Janice Hallett

A BOX Full of MURDERS

DEATH AT THE MUSEUM



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Penguin
Random House
UK

First published 2026

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Text design by Mandy Norman
Printed in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–0–241–63622–0

All correspondence to:
Puffin Books, Penguin Random House Children's
One Embassy Gardens, 8 Viaduct Gardens, London SW11 7BW

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This book is for you,
because you know
the power of adventure

Ava Where are you?

Luke on windowsyll with Daisee  watchin da rain.

Ava Can you see our flat from there?

Luke dont think so ill wave anway.

Ava I'm waving back.

Luke y dus it allways rain on scool hollydays?

Ava Luke, you've got autocorrect off again 

Luke There's nothing to do when it rains. Better?

Ava  We need another mystery to solve! It's SO mean of Dad to take the next box away when you'd just got it down from the attic.

Luke But . . . he did say it was just until the end of term. To stop us being 'distracted' 

Ava Right! Well, the end of term is here and after two weeks of waiting I'm ready for another case! I've got a plan.

***

Hunter Family Chat Group

Ava Hi Dad! It's finally the school holidays. Remember you promised you'd get another box out of the loft so we can practise our detective skills??? 🤓

Luke Please!

Dad Haven't you both got holiday homework?

Ava But investigating a box of murders is soooo educational 🤔

Mum Ava, don't forget you and I are going to Nanny and Grandad Ingleby's tomorrow.

••• Ava is typing

Mum Before you ask AGAIN. No, you can't stay here with Dad and Luke.

Ava Luke could come with us . . .

Dad Luke's signed up for swimming lessons. They're expensive and I've already paid. We can't cancel them now.

Ava Luke can swim already 🏊

Dad Not a length, and if he can't do that by the start of next term, he's not allowed on the canoeing trip his whole class are going on.

Luke And I really want to go!

Ava Dad, couldn't you drive to Nanny and Grandad's to pick him up for the lessons? Or Mum could drive me there and back?

Dad Mum will have enough to do and I can't drop everything to drive miles every day  It's too far 

Mum Dad's right. We've been through this. Grandad isn't well and Nanny's finding it hard to cope. It'll be too much for them if you're both there. It makes sense for Luke to stay at home and Ava to come with me.

Luke OK.

Ava OK. Then it's even more important to have another box to investigate  So we don't miss each other while I'm away.

***

Luke Dad's gone into the loft.

Ava 

Luke Ready????



Ava 👍

Luke Pics incoming 🔎

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?

Turn the page now 

1983. Autumn.
School has just started after
the summer holidays.

Imagine an old museum with more
secrets than anyone could ever guess.

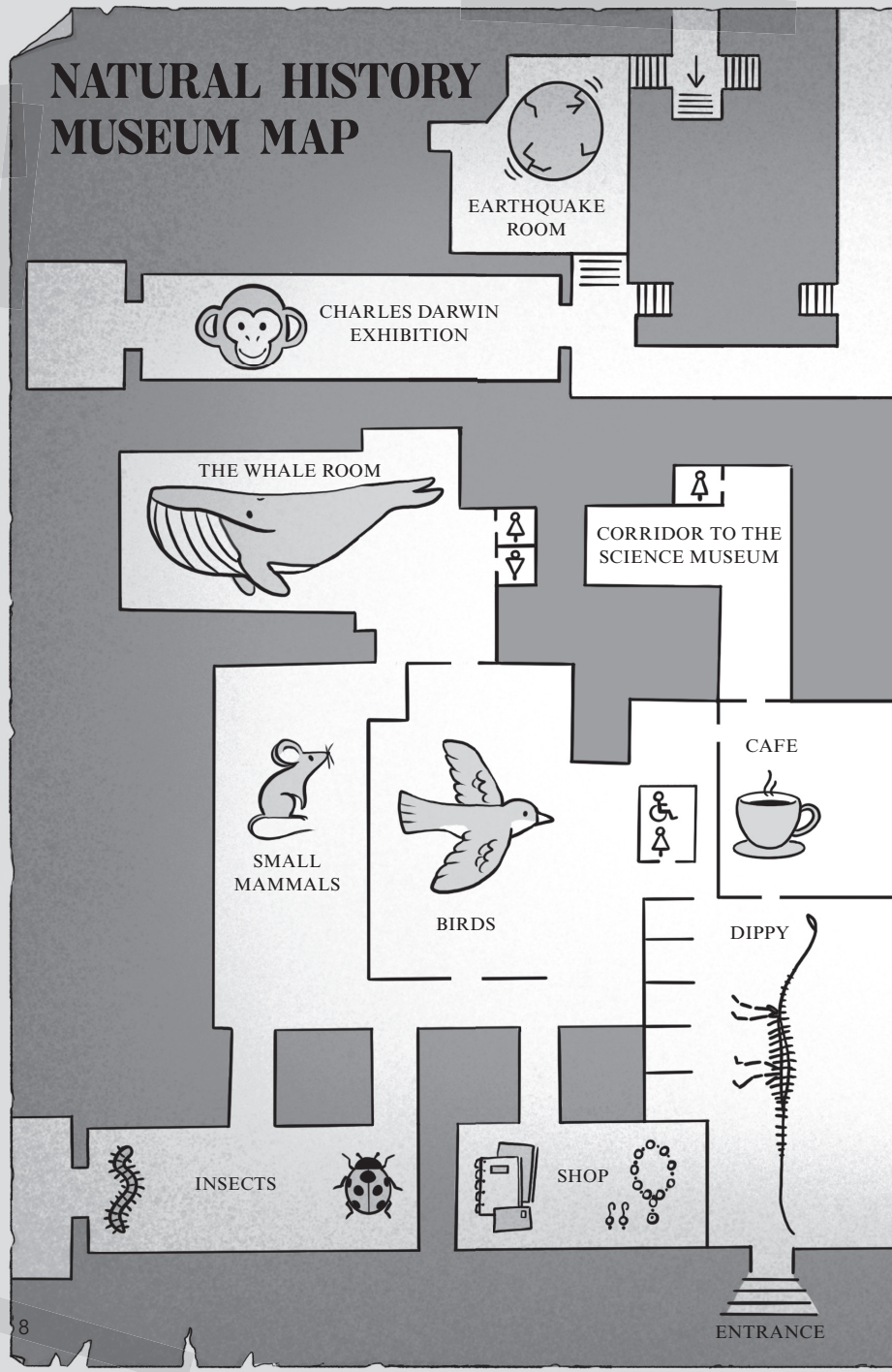
A school trip that ends in murder.

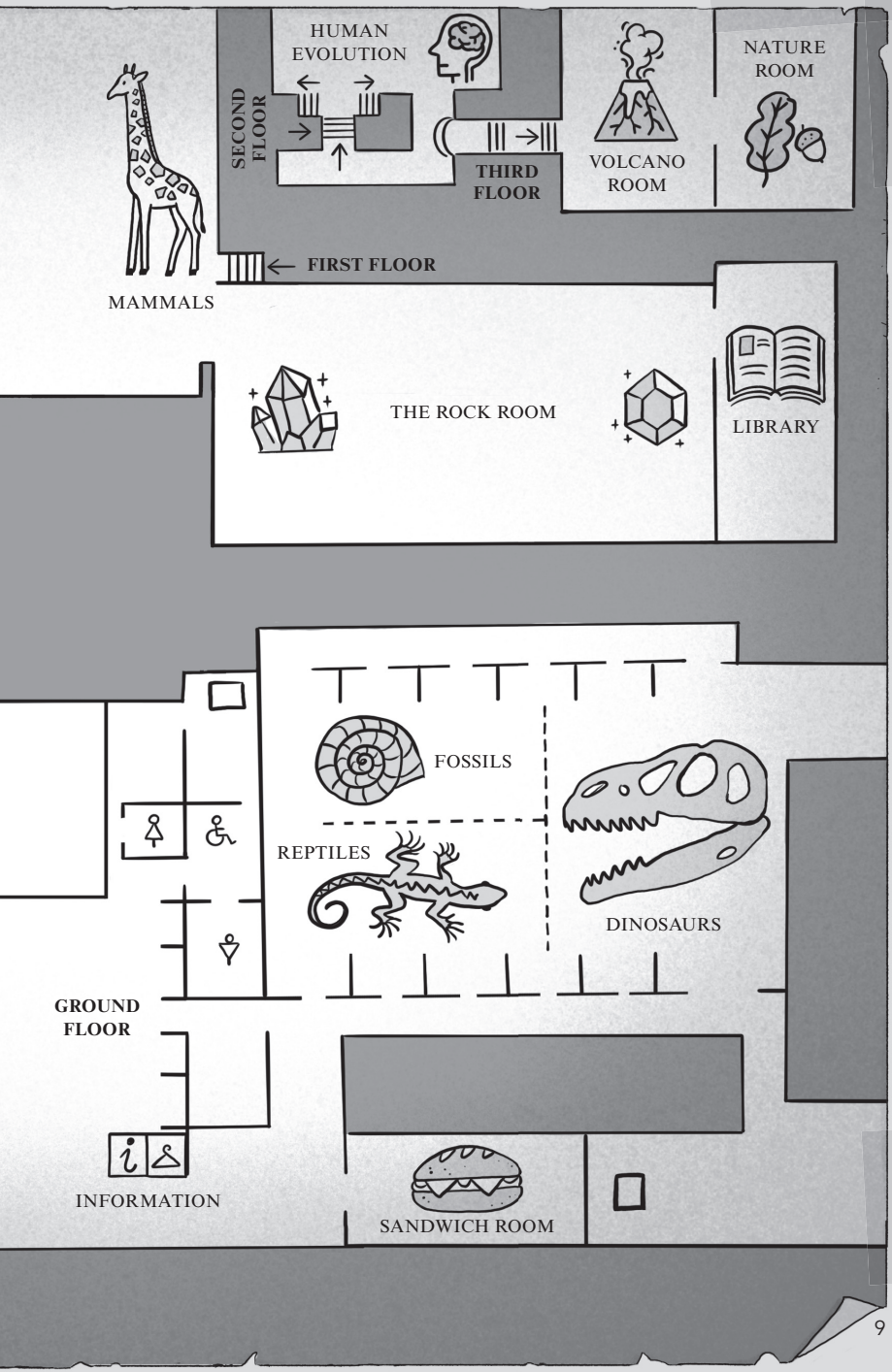
But who did it?
That mystery is still unsolved . . .
and it's not the only one.

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

As you make your way through the twists
and turns of this mystery, remember:
do NOT touch the exhibits.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM MAP




HUMAN EVOLUTION
SECOND FLOOR
THIRD FLOOR
VOLCANO ROOM
NATURE ROOM
FIRST FLOOR
MAMMALS
THE ROCK ROOM
LIBRARY
FOSSILS
REPTILES
DINOSAURS
GROUND FLOOR
INFORMATION
SANDWICH ROOM

Brewford Middle School

Matchley Road, Brewford, Coltern CN2 9BH

Friday, 16 September 1983

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are excited to inform you that we're organizing a trip to the Natural History Museum in London for all second-year pupils on 26 September 1983.

If you wish your child to attend, please complete the permission slip below and give it to your child to pass to their form teacher.

On the day, please ensure your child arrives at school for 7.30 a.m. with a packed lunch and enough money to purchase gifts in the museum shop, should they wish to do so. Coaches will arrive back at school at around 5 p.m.

I must request that children do not bring expensive items such as cameras with them as these are easily lost, stolen or broken. Any such items will be confiscated and returned at the end of the day.

Yours sincerely,

Veronica Harney

Headmistress

I _____ the parent/guardian of _____ hereby give permission for them to attend the Natural History Museum trip.

Signed _____

Ava The Natural History Museum! I went there with school  It was amazing!

Luke Never been! 

Ava You'll go next term. Everyone does 

Luke Do you remember it from the map?

Ava Kind of. There was a big , and  skeletons. Wait! Isn't Brewford where the kids in the first box of murders lived?

Luke Yes! Look! IT'S MONIQUE! 



19 September 1983

Dear Natural History Museum,
I know you're a building and won't reply yourself, but I'm expecting this letter to be answered by a person who works in you.

Next Monday my year is coming from Brewford (in three big coaches) to visit you in London. I have some questions about the trip that my teacher, Mrs Gujari, seems unable (or unwilling) to answer and she suggested I write to you.

First I'll tell you a bit about us. My name is Monique. I'm ten and have just started in the second year at Brewford Middle. Alison is my trip buddy, which means we'll be sitting together on the coach and will stay together all day. This is easy for us as we are best friends and do most things together anyway.

Mrs G says we have trip buddies because if the whole class stayed together, we'd block the corridors and rooms of your museum. So instead we'll go round in our pairs, and she'll wait in the cafe with our other teachers, Miss Clarke and Mr Bellamy.



We've heard you have a big whale and some dinosaurs, but the thing Alison and I are MOST excited about is the museum shop! I collect stationery, especially erasers and pencils. Alison collects keyrings and bookmarks. Will all of those things be for sale when we come? What else could we buy? I'll have £4.17 saved by then, but if I need more I'll have to ask for my pocket money in advance and will need a few days to talk my mum round.

Mrs G says we'll have a workbook to write in during our visit. Alison and I have mixed feelings. On the one hand, it's nice to do some drawings. On the other, it would be even nicer to wander around without having to do schoolwork. Could you let me know if it's normal for children to be given work to do in the museum? If it isn't, then I'll let Mrs Gujari know and she can change her plans.

We're bringing packed lunches. Mine will be egg sandwiches, salt-and-vinegar Golden Wonder crisps, and (if I'm lucky) a Mint Club biscuit. If I'm unlucky, it will be an apple. Mrs G says there's a 'Sandwich Room' where we eat lunch. I need to make sure you have removed ALL snakes from this room.



Last year I went to the zoo with my cousins and we sat on a bench right in front of the reptile house, which meant I could see LOADS of snakes through the windows. I couldn't eat a thing.

Also, earlier this summer I went camping with my guide pack. Two dead bodies were found near our camp, which caused a LOT of problems and stopped me and my friends from getting as many guide badges as we'd hoped. (Alison doesn't go to Guides, but I have three really good friends there and we like to get as many badges as possible. I wish my guide friends went to my school, because then I'd have more school friends.) Anyway, if you could ensure there are no dead bodies when we visit, I'd be very grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Monique (and Alison)

PS We forgot to ask – are there toilets at the museum?

Ava I remember Monique from the last case! Her tent called themselves the Brewford Badgers!

Luke Right. Cos they were obsessed with getting badges.

Ava It sounds like she's obsessed with stationery too 😂

Luke Next page! ⬇️

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London SW7 5BD

22 September 1983

Dear Monique (and Alison),

Thank you for your letter. The museum looks forward to welcoming you and your class.

You will find a wide range of stationery, keyrings and bookmarks in our lovely shop. We also stock toy animals and other items such as postcards, beer mats and ashtrays. Prices range from 40p to £1.50.

I guarantee you will not see a live snake. In fact, there are no living animals here because we are a history museum. We focus on the past to help understand the present and prepare for the future. Our animal exhibits are either skeletons from archaeological digs, preserved by taxidermy many years ago, or models.

I'm sorry to hear about your camping trip – it sounds very unfortunate. I can assure you there will not be any dead human bodies at our museum.

I hope you have a wonderful time.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Ayodele

Assistant Curator, Mammals

PS There are lots of toilets. Just follow the signs.

Hunter Family Chat Group

Dad OK, so you've got a new box to look through  but: don't email ANYONE without asking first.

Mum Yes. We don't want a repeat of last time when a criminal arrived on our doorstep!

Luke 

Dad Ava?

Ava 

Mum We're off tomorrow. Luke, be good for Dad and we'll send your love to Nanny and Grandad Ingleby.

***

Luke Are you there yet?

Ava Just arrived. Nanny and Grandad Ingleby look older than ever.

I hope you've not read any more without me?

Luke No! I was waiting. But here's the next page

22 September 1983

WHY I SHOULD GO ON THE TRIP, EVEN THOUGH I'M ON REPORT

by Bradley Ryan

Dear Mrs Harney,
Mrs Gujari says this letter is my only chance of going to the Natural History Museum, because I'm 'On Report'. That means I have to get a piece of paper signed by a teacher after every lesson to say if I've beehaved well or not. I suppose you already no that, seeing as your the headmistress. You must also no it means I can't go on the trip, becoz it's only for good kids. But dinosaurs are my favourite thing of all time and the museum has loads so I REALLY want to go.

Not getting in trouble seems easy for everyone else. It's not fair. Yesterday I was in the lunch cue and a boy walked past who ALWAYS kicks me on the ancle and gets away with it. I didn't want him to kick me again so I kicked him first. Then I hit him. That's when Mr Bellamy and Mrs Gujari pulled me away. But he was about to kick me, I no it!

I couldn't tell them why I done it coz that would make me a snitch and my stepdad says if you snitch, its worse than whatever the person did in the first

place. Thats why he's in prison for somethin he didn't do. Plus, he was framed. And in the wrong place at the wrong time. And the police dont like him. And the judge was asleep and the jury were nobbled. Thats what he says, anyway.

I've got a book about dinosaurs. My real dad got it for me from the library when I was little – before he died. It has pages on Stegosaurus, Brontosaurus,Triceratops, Pterodactyl, Diplodocus and my favourite, Tyrannosaurus Rex.

I was extra careful to spell them all right, becoz I like them so much. My dream is to find a T-Rex egg and hatch it. I'd take it for walks, as Mum says I cant have a dog coz they cost too much.

That's why I REALLY REALLY REALLY want to go on the trip. Please. I promise I'll be good the hole day and will avoid Jellyhead Jackson so I don't end up fighting him again. PLEASE.

Bradley Ryan

Luke Bradley should be allowed on the trip. He really loves dinosaurs.

Ava He was fighting in the lunch queue. So no.

Luke He was being bullied and didn't want to tell anyone!

Ava Actions have consequences, Luke 

Luke  That's exactly how Dad messages! 

Ava I don't think they'll let Bradley go. Dad always says teachers were stricter in the past.

Luke 

Brewford Middle School

Matchley Road, Brewford, Coltern CN2 9BH

Thursday, 22 September 1983

Dear Bradley,
Thank you for your letter.

I have considered your request, but I'm afraid I cannot overlook the fact that you kicked and hit another boy in the dining room. There is no excuse for this behaviour.

I have arranged for Mr Driver to help you with your maths on Monday, while the others are on the trip. I see your marks are well behind the rest of your class, so I'm sure you will enjoy the chance to catch up.

I have no doubt your teacher and classmates will talk about the museum and all the exciting things they saw there. You may then enjoy hearing about the dinosaurs.

I expect you to learn an important life lesson: that actions have consequences.

Regards,

Mrs Harney

Headmistress

Ava See!

Luke 

Ava Do you remember Wooster? Nanny and Grandad's . He's already scratched my arm and bitten Mum.

Luke How are Nanny and Grandad?

Ava Grandad's being a bit weird. He acted like he didn't know who I was when we got here.

Luke Hmm . . . That IS weird. We only saw them at Christmas!

Ava Send the next paper please, Luke!

Brewford Middle School

Matchley Road, Brewford, Coltern CN2 9BH

Thursday, 22 September 1983

Dear Brewford Coaches,

I would like to confirm our booking for three coaches on Monday 26 September. Pick-up from our school at 7.30 a.m., to arrive at the Natural History Museum, London, by 10 a.m. The coaches will wait then drive them back to school at 3 p.m., arriving back by 5 p.m. You will find a cheque enclosed for £90.00, as agreed.

We will seat twenty children each in two coaches and nineteen in the third (as a child has been excluded from the trip). A teacher will travel in each coach.

I want to stress that the fourth-form trip to Bakewell last year was unusually eventful and certainly not the norm for our school. The stolen items have been returned and repairs paid for. I have ensured that such a disaster will not happen again by weeding out troublemakers before the trip!

Thank you in advance for the patience and understanding of your lovely drivers.

Regards,

Mrs Harney

Headmistress

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

LONDON

STAFF NOTICE

23 September 1983, 9 a.m.

It has been brought to my attention that an ammonite has disappeared from a locked display cabinet. This specimen remained in the same limestone cliff for more than 66 million years. Yet, after a mere one hundred years in our museum, it has vanished!

If someone borrowed the exhibit and failed to replace it, please be aware that this is NOT in the interests of the museum or its visitors, and is certainly not in the interests of natural history!

However, if the specimen is returned to its cabinet by the end of today, I will say no more.

EXCEPT that, in future, any member of staff removing items from displays MUST obtain permission from me BEFORE they do so. This will mean explaining, in writing, WHY.

I anticipate your full cooperation with this request.

Edward Mosham
Curator of Fossil Invertebrates

12 p.m. The exhibit has been returned. Thank you.
E.M. 23/9/83

Ava Last time we looked up words and things we don't understand in case it helped us solve the mystery. Let's do that again.

Luke Good idea. I know what an ammonite is.



The preserved remains of an extinct sea creature with a distinctive coiled shell. Ammonites are one of the most common fossils found on Earth. They are thought to have lived between 450 million and 66 million years ago.

Ava These are words from the first letter from Joan at the museum:

Archaeological – studying history by digging things up out of the ground

Taxidermy – stuffing dead animals to make them look alive

Curator – a person who looks after things in a museum.

Luke I know what archaeological means, though if I didn't have autocorrect on it would be difficult to spell.

Ava Edward Mosham's notice is put up three days before the school trip. And it says the fossil that went missing was returned the same day 🤔 So what's the mystery?

Luke There's loads more things in the box ⬇️