutely loyal to my boyfriend Hugo . . .’

‘Hmm,’ said Lavinia, leaning over both of us. ‘The blond one’s all right, but *he’s* more handsome.’ She pointed at George.

‘No he isn’t!’ I said, rather surprised, for I had never considered George that way. ‘He’s . . . he’s just George.’

‘They’re both just *boys*,’ said Daisy, shrugging. ‘There’s nothing else to say about them.’

At that moment, Beanie came running into the dorm, startling us all. ‘I’ve just got a letter from Daddy!’ she cried. ‘He’s coming to the Anniversary, and he’s bringing Mummy!’

# 5

After that, the Anniversary weekend was all anyone could think about – and it is funny now to remember how excited everyone was. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of Deepdean’s opening, and so a long weekend of celebrations had been planned. The Anniversary was to begin with a music concert on Friday evening in which both current and old girls would perform, and then there were exhibition matches on Saturday, a gala dinner for Big Girls and parents on Saturday night, chapel on Sunday morning, the garden party on Sunday afternoon, the play on Sunday evening, and finally, to mark the end of the school year, Leaving Prayers on Monday morning.

Most parents were coming down on Thursday evening or on Friday and staying until Monday. As well as Beanie’s parents, Kitty’s were coming, and Lavinia’s father with his fiancée as well as her mother, who he was

divorcing. Even Clementine's father had promised to make an appearance – and it was rumoured that Amina's people were coming all the way from Egypt.

In fact, Daisy and I were the only fourth formers set to be entirely on our own. I tried not to mind about that and to remember what my father had said during his last telephone call.

'You must understand, Hazel,' he had said to me down the crackling phone line. 'The journey from Hong Kong would take far too long. You must be brave about this.'

'Yes, Father,' I said, thinking I had already been brave enough for a whole lifetime.

'I will come for the Christmas holidays, I promise you,' said my father. 'And IF Rose and May are VERY GOOD, they MIGHT be able to come with me.'

I heard Hong-Kong-faraway shrieks behind his voice, and I knew that my little sisters were in his study with him.

I tried to be excited, but Christmas seemed oceans away, just like my family.

'Buck up,' said Daisy, who was being very don't-care about it. 'Who needs parents, anyway? *I'm* here, that ought to be enough for you.' But I know Daisy too well by now to be tricked by her poses. I knew that she had telephoned London and come out of Matron's office with her shoulders slumped. Uncle Felix and Aunt Lucy

were both too busy with work to be able to come down, and Bertie was busy at Cambridge, and that cut Daisy deeply.

‘You’re lucky!’ grumbled Lavinia. ‘It’s far worse to have your people here embarrassing you. It’s going to be *awful*. My parents, in the same room – ugh! They hate each other. And my father’s bringing Patricia. If he makes me call her *Mother*, I think I might kill him.’

‘I’m sorry,’ said Beanie, patting her, ‘but Patricia is nice, isn’t she?’

Lavinia glared at her. ‘I hate her, and I hate my father, and I hate my mother. Ugh, I want to run away all over again.’

Beanie looked quite shocked.

‘Hey, Beanie,’ said Kitty, poking her. ‘Cheer up. Your mum’s coming to the Anniversary, remember?’

‘She *is*!’ said Beanie, and her eyes lit up. We all knew that Beanie’s mother had not been well. It was the reason why Beanie had had to stay with Kitty last Christmas – but Mrs Martineau must be better now.

Excitement buzzed about the school. The Games mistress, Miss Talent, was choosing girls for the exhibition matches and the English mistress, Miss Dodgson, was leading play rehearsals. (‘She’s hopeless,’ said Daisy, ‘not a patch on Inigo.’) The Music and Art mistress, Miss Morris, was choosing performers for the concert, including

Sophie Croke-Finchley from the other fourth-form dorm, who was to play a piano solo. The thumping noises she produced as she played through her piece in the House common room became a constant noise in my head that I would find myself humming at odd moments. We practised walking and curtsying in Department, and the Big Girls were gathered in a room and quietly reminded of the niceties of dinner etiquette: holding their forks and knives correctly, passing the salt and pepper to the left at the same time and conversing in a manner both polite and amusing. ('As if they wouldn't already know all that!' said Daisy scornfully. 'We're Deepdean girls, not animals!')

Miss Runcible, the Science mistress, stopped her lessons on solutes and distillation and had the third and fourth forms making fireworks for the display to be held at the end of the garden party on Sunday night. (This made me nervous – Deepdean does not have a good history with fireworks.) And everyone, from the Big Girls to the shrimps, began whispering about the end-of-year pranks. There is a tradition of playing them at Deepdean – but it could not be decided whether we ought to hold off, because of the Anniversary, or make them even more impressive than usual.

'I heard the fifth formers are going to dye the Deepdean pond green during the Anniversary,' said Kitty.