Janice Hallett

A BOX Full of MURDERS



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This book is for you,
because you dare to open the box

Ava Where are you?

Luke out in the grden playing fetch wiv daisy 🐶 you?

Ava Helping Mum arrange furniture 💺🛋💪

Luke it's sooooo quite here wivout you and mum

Ava What's Dad doing?

Luke got sum old chares down frm the loft to fil the big space were the sofa was. now hes siting in one of them lokking at the
tv an I meen looking 👀

hes not turned it on. hes being rily wierd!

Ava Mum's being weird too. She's made us move the sofa SO MANY TIMES and keeps sighing.

I asked Mum if we can look after Daisy sometimes but the flat is too small ☹

Luke yule see her wen u come to visit.
or we can tak her 4 a walk togever.
at leest yor only arond the corner

Ava Luke, your messages make no sense! Put autocorrect on! 😠

Luke Sorry wate a minite

Done! Is this better?

Ava Phew! Yes 😀

Mum says if anyone asks we say, 'Mum and Dad are separated' 😟

Luke Dad says if anyone asks we say mind your own business 😂

Ava Is the loft still open?

Luke Yep. Why?

Ava Dare you to go up.

Luke We're not allowed

Ava I knew you'd be too scared. You're only ten after all.

Luke Well you're only eleven! 😳

Not scared. Just don't want to cause trouble today

Ava Go on. Nothing to be afraid of. It's just a dusty old room in the roof.

Luke There. I'm at the top of the ladder. Here's proof I'm in the roof 😂



Ava So DARK. I bet there's ghosts and zombies and skeletons in there! 👻 💀

Luke?!

I was joking 🐼 🤡 Don't be scared! There's nothing up there

LUKE!

Luke I'm back!

Ava Phew! I thought you'd fallen down the ladder!

Luke Nope. Dad found me and got really cross. He's shut the loft again

No ghosts but I found something interesting . . .



Ava What's that?

Luke Not sure. It was hidden behind loads of old stuff.

Really dusty and full of old paper covered in writing

Ava Ew 

Luke I thought dad was cross I was in the loft but now I think he was just freaked out by this box

Ava Weird! Why would he care about a load of old paper?

Luke That's what I thought

So I grabbed some and stuffed them up my jumper 

Ava !!! Send me pics so we can look together?

Luke  Sending now

TOP SECRET

DO NOT READ

On no account must you turn this page



I see.

Rules mean nothing to you.
You don't believe easily.
You want to make up your own mind.

Good.

You might have what it takes to solve a mystery, and if you do, who knows what prize may await you?

Keep reading . . .

1983. A hot summer. Bright sunshine. Starry nights. No parents. A happy group of children enjoying a camping trip together. The perfect summer . . .

Except . . .

A terrible crime was committed and no one knows who did it.

Not then. Not now.

Read this stack of documents from the past. Within the pages, between the lines, are all the clues you need to solve a mystery. Can you?

No pressure, just . . .
be prepared and do your best.

Ava Wow! Who wrote that? And who was it for?

Luke Doesn't say

It's not Dad's handwriting – or Mum's

Ava Did you get any more papers?

Luke Loads more

But Dad's on his way to bed

Don't want him to see the phone light 

Ava Send pics when you can.

We HAVE to keep reading. WE could solve this mystery!!!

PLANNING APPLICATION NOTIFICATION

14 November 1982

Nature of the application: To develop land currently known as Chalfont Camp and Woods.

Person(s) making the application: Sallow & Razer (Property Development) Ltd.

Detail below what changes will be made to the site:
We intend to dig up the area known as Chalfont Camp and build a factory that will process industrial waste that is too dangerous to dispose of closer to where people live.

At the same time, we will bulldoze the area known as Chalfont Woods, remove all the trees and shrubs and create a landfill site where this toxic waste can be buried.

We will leave the river where it is, as this will be a useful way to drain liquid chemical waste that would otherwise be too expensive to process.

How long are the building works expected to take?
Approximately two years.

Proposed start date:
Work would start on Friday 29 July 1983. Immediately after the last day of a planned scout/guide camp on the site.

Persons wishing to lodge reasons why planning permission for the above works should or should NOT be granted are requested to put their objections in writing to the council.

SAVE
CHALFONT WOODS!

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN TODAY!

The council is SELLING our beautiful Chalfont Woods! After July next year our children will no longer be able to enjoy the great outdoors at this unique location, home to rare animal and plant species, including the red-backed shrike. Even worse, the buyers have applied for permission to build a toxic waste processing factory and landfill site. Let's show them how we feel!

1. Write to the council and OBJECT to the planning application.
2. Write to your local MP.
3. Meet local councillors! Tell them you want the woods to be PROTECTED to SAVE the rare ECOSYSTEM and the animals and plants of Chalfont Woods.

PUBLIC MEETING ON 16 NOVEMBER 1982 – BE THERE!

SAY NO TO TOXIC WASTE AND YES TO RARE SPECIES!

SAVE THE RED-BACKED SHRIKE!

PLANNING APPLICATION CONFIRMATION

20 December 1982

Nature of the application: To develop land currently known as Chalfont Camp and Woods.

Person(s) making the application: Sallow & Razer (Property Development) Ltd.

VERDICT:

Permission to: Dig up the area known as Chalfont Camp and build a factory that will process industrial waste. **Granted**

Permission to: Bulldoze the area known as Chalfont Woods, remove all the trees and shrubs and create a landfill site where toxic waste can be buried. **Denied**

Permission to: Drain liquid chemical waste into the river. **Denied**

Luke Wow 😮 the 1900s though 😱

Ava Ancient documents 📜😂

A company wants to build a horrible factory and people are protesting 🤔

Luke Nothing to do with starry nights or camping ⛺ Where's the mystery?

Ava It looks like the planning application has been torn up and stuck back together?

Luke Like someone saved it from the bin 🗑️

Ava At least they didn't get permission to bulldoze the woods or use the river 😃

Luke Sending more pics ⬇️

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As the Parent/Guardian of a Matchley/Brewford scout/guide, you will be pleased to hear that our annual camp will go ahead as usual between 23 and 29 July at Chalfont Camp.

Sadly, this is the last time we'll be camping there, as the land has been sold and permission granted for redevelopment. So, to make this the best camp ever, please ensure your child arrives with ENERGY, ENTHUSIASM and ALL the items on the checklist below.

Chalfont Camp 23–29 July 1983 Checklist

- Full scout/guide uniform
- Sleeping bag and pillow
- Groundsheet
- Campfire blanket
- Hiking knapsack
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Comb or hairbrush
- Towel
- Swimming costume
- Pen and pencil
- Survival tin: compass, wool kindling, boiled sweets, sewing kit, mirror, safety pins
- First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic cream, bandages, cotton wool
- Camping mug and plate
- Torch (with new batteries please!)

- Spare batteries
- Wrist-watch
- Hiking shoes and socks

Please CLEARLY label ALL your child's belongings with their FULL NAME. After last year's camp, two parents almost tore a disputed sleeping bag in two – all while exchanging colourful insults. Anyone who remembers will be as keen as we are that such scenes are NOT repeated!

Activities planned include fishing, canoeing, hiking and pathfinding! Do be assured that scout leaders – myself and Mr Jolly – and guide leaders – Linda Pinder and Diane Tibbs (Brown Owl) – will ensure everyone enjoys a fun and character-building week in the great outdoors! Bring your child to the gates of Chalfont Camp by 7.30 a.m. on Saturday, 23 July. I look forward to seeing them then!

Yours sincerely,

Baloo
Leader
Third Matchley Scouts

Chalfont Camp Rules

Camping IS FUN!

However, there are RULES that MUST be obeyed if it is to STAY FUN!

1. WALK, don't run. Unless a leader tells you to run.
2. Do not leave camp unless an adult tells you.
3. Always listen carefully and follow the instructions from your scout/guide leader.
4. Wear your full scout/guide uniform every day and ensure it's clean and tidy! This is how local people will know you're part of the camp.
5. Don't light fires unless supervised by an adult or venture scout.
6. Unplanned events must be recorded in an Incident Report and lost property on a Lost Property Form. If asked by a leader to complete either, do so quickly and clearly.
7. Do not climb trees or swim in the river at night.
8. Complete your daily camp chores with a smile!
9. All scouts/guides are to treat each other, their leaders and local people with politeness and respect.
10. Remember scouts and guides help others whenever, wherever and however they can.

Third Matchley Scouts & Second Brewford Guides

Summer Camp 1983

Location: Chalfont Camp
Dates: 23–29 July 1983

TENTS:

Hunky Dory
Ricky – Leader
Curtis
Liam
Arnie

Brewford Badgers
Alex – Leader
Monique
Siobhan
Amira

Fun Girl Three
Belinda – Leader
Josie
Sofia
Nancy

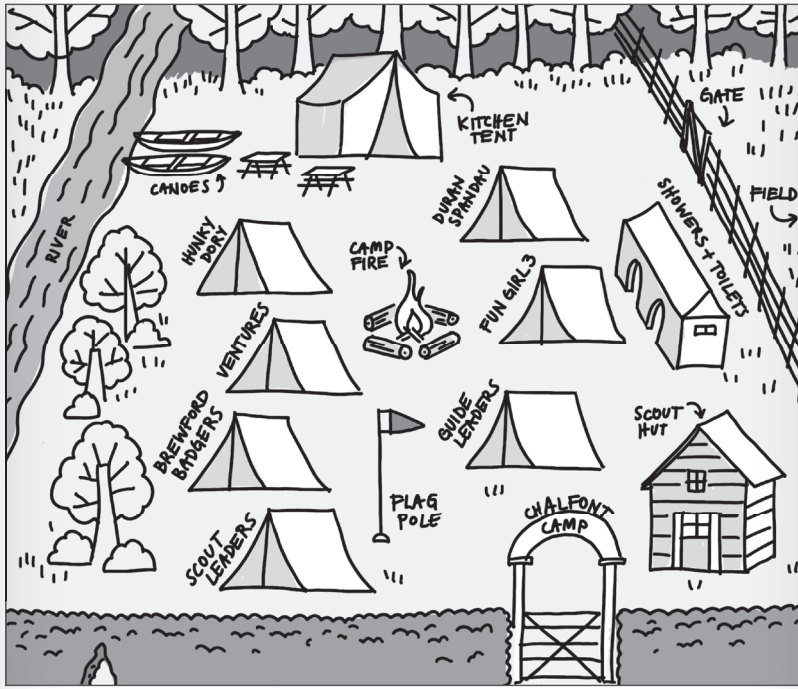
Duran Spandau
Jackie – Leader
Zara
Denise
Leila

Ventures
Skip – Leader
Ralph
Andre
Mohamed

Scout Leaders
Baloo
Mr Jolly

Guide Leaders
Linda Pinder (LP)
Diane Tibbs (Brown Owl)

Chalfont Camp



Notes for tent leaders: As this is our last summer camp at Chalfont Woods, let's keep a record of the week, so that future scouts and guides can see what we enjoyed doing back in 'the old days'. As tent leader, you are responsible for keeping a Tent Diary. It should be updated every day to record all the fun activities and adventures you have at camp. You may give permission for other tent members to write in the diary if you wish. Let's make this week one to remember!

Ava Wow! An old map of a scout and guide camp 😀

And as many rules as SCHOOL!

> **Luke** No climbing trees or swimming in the river AT NIGHT 😂 So they WERE allowed in the DAY 😱

Ava 😂 Mum and Dad NEVER let us climb trees because it's 'too dangerous' 😳

> **Luke** Ha! Maybe that's why they all had to bring a SURVIVAL tin and FIRST AID kit 😂
>
> It's not just the map and rules from the camp. The box was full of paper. Someone has kept EVERYTHING – diaries, reports, lists. All from that summer.
>
> The first page said something is top secret

Ava Something bad must have happened at the camp! That's why there's a mystery to be solved 🔎 and these papers will help us solve it!

🤔 But how did they end up in the loft? Are they Dad's? Or Mum's?

> **Luke** 🤷 Only one way to find out. Sending pics of the next page now ⬇️

Third Matchley Scouts & Second Brewford Guides

Summer Camp 1983

Camp Activities

Saturday, 23 July 1983 – Day One

REMEMBER: If no adult is named, your tent leader is in charge.
Always be ready and willing to help when asked.

KITCHEN DUTIES:
Cooking – ~~Skip's tent~~ Ventures tent – Mr Jolly
Washing-up – ~~Alex's tent~~ Brewford Badgers – Brown Owl

MORNING

Arrival: 7.30 a.m.
No activities are scheduled.
Finish putting your tent up. Make sure all kit is stored INSIDE.
Decide on your tent name and TELL SKIP.
TENT DIARIES to be handed out.

TENT NAMES

~~Ricky's tent~~	Hunky Dory
~~Belinda's tent~~	Fun Girl Three
~~Jackie's tent~~	Duran Spandau
~~Skip's tent~~	Ventures
~~Alex's tent~~	Brewford Badgers

LUNCHTIME: 12–1 p.m.
Campfire lighting with Baloo – Hunky Dory
Lunch followed by welcome meeting around the campfire with Baloo

AFTERNOON
Hunky Dory – knot practice
Fun Girl Three – tidying camp
Duran Spandau – cleaning the shower block (see Brown Owl for cleaning supplies)
Ventures – hike to the farm (collect eggs, sausages, bacon etc.)
Brewford Badgers – compass practice (Brown Owl)

EVENING
6 p.m.: dinner – around campfire
8 p.m.: campfire story with Baloo
9 p.m.: bedtime
9.45 p.m.: lights out (NO EXCUSES!)

TENT DIARY: HUNKY DORY
Saturday, 23 July 1983 – Morning
Diary keeper: Ricky, aged 12 (soon)

I'm not sure what to put in this diary. I know we HAVE to write in it every day and that as tent leader I'm responsible for making sure we don't miss anything out. To be honest, I'd much rather be having adventures than writing about them, but as I'm the best at English, Liam, Arnie and Curtis (who are all in my tent) seem happy for me to write it. (I agreed to mention them if they do anything interesting.)

I suppose I should start from the beginning.

This morning, Dad drove me to camp. It took forever and he kept going on and on about when he went to this very same scout camp at my age (which was ages ago!). On the first day they were told they had to collect eggs from a nearby farm EVERY morning. It was miles away, through muddy fields and small lanes, so Dad and another boy had an idea. As well as the eggs, they secretly took a chicken back to camp, so they wouldn't have to walk to the farm again.

They called it Henrietta and fed it peanuts. It was a secret for the whole day and night. But then, REALLY early the next morning, the whole camp was shaken awake by a loud cock-a-doodle-doo! They were busted! What was even worse, the chicken was a cockerel so didn't even lay any eggs! Dad found the story very funny, until he quickly stopped laughing and gave me a long speech on how wrong it is to steal.

The lane that leads to Chalfont Camp is so narrow and uneven Dad had to drive very slowly. It hasn't rained in weeks so there were huge mounds and craters of dried mud. At one point the tyres got stuck in a dip and Dad muttered a swear word he thought I couldn't hear. While we were stuck I saw a sign by the side of the road, smashed in two bits, as if someone had snapped it over their knee and thrown it away. It was covered in tyre tracks and footprints so must have been there for weeks. I had to think hard to imagine the two sides together again before I could read what it said.

Save Chalfont Woods – and underneath:
Say NO to TOXIC WASTE and YES to rare species.

I asked Dad if the camp was really closing. He nodded and pointed to a field beyond the hedge where there was another sign. A brand-new one this time, set firmly in the ground. It said 'SOLD to Sallow & Razer (Property Development) Ltd'. Dad said I was lucky, as this is the last summer camp here.

Finally, we reached an old wooden arch with 'Chalfont Camp' in faded green and purple letters. Dad stopped the car by the front gate and looked at me in the way he always does when he 'wants to say something'.

The trouble was, I told my friends I'd meet them by the scout hut and could see the twins, Liam and Arnie, waiting there already, so I didn't have time for a Dad Speech. But then Dad pulled something out of his pocket. A small package, wrapped in an oily cloth. 'Here,' he whispered. 'My dad gave this to me at my first scout camp. Now it's yours.' He placed the grubby thing in my hand like it was a magic sword or an enchanted diamond.

I unfolded the rag and found a worn leather case and inside that: a small knife. It had a curved blade with a hinge, so it folded into the wooden handle to keep

it safe. It looked really old. The metal was dull and rusty. The blade was blunt. The wooden handle was carved into a wolf's head, but it was chipped and dirty with a bit of one ear missing.

'THIS is the family scouting knife,' Dad said, all proud. I turned it over in my hand and thought I'd never seen such a cool thing in my life.

'See this nick in the tip of the blade, Ricky? If you whittle with this, you'll get a double groove in the wood. Your grandad did that so he'd know at once if anyone else had used his knife. Be sure to take good care of it.'

I promised I'd keep it safe, then stashed the knife in my pocket. By this time I was starting to get worried he might try to hug me when all my friends were watching, so I quickly opened the car door and put one leg out. That was when Dad said, 'Oh, and look out for the ghost.'

What ghost? I froze, one leg in the car and one leg out. 'You always say ghosts don't exist.'

'Ah, you're right – it's probably just a rumour!' he said

and grinned. 'In that case, don't steal a chicken.' He laughed. Sometimes parents can be so weird.

Finally, Dad left and I ran over to Liam, Arnie and Curtis. But before we could even say hi properly, Mr Jolly arrived. Do I need to explain who Mr Jolly is for this diary? I suppose if you're reading this in the future you probably won't know him, so here goes. Mr Jolly is one of our scout leaders. He's usually making or mending things, and one leg of his khaki trousers is always much shorter than the other. The left leg touches his plimsoll and the right flaps above his ankle with the breeze. No one knows why and when he's around we can't take our eyes off it. It's like time stands still.

Mr Jolly squeezed out of the little doorway of the scout hut in his beige apron, a rolling-pin in his hand. He said something about bagging a tent quickly before the good spots were taken, so we grabbed our things and headed towards the row of orange tents by the woods.

On the way we passed the venture scouts' tent. They must have arrived ages ago to help the leaders set up camp. The venture scouts are all older than

us and, even though that means they were just born earlier, some of them never let us forget it! For example, as soon as Ralph (who's thirteen) spotted us, he yelled, 'Oi! Tiddlers! I put your tent up. You know what that means . . . you owe me a tenner each.'

Luckily, Ralph is easy to avoid because his red scout scarf stands out a mile from everyone else's bright yellow ones. Ralph started at First Matchley and never bothered changing his scarf colour when he switched packs. And why did he switch? Well, he says it's because our pack is nearer to where he lives, but EVERYONE knows it was really because he unscrewed First Matchley's flagpole and sold it to a local garage.

Speaking of flagpoles, as we passed the camp one – THWACK! A giant snake fell from the sky and landed at our feet! All the others leapt out of their skins, but as leader I knew I had to take charge and deal with the beast. I bravely took a closer look only to find it was nothing more deadly than a rope! We all looked to see where it had come from, and there, at the top of the flagpole, gripping it by his ankles and one hand, was Skip, leader of the ventures. His real name is Geoffrey, but we call him 'Skip' because it

means 'captain' and for some reason everyone seems to look up to him (and not just because he's at the top of the flagpole). I don't see what the big deal is about him and, if you ask me, he doesn't set the best example to us younger scouts, which is what a leader should do. I said, 'Are you allowed up there, Skip? It's very high.' WHOOSH! He slid down the flagpole like a fireman. I don't think he even used two hands. Embarrassingly, Curtis, Liam and Arnie were all wide-eyed with awe. I don't know why; it wasn't skill, just gravity.

'Up where, Ricks?' He grinned and ruffled my hair, then high-fived Curtis and pretended to box with the twins. Anyone would have thought Skip was the leader of our tent, not me. So I stood there with my arms folded and waited for them to see sense.

I mean, what is it about him? He wasn't even wearing his scout shirt! We have to wear our uniforms all the time so people in the area know where we're from. That's in the camp rules. Skip was wearing just his shorts, a necklace of beads on a dirty string and matching bracelets round his wrists, which were all twisted round a battered digital watch.

His feet were filthy too because for some reason he didn't have shoes on. But when I mentioned it, he just said, 'Ricks, you gotta feel the ground beneath your feet. The grass between your toes. That's when you know you're alive!'

The others nodded as if he'd just told them the meaning of life, when really I think he just forgot where he left his plimsolls.

'Come on, we better bag a tent or all the good ones'll be gone,' I muttered, and marched off. 'See you later, guys,' Skip called. 'See you later, Skip!' It was like a chorus.

Now, I'm not saying my friends are easily led, but the first thing they all did when we got to the tent was take their shoes and socks off. I kept mine on and intend to do so for the rest of the week.

The ventures might have put our tent up, but we had to add the final touches to it: looping each peg in a guy rope – that's a rope that holds the tent up – stretching it out as far as it'll go, then hammering it into the ground with the mallet. I took charge, of course, and timed us on my digital watch, like I did

last week when we practised. Thanks to all the work we did then, I'm pleased to say we completed the task in nine minutes, forty-four seconds.

Next, we secured our groundsheet and rolled out our sleeping bags inside. I've chosen a spot by the entrance, so if anyone comes to the tent, they'll have to deal with me first. That's what leaders do.

When we'd finished setting everything up, we stopped to chill in the sunshine outside. Of course, that was when Baloo arrived to see how we're doing. I'd hoped he'd come earlier so he could have seen how efficiently we secured the tent. Baloo is the main scout leader and he's pretty cool. I don't know if Baloo is his actual name or some kind of nickname. But it's what everyone calls him.

'Good work, boys!' he said and tested the tension of our ropes. Then he gave each tent peg an extra bang with the mallet. I told him he didn't need to, because I'd supervised and made sure they were firm.

'All good, Ricky,' he said when he'd quickly (and needlessly) extra-hammered the final peg into the ground. 'I'm just testing the mallet.' He reminded us

to come up with a tent name, then marched off to check the next tent along.

We scrambled inside and went through a few name suggestions. Mostly, they weren't very good. Liam wanted to call it 'Anna Key' after some punk song he likes, but I pointed out that sounds like a girls' tent. Curtis said 'Blowing in the Wind' after the Bob Dylan song, but I said that was like saying we hadn't fixed our tent firmly to the ground – when we have. My suggestion was the best, 'Ricky's Tent', because after all I'm the oldest and tent leader. The others didn't like that for some reason, so in the end we decided on Arnie's suggestion of 'Hunky Dory', which is the name of a David Bowie album that we all really like. So that's decided. We're the Hunky Dories.

Anyway, that feels like a lot to have written and it's only the first morning. I'll write an update as soon as anything else happens. The Hunky Dory diary will be the best kept in the whole camp!

Ava Luke. Did you finish reading?

Luke Yep. Feels a bit weird to read someone's diary, doesn't it?

Ava And I can't understand some of the words. Like what's whittle? 

Luke I guess it was written ages ago. Kids must've spoken differently then. Dad always says to look up words you don't know

Ava OK. Let's make a list of words and what they mean in case they're important to the mystery. Whittle means to carve things into wood using a small knife.

I looked up the songs Ricky wrote about too. It's not Anna Key. It's 'Anarchy' 

Luke Let's make a playlist of all the songs

Ava Good idea. We should keep track of any clues. I'll set one up.

Luke  Add David Bowie too

Ava Hunky Dory – the title of a David Bowie album and also means 'fine, going well', such as: 'everything is hunky dory'.

Luke Dad just told me to turn off my phone and go to sleep. I told him everything is hunky dory

Ava  Let's read the rest after school tomorrow 