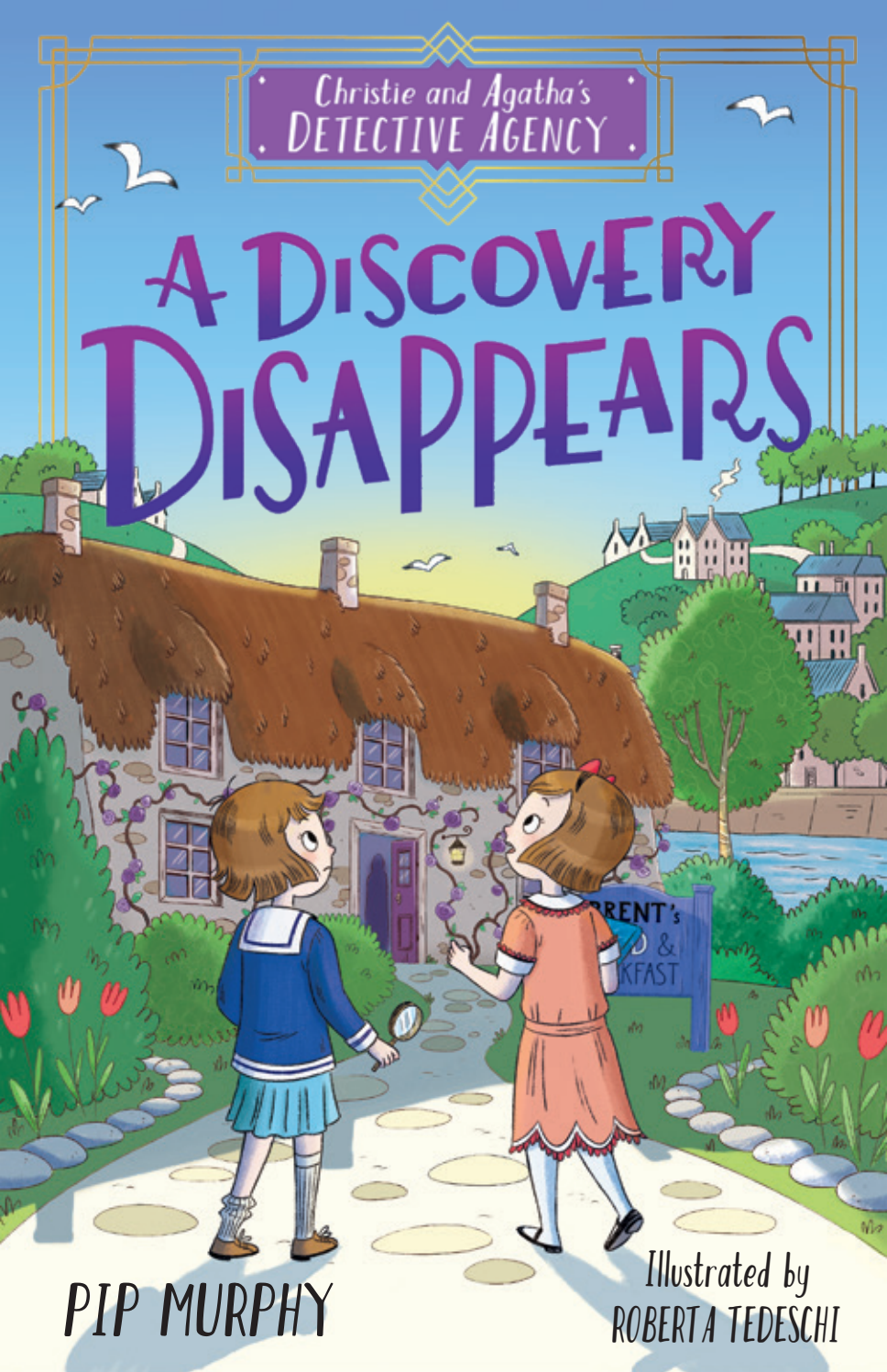

Christie and Agatha's
DETECTIVE AGENCY
A DISCOVERY DISAPPEARS
PIP MURPHY
Illustrated by
ROBERTA TEDESCHI

Book 1 in the fun 1920s detective series starring twin sisters Christie and Agatha!

"Whoever gave you that sandwich did it deliberately.
They wanted to sabotage Fleming's research."
When Agatha accidentally eats a major scientific discovery (hidden in a sandwich!), it's a race against time for twins Agatha and Christie to find out who's trying to ruin physician Sir Alexander Fleming's reputation.

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Christie and Agatha's Detective Agency:
A Discovery Disappears

Written by Pip Murphy

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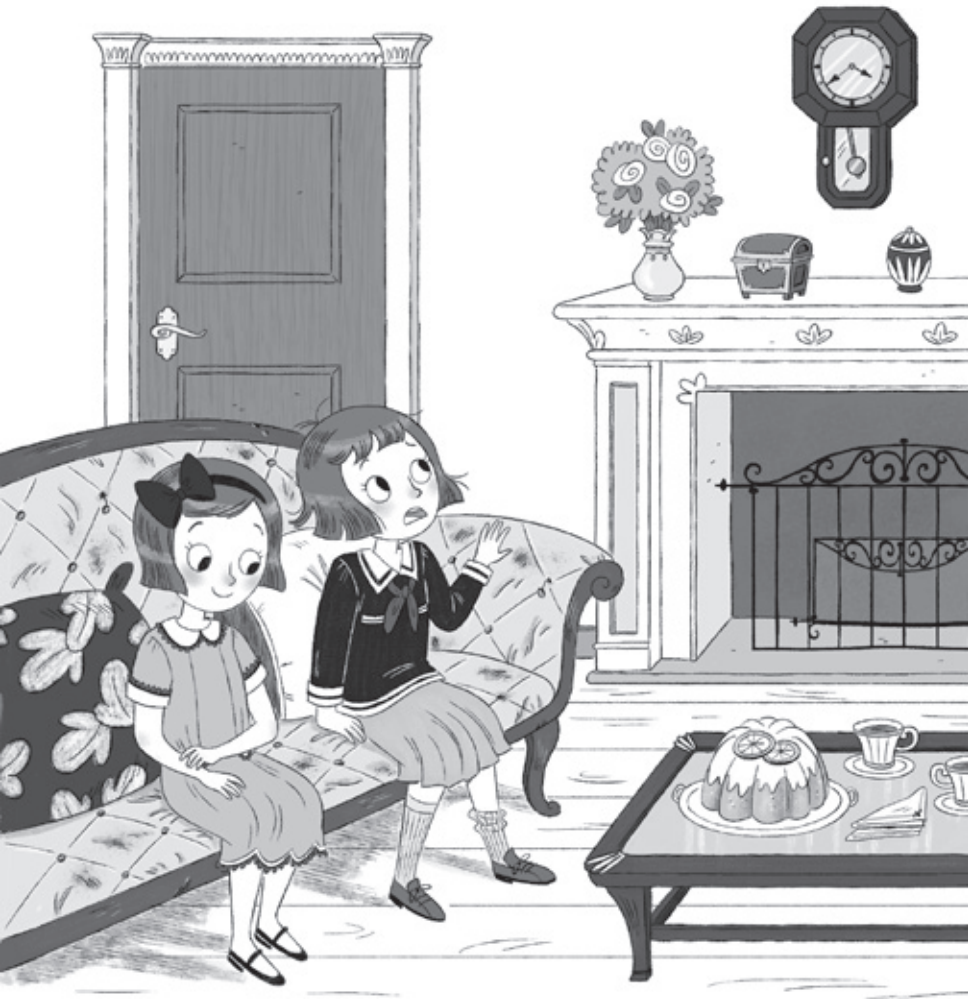
CHAPTER ONE

Agatha never went anywhere without her notebook. After all, you never knew when someone was going to say something interesting. Her twin sister, Christie, on the other hand, never went anywhere without a gadget. After all, you never knew when someone was going to say something boring.

Right now, both sisters wished they could delve into their pockets. The two of them were sitting in the cosy family drawing room with their mother Clara, their elderly neighbour Mrs Trellis and the mouth-watering smell of homemade lemon cake.

In Christie's opinion, the cake was wonderful. Her family was good company. But Mrs Trellis was the dullest person ever born. She was itching to take out her toy gyroscope. She stole a look at the drawing-room clock that hung above the white-plaster fireplace,

and was shocked to see that only twenty minutes had passed since Mrs Trellis's arrival. That couldn't be right. Christie would have to take



the thing apart and check it later. She was pretty confident that she could put it back together correctly this time.

Agatha, meanwhile, was sitting on the well-worn sofa next to her sister, listening to everything the adults said as carefully as possible. She was hoping she might be able to remember some of it to write down later. She dreamt of being an author, but dialogue was not her strong point. Neither was speaking to people. As her twin pointed out, the two facts could well be connected.

‘Dear Agatha!’ boomed Mrs Trellis from her high-backed armchair, next to the fireplace.

Agatha jumped. Mrs Trellis was partially deaf, which meant her voice could be a little too loud at times. ‘Er, yes, Mrs Trellis?’ she said.

‘You really are such a good girl. You put me in mind of my own childhood. Back then, children were always seen and not heard.’

‘We could be not heard or seen if we were allowed to go outside to play in the garden,’ muttered Christie under her breath.

‘Pardon?’ said Mrs Trellis suspiciously.

‘Well, things have moved on a little since then,’ said their mother extra loudly. ‘This is the twentieth century, after all. I’d miss out on learning all sorts of fascinating things if my daughters never talked to me. For instance, Christie was showing me this rather lovely trick with her chemistry set the other day–’

‘Is that so?’ said Mrs Trellis with a sniff. ‘Well, I’m sure it’s not my place to tell you how to raise your daughters, Mrs Parker, but playing

with chemicals is hardly the most ladylike of hobbies.'



'No,' agreed their mother, who didn't care a bit how unladylike her daughters' hobbies were. 'More cake, Mrs Trellis? Christie, be a dear.'

Christie hopped up from the sofa and offered the cake plate to Mrs Trellis. The grey-haired woman accepted a piece with icy politeness. Her views on the two sisters were strong and unshakeable: Christie she disliked for constantly trespassing into her



garden, in order to retrieve her wooden glider or sample the apples that fell from her fruit trees; Agatha she liked for not doing this.

'Anyway,' said Mrs Trellis, 'I really should tell you my reason for dropping round unannounced.'

Christie readied herself for a complaint. *She's noticed* that broken apple tree branch, she thought glumly.

Surprisingly, the woman turned to her twin.

'I've got a great treat for you, Agatha,' she told her, beaming.

She then glared at Christie, daring her to ask why she was not included.

'Thank you, Mrs Trellis,' said Agatha, worrying what the woman's idea of a treat might be.

'I remember your mother saying that you want to be a writer. It so happens that a dear friend of mine, who is down here on a visit, is having a little tea party tomorrow afternoon and one of the guests is a famous author. Naturally, I thought you might like to attend.'

'Oh!' That sounded like it really might be fun. If she could find the

courage to talk to them.

'How wonderful!' said their mother. 'That will be exciting, won't it, Aggie?'

'I'm afraid he's a rather sensational, modern type of writer,' said Mrs Trellis apologetically. 'You might not have heard of him. He's a Scotsman. It's going to be a Scottish invasion with Mr Fleming there as well. Anyway, his name is Sir Conan Doyle.'

Agatha nearly choked on her mouthful of cake. Conan Doyle? Sir Arthur Conan Doyle? The writer of the Sherlock Holmes books? She

was actually being invited to meet the master of mysteries? She could hardly believe her ears.

'I know,' said Mrs Trellis, mistaking her shock for horror. 'Not one of the classics, like Austen or the Brontës, but then all the really good writers are dead. I understand if you'd rather not come.'

'No,' gasped Agatha. 'Please, I'd love to come.'

'Such good manners,' said Mrs Trellis adoringly.

As the conversation moved on, Christie grinned at her sister and whispered, 'Lucky you! Meeting

your hero.'

'You don't mind not coming?'

'Spending another afternoon with Mrs Trellis? No thanks. But you have fun.'

And Agatha probably would have had fun, if only she hadn't made the terrible, catastrophic mistake of eating the wrong sandwich.

END OF FREE EXTRACT!

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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This story is a work of fiction, but some of the characters and events are based on real historical people and what happened to them.

REAL PEOPLE:



Alexander Fleming (1881–1955),
a Scottish biologist.



Merlin Pryce (1902–1976), a Welsh medical researcher who had been Fleming's research assistant.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), a very famous Scottish mystery writer and the creator of Sherlock Holmes. He really was very interested in the paranormal, including spiritualism and fairies.

REAL EVENTS:

On 3rd September 1928 Alexander Fleming came back from a family holiday to discover ‘mould juice’, which he later called penicillin, growing in a petri dish in his laboratory.

Howard Florey, an Australian pharmacologist and Ernst Chain, a German (later British) biochemist developed penicillin so that it could be used in hospitals.

Fleming, Florey and Chain won the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1945 for their role in the development of this important antibiotic.

But what about Merlin Pryce?

How much Merlin Pryce was involved in the discovery of penicillin is unclear. Perhaps he just suggested that Fleming's discovery merited further research, or perhaps he was the one who noticed the strange mould and its effects in the first place. Either way, he definitely downplayed his role in the event. Why he did so is a mystery!

