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From the report of May Wong, WOE operative,
18th December 1940

My name is May Wong. I am ten years old (nearly eleven), and I have become a spy in order to save the world. That is true and not an exaggeration. *Anything* can happen in a war, and anyone can be a hero.

And anyone can be evil too. When the war began, I thought that Nazis might look like the lizards who used to bask on the steps of our Big House, back in Hong Kong. I imagined them with scaly, flickering skin and yellow eyes. I thought that being evil must make you *look* evil.

But, now that I'm older, I've realized that evil can look like anything. Evil can look like a starchy governess, or a kind old lady, or the warden who comes round to check the blackout.

This is the story of how I – how *we* – uncovered a Nazi spy in England, solved a murder and joined the Ministry of Unladylike Activity. It was much harder than I expected.

We had to be very clever, and, as usual, none of the grown-ups listened to us until it was almost too late. Grown-ups really are hopeless. But they're listening now, at last, and they want to know everything that happened. That's why I'm writing this.

By the way, this is the *official* version of the notes I took during our mission. I'm supposed to be using formal language, the way we're taught at school, but I've decided that this is *my* report, and I'm going to tell it my own way. And that means explaining some things first.

The most important thing to know about me, apart from the fact that I am now a spy, is that I'm not supposed to be in England at all. I'm *supposed* to be living in Hong Kong, where I was born, with my mother and my father and my little brother, Teddy. But I came to England last year with Father and my second sister, Rose, to visit Deepdean School for Girls – the stupid English boarding school that Father planned for us to go to. And, while we were here, the war began.

Father went home as quick as he could to be with Ma Ma and Teddy, but he left me trapped in England with Rose and my biggest sister, Hazel. I can't go back to Hong Kong until the war ends – so obviously the only thing I can do is make sure it ends as quickly as possible. I miss Ma Ma and I miss Teddy (even though he's too small to be very interesting). I think I even miss Father, although he was the reason I got stuck in England in

the first place, and the reason I have to go to Deepdean, which I hate.

Or at least I *did* go to Deepdean until I ran away to become a spy.

I ran away because I had to. There was no other choice. Everyone in my family – including Big Sister Hazel – thinks that I'm still a baby, but I'm not. The truth is that I can speak two entire languages and run for ten minutes without stopping and lie well enough to trick Father and the Deepdean mistresses. I can fight with a sword (or I could if someone would give me a real one – all I've practised with is a stick) and with my feet and my fists.

So I was sure that I'd be an excellent spy, if only someone would give me a chance.

You see, I knew a spy already: Hazel.

I am absolutely not making that up. It's true.

And it's hard when your sister has already done all the things you want to do. Hazel went to Deepdean once too, and she's famous there, even now that she's very old (nineteen). She loved school. And Rose, who is twelve, loves it as well. So, when I first decided I wanted to become a spy, I thought I had to love it too. I spent minutes and minutes on my school compositions, and I *tried* not to hit any of the other girls during Games, and I even gave Mariella Semple my jam roly-poly pudding at dinner. (I was sorry about that later – she didn't even

finish it. What a waste of jam roly-poly!) But it all just made me notice how much I hated school, even when I was trying.

So I decided to become a spy another way.

I asked Hazel how to do it, but she would never answer any of my questions. She wouldn't even admit she *was* a spy, even though it was perfectly obvious.

And then I found the note in her handbag.

Obviously it wasn't for me – I'm not stupid – and I shouldn't have been looking in Hazel's handbag in the first place. But I was bored, and I was cross, and sometimes I just *do* things without thinking about them. I only feel bad about them later.

It happened like this.

By September 1940, the war had been going on for a year, but you almost wouldn't know it, living in Deepdean. Deepdean Park was full of sandbags, a bomb had fallen on the cinema by mistake (no one was hurt) and there was no cream on the cakes at the Willow Tea Rooms or soap powder at our boarding house to wash with. I didn't care much about the soap, but I did about the cream. But that was really as far as it went. It wasn't at all like war is in stories. The newsreels at the pictures, of cities in Europe falling and German soldiers marching and shooting, felt exciting but nearly as made up as the main feature. It sounds strange now that I know better, but I was . . . almost disappointed.

And then we began to hear stories about the Nazis crossing the Channel to flatten us like a thumb squashing a bug. Planes buzzed overhead every night, and every day the invasion seemed closer and closer. So, when Hazel came to Deepdean to take me and Rose out for tea, one weekend at the beginning of October, I decided I couldn't wait any longer.

I asked and asked and asked Hazel about spying, and what it felt like to be in a real air raid, and how many people were dead in London, and whether it was true that the Germans were about to invade, and if so what were we going to do about it, until Rose got all wobbly and started to cry, and Hazel told me to stop. Rose had to sit down on a bench on Deepdean high street and put her head between her knees, hugging her gas-mask case, while Hazel patted her back and gave her a bullseye to suck. Hazel always has sweets in her pockets, even now they're rationed. Spies get all the best things: another reason why I wanted to be one.

'It'll be all right,' said Hazel, as a man in a Home Guard uniform walked by. 'No one will hurt you, Rose, I promise. We're prepared. We won't let them come here.'

I didn't see how she could promise something like that. It sounded like a grown-up lie. I picked up her handbag to look for more sweets. But what I found, instead, was a note.

It was scribbled all over with crossings-out, but circled at the bottom of it was a very simple message, underlined:

Your attendance is required for training of the utmost importance. The Ministry, 13 Great Russell Street, London, 4 p.m., Saturday 26th October 1940.

This looked important. I shoved it in my pocket just as Hazel turned to look at me.

'Give me that,' she said, and slid her handbag back onto her arm. So she *hadn't* noticed what I'd taken. 'Come on, who wants scones?'

I did, obviously. But, more than that, I wanted to find out what that message meant. It was *spy business*, I was sure of it. I knew that this was my chance to find out what Hazel was really doing, and help her do it.

I just had to run away from school first.