

THE
MiZZY
MYSTERIES
A SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

CLAIRE HATCHER-SMITH



For every child who longs to be seen for who they really are . . .

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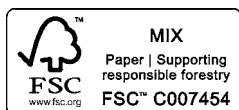
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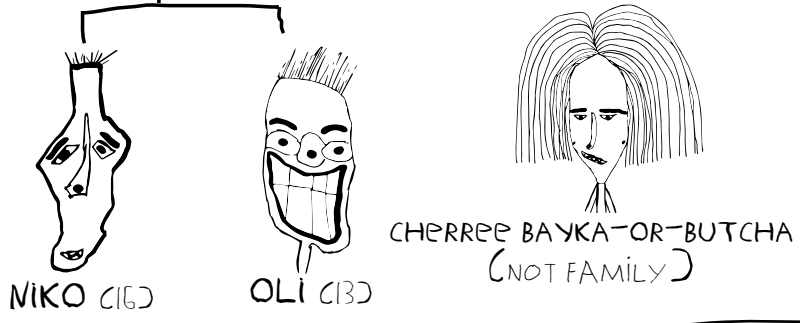
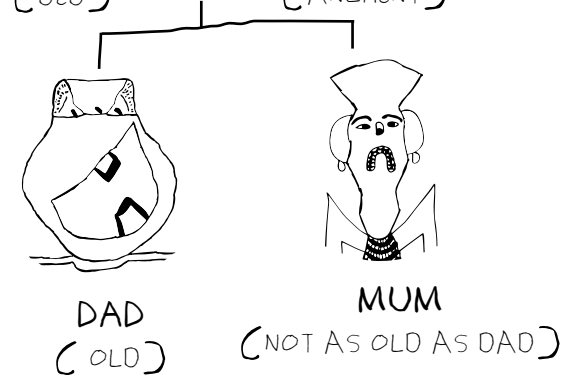
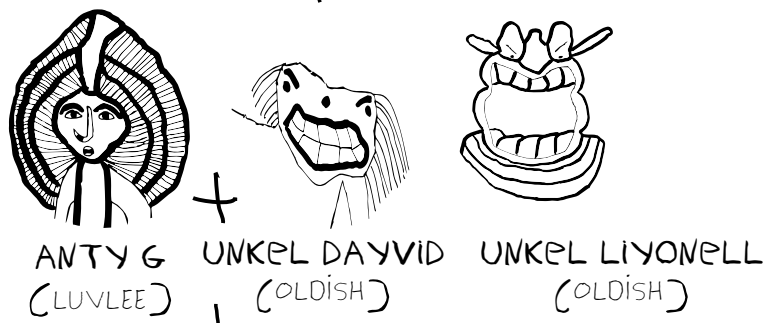
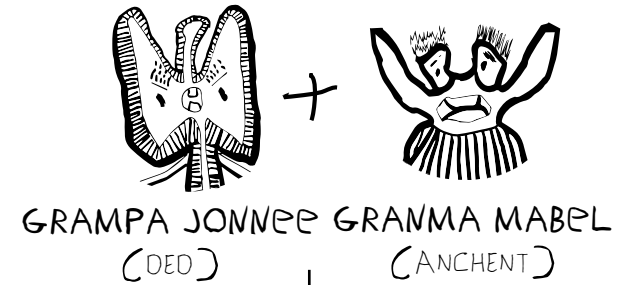
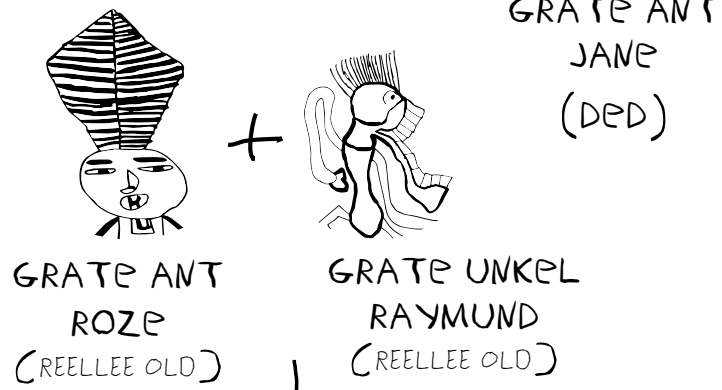
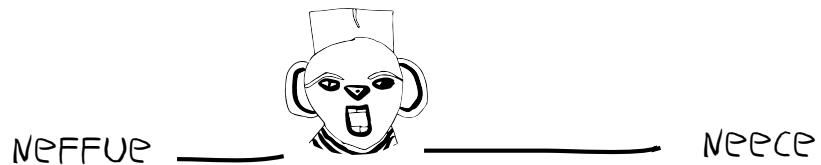


CLAIRE HATCHER-SMITH



MY FAMILY TREE

BY ME (MIZZY) 12 3/4 YRS





= 1 =

The Case of the Swapped Swimsuit



Call me Mizzy, everybody does.

Actually, my cousins call me Miz (or Misery when I'm really annoying) but in my head, I'm Mizzy the Marvellous, world-famous detective. Think Sherlock Holmes crossed with Rachel Bailey, the police detective from that old show *Scott and Bailey* – the one with big brown eyes, never-ending legs and long, elegant fingers. Sometimes I want to be her so much, it hurts.

You see, I've wanted to be a detective for as long as I can remember. It's in my blood, or something. My cousins say I can sniff a mystery no one else has even noticed and my tummy just has a knack for feeling things.

They're right. My tummy fizzes at the first sign of a secret. Sometimes it tightens into a small, hard lump as well. Sometimes it loops and tumbles and twirls.

What I'm not so good at yet is actually solving things. Mum and Dad just roll their eyes and say my dreams are Great Aunt Jane's fault and could I please stop poking my nose into other people's business already?

But I can't help it. And one day, they'll see. One day, I'll show them I'm a proper detective. I'll make them proud.

Maybe today's the day. After Sunday lunch with Grandma Mabel, we've made our way to the ponds on Hampstead Heath. Mum and Dad whisper a bit more about pork and porridge for lunch *again* and how maybe it's time to find Grandma Mabel a nice care home. Then we leave Dad at the Floaty-Boat Pond and Mum, Grandma Mabel and I head to the Ladies' Pond for my swimming lesson.

Like every summer Sunday, the pond and the dock and the grass are filled with families. Mums and grandmas and girls of all ages. Almost-grown-up ones in bikinis stretched out on towels in the sun. Littlies in frilled swimsuits and rubber rings and armbands. And

groups of almost-teenagers, like me, hanging their legs off the end of the dock and giggling.

Except they're not like me, are they?

I tug at the frill on my swimsuit. Mum says it's cute, but almost-teenagers aren't supposed to be cute. We're meant to be cool. Like that girl over there with the swim shorts and crop top. I bet her mum even lets her wear lip gloss.

And that one over there, she's wearing mascara. There's streaks of it running down her face.

And not a single other twelve-and-three-quarters-year-old wears armbands.

My cheeks sizzle. I should be pulling on the blasted things but, like always seems to happen right about now, something much more interesting catches my eye.

Today, a woman with a shark tattoo on her left wrist strolls up to a grey-haired lady a few towels away from me, who's fast asleep on the dock. (I can tell she's sleeping, because her tummy goes up and down exactly the same amount with each breath and her

snores drown out the bees zigzagging in the reeds.)

Shark-Wrist pauses a moment. Then, cool as the Sunday 99 Dad always promises me if I actually manage to swim, she slips her hand in Snory-Grey-Hair's bag and pulls out a navy-and-white-striped swimsuit. She holds the suit up to the light, like she doesn't want to steal a holey one, then strolls back along the dock to the changing room.

Is Shark-Wrist stealing the swimsuit? My heart hops. This is my next case. The one that'll show Mum and Dad I'm a proper detective. That'll show them I should wear lip gloss and a crop-top bikini and forget all about armbands.

Mum is digging around in our bag. She hasn't noticed a thing. Tummy fizzing, I scramble to my feet and ever-so-cool-and-Rachel-Bailey-like, saunter after Shark-Wrist.

Outside the changing room, I stop and study the flaking rubber safety ring on the wall, like I'm fascinated by flaky, rubbery things. (Rachel Bailey calls

this *surveilling*.)

Fourteen (well-examined) rubbery flakes later, Shark-Wrist reappears through the changing-room door. Wearing the swiped-striped swimsuit.

My heart thumps faster. I'm going to catch a real thief! A gazillion shades of lip gloss tumble through my head. Mum will be so proud. I stumble after Shark-Wrist and as she reaches the end of the dock where the wood pokes out over the water, I grab her arm and yell, "You're nicked!"

"Excuse me?" Shark-Wrist swivels and peers down at me, forehead all sorts of wrinkly. But her eyes don't flick from side to side. Her face doesn't turn red.

Oops. My tummy tightens. Have I got the wrong end of the stick?

"Mizzy!" Mum appears from nowhere. "Let go of the lady. At once."

My lip-gloss dreams vanish. "But, Mum . . . the swimsuit! It isn't hers!"

"Right now." Mum gives me one of her best glares,

then turns to Shark-Wrist. "I'm so sorry. She likes to make things up."

I hang my head.

But Shark-Wrist smiles down at me. "She's right, actually. It isn't my swimsuit."

It isn't? I sneak a glance at Mum.

"Mine had a hole in it," Shark-Wrist continues. "So I swapped with my aunt."

Then she nods at Snory-Grey-Hair, pats my head and dives into the pond.



= 2 =
The Saver



My cheeks burn. Another failure. A swapped swimsuit, not a swiped one. Rachel Bailey shakes her head. I should have surveilled a bit longer.

Mum obviously wishes I hadn't surveilled at all. Giving me one of her best why-do-you-poke-your-nose-in-where-it's-not-needed sighs and squeezing my fingers a bit too tight, she drags me back along the dock to our heap of swimming bags. "That's quite enough Great-Aunt-Janeing for today."

Great Aunt Jane is actually my great *great* aunt but that takes too long to say. She's famous in our family for being terribly nosy, watching all the neighbours and writing down stories about them in her diaries. Depending on who you ask (her nephew, Great Uncle Raymond or her niece, Grandma Mabel), she was either an interfering busybody with a talent for getting the wrong end of the stick, or a *brilliantly* perceptive