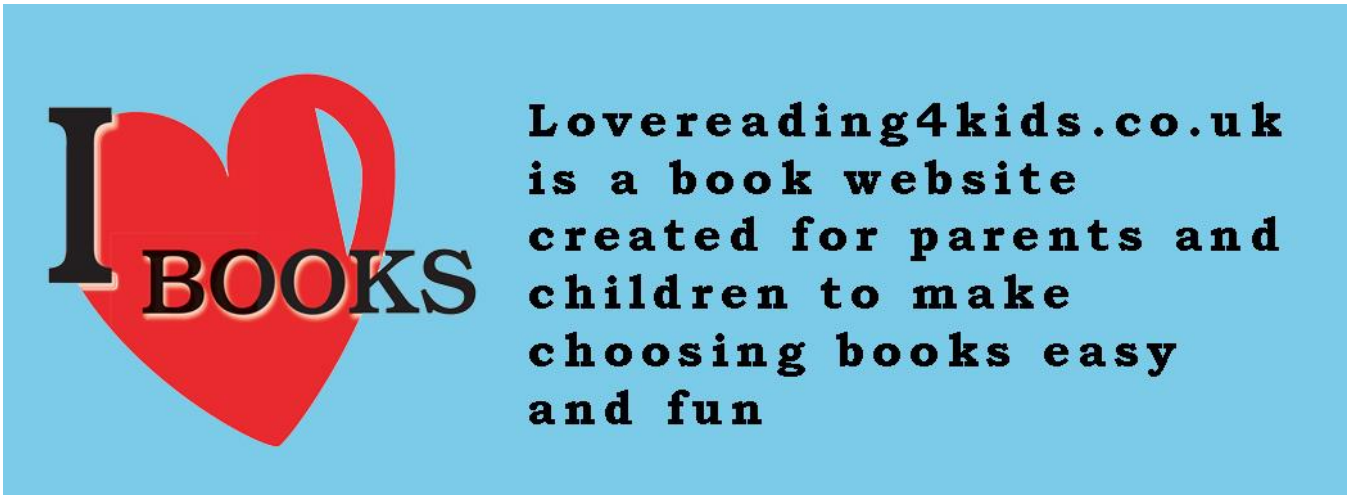


Opening extract from

Jolly Foul Play

Written by

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1

We were all looking up, and so we missed the murder.

I have never seen Daisy so furious. She has been grinding her teeth (so hard that *my* teeth ache in sympathy) and saying, 'Oh, Hazel! How could we not notice it? We were *on the spot*!'

You see, Daisy needs to know things, and see everything, and get in everywhere. Being reminded that despite all the measures she puts in place (having informants in the younger years, ingratiating herself with the older girls and Jones the handyman and the mistresses), there are still things going on at Deepdean that she does not understand – well, that has put her in an even worse mood than the one she has been in lately.

And, if I am honest, I feel strangely ashamed. The Detective Society has solved three real murder mysteries so far, and yet we still missed a murder taking place

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under our noses, in our very own Deepdean School for Girls – the place where we began our detective careers one year ago.

It really is funny to think about that. It seems in a way as though we have not moved at all – or as though we have made a circle, and come all the way back to the beginning again. I suppose I still *look* almost exactly like the Hazel I was when I ran into the Gym and found Miss Bell, our Science mistress, lying on the floor last October. I am not much taller, anyway. When I measured myself last week, I found I have hardly grown at all – or at least, not upwards. My hair is still straight and dark brown, my face is still round, and I still have the spot on my nose (I suppose it must be a different spot, but it does not look that way). Inside, though, I feel quite different. All the things that have happened the past year have made me quite a new shape, I think – one who has faced up to the murderer at Daisy's home, Fallingford, and defied my father to solve the Orient Express case. On the other hand, sometimes I think that even though Daisy keeps on shooting upwards, and becoming blonder and lovelier than ever, she has stayed the same inside. She bounces back from things, like a rubber ball – not even what happened at Fallingford could truly alter her.

Before the fifth of November, I had not been enjoying Deepdean much this term. Just like the changes that

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have taken place in me, the school has felt different from last year, and not at all in a good way. It has felt as though something awful were rushing towards us all term. Last night was dreadful, but now it has happened I feel almost relieved. It is like the difference between waiting to go in to the dentist and sitting in his chair.

And now that there is a murder to solve, Daisy and I can be the Detective Society again. It is sometimes difficult being Daisy's best friend, but being her Vice-President and Secretary is much more simple. This case, though, will not be simple at all.

You see, the person who has died – who we think has been murdered – is our new Head Girl.