

ANNABELLE SAMI ILLUSTRATED BY DANIELA SOSA

Agent Zaiiba

INVESTIGATES



THE HAUNTED HOUSE

LITTLE TIGER


LONDON

To my wonderful friends, who always help me
get in *and* out of trouble! Love you.

– AS

For those who go out and explore despite being afraid

– DS

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I WELCOME TO OAKWOOD MANOR

“This is Agent Zaiba. Detective’s log number five. The time is 17:00 hours. Location: Second-floor landing, Oakwood Manor. All entry points and emergency escapes have been located. Threat level remains low.”

Zaiba clicked off the voice recorder on her phone and tucked it back into her pocket. Gazing out of the windows on the landing, she surveyed the grounds of Oakwood Manor and squinted into the fog. Whenever she came to a new location, she always made a general observation – getting the layout of the land and possible escape routes firmly in her mind. Being a secret agent meant being thorough and dedicated, even when it seemed nothing

was amiss. She may have come here to hang out in her new friend's house, but an agent was never off the clock.

It was the first week of the autumn term and the days were starting to get shorter – darkness was already creeping in and they'd only got back from school an hour ago! The setting sun was casting long shadows against the high walls of the landing, and a slight chill in the air suddenly made Zaiba shiver.

“Zaiba! Have you finished your observations?” Poppy came running on to the landing, panting slightly. “Olivia said we can use her fossil-finding kit!”

Zaiba was relieved to see her best friend. “Yes, I'm all finished. Let's get excavating!”

“Exca-what?” Poppy looked puzzled.

“It means uncovering things.”

Poppy laughed and poked Zaiba in the ribs. “You know all about uncovering things, Zai – especially mysteries!”



As the girls headed towards Olivia's room, Zaiba thought how lucky they were to have been chosen to look after

the new girl during her first week at their school. They'd discovered that Olivia was kind (she'd brought them treats when her parents cooked something amazing), interesting (Zaiba had learned that the very last word in the dictionary was Zyzzeva – the name for a South African weevil!) and funny (her jokes made even their teacher laugh). In short, she was a fabulous new friend! *Maybe even a future member of the Snow Leopard Detective Agency UK branch*, Zaiba thought as they walked into Olivia's bedroom.

Olivia was setting up the fossil pit on the floor, kneeling down in the large tray, her soft red curls dangling round her face. The floor surrounding the tray was covered in sand.

A little bit of mess didn't matter too much though as Olivia still hadn't finished decorating her bedroom. There were squares of paint on the walls from where the Bookers had been trying out new paint and the carpet had been rolled up, exposing the bare floorboards. Olivia's new bedframe hadn't arrived, so she was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Looking around, Zaiba noted

the size of the room. It was so big and echoey that you could hear every tiny sound, from the smallest scurrying of a mouse in the attic to the scraping of a branch against the window...

The Booker family had only moved here at the start of summer and they hadn't got everything sorted yet, but they'd still managed to make it feel homely.

"I've set up the fossil-digging pit," Olivia beamed as Zaiba and Poppy came to join her. "It's just a big tray full of sand, but you can uncover some really good finds in it!"

Zaiba smiled at the way Olivia said 'tray'. She had a slightly different accent, which Zaiba loved. As her dad, Hassan, always said: "Difference is what makes life exciting!" Olivia had moved to their town from another part of the country during the holidays, so until school had started she hadn't had any friends to play with. It must have been lonely, but luckily Zaiba and Poppy were on hand now!

The girls set to work, picking up tiny trowels to begin sifting through the sand.



“How do your parents like it here, Olivia?” Zaiba asked. She decided not to ask anything about the scurrying sounds – after all, she wouldn’t want them to think she was *scared*...

“They love the house and the woods around it! There’s still lots of building work to do though and they’re going to make some changes. They keep saying that the house is a diamond in the rough – whatever that means.”

Zaiba knew all about diamonds after she’d solved her first ever mystery at the Royal Star Hotel. That, coupled with her success of uncovering a poison plot at her school’s summer fete, had earned Zaiba her special agent stripes. It also definitely helped having Pakistan’s top agent as an auntie. Aunt Fouzia had allowed Zaiba, her little brother Ali and her best friend Poppy to run the Snow Leopard Detective Agency’s first overseas branch.

“Oh! I’ve found something!” Poppy squealed, clapping her hands.

“Here’s the brush, be gentle.” Olivia handed Poppy a wooden brush with long hairs and demonstrated how to push away the remaining dirt without harming the fossil.

“It’s a... It’s a...” Poppy squinted at the shape.

“Gastropod!” came a voice from behind the girls, making them jump.

Zaiba whirled round and saw her little brother pointing at the swirly shaped rock in the sand. “Ali, you shouldn’t just sneak up on people!” she said.

“Neither should you, Flora!” Olivia wagged her finger at her younger sister, who was hiding behind Ali. Flora also had ginger hair, though she had it cut into a wavy bob. Both girls had bright green eyes and round faces – Flora was basically a mini version of her sister.

“Looks like a marine gastropod to me,” Flora added, taking a closer look at the fossil. Even though she was only eight years old, Flora had an impressive range of knowledge – just like Ali! It wasn’t surprising that Ali and Flora had become firm friends. “But what’s that?”



Flora pointed at another lump in the sand, and just as her finger grazed the surface ... it moved!

“A mouse!” The group screamed, running to the corners of the room.

There was a sudden pounding of footsteps and then Olivia and Flora's mum, Courtney, appeared at the door, red-faced and breathless.

"What's going on?" she panted. "I heard screaming!"

"There was a mouse, Mum!" Flora was horrified, and Zaiba had to admit her own heart was beating very fast.

"I think it's scampered away into a little hole behind the cupboard." Olivia had wriggled behind the wooden cupboard checking it out, which earned her a lot of bravery points in Zaiba's opinion.

Courtney sighed and steadied herself against the doorframe. "Oh, just a mouse. We'll have to put down some humane traps... I'm just glad it wasn't the—" Courtney stopped herself. "Never mind. Tea will be ready soon, we're having a pizza feast!"

Forcing a smile, she left the room and headed back down the squeaky stairs.

"Yes, pizza!" Poppy had quickly recovered from the shock of the mouse with the mention of one of her absolute favourite things – food! "Yum! I wonder if it's a sourdough crust..."

Even though her foodie friend seemed happy enough, Zaiba knew something wasn't right. A good detective could sense when there was mystery in the air.

"Is your mum OK, Olivia? She seemed really worried." Zaiba knew to be delicate. When asking a potential source for information, you had to be careful not to push too hard.

Olivia's expression darkened and she beckoned for them to come closer. Ali and Flora moved nearer too, huddling into a circle on the bare wood floor.

"Well," Olivia whispered, "Mum told me not to mention it, but since you're detectives, I don't think you'll be scared. After everything you've told me at school about the cases you've solved, I know you'll be able to handle it."

Zaiba's heart began to beat a little faster. "Scared of what?"

Olivia and Flora exchanged a look.

"Mum thinks the house is haunted," Flora said, rolling her eyes.

"I do too!" Olivia blurted out. Flora shot her older sister

a stern glance, but Olivia carried on. “I mean, we’ve found plates smashed in the kitchen and a vase knocked on to the floor in the foyer, furniture has been moved around ... even some of Mum’s jewellery has gone missing!”

Poppy gasped in horror and Zaiba’s mind was racing a mile a minute. She *knew* she’d felt a strange atmosphere here! Despite the obvious worry, Zaiba couldn’t help but feel slightly relieved that her detective instincts were still strong.

“Is there anything we can do to help?” Zaiba asked. She liked Olivia’s family and it seemed that all this drama was making Courtney super stressed.

“Not unless you know how to stop the ghosts being so troublesome,” Olivia said gravely. “I heard an old lady in the village shop talking about how this house was used for injured World War One soldiers to recover in.”

Flora stood up and brushed the sand from her denim skirt. “For goodness’ sake, Liv. It’s not a ghost!” She looked at Ali and shrugged. “They’re just accidents.”

Ali nodded in agreement. “From a scientific point of view, there is absolutely no hard evidence to prove

that ghosts exist.”

“As a detective, Zaiba, you must trust the science?”

Flora appealed to Zaiba.

Zaiba took in the collection of faces looking at her. “I can’t come to a conclusion until I’ve made a thorough investigation.” She crossed her arms to show Ali and Flora she meant business and Poppy crossed hers too in support.

Now it was Ali’s turn to roll his eyes. “But Zaiba—”

“But nothing! I’ve heard too many ghost stories from our Pakistani family at parties about evil jinn... Why would so many people make something like that up? Aunt Fouzia even said she *saw* a jinn when she was a little girl. It stole a banana from her kitchen table! Aunt Fouzia wouldn’t lie to me.”

“Is a jinn like a ghost?” Olivia asked, anxiously looking round the room for any lurking shadows.

“Basically.” Zaiba nodded. “They can be good or bad, helpful or mischievous. But even if these events aren’t caused by a ghost, we simply *have* to investigate. Flora could be right. Maybe they are accidents.” She paused.

“And maybe they aren’t. What do you think, Pops?”

Poppy was chewing her nails, so Zaiba could tell she was frightened. Poppy didn’t ruin her manicure for just anything! She thought for a little while and then took a deep breath, drawing herself up tall. “I think it’s our duty to figure this out! Does this mean the Snow Leopard Detective Agency UK have their next case?”

Olivia’s eyes widened in anticipation and Zaiba knew what she had to do.

“Olivia, we would like to investigate the case of your haunted house.”

Olivia threw her arms round Poppy and Zaiba in a big hug. “Oh, thank you, thank you! I like it here. I don’t want my mum to get so scared that we have to move. Even Dad’s been getting a little bit freaked out..”

Ali cleared his throat. “In the interests of scientific balance, I’d like to help with the investigation too.”

“Me too!” Flora said, then quickly added, “If you’ll let me.”

“Of course!” Poppy smiled. “And Olivia too.”

“The more brains the better.” Zaiba agreed. “I’m sure

there's a logical explanation to all this." Though she still felt uneasy in her tummy, as if she was trying to convince herself more than the others. "But when can we begin the investigation? My dad is coming to pick us up after dinner."

Olivia thought for a while, her green eyes focusing in concentration. She clicked her fingers. "I know! My parents are having a housewarming party tomorrow. Why don't you and your parents come too? You can sleep over and we can start looking for clues."

"Perfect!" Zaiba nodded. "If you're sure your mum won't mind. Ali, you and I will get our equipment ready at home. Poppy, do you still have that copy of Eden Lockett's *The Haunting of Hay Hall* I lent you? There are some useful notes from my ammi in it that we might need."

Eden Lockett was Zaiba and Poppy's favourite author – a real-life detective who wrote about the mysteries she solved in a series of books. Zaiba had inherited a huge collection of Eden Lockett books from her birth mum who had gone missing years ago. Bit by bit, Zaiba was piecing together the mystery of who her ammi was by

reading notes she had left in the margins of the books. Zaiba had only just learned that her ammi and Aunt Fouzia had set up the Snow Leopard Detective Agency in Karachi together! Detecting ran in Zaiba's blood.

“Don't worry, Olivia and Flora. We're on the case. Together we can solve this!” Zaiba put her hand in the middle of the circle and, one by one, her friends placed their hands on top. “What shall we say on three?”

Ali's eyes lit up and there was a cheeky smile on his face. “I know!

“One...

“Two...

“Three...

“Boo!”



2

PREPPING FOR THE POLTERGEIST

It was Saturday morning and Zaiba woke up with a sense of purpose (and just the *slightest* tummy ache from all the pizza they'd eaten last night).

She glanced over at the shiny white desk in the corner of her bedroom with the matching white leather swivel chair. She'd asked for the desk as a birthday present since she knew how important it was for a detective to have a place to organize her case files. With the colour-coded files and stationery trays, the desk had become the perfect headquarters for the Snow Leopard Detective Agency UK! Together with Poppy and Ali, they had come up with their own logo and used cardboard and craft



paper to make a sign, which they hung over the desk. It was a snow leopard's face in profile, mouth open in a roar, against a black background. Underneath they had stuck on the letters S.L.D.A. UK (since the agency name was too long to write out in full).

To keep a record of the cases they'd cracked so far, Zaiba had pinned up a large corkboard behind her desk. Stuck in with a gold pin was a piece of bunting from the cake-baking tent at her school's summer fete, where Zaiba and the team had discovered who had baked a poisoned cupcake! Next to it was the map from the Royal Star Hotel, where they'd solved the case of the missing diamond dog collar.

Now Zaiba smiled. When she'd shown the desk and sign to Aunt Fouzia during a video call, her aunt had said it looked just as professional as the desk she had in her office in Karachi.

Pushing back her Eden Lockett bed sheets, decorated in tiny footprints and a large magnifying glass, Zaiba

stretched and brushed her wavy hair from her eyes. Straightening out her pastel blue nightgown, she swung her legs out of bed and walked over to her desk. She wanted to admire the folder she had made *one more time* before breakfast. Even though it had been late when Zaiba finally got up to her room last night, she wanted to be ready for the investigation today. She'd found a brand-new laminated black folder and stuck a label down the side, writing in clear capitals: THE HAUNTED HOUSE, OAKWOOD MANOR. It had a section for evidence, notes and transcripts of the voice recordings she would take on her phone. It was *perfect*.

“Zaiba! Are you up? Poppy will be here soon!” called Zaiba’s stepmum, Jessica. A faint hiss of frying butter let Zaiba know that Jessica was making her favourite breakfast – blueberry pancakes! Just what a young detective needed to prepare for a long day of investigating.

Zaiba quickly popped into the bathroom, kicking Ali out for taking too long.

“I want to look smart for the party!” he complained.

“I need five more minutes!”

“You’ll need longer than that to make this look smart,” Zaiba teased, ruffling Ali’s long curly fringe.

After a quick shower, Zaiba was standing in front of her wardrobe trying to decide what to wear for the party later. It was impossible to choose from the tangle of clothes in her cupboard. Luckily her own personal stylist came running up the stairs. On Saturday mornings, Poppy’s mum Emma played netball with her friends, so Poppy had come over early to help prepare for the investigation with Ali and Zaiba.

“That dark orange shalwar kameez!” Poppy pointed at the tunic hanging in Zaiba’s wardrobe. “That colour is really in this season.”

Zaiba pulled it out and held it up to her, looking in the mirror. “We are going to a party, and I trust you on anything to do with fashion!”

Poppy straightened her own forest-green skirt and T-shirt in the mirror. Zaiba pulled on some jeans and a jumper and packed the shalwar kameez away for later.

Poppy showed her how to roll it up so it wouldn’t

crease. “My mum taught me this trick. It’s how I’ve packed my party dress into my bag for later,” she explained.

“Are you decent?” Ali said, knocking at the door and shielding his hands with his eyes.

“Yes, come in,” Zaiba laughed. “And don’t forget I used to help Mum bathe you when you were a baby.”

Ali stuck his tongue out. “Don’t remind me! Now where are we with preparations for investigation ‘Prove Ghosts Aren’t Real’?”

“Ali, keep an open mind. *A good detective weighs up all the options.* That’s Eden Lockett’s golden rule number three.”

Zaiba patted the overnight bag she’d packed specially for the occasion. Aside from her party

dress and all her regular sleepover essentials, it

also contained her Eden Lockett binoculars, a notepad and pen, tape measure, a torch, a first-aid kit and some rope. After she’d had to scale a wall in her first investigation, she thought it was better to be safe than sorry!

“We’re all set. There’s just one thing left to do.”



Down in the kitchen, where a big plate of pancakes with blueberries and syrup was waiting, Jessica had set up her laptop for Zaiba, Ali and Poppy to video call one of Zaiba's favourite people in the whole world – her cousin, Samirah.

Sam was a junior doctor, recently married to Tanvir (#SamTan forever), and Aunt Fouzia's daughter. She was like a big sister to Zaiba. Sam had texted Zaiba's dad Hassan that morning to say she had exciting news to share, and Zaiba was desperate to find out what it was.

"So, my budding detectives! How are you today?" Sam asked, her beautiful smile filling the computer screen.

Ali, Zaiba and Poppy started to babble at the same time.

"There's a ghost at Oakwood Manor!"

"We're starting a new investigation—"

"—prove once and for all that there's a logical explanation!"

Sam took a big breath in, her eyes darting around the screen as she tried to keep track of who was talking. She held up her hands. "Wow! Hold on, hold on. This is a lot

to take in.” She grinned. “And I haven’t even told you my news yet!”

Suddenly a new face appeared on the screen, blocking out Sam with a dazzling smile.

“Aunt Fouzia!” Zaiba, Ali and Poppy chorused. It was their favourite detective auntie!

Aunt Fouzia waved at them. “That’s right, sweeties! I flew all the way from Karachi to surprise you.” She winked before Sam pushed her back out of the way.

“Ammi, that isn’t the surprise, remember?” Sam looked exasperated although she couldn’t help chuckling. “Can you guys figure out what it is? You’re all such brilliant detectives.”

Poppy had a go first. “Is it that Aunt Fouzia has brought us some delicious sweets back from Pakistan?”

Zaiba rolled her eyes. Poppy’s first thoughts were almost always food-related.

Sam shook her head. “Nope! Try again.”

Poppy slumped on her stool but Ali’s hand shot into the air. “Is it that you’re on the brink of a groundbreaking new scientific discovery in the world of

medicine?” His eyes shone, thinking of the possibilities.

“Not quite. Sorry, Ali.” Sam winked. “Zaiba?”

Zaiba bit her lip and thought hard. She was sure she knew what the news was, but she didn’t know if it was rude to say.

“Well, Sam... I have noticed that you’ve not been running like you used to. You don’t eat eggs any more and when we went for your birthday dinner you made sure all the meat was cooked really well. Plus you’ve been wearing baggier clothes than usual. So, are you having a baby?”

Sam clapped her hands together. “You really are a brilliant detective, Zaiba. I should have known you’d guess. Yes, I’m pregnant!”

“And I’m going to be a grandma!” Aunt Fouzia called happily from off-screen.

All three of them cheered and Poppy burst out in a round of applause. Jessica and Hassan, who were sitting at the other end of the table, smiled knowingly at each other.

Why is it that grown-ups just seem to know things sometimes? Zaiba thought. But that didn’t stop her from being thrilled at Sam’s news ... and that she’d got to show

off her detective skills in front of Aunt Fouzia.

“So, your aunt Fouzia is staying with me until the baby arrives!” Sam explained.

“Oh my gosh, this is so exciting!” Poppy sang. “Think of all the cute baby outfits we can get for her.”

“We don’t know if it’s a girl yet, Poppy,” Aunt Fouzia said from off-camera.

“How about Eden for a name?” Zaiba suggested.

“Or Ali!” Her little brother raised a finger. “I will be the baby’s favourite relative, of course.”

Sam waved her hands in a slow-down motion. “The baby isn’t due for another four months. I’m excited too, but I have to stay calm. I can’t even drink caffeine any more and you know how much I love my *chai*. Hot water and lemon just isn’t the same...”

Zaiba felt a little sorry for her cousin. It sounded like there were lots of rules involved with being pregnant. But at least this meant Zaiba was going to have a brand-new baby to play with!

“Besides, don’t you have other matters to focus on first?” Sam wiggled her eyebrows.

Aunt Fouzia leaped in front of the camera. “Yes, the mystery at Oakwood Manor. Keep your eyes and ears peeled, team! At night things can be harder to detect. Make sure your torches are fully charged and catch that ghost. OooooOoo.” Aunt Fouzia made ghostly howling noises as they waved goodbye and hung up.

Ali put his face in his hands. “Not Aunt Fouzia too!”

Hassan put down his newspaper and rescued the laptop, storing it safely back in a drawer. “Your aunt Fouzia tells the scariest stories about jinn, ghosts and ghouls. She used to scare Zaiba’s ammi silly!”

Zaiba considered this. Knowing her ammi was scared of jinn made her feel better about getting spooked at Oakwood Manor. Whenever Zaiba learned more information about her birth mum, she quickly filed it away in her brain to remember for later. Hassan would tell Zaiba the occasional detail like how she had inherited her ammi’s loud laugh, or that she made the best cup of chai he’d ever tasted, but he didn’t focus much on ammi’s detective work. After all, she had gone missing while on a mission. Zaiba loved Jessica, but she did miss

her ammi and sometimes she dreamed about having a mum who shared her passion for detecting.

However there was no time for pondering now. They had a case to solve! Olivia would be waiting for them to arrive to begin the investigations.

“I think we should get going,” Ali said, hastily glancing at his watch. “It takes precisely fourteen minutes to drive to Oakwood Manor, providing we stay at the speed limit and traffic is moderate.”

Jessica laughed and patted Ali on the head. “Hassan will drop you off. I’ve got some shopping to do. I want to bring a nice housewarming present.”

Poppy stuck out her bottom lip. “I wish I could come. I love shopping.”

Zaiba laughed and grabbed her friend’s hand, pulling her out of the door. “Shopping can wait. We’ve got a ghost to catch!”

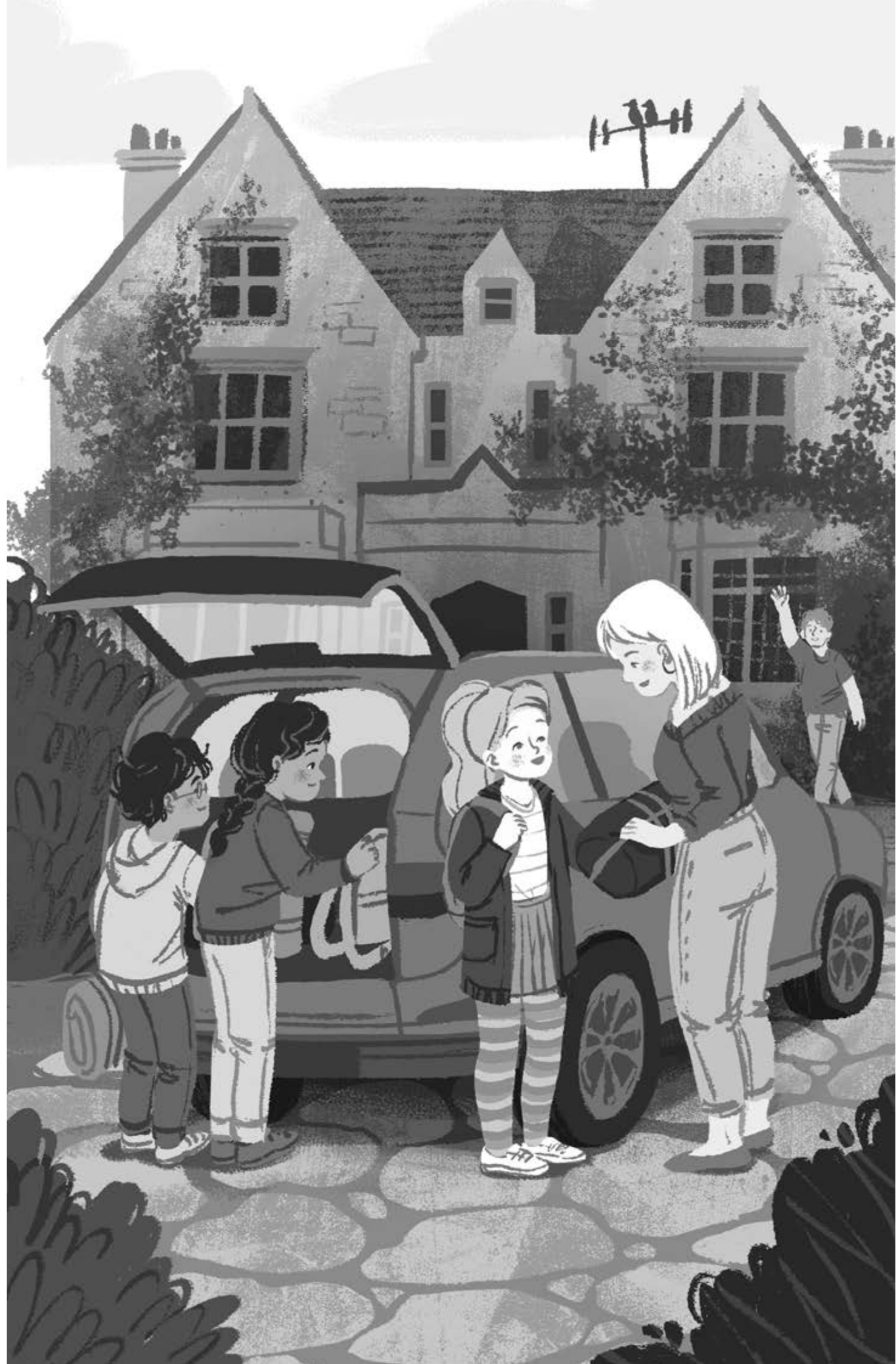


Ali (as usual) was correct in his predictions. The drive to Olivia’s house took thirteen minutes and fifty-eight

seconds. They didn't pass many neighbours since Oakwood Manor was so out of the way. But Zaiba could have sworn she saw a pair of eyes peering round the curtain of the last house on the road before they turned on to the long driveway that led to the manor. As they pulled up, Hassan whistled. It was the first time he'd seen the place.

"I know why they call it a manor now," he said as he took in the huge brick facade, with its numerous windows and pointed slate roof. Zaiba pressed her face to the car window and sensed the eerie feeling creep back over her. Oakwood Manor must have been impressive when it was first built, but the sharp angles of the roof and the ivy that had grown over the crumbling bricks now made it appear deserted, despite its new residents. Hassan poked his head out of the window to say hello to Olivia's parents, who had come to the door.

"Do you need a hand with anything?" he called. But Courtney had already come out to help the kids. With her round cheeks, small chin and green eyes she looked almost like a fairy.



“No, no it’s fine. Don’t worry!” She smiled, passing the bundled-up sleeping bags to her husband Jack, who had joined her in the driveway. Courtney had blond hair, but Jack’s was fiery red and curly.

“Have fun! Behave yourselves!” Hassan wagged a finger at Zaiba and the others.

“Isn’t that a contradiction in terms?” Ali muttered.

Zaiba elbowed him. “Just wave goodbye,” she said out the side of her mouth. The sooner their dad was off, the sooner they could start their investigation. They all waved as Hassan drove back down the gravel driveway, tyres crunching on the uneven stones.

Olivia ran out to greet them. “Hello! Do you want to see the sleepover set-up in my room?”

“Yes please!” Zaiba and Poppy cried.

“Does it have a computer?” Ali asked.

All four of them ran into the house where the party prep was under way. A Hoover was parked in the middle of the huge foyer and a bottle of polish with a rag had been left on the oak-wood staircase. Even with the lights on, the foyer was dim and the hard, shiny flooring made

Zaiba feel cold. She was glad to follow Olivia up to her room, where her mum had set up five roll-out foam mattresses. Luckily Olivia's room was massive. It even had an old fireplace and a glass chandelier!

Zaiba and Poppy laid out their matching Eden Lockett sleeping bags. Zaiba's was a pastel blue to match her nightgown and Poppy's was pink – her absolute favourite colour. The sleeping bags had special secret compartments at the bottom to hide your valuables in and the zip was shaped like a magnifying glass!

“Why do I have to use Dad's old camping stuff?” Ali grumbled, fumbling with a huge sleeping bag. “It's five times bigger than me!”

“I know how you feel. I have Olivia's old pony duvet.” Flora stuck her tongue out in disgust at the glittery design.

Zaiba, Poppy and Olivia giggled.

“This is going to be so much fun!” Olivia beamed as she admired their sleepover set-up.

But Zaiba's mind was back on the task at hand. “I'd like to start by taking a sweep of the grounds around

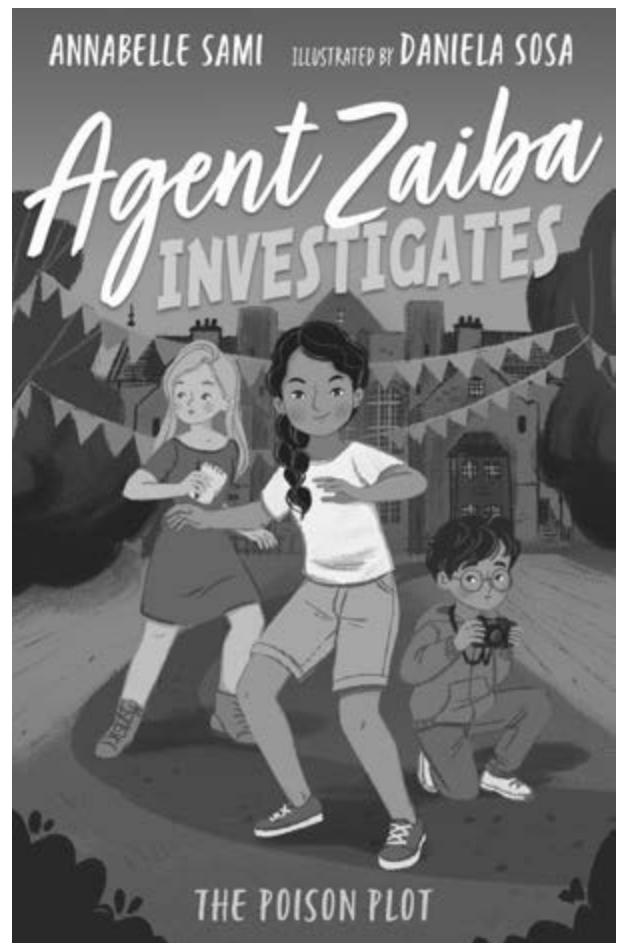
the house, please, Olivia,” she announced. “With woods like these, you can’t be too careful. Anyone could approach ... unseen.”

Poppy nodded seriously and gathered the others round her. “Is everyone ready?” She glanced from face to face, checking. “Are you *sure* you’re ready?”

The others nodded and looked at each other, slightly confused.

Poppy threw out her arms dramatically. “We’re about to go ghost hunting!”

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Annabelle Sami is a writer and performer. She grew up next to the sea on the south coast of the UK and moved to London, where she now lives, for university. At Queen Mary University she had an amazing time studying English Literature and Drama, finally graduating with an MA in English Literature.

When she isn't writing she enjoys playing saxophone in a band with her friends, performing live art and swimming in the sea!

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Originally from Romania, Daniela Sosa now lives and works in Cambridge with her husband and is completing an MA in children's book illustration at the Cambridge School of Art.

Creating a magical mix of the ordinary and the unusual, Daniela enjoys highlighting subtle detail and finding beauty in everyday life. She gets inspiration from nature, books and observing the world around.