Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

The Case of the Stolen Sixpence

Written by

Holly Webb

Published by

Stripes Publishing an imprint of Little Tiger Press Group

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

31 Albion Street, London

Attic:

Maisie's grandmother and Sarah-Ann the maid

Third floor:

Miss Lane's rooms

Second floor:

Madam Lorimer's rooms

First floor:

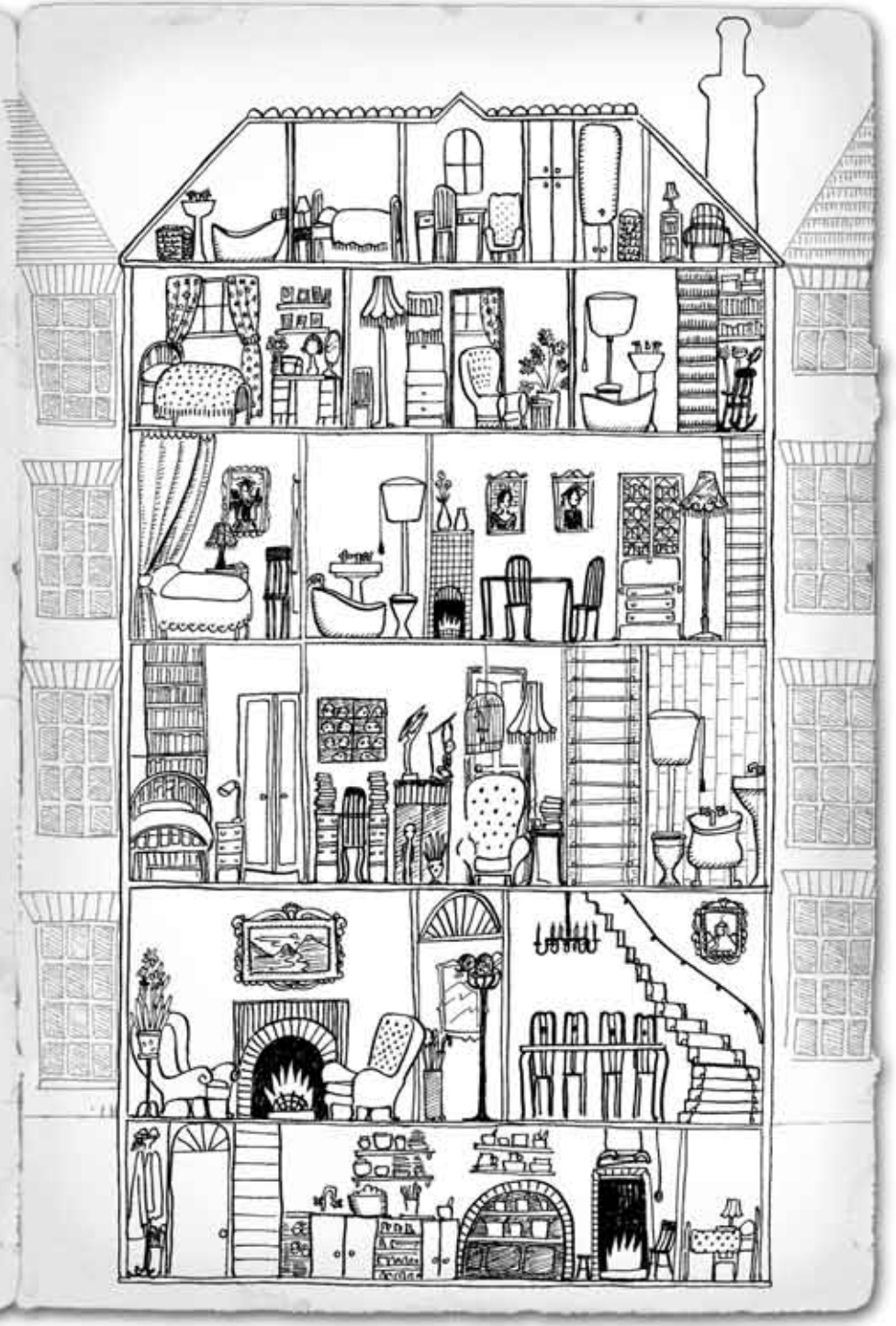
Professor Tobin's rooms

Ground floor:

Entrance hall, sitting room and dining room

Basement:

Maisie's room, kitchen and yard entrance







Maisie Hitchins watched, open-mouthed, as the famous detective, Gilbert Carrington, came haring down the front steps of his lodging house, hauling on his coat as he ran. His faithful assistant Major Edward Lamb galloped after him, clutching both their hats, and they sprang into a cab, and rattled away.

Maisie stared after the hansom cab, and sighed heavily. Where could they be going? It was bound to be somewhere exciting. Chasing jewel thieves, perhaps? Only yesterday, Gran's paper had said that they were on the trail of the Larradine Rubies at last. The newspaper article confidently expected the hunt to take them to India, possibly by way of Paris, or even Madrid. It had sounded wonderful. *Just imagine,* Maisie thought*, following footprints, spotting clues, trailing culprits…*

The dust cast up by the cab horse's hooves settled slowly back on to the road, and Maisie started walking again. Gran would be waiting for the fish she needed to cook for the lodgers' supper. Maisie's gran ran a boarding house, and she spent all her time running round after the fussy lodgers.

Maisie scuffed her boots along the pavement sadly. The fish smelled, and it was oozing out of its soggy paper parcel. She was almost certain that Gilbert Carrington never ate fish. He probably instructed his landlady never even to serve it. Certainly not in a parsley sauce, which Maisie really hated. Just because Madame Lorimer, who lived on the second floor of the boarding house, happened to have a fancy for fish, now Maisie would have to have it for her supper as well.

Still. If she hadn't had to run out and fetch the fish, she'd never have seen Gilbert Carrington, Maisie admitted to herself, cheering up a little. Perhaps he'd been on his way to Scotland Yard? Perhaps he'd solved the mystery of the rubies already?

Maisie dawdled along, swinging the

basket, and dreaming. If she walked along Laurence Road where Gilbert Carrington lived, whenever she was sent out on errands, surely sooner or later she'd meet someone on their way to consult the great detective? It was lucky that he lived so close to her grandmother's lodging house, in Albion Street. If only she could manage to run into one of his clients first, and deduce something amazing. Then she might be able to help him solve a mystery.

Maisie smiled to herself, as she imagined the great man, pacing up and down his rooms. He probably had all sorts of strange things on the walls, things that he'd picked up on his adventures. Strange African spears, sets of handcuffs, amazing jewels that people had given him after he'd rescued them… Treasure maps… Carrington would

be smoking his pipe – he was quite often drawn with it, in the newspaper cartoons, so Maisie knew he had one. She had borrowed a pipe once, from the young man who had the third-floor back bedroom, but trying to smoke it had made her sick. And the young man hadn't paid his rent, so she hadn't had a chance to try again. She wasn't sure it was strictly necessary to smoke a pipe to be a great detective, anyway, though it would have helped her look the part.



"Edward," he would groan. "I just don't see it. Something's missing. Some vital clue…" And Maisie would step in, just then, and tell him what it was.

Because Carrington could always be having an off-day, Maisie reasoned. It would only take him having a cold, after all. With a blocked-up nose, the great detective wouldn't be able to smell a thing, and smells could be vital.

If she had a cold right now, she wouldn't be able to smell this disgusting fish.

Maisie drew aside politely for an elderly lady in a smart black silk dress and an enormous bonnet to walk past. She tried to look at her as Gilbert Carrington would – every bit of her.

The old lady looked exactly as she ought to, unfortunately. No odd colour in her

cheeks. No strange jewellery. But Maisie could pretend, just for practice.

Another whiff of fish from the basket reminded her of smells. She ought to check for that. Perhaps the old lady smelled of… Maisie frowned to herself, as she tried to think what it could be. It would have to be something unusual, and noticeable…

She sniffed thoughtfully. There was actually an odd smell. She just couldn't quite work out what it was.

Aniseed! Maisie glanced over her shoulder in surprise. Of course, the old lady had probably just been eating aniseed balls, but she didn't look like an aniseed ball eater. They were a child's sort of sweet. Surely such a proper-looking person should smell of the usual old lady things. Like violet bonbons, and lavendery lace.

Maisie gave a blissful little shiver. Perhaps the old lady was really a murderess, and she'd used essence of aniseed to confuse a watchdog at her victim's house. Everyone knew that dogs loved aniseed.

Maisie took a few quick steps back down the road after the old lady, who glided on, her black silk dress whispering over the paving slabs. She didn't look like a murderess, but one never knew, after all. Maisie caught her breath, wondering if there was a weapon in the delicate little black reticule she was carrying. She felt in her pocket for her notebook, and the stub of pencil. She might need to write down her observations…

The old lady seemed to sense that she was being followed, and she turned back to glare at Maisie through a pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez spectacles that she drew

out of her little black bag. It was a particularly freezing glare, and Maisie wilted. She was almost certain that there wasn't room for a dagger or a pistol in the black bag though. She scuttled away round the corner of the street, cursing herself for being careless and being seen. This detective thing was difficult. Gilbert Carrington would never have let himself be spotted.

