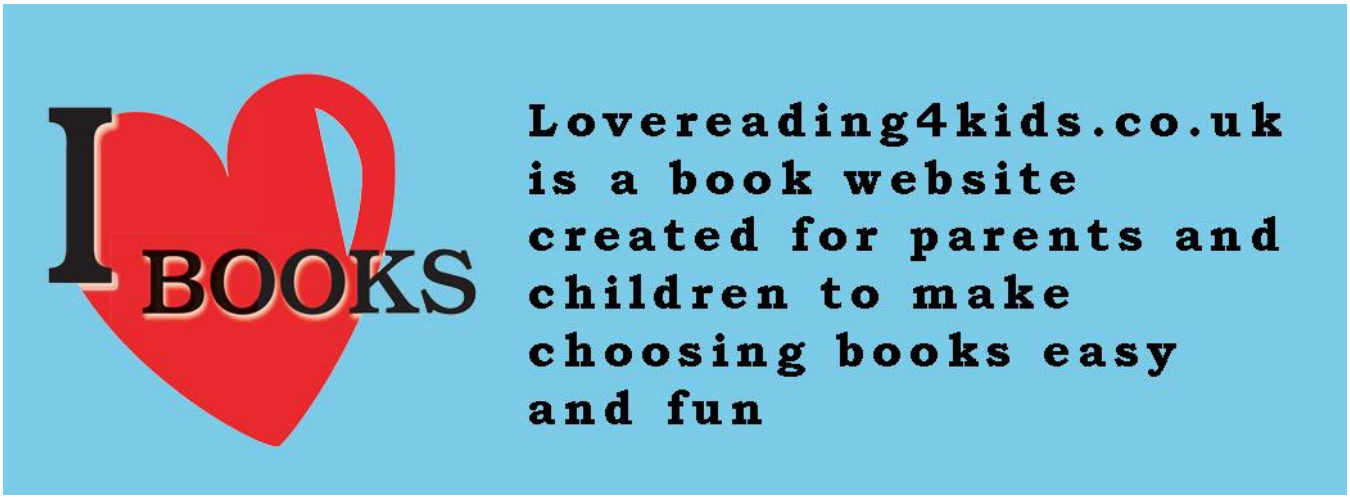


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THE CASE OF THE DEEPDEAN VAMPIRE

Being an account of

The Case of Camilla Badescu,
an investigation by the Wells and Wong
Detective Society
(mainly Daisy Wells).

Written by Daisy Wells
(Detective Society President), aged 14.

Begun Thursday 21st November 1935.

Now it's time for another case! Daisy has written this one as well – it's a mystery that confused me (and rather frightened me, if I'm being honest). But it does prove that it's a good idea to read things that are not just mystery stories – if it hadn't been for me and Dracula, I'm not sure if we would ever have solved the problem!

– Hazel Wong

I

Of all the cases Hazel and I have investigated so far, the Case of the Deepdean Vampire was one of the strangest and most interesting. It was not a murder, which was a pity – but I did solve it very cleverly, as usual, and I am convinced that it ought to be written down properly, so that other people can read it one day and be impressed.

I asked Hazel to do it, but she is still busy writing up her notes for the Case of the Murder of Elizabeth Hurst, our Head Girl (that *was* a murder, and a very exciting one). However, I remembered how good I was at writing up the Case of the Blue Violet, and I realized that I could do it perfectly well myself. After all, I am not only an excellent detective but a truly first-class writer. I am the Honourable Daisy Wells, and I can do anything.

Now, I am sure that one day Daisy Wells will be recognized as the greatest consulting detective the world

has ever known (the second greatest will be Hazel Wong, of course). However, I must admit that international fame has not quite happened to us yet. We are currently fourth formers at Deepdean School for Girls. I am the President of our Detective Society, and Hazel Wong is my Vice-President and Secretary. She is also my best friend, which I am glad about. Not that there was ever any danger that she was not, but all the same, I did spend the first part of this autumn term wondering.

The facts of the case are these. At breakfast on Thursday 21st November I was watching our new prefects try to keep the shrimps in order. (If you read Hazel's account of Elizabeth Hurst's murder when it is finished, you will understand why we have new prefects, and why I might be interested in them.) However, one of the most important things for a detective to remember is the principle of *constant vigilance*. You cannot simply think about one thing. You must watch and listen to several things at once. I am an excellent detective, and so I was keeping half an ear on the chatter at our fourth-form table. The others (Kitty, Beanie and Lavinia from our dorm, as well as Clementine from the other dorm) were talking their usual useless nonsense, but then something came through that made me sit up and take notice.

'And she climbed past our window like a lizard at two in the morning – *upside down*!' said Clementine

Delacroix. 'I was lying in bed awake, and I saw her. Our dorm is right below hers, you know. She must have come out of the window above us!'

Now, Clementine is a terrible gossip. Most of the things she says can be ignored, but all the same, this sounded most interesting.

'She did *not*!' said Kitty scornfully. Kitty is also a gossip, so she and Clementine often don't get on.

'I tell you, she did!' said Clementine. 'I saw it with my own eyes. I'm not surprised – I've been waiting for something like this to happen for weeks. You see, Camilla Badescu is a vampire.'

I keep close watch on everyone at Deepdean as a matter of course, and so I already knew quite a lot about the fifth former Camilla Badescu. She comes from Romania, and she is new this year – she went straight into the fifth form, which is unusual. She is tall and pale, with dark hair, and she is exceedingly haughty. She is rude to everyone, including the mistresses – everyone, that is, apart from her best friend, Amy Jessop. Camilla and Amy share a dorm with Eloise Delacroix (who happens to be Clementine's sister) and two other girls, and they have become as close as anything since a few weeks after Camilla arrived.

'Don't be silly,' said Kitty. 'People don't climb *upside down*. And anyway, there's no such thing as vampires.'

'Yes there is, Kitty Freebody, and Camilla is one,' said Clementine. 'She comes from Romania, doesn't she? Well, Romania is next to Transylvania, and everyone knows that's where vampires come from. It's perfectly obvious if you think about it. She never eats anything at dinner and her hair has one of those window's peaks—'

'*Widow's* peaks,' said Lavinia.

Clementine glared at her. 'And how would you know, Lavinia? Are you a vampire too?'

Lavinia bared her teeth. Clementine rolled her eyes.

Beanie, eating her toast, looked alarmed. 'You don't really mean it?' she asked.

'Of course I do,' said Clementine. 'I tell you, I know what I saw!'

Kitty soothed Beanie, and I glanced at Hazel, to see how she was taking things. She looked rather worried – Hazel doesn't enjoy ghost stories, and this sounded very much like a ghost story. But I was not quite so sure.

In my experience, people rarely *do* know what it is they saw. Their minds are dreadfully lazy, always playing tricks on them. But all the same, there is a reason behind everything – and I wondered what the explanation for this story was.

'Anyway, if you want proof that Camilla's a vampire, look at Amy Jessop,' Clementine went on. 'I know they're

supposed to be friends, but look how pale and thin she's got since Camilla arrived in her dorm! My sister Eloise says that Amy's even begun to sleepwalk. That's why I was lying awake last night. I can sometimes hear the floor in their dorm creaking above our ceiling, and I thought I might hear her doing it.'

'Fourth form!' said the prefect on duty, turning to us suddenly. 'Eat up your breakfasts before the bell rings!'

We went silent and ate. I ate very quickly, to give myself more time to think. Most people are slow to do anything, which is foolish. If you do all the boring things in life like meals and prep and getting dressed extremely quickly, you have more time to detect.

Once I had finished my toast, I thought about Camilla and Amy. It was true that they seemed to have become close very quickly – and that was odd. Amy herself is known for being very polite, and good at lessons – her essay on *Macbeth* even won a prize at the beginning of this term, and was featured in quite a prominent paper. Camilla, as I have already explained, is stand-offish and rude – that Amy had picked *her* to be friends with was unusual. Amy had lost other friends because of it – she and Camilla spent almost all their time together now. I had noticed this, but I had not enquired further. I saw that I must do so now. Vampires are not real, but all the same, people don't simply imagine someone climbing past them, out of a

window. I wanted to know what Camilla was really doing, and why.

II

On the way down to school from House after breakfast, I told Hazel that I thought I might have found the Detective Society a new case.

'You don't think she *is* a vampire, do you?' Hazel asked anxiously, and I knew I had been right: she did think it was a ghost story.

'Of course not!' I said. 'But I do believe that Clementine saw Camilla climbing out of the window, and I want to know *why*.'

I made sure that Hazel and I walked just behind Camilla. That morning she was walking with Amy, as she always did. They had their arms linked, and they were walking slowly. Amy was hunched over, her head almost drooping against Camilla's shoulder. I saw what Clementine meant – she looked unwell, quite weak. I also observed Camilla. She too was pale, and there were hollows under her eyes. She looked like someone who had not slept much the night before. Clementine's story was standing up so far.

We could observe our subjects – but of course, because we were only fourth formers and they were fifth, we

couldn't simply go up and quiz them. We had to simply watch. I looked closer – and this time I saw something on Amy's neck. It was half hidden by her school collar, but it looked like a scratch – or a cut. I nudged Hazel, and she saw where I was pointing at once. We hung back, to let them get ahead of us, and then I turned to face Hazel.

'That mark, on her neck!' said Hazel. 'You know that's where vampires bite their victims?'

'Hazel!' I said to her. 'That was a cut, not a bite! You know as well as I do that there are no such things as vampires.'

'But – an unusual mark on the neck *is* one of the signs,' said Hazel. She said it rather nervously. Hazel really is terribly silly about the supernatural.

'All right, Hazel,' I said. 'Explain to me. What makes someone a vampire?'

I don't bother much with stories where nothing is real. Murder mysteries and spy books are all right, and so are books with names and dates and facts, but novels where people come back from the dead are not. I realized that I didn't know much about vampires – but Hazel would.

'Their powers only work properly at night, they drink blood, they can turn into anything they like – bats or rats or a pillar of mist – but they can't go anywhere without being invited, garlic and silver make them ill, they can crawl down walls like lizards, and if they drink

your blood you'll become a vampire too,' said Hazel without drawing breath.

'Really, Hazel,' I said. 'You do read rubbish. But thank you.'

'I do not!' said Hazel. 'Anyway, it came in useful just now, didn't it?'

Really, Hazel has become very bold this term. Anyone would think she was becoming her own person. I tried to look severe, and keep us focused on the case.

'Listen. You saw Amy just now. She looks miserable – but so does Camilla. If she was a vampire, preying on Amy, wouldn't she be more smug? Now, let's put out feelers this morning. By the end of the day I want to know everything there is to know about Camilla – and Amy, while we're at it. And I want you to remember that there are *no* such things as vampires.'

III

I am always prepared to uncover new information at Deepdean. I have threads carefully set up, and all I need to do is tug them to put them in motion.

At bunbreak Hazel and I went over to see the third formers. 'What do you know about Camilla?' I asked. They are a very rude, bold year, and so nothing but a direct approach will do.

'She's a vampire,' said Binny Freebody immediately. 'She drinks Amy Jessop's blood. She's got a dark power over her.'

'You are stupid,' I said, because it is not good for Binny to be told she is anything else. 'That's a fairy tale!'

'It's *true*,' said Binny, widening her eyes. She really is unsquashable, even after the events of this term. 'I've heard three different people say so. Anyway, look at them! Amy never goes anywhere without her.'

I looked over at Amy and Camilla, sitting together on a bench. Amy was pinched and pale, a pretty contraband floral brooch pinned to the collar of her Deepdean blazer the only flash of colour anywhere about her. She was drooping worse than ever, and Camilla was whispering in her ear. Camilla had very red lips, I noticed, and her teeth were slightly pointed.

Hazel shuddered. 'Come on, Watson!' I said, nudging her. 'Buck up! These third formers can't help. Let's go and talk to Violet.'

Violet Darby is one of the Big Girls. Hazel and I did her a favour during the Case of the Blue Violet a few months ago, so she is in our debt.

That morning, as usual, she was sitting on a wall by herself, writing a letter. I motioned to Hazel, and approached her.

'Good morning, Violet!' I said.

Violet jumped. 'Daisy!' she said. 'Hazel. Are you all right?'

'Perfectly,' I said. 'But – Violet, we're worried. It's Amy. We think there's something wrong with her.'

Violet is soft-hearted, and just as I had hoped, she wrinkled her brow at that, and sighed. 'You've noticed?' she asked.

'Of course we have,' I said. '*All* the younger girls have.'

I nudged Hazel, who I knew was blushing. She is still annoyingly bad at espionage.

'Camilla's a bad influence,' said Violet. 'Amy oughtn't to have become friends with her. But she's too caring. She's had to look after her mother her whole life – her father went missing at the end of the war, you see, which usually means *died*, and Mrs Jessop never recovered from it. Amy didn't even get to meet him – it's awfully tragic. Anyway, I suppose she thought Camilla needed looking after too – a new girl arriving from another country, knowing not a single person at Deepdean. But it's Amy who needs looking after now, if you ask me. She's not eating enough, and she looks so upset all the time. Camilla won't let anyone else come near Amy these days. She frightens them away! I've tried to help, but what can I do?'

'What happened to make them friends?' asked Hazel. She is interested in this sort of thing – I

suspect it reminds her of the time when I decided to befriend her.

'Oh, I don't know,' said Violet. 'They simply began hanging about together – walking to the sports field and school and things. Perhaps it was being in a dorm together, or perhaps they discovered they had something in common?'

I was wondering what on earth Camilla Badescu could have in common with Amy Jessop when suddenly there was a commotion behind us in the quad. Hazel and I turned round. Violet stood up with a start.

Amy had slumped back in a faint on the bench. Camilla was leaning over her, eyebrows drawn together fiercely, clutching Amy's hands, and on Amy's neck was a streak of red.

'She's hurt herself!' cried Violet. 'Oh dear!'

Several people ran for Mrs Minn – but Camilla and Amy stayed frozen in their places.

Hazel seized my arm, and I began to have an uncomfortable feeling about this case.