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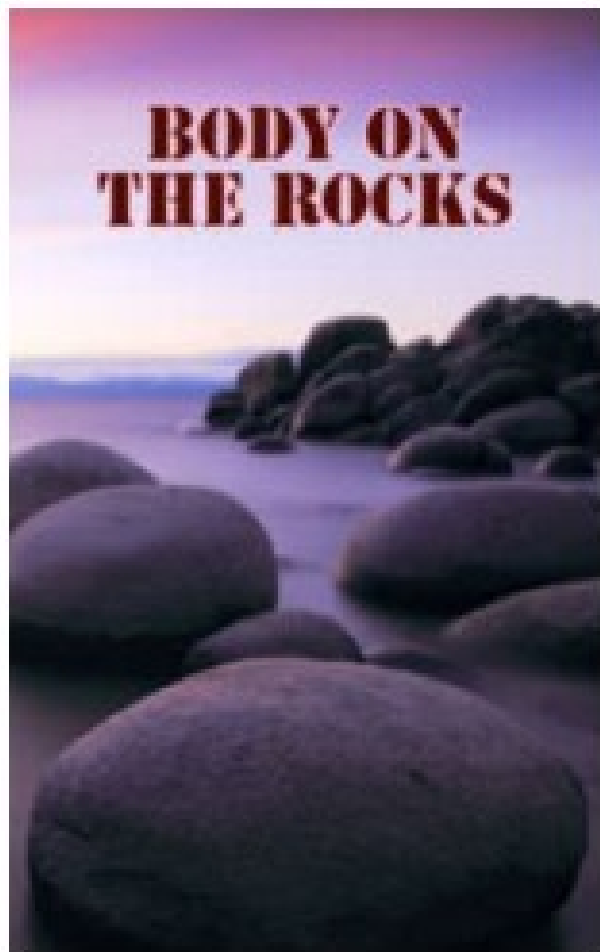
B1+ Novels and Stories

Intermediate Level

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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**BODY ON
THE ROCKS**



Body on the Rocks

By Denise Kirby

CHAPTER ONE

The visitor

The gardener glanced up from the roses. The man across the road was still there - standing on the footpath and looking up at the house. What did he want?

The man had a tattoo on his arm and his hair was long. He didn't look like a visitor. No, not a visitor to this house - this enormous house with its carefully kept gardens and its river views, its swimming pool and tennis court and four-car garage. No, the visitors to this house were carefully chosen. The gardener himself had only been inside once, and that was only into the kitchen. He snipped off another dead rose.

He heard the sound of footsteps.

The man with the tattoo had crossed the road and was walking up the path to the house.

The gardener quickly moved his position so that he could see the front door. He snipped off another dead rose.

'This will be good,' he said to himself. Whatever the man wanted, he wouldn't get past Mrs Balfour. She was fierce.

The man rang the doorbell. A moment later, Mrs Balfour answered.

The gardener was too far away to hear the conversation but he could see the man holding out a book towards her. Mrs Balfour raised her voice. Then suddenly she stopped. She disappeared into the house and left the man standing there. A few minutes later, she returned and let the man into the house.

The gardener, surprised, snipped his finger by mistake.

'Agh!' he said, and went to wash the cut under the garden tap. 'I knew I should have worn gloves.' But his hands got so sweaty in the heat.

He took his finger out from under the stream of water. It was only a small cut. It would stop bleeding soon. He turned off the tap and pressed his thumb over the cut.

He heard shouting coming from the house.

The front door opened and Mrs Balfour pushed the man with the tattoo out.

The man turned and looked at an upstairs window. He shook the book in the air.

'I'll find her!' he shouted. 'And she'll remember. She'll remember. And then the whole world will know the truth!'

CHAPTER TWO

Rottnest Island - here we come!

Becky waited in the car park near the dock. She looked at her watch. The ferry was due to leave in ten minutes. Where were they?

'Becky!'

She turned towards the voice and then burst out laughing. 'How many bags have you got?' she said. 'We're only going for two weeks. You'll sink the ferry!'

She watched as her two best friends, Amber and Natalie, struggled towards her. They had two large bags each and, behind them, Natalie's father carried two more.

'Ah, Rebecca,' he said, looking at the one bag and box of food at Becky's feet, 'I'm glad to see there's going to be one sensible person on this holiday.'

'Da-ad,' complained Natalie.

Becky laughed. 'Come on,' she said, 'or we'll miss the boat.'

They all hurried over to the dock to join the line of people moving onto the ferry. Natalie's father helped the girls to load their bags on the front of the boat and then went back onto the dock. He waved to them and called, 'Be good,' then turned and walked away.

The girls looked at each other and grinned.

'Our first holiday by ourselves!' said Amber, hugging the other two. 'No parents, no teachers...'

'Just us,' said Becky.

'Hey,' said Natalie, 'let's see if we can get a seat outside.' She led the way to the back of the ferry and they found three seats. 'We'll have the sun on our backs. Perfect.'

The boat began to move.

'Rottnest Island - here we come!' said Amber, and the girls grinned at each other again.

Soon the ferry was out into the deeper waters of the Indian Ocean.

Becky stood and went to look over the side of the boat. The wind whipped her long brown hair about her face. She pulled her hat down tight on her head. She looked at the sparkling water below her and the clear blue sky above and felt a wonderful sense of freedom. She had studied so hard during her final year of high school. But that was all over now. She was free. Well, until university started...

'Excuse me, dear.'

Becky turned.

An elderly woman in a bright yellow shirt held an equally bright yellow pamphlet out towards her.

'I'm one of Rottnest's voluntary guides,' said the woman. 'We do tours on the island.' The boat rolled on the waves and she pushed the pamphlet at Becky. 'Here's some information and a list of tours if you're interested.'

'Oh, thanks.' Becky took the yellow paper and the woman moved away. Becky looked at the pamphlet.

Just 19 kilometres off the coast of Fremantle lies Rottnest Island, one of Western Australia's favourite holiday places. The Dutch explorer, Willem de Vlamingh, landed on the island in 1696. He thought the quokkas (small wallabies that live on the island) were rats. He named the island 'Rats Nest Island'; or in Dutch, 'Rottenest...'

Becky pushed the pamphlet into her pocket. It was just for tourists.

'What's that?' asked Natalie, coming to stand beside her.

'Oh, just some stuff about tours on the island.'

'I can't wait to get over there,' said Natalie. 'Two weeks lying on a beach. Heaven!'

Amber came to join them. She looked pale. 'How long until we get there?' she asked.

Becky glanced at her watch. 'Ten minutes.'

'I'm feeling a bit sick,' said Amber.

'Look at something that's not moving,' suggested Becky. 'You'll be okay.'

Amber didn't seem too sure.

'Hey, look!' said Natalie. 'There's the lighthouse near Pinky Beach!'

All three girls looked out beyond the front of the boat. They could see the lighthouse on the north end of the island.

'We're nearly there!'

And as they got closer and closer, the water beneath them became calm and light green and clear. And soon they could see the white, white sand on the beach and the little ochre-coloured cottages between the tea trees along the shore. Gradually everything became larger and larger until, finally, they were there.

The ferry came slowly up to the jetty at the main settlement, the small village on Thomson Bay. There were two other smaller settlements on the north side of the island - at Longreach Bay and Geordie Bay - but the girls were to stay at the main settlement. There they would be close to the General Store, the few tourist shops and - best of all - the famous bakery.

Standing among the crowd on the jetty, with her feet firmly on solid ground, Amber began to feel better. 'Shall we hire our bikes before we go to the cottage?' she asked the others. 'The luggage might not be delivered for ages.'

The girls had clearly marked their luggage and it would be delivered to their cottage - T179. They collected the cottage key from the Tourist Information building at the end of the jetty and walked into the settlement.

Apart from a few cars for the people who worked on the island and a bus service, no vehicles were allowed on Rottnest. Everyone used bicycles.

'This seat's uncomfortable,' said Becky, trying out a bike.

The Bike Hire building - like everything else in the settlement - was only a short walk from the jetty. There were rows and rows of bright blue bikes. People walked among them looking for something suitable.

'Mine's okay,' said Natalie. 'Try one of these over here.'

Soon all three girls had chosen a bike and paid for two weeks' hire. Minutes later, they were riding down a sandy road looking at the ochre cottages on either side of them.

The road ran parallel to the shore. The cottages to their right faced the road while those on their left faced the sea and had their backs to the road.

Becky suddenly pointed. 'Look, T179. There it is!'

'Oh, perfect!' said Natalie. 'It's on the sea side.'

There was a high wall at the back of the cottage. The girls jumped off their bikes, leaned them against the wall and opened the gate.

'The luggage is here!' said Natalie, going first into the little backyard. 'That was quick.' She turned to face the others. 'Who's got the key?'

Becky took the key out of her pocket and opened the back door.

'Well, here we are,' she said, as they all went in. 'Home, sweet home.'

The cottage had just three rooms - the kitchen in the centre, in which they were standing, and two bedrooms. Through the windows at the front, the girls could see the blue-green water of Thomson Bay. They hugged each other. Then Amber suddenly broke away and ran from one bedroom to the other, trying out the beds. Becky and Natalie joined the race.

'I'm having this bed,' called Amber.

'I'm having this one in here,' called Becky.

'Where am I going to sleep?' asked Natalie.

'You have that one.'

The girls laughed and unpacked their clothes and the sun sparkled on the waters of the bay.

CHAPTER THREE

West End

The next morning Becky and Amber sat on the front verandah of the cottage eating breakfast. A low wall ran around the small front yard and beyond that was the beach. But the girls weren't looking at the water. The little wooden gate in the wall was open and two quokkas had wandered in.

'They're so sweet,' said Amber, kneeling down and holding out her hand. The smaller one put its nose to her fingers hoping for some food. 'Oh, look at his little face.'

Just then, Natalie came out onto the verandah and the quokkas jumped back towards the gate.

'So, what's the plan?' asked Natalie. She sat on the low wall that divided their cottage from the one next door.

'Well,' said Becky, 'we ride out past Geordie Bay to West End. Maybe we can have a swim at Parakeet Bay on the way. And then we come back on the road on the south side of the island.'

'We'll need supplies from the bakery,' said Natalie.

'Of course,' grinned Becky. 'If we leave soon, we should be back by about one o'clock.'

Suddenly a window in the cottage next door opened and Natalie turned to see the face of a young man with sandy-coloured hair. He smiled at her. She turned and stood and walked back to the other girls, her eyes wide.

'There's a really good-looking guy next door,' she whispered.

There was a solid wall at the end of the verandah, so Becky and Amber couldn't see into the cottage. But they heard the front door open.

Two young men came out into the yard - one with sandy hair and one with dark hair. They looked across at the girls. The dark-haired one spoke first.

'Hi. How are you going?'

'Hi,' said the girls.

'We've just arrived,' said the other boy. 'Have you been here long?'

'We arrived yesterday,' said Natalie.

'Yes, Sunday. Yesterday,' repeated Amber. 'We're here for two weeks.'

'Oh, good.' The dark-haired one smiled. 'My name's Dominic, by the way. And this is Richard.'

'I'm Amber.'

'Natalie.'

'Becky.'

'Right. Well. We'd, um, better go and unpack. We'll probably see you around.' Dominic gave a quick wave and the two boys disappeared behind the verandah wall and into their cottage.

Amber signaled to Becky and Natalie and they all went inside too.

'They're both good-looking,' said Amber once the door was safely shut. 'This holiday just gets better and better.'

'I like the dark-haired one,' said Natalie. She turned to Becky. 'What about you?'

Becky paused and then said very calmly, 'You do realise, don't you, that were still in our pyjamas?'

Becky was the first to be dressed and ready for their ride around the island. She took her towel and a bag out to her bike. She wheeled the bicycle out of the back gate, leaned it against the wall and fastened her bag on the back of the bike. She folded her towel and put it on the seat. With more than two hours' riding ahead of her, she would need that for comfort.

She heard voices behind her and turned around. A group of older women were on the verandah of the cottage opposite.

'Hello,' she said.

'Hello, love,' replied one of the women, coming forward to hang a wet towel on the back of a chair. 'Going for a swim?'

'No, a long ride around the island.'

'All the way to West End?' Becky nodded.

The woman turned to her companions on the verandah.

'We haven't done that for a few years, have we, girls?'

Becky smiled. These 'girls' looked about fifty or sixty years old.

The women smiled at Becky.

'Do you come to Rottnest often?' she asked.

'We've been coming every year since 1991,' the woman with the towel answered. 'Well, apart from Ruth.' She pointed at a woman with very short grey hair. 'She's new. We've only known her for ten years.'

The women laughed.

'Of course, we all came here when we were children too. Oh, hello.'

Natalie and Amber were wheeling their bikes out onto the road. 'Hello,' they said.

'Ready?' asked Becky.

'Yeah.'

'Well, it was nice talking to you,' Becky said to the woman. 'Bye.'

The women on the verandah waved to the girls as they set off.

After a visit to the bakery for supplies, the girls rode to Parakeet Bay on the north side of the island. They stopped there for a swim in the calm, clear green water and then sat on the warm sand and ate the cream buns they had bought, before continuing on their journey.

The further they got from the settlement, the fewer people they saw. Riding down the road through Narrow Neck - the narrowest part of the island, where once the sea had flowed and formed two islands instead of one - they saw no one. The low tea trees were windswept and it was dry and hot. As Becky came down a hill, a black snake quickly crossed the road in front of her bike. She pointed and shouted back at the others, 'Snake!'

Amber gave a short scream and Becky and Natalie laughed.

Finally, they came to the end of the road at West End. They dropped their bikes on the ground and drank thirstily from their water bottles.

The road ended on high ground. There was no pretty bay or pure white sand here. Only steep, jagged rocks and the windswept sea below.

Suddenly the wind caught Amber's hat and it flew down onto the rocks.

'Oh, no. I love that hat,' she cried. 'I've got to get it back.'

'Don't be crazy. You can't climb down there. It's too dangerous,' said Natalie.

The girls went to the edge and looked at the rocks below.

Suddenly Amber gasped and covered her mouth with her hand.

'What is it?' said Natalie.

'Oh my God!' said Becky. She had seen it too.

To their right, down on a jagged shelf of rock, lay a man. There was blood on his face.

'Is he dead?' whispered Amber.

CHAPTER FOUR

The body on the rocks

Becky called out but the man didn't move.

'I'm going down there,' she said.

'But it's too dangerous,' cried Natalie. 'You'll get swept off the rocks by a wave or something.'

'Well, we can't just leave him there, can we?' replied Becky, putting her water bottle in the long pocket of her shorts. 'Maybe he's still alive. Look, someone needs to ride back to the settlement and tell the police. I'll try to climb down to him that way.' She pointed to some rocks that led to the shelf below. 'I'll be careful.'

'Well, if you're going down there, I'm staying here too,' said Natalie. 'Amber can go back to get help.'

Amber looked at her, alarmed. 'I'm not riding back there alone,' she said. And I'm not staying here!

Becky put her hand on Natalie's arm. 'I'll be fine,' she said. 'You go with Amber.'

'I knew we should have brought our mobiles,' said Amber as she and Natalie picked up their bikes.

'Are you sure about this?' Natalie said to Becky.

'Yes. Go!' she replied and she started to climb down the rocks.

'Be careful,' called Natalie. And seconds later, they were gone.

Becky looked for a way down to the rock shelf. She judged it to be no more than ten metres below her, but the rocks weren't made for climbing. They stuck out towards the sky with nasty sharp points. There were no flat places to put your feet. She didn't want to fall forward and meet the same fate as the man below. Slowly, slowly, she worked her way down to him.

Finally getting onto the jagged rock shelf, she could see immediately that he was dead. His eyes were open wide, staring at the sky. His skin was a strange purple colour.

She went closer.

The angle of one of his legs was all wrong. It looked broken. Flies moved around the cuts on his head and his mouth was open. There was a tattoo of a snake on his arm.

Becky turned away and looked at the rocks above. He must have fallen. Perhaps he was climbing and he fell.

She didn't know what to do. It didn't seem right to leave him alone. She moved a bit away from him, sat down and looked at her watch. It would probably be another three-quarters of an hour before the police arrived. Hugging her knees, she sat there watching the waves break on the rocks. Although the sun was shining fiercely, she was in the shadow of the rocks above her and she felt cold. She had never seen a dead body before.

She forced herself to look at the man again. And she noticed something else. Slowly she stood up and went over to him. She knelt beside him and looked at

his neck. His skin was a strange colour, but there was something else. Definite marks on his neck. As if...

Becky stood up quickly.

Could this be murder?

She looked at the wild place around her and felt frightened. The police would be here soon. She didn't need to stay with the body. She began to climb back up the rocks.

It was easier going up than it had been going down and it wasn't long before she was at the top. She took a drink from her water bottle and put it back in her bag on her bike. She looked at the bike and then looked around her.

Where was the man's bike?

How did he get here? It was a long walk.

Did someone drive him? There were few cars on the island.

She searched in the bushes at the side of the road and soon found it - a bicycle from the island's Bike Hire, exactly the same as hers. She didn't touch it.

Coming back out onto the road, she heard a car. Seconds later, a police van appeared. It stopped and two officers got out.

'Hello,' said one. 'I'm Sergeant Tom Barker. Are you Becky?'

Becky nodded. 'You were quick,' she said.

'Your friends found someone with a mobile phone and called us from Geordie Bay. They asked me to tell you they've gone back to the cottage.'

'Oh,' said Becky. She pointed in the direction of the body. 'I've been down there.' She paused. 'He's dead.'

The officers glanced at one another.

'Are you okay?' asked the sergeant.

'Yeah. But there's something else.'

The officers waited.

'I think... Well, I think he may have been murdered.'

The officers stared at her.

'There's a bike in there.' Becky pointed into the bushes. 'It's probably his. I didn't touch it.'

What the officers said then to each other Becky didn't hear because, at that moment, a rescue helicopter flew over them and hung in the air above the rocks.

The men went back to the van and the sergeant shouted into the police radio.

Becky watched the helicopter.

Then the other officer came over to her.

'There's nothing more you can do here,' he said loudly. 'Are you all right to ride back to the settlement on your own?'

'Yes,' said Becky.

'We'll need to get a statement from you and your friends,' the officer continued. 'Can you come to the police station in the main settlement this afternoon?'

'Okay,' she said.

The officer smiled and went back to the van.

From the helicopter, a man on a rope was dropping slowly down onto the rocks below.

Becky picked up her bike and rode away.

Mid-afternoon, the girls walked to the police station. They gave their statements separately - Becky took longer than the others - and then went home.

They lay on the beach in front of their cottage in the late afternoon sun. Amber and Natalie wanted to keep on talking about the body on the rocks. But Becky just wanted to forget about it.

That night in bed, however, she couldn't escape.

It was grey. It was all grey. She sat on the rock shelf, grey water sweeping over her feet. The body floated in on the waves. It pushed up against her. She wanted to stand up but she couldn't move. The tattooed snake on the man's arm lifted its head and came towards her. She gasped. Now she was on her bike, riding fast. She looked behind her and gasped. The snake was following

her. She couldn't get away. And then the man's face, covered in blood, came towards her. The staring eyes. The open mouth. And he smiled.

Becky woke in a cold sweat.

CHAPTER FIVE

The boys next door

'They're out there. They're out there,' gasped Amber, running in through the front door of the cottage the next morning. 'Quick, give me the broom.'

Natalie reached out of the backdoor, got the broom and gave it to Amber. Then she joined Becky at the front window and they watched Amber go back outside; Amber moved slowly down the front yard towards the gate, sweeping the, sand off the path.

'Who cares about sand on their path at Rottnest?' said Becky. 'They'll think she's crazy.'

Amber looked up towards the cottage next door.

'Oh, hello,' she said. She leaned on the broom. 'I didn't see you there.'

Natalie rolled her eyes at Becky. They both laughed, then quickly hid behind the curtains as Richard and Dominic appeared.

'Listen,' said Dominic, 'we thought we might play tennis this afternoon. About one o'clock. Do you and your friends want to join us?'

Amber nodded. 'Okay.' She smiled at the boys. 'I mean, I'll have to ask the others, but they'll probably say yes. I mean, I'm sure they'll say yes. Yes. Great. What time?'

Natalie made a face at Becky then looked through the window again.

Richard smiled showing a row of perfect white teeth. 'One o'clock,' he said. 'At the tennis courts?'

'Okay,' said Amber. 'Great. See you there.'

The girls decided to spend the morning at The Basin, a swimming place in a small bay about half a kilometre from the settlement. It was called The Basin because it was a large round hole in a rock shelf that lay just below the surface of the water. The rock came all the way into the shore and you had to walk across it for a metre or two before you could step down into the basin of clear

green water. All the beaches on Rottnest were beautiful, but this was the most inviting.

It seemed to Becky the perfect place to wash away the memory of yesterday.

She walked across the rock shelf to the deeper water of The Basin and dived in. There was nothing like the feeling of salt water on your skin and in your hair. It made you feel clean and new. Surrounded by the sparkling water she could let go of the uneasy feeling she'd had since her dream the night before.

The girls spent a few lazy hours at The Basin, talking and swimming and lying on the beach in the hot sun watching other people come and go. Then they slowly rode back to the cottage to have lunch and change for tennis.

At the tennis courts, Natalie and Amber couldn't wait to tell Dominic and Richard about their ride to West End.

'You'll never guess what happened to us yesterday,' started Amber.

The boys listened to the story, then Richard turned to Becky, who hadn't said much.

'And you stayed there the whole time with the body?' he asked.

'Yes,' said Becky. 'I mean, it wasn't long really.' She spoke lightly, but the uneasy feeling was rising inside her again.

Richard looked closely at her and smiled. He threw her a tennis ball.

'Come on, you can be my partner,' he said. 'Amber and Natalie can be partners. And Dom...' He turned to his friend. 'You can collect the balls.'

'Hey!' objected Dominic.

Everyone laughed.

And as they played, there was more laughter. The boys were funny and confident. They ran around the court doing crazy things. Everyone changed partners several times until they all sat down, sweaty and tired, in the shade of a large fig tree at the side of the court. They all drank from their water bottles.

'Hey,' said Amber, turning to the boys. 'Why don't you guys come over to our cottage for dinner tonight? We'll cook.'

Becky and Natalie looked at each other in horror. What was she saying now? Was she really inviting Richard and Dominic to dinner? Was this the same girl

who only last night had let the rice boil dry? What was she thinking? None of them could cook a proper meal. Not a proper meal. Not for guests.

Dominic looked at Richard who nodded his head.

'Yeah, we'll come,' he said. 'Thanks.'

Becky and Natalie smiled weakly at them.

'No, we can't roast anything,' said Becky to Natalie. 'It's too hot. The whole cottage would feel like an oven by the time the meal was ready.'

The two girls were sitting at their little kitchen table trying to think of ideas for dinner. Amber was still in the shower.

'Chicken and vegetables with rice?' asked Natalie.

Becky shook her head. 'It's a bit plain. We need something more exciting. Hey! What about that pasta thing your mum makes? That always looks good.'

'Yes,' said Natalie. 'Yes. That wouldn't be too difficult at all. Good idea.'

She went over to the cupboards under the sink and opened them.

'There's a big pot for the pasta. And we should be able to make the sauce in this.' She took out a large pan. 'Excellent!'

'Do you think you know how to make the sauce?' asked Becky.

'I think so. I've helped Mum make it a few times.'

'So,' Becky continued, 'we can have pasta and we can make a salad and we can get some nice bread from the bakery and a cake for afterwards, for dessert.'

'Excellent,' said Natalie again. 'Let's make a list.'

She found a piece of paper and a pen, sat down at the table again and tried to remember the ingredients for the pasta sauce. Finally, she thought that she had written them all down. Then, with Becky's help, she added the salad ingredients to the list. Then underneath that, she wrote PASTA and BREAD.

'Don't forget the cake for dessert,' reminded Becky.

'Ooh, yes,' said Natalie. And she wrote that down too.

Amber came in from the little bathroom off the back verandah. She looked at the ingredients on the list.

'See, I told you it would be easy,' she said.

'We haven't cooked it yet,' said Natalie.

The girls rode to the shops.

Amber went, into the bakery while the others went next door into the General Store. Natalie tore the list in two and gave one half to Becky.

'I'll get the sauce ingredients,' she said. 'You get the stuff for the salad.'

'Okay,' said Becky. She took a basket and went over to the fruit and vegetables. She began choosing things.

She had just picked up a tomato when suddenly she heard part of a conversation behind her.

'It's definitely murder,' said a woman's voice. 'I spoke to Tom a few hours ago.'

'What did he say?' said another woman.

'The man was strangled. He was probably dead before he hit the rocks...'

The women moved away.

Becky looked at the tomato in her hand. It was split on one side and pale red juice dripped down.

She was right. The man on the rocks had been strangled.

She put the tomato back. She had an uneasy, sick feeling in her stomach. She filled her basket and went to find Natalie.

With a lot of careful planning and laughter and remembering to keep Amber away from the stove, dinner with the boys went well. The girls had prepared the salad and the sauce earlier in the evening, so all they had to do when the boys arrived was cook the pasta. Some of it stuck together and was a bit hard but the girls hid those pieces on their own plates and gave the best to the boys. It was a great success.

Becky had told Amber and Natalie about what she had heard in the General Store and, when they first arrived, Amber told the boys. But after that nobody mentioned the body on the rocks and Becky was able to forget all about it.

But later that night, she again had a strange dream.

She was riding a bike along a sandy road. Heavy drops of rain began to fall. Drip, drop, drip. They hit her in the face and ran down her arms. She looked down. The rain was blood. Blood dripped down her arms and legs. She was covered in blood. She threw down her bike and was standing at the top of a cliff. Down below her was the sea and the dead man on the rocks. Then the distance between them closed and his body rushed up towards her. His strangled neck was broken. She looked at his face. It was Richard.

CHAPTER SIX

West End again

Becky woke the next morning feeling tired and haunted by her dreams. She lay in bed and looked out at the water of the bay. This was supposed to be a free and easy island holiday with her friends. But how could it be? With a horror film playing in her, head every night? She realized the only way to stop feeling haunted was to stop pretending that she hadn't come face-to-face with a dead man. She dressed quickly and crept out of the cottage.

By the time she got back Natalie and Amber were awake and having breakfast on the front verandah.

'Hello. Where have you been?' asked Amber.

'I just went to buy a newspaper,' said Becky.

'A newspaper?' repeated Natalie. 'What about our holiday rule? No television, no mobiles, no newspapers. Remember?'

'I remember,' said Becky. 'But when we made that rule I didn't know we were going to find a dead man.' She sat down and opened the newspaper. 'I just wondered if there was anything in the paper about it, that's all.'

'I'd rather forget about it,' said Amber.

'Here it is,' said Becky. 'On page three. "Murder on Rottnest".'

She read a few lines to herself and then began to read aloud.

'The dead man was John Tavis Radcliff (51) of Balcatta. He had recently been released from prison.'

Becky looked up at the other two, then continued.

'Police are investigating Radcliff's prison connections to try to find a motive for the killing. Radcliff was strangled at West End on Rottnest Island on Saturday night. His body was discovered by three teenage girls the following morning.'

'That's us!' said Amber.

Becky continued reading.

'At present the police can see no connection between Radcliff and Rottnest Island. It is believed the killer followed him there and that there is no threat to any other persons on the island.'

Becky stopped reading and closed the paper. 'John Radcliff,' she said.

'Recently released from prison,' said Natalie.

'Yeah, he was probably some criminal who got exactly what he deserved,' said Amber.

'Probably,' said Natalie.

Amber stood up. 'Yuck! I don't want to think about it. Come on, let's go swimming.'

'Let's go over to Salmon Bay,' said Natalie. 'There'll be no one there and we didn't get a chance to see it the other day.'

'Okay,' said Amber. 'Bec?'

Becky had opened the newspaper again and wasn't listening.

'Becky?'

'Huh?'

'Shall we go for a swim at Salmon Bay?'

Becky looked up. 'Oh, yes. Yes, okay. If you want.'

But by the time they got to Salmon Bay, Becky had decided to leave the others there and continue riding to West End.

'Why?' asked Natalie.

'I never want to go there again,' added Amber.

Becky told them about her dreams.

'I feel a bit haunted, by him. Maybe if I go to West End again and he's not there I can release him, let him go, or he can let me go or something...'

'Do you want us to come with you?' asked Natalie.

'But -' began Amber.

Becky interrupted, smiling. 'It's okay. You two stay here. I'll be all right. I'll see you in about an hour.'

Some other riders passed by and Becky set off confidently behind them.

However, the other riders soon turned off onto a smaller road leading to another beach and Becky was on her own. She started to feel a bit frightened. Then she got angry. She had never felt frightened on Rottnest before, ever. It was always a safe place to be. A safe place to ride your bike or go to the shops by yourself when you were little; a safe place to walk to the beach alone or with your friends when you were a bit older. It made you feel strong and independent, not weak and frightened. Becky didn't like it. She rode on, determined to face the rocks alone.

Then as she came over the last hill and saw the end of the road, she burst out laughing. A bus was parked and there were about twenty people wandering around looking at the view. She could see the bright yellow shirt of the voluntary guide. It must be a tour.

She rode down the hill and jumped off her bike. She went to the edge. She could only see part of the rock shelf. She couldn't see the place where the man had lain.

'Okay, everyone,' said a voice suddenly behind her. It was the guide. 'It's time to get back on the bus. Next stop - the lighthouse.'

Two minutes later Becky was alone again. She decided to go a little way down so that she could see the rock shelf better. She wanted to imagine the dead man lying there and then throw the picture in her mind into the sea to wash it away, to get rid of it. Carefully she climbed down. When she could see the rock shelf properly, she stopped and sat down. It wasn't comfortable but she wouldn't be there for long.

She looked down. It wasn't hard to imagine the dead man. The picture was still fresh in her brain. She kept it there for a moment and then said aloud, 'Mr Radcliff, I'm sorry about the way that you died, but I want you out of my

dreams NOW,' and then she imagined throwing the picture into the sea below. In her mind, the water washed over it and it was gone. She stood up and turned to go.

She looked up. There was someone there. A man, she thought, in a red and white cap. She couldn't see his face properly - the sun was behind him. He seemed to be watching her. Becky tried to shake off the thought. Of course, he's watching me. He's wondering who the crazy person is down on the rocks and if I'm going to fall to my death. She looked up again. The man was very still. He watched her.

Becky began to feel really frightened. What could she do? She couldn't stay down on the rocks. She had to go back up to the top. Her mind worked fast as she began to climb. She looked for a path up the rocks that would take her away from the man. She glanced up. He was still there, watching. As soon as she reached the top, she would grab her bike and get away from there. Her heart beat fast in her chest. She was nearly there. She took two more steps on the rocks and then she was on the flat sandy ground at the top. She ran to her bike and grabbed it, then quickly looked behind her. Then she looked to the other side. She looked all around, her heart knocking in her chest. The man had gone.

Becky decided not to tell Natalie and Amber about the man in the cap. She didn't want to spoil their holiday and anyway, she told herself, she was probably just imagining things. The man was probably just an innocent visitor having a look at the view.

But when the girls were back at the settlement waiting in the line at the bakery to get some lunch, Becky looked out of the window and saw a bike leaning against a wall with a red and white cap hanging from it. Her heart beat fast again as she looked at the faces around her. There were about thirty people in the bakery and dozens more outside. The bike could belong to any one of them. She began to feel more haunted than ever.

'Hey, there are Richard and Dominic!' Amber called out suddenly.

The girls paid for their food.

'Come on!' Amber grabbed Natalie and Becky and dragged them out of the shop. 'Hurry up, or they'll be gone.'

And when Becky looked back, the bike with the red and white cap on it was no longer there.

The girls ate lunch with the boys at one of the wooden tables outside and then they all decided to ride over to The Basin for a swim.

'You're a bit quiet,' said Richard. He had followed Becky out of the water and sat down next to her on the sand. The others were still swimming.

'Oh, don't mind me,' said Becky. 'It's nothing.' She looked at him. 'It's just...'

'What?' asked Richard.

Becky looked down and laughed. 'No. You'll think I'm stupid.'

'No, I won't,' said Richard gently. 'What is it?'

And suddenly Becky found herself telling him all about her dreams and the man she thought had been watching her, at West End.

'I couldn't see his face. He had a cap on and the sun was behind him, but I'm sure he was watching me.' She looked at Richard. 'I told you it was crazy.'

He smiled at her. 'No, it's not.' He looked at the water. 'I've never seen a dead body.'

'No,' said Becky. 'I hadn't either until...'

'I think I'd dream about it too.' Richard paused. 'But try not to worry about the man you saw today. I think he was just a man, don't you? Nothing to do with it.' He looked at her. 'And if I'm in any more of your dreams, be sure to let me know.' Becky laughed.

And that night she slept as peacefully as a baby.

CHAPTER SEVEN

To the lighthouse

'Hey, Bec, have you still got that list of tours that the woman gave you on the ferry?' asked Natalie.

'I don't know,' answered Becky. 'It's probably still in the pocket of my skirt. Why do you want it?'

Natalie went inside to find Becky's skirt.

'Dominic said that you can go to the top of the lighthouse,' she called. 'I thought it might be fun.'

'The lighthouse near Pinky Beach?' asked Amber.

Natalie returned with the yellow pamphlet. 'No, the one in the middle of the island - on Wadjemup Hill.' She looked at the list. 'Yes, here it is,' she said, reading. 'It was opened for tours eighteen months ago - the first time in a hundred and nine years. They take you there on a bus. You can get tickets from the Tourist Information building.'

She looked at the others. They didn't look very excited,

'It would be a great view from the top,' she said. 'Come on.' Amber and Becky looked at each other.

'Okay,' they agreed.

It was a good view from the top of the lighthouse. You could see the whole island. And the tour turned out to be quite interesting.

The lighthouse they climbed was in fact a 'new' one, having been built in 1896. All that remained of the original one, built in 1849, was a small stone building next to the lighthouse. Inside this building there was information about the history of the lighthouse - the plans of the original tower, details about the height of the tower and the size and strength of the lamp and, over on one wall, photographs of some of the lighthouse keepers and underneath them a full list of all the lighthouse keepers, starting with the first in 1851 up until the last in 1990.

Becky glanced down the list. Suddenly one of the names jumped out at her - Leslie Tavis Newman. 'Tavis'. Wasn't that the middle name of the dead man? Becky tried to remember. Yes - John Tavis Radcliff. That was it!

Tavis. It was an unusual name. Most people's middle name was like their first - John, Peter, Andrew, Mary, Susan. Becky's own middle name was Jane. But Tavis was different. It sounded like a family name - a surname. Perhaps it was the surname of a woman who had married into the family and didn't want to lose her maiden name. Becky's aunt did that. When she married Becky's uncle, she took his surname, but when she had children, she gave them her maiden name as their middle name.

'Are you coming?' said the guide suddenly at her shoulder.

Becky jumped and turned. She hadn't realized the others had left the building. She turned back and pointed at the list on the wall.

'This lighthouse keeper, Leslie Tavis Newman. Do you know anything about him?'

The elderly guide looked surprised. 'Yes, I do,' he said. 'A bit of a sad story, that one.'

'Why?' asked Becky.

'Well...!' The guide paused. 'He was the keeper here during the early 1960s. But a sixteen-year-old girl was killed on the island and Newman was accused of her murder. A nasty business. There was no solid proof and it never went to court, but it was an enormous scandal. It was in the newspapers for weeks. And in 1962 - whether because he was guilty or because of the scandal, we'll never know - Newman committed suicide.'

'What? Here at the lighthouse?' said Becky.

'No,' said the guide, leading the way out of the building, 'not here.' Then he added, raising his voice so the others waiting outside could hear, 'Although there have been several deaths at the lighthouse.' He turned to speak to everyone. 'As some of you may know, from 1838 to 1931 Rottnest Island was used as an aboriginal prison. Aboriginal people who had committed crimes were sent here to be "civilized". In fact, the white settlers wanted to get them out of the way. It was hard to escape from an island. It is believed that during these years about three thousand seven hundred men and boys were kept here. The oldest buildings on the island, including the lighthouse, were built by aboriginal prisoners. Unfortunately, during the building of the lighthouse three prisoners died. Two fell from the tower itself and a third man was beaten to death by the white prison guards.'

Becky looked up at the beautiful white stone tower, its outline sharp against the bright blue of the sky.

'The word Wadjemup,' continued the guide, 'is the local aboriginal word for Rottnest. It simply means, "place across the water".'

Going back to the settlement in the bus, Becky looked out of the window. She had always thought of Rottnest as a sunny, happy place. She'd thought it had always been a holiday island. She'd never heard about its history before. This lovely, sunny holiday place had a dark past.

And that dark past reached forward to 1962 - to a dead girl and the lighthouse keeper's suicide. And suddenly the question became clear - the question that had been forming in her mind since the moment she saw the name Tavis on that list. Could the body on the rocks be connected to something that happened in 1962?

But surely, it was just a coincidence that both men had the same middle name. Perhaps, if she questioned people, she'd find dozens with the middle name Tavis. Yes, it must be a coincidence. And, anyway, even if the two men were from the same family or something, it didn't mean that Radcliff's death was connected to Newman's suicide.

But by the time, the bus arrived back at the settlement Becky knew that she had to find out more about Leslie Tavis Newman. But how?

She got out of the bus and stood with Natalie and Amber in the shade of a big fig tree.

'I told you it would be a good tour,' said Natalie.

'It was all right,' said Amber. 'It was good exercise walking up all those steps.'

'It was excellent!' said Becky, suddenly full of energy.

'It wasn't that good,' said Amber.

But Becky just smiled. She had suddenly remembered who might be able to tell her more about 1962.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1962

Becky opened the back gate of the cottage and looked out.

'Finally, they're home,' she said to herself.

She left the gate open and walked across the road. Three of the women from the cottage opposite sat on their verandah playing some kind of board game. As Becky got closer, she could see that it was Scrabble. 'Hello,' she called.

The women waved. 'Are you any good at Scrabble?' said one of them. 'I'm losing here.'

Becky laughed. 'Actually, do you mind if I come in? I wanted to ask you something.'

'Of course not, love,' replied the woman. 'Come in, come in. Grab a chair.'

Becky got a chair and brought it to the table.

'I'm Shirl,' said the woman, 'and this is Ruth, and Sally.'

The other women smiled at Becky. She sat down.

'I'm Becky,' she said. 'I'm sorry to interrupt your game but I wanted to know something and I thought you might be able to help.'

The women all looked at her and waited.

'Um...' Suddenly she didn't know where to start. 'Um... I went on a tour of Wadjemup lighthouse today and the guide told me a story about one of the lighthouse keepers, Leslie Newman. He was accused of killing a girl about forty-five years ago.' She turned to Shirl. 'And I remember you said the other day that you all used to come here when you were children. And I wondered, well, if you remember anything about it.'

Shirl sat back in her seat. 'Leslie Newman,' she breathed. 'It's a long time since I've heard that name.'

'So you do remember?' asked Becky.

'Oh, yes,' replied Shirl. 'You couldn't forget. It was in all the newspapers. Quite a scandal. I must have been about fourteen years old.'

'Yes, I was about ten, I think,' added Sally.

'I was seven,' said Ruth.

'My mother wouldn't let me go anywhere alone for weeks after that girl was killed,' said Shirl.

'What happened?' asked Becky.

'Oh, well, who knows?' said Shirl. 'The girl - ooh, what was her name? Bessie? Libby?'

'Lizzie,' said Sally.

'Lizzie Keegan,' added Ruth.

'Lizzie Keegan, that was it,' said Shirl. 'She was only sixteen. She was found strangled out at West End.'

'West End?' repeated Becky.

'Ooh, like that man the other day,' said Sally. 'Did you hear about that?'

Becky nodded.

'But Lizzie Keegan wasn't a criminal,' said Shirl.

'No,' said Ruth.

'Anyway,' continued Shirl, 'it was a big shock for everyone. Rottnest seems quiet and peaceful these days, so imagine what it was like in 1960.'

'1961,' said Ruth.

'Yes,' said Shirl. 'There were no settlements at Geordie and Longreach - no coffee shops, no regular bus service around the island. The bakery was just a small place - six people inside and it was full.'

'Only the original cottages built in the 1920s and 30s were here,' said Sally.

'And it wasn't difficult to rent a cottage any time you wanted to. The same families met on the island year after year for their holidays.'

'And some of the best families too,' added Shirl. 'The Parkers, the Scanlons, the Angwins, the Timperleys - remember?' she said to Ruth and Sally.

They nodded.

Then she said to Becky, 'Of course, they stayed on their boats.'

The name Timperley was familiar to Becky. There was a Timperley Park near her old school. And she thought the Timperleys owned a newspaper. But she hadn't heard of the other families.

'So, it was a big shock?' said Becky, trying to get the women back on the subject of Lizzie Keegan.

'Oh, yes,' said Shirl.

'And do you remember why Leslie Newman was suspected?'

'Oh, he was seen with the girl just before she died,' answered Sally.

'Where?' asked Becky.

'Oh, I can't remember, love.'

'I mean, did lots of people see him or -'

'One of the Scanlon boys, I think,' said Ruth slowly. 'Yes, one of the Scanlon boys said they saw Newman with Lizzie.'

'Of course, he said over and over again that he didn't do it,' said Shirl.

'Do you think he did?' asked Becky.

'I think he did,' said Ruth.

'I certainly thought so then,' said Shirl 'But then I was young. We all were. The papers certainly made him look guilty. Perhaps he was. Perhaps he wasn't.'

'I suppose a man living alone in a lighthouse is an obvious suspect,' said Becky.

Shirl looked down at the table. 'Oh, he wasn't alone, love. He had a wife and a young son. Heavens! What am I supposed to do with these?' She showed Becky her Scrabble letters. 'How can I make a word out of that?'

Becky read the letters - N, N, P, Y, X, J, H - and laughed. 'I don't think I can help you.' She pushed her chair back and stood up. 'Well, I'd better let you get back to your game. Thanks for talking to me.'

'Any time, love,' said Shirl 'Any time. We love a chat.'

That evening Dominic and Richard invited the girls to dinner.

'But we're not cooking,' said Dominic over the wall between their two cottages. 'We'll take you for a pizza.'

There was a pizza restaurant in the old hotel at the end of their row of cottages. It was bright and noisy and the pizza was good. They all ate too much.

'Oh, my stomach,' said Dominic, as they left the restaurant. 'I'm going to explode.'

'Not near me you're not,' said Amber, running ahead and laughing.

'Hey, let's go for a walk along the jetty,' said Natalie.

'Okay,' said Dominic and he and Natalie ran to catch up with Amber.

Richard and Becky walked slowly behind.

It was a still night. The moon shone on the dark water.

'Did you have any bad dreams last night?' asked Richard.

Becky shook her head and smiled. 'No.'

'But I did find out something strange today,' she added. 'We went for a tour of the lighthouse and on the wall was a list of names of the lighthouse keepers. And there was one from 1960 to 1962 called Leslie Tavis Newman.'

'1960?' said Richard. 'Did they still have lighthouse keepers then? Wasn't it run by a machine or something?'

'No,' said Becky. 'I read that there was a keeper there until 1990.'

'Oh.'

'Anyway, that's not the point,' continued Becky. 'The point is that Leslie Tavis Newman had the same middle name as the dead man we found, John Tavis Radcliff. Have you ever heard that name before - Tavis?'

'No,' said Richard. 'It's certainly unusual, but Becky interrupted. 'So I thought I'd find out more about him - Leslie Newman, I mean. And guess what?'

'What, Miss Detective?' asked Richard, smiling.

Becky told him all about Lizzie Keegan and Newman's suicide and the other things that the women had told her.

'I mean,' she finished, 'don't you think it's a strange coincidence that these men have the same middle name and that Radcliff was killed in the same place as the girl?'

'Well... maybe,' said Richard, 'but -'

Again, Becky cut him off. 'Look, suppose John Tavis Radcliff was the son of Leslie Tavis Newman. The women said Newman had a young son. The newspaper said Radcliff was fifty-one. That would make him quite young in 1962.'

'Yes,' said Richard. 'But they don't have the same surname.'

'I know, but perhaps Radcliff changed his surname.'

'Why?'

'I don't know. But suppose the lighthouse keeper, Newman, didn't kill the girl? And suppose that, somehow, Radcliff knew who did? The real killer could still be alive. He would be old now but...'

Richard stopped walking. 'So, you think the real killer followed Radcliff and killed him too?'

Becky turned and walked the few steps back to Richard. 'Or he got someone to do it for him.'

Richard laughed. 'That's a lot of supposing, Becky.'

'I know. But here's more. Suppose the killer is still on the island? Suppose it's the man with the cap, I saw at West End? And suppose he followed me there?'

'Becky! Richard!' called Natalie softly through the dark. 'Come quick!'

Dominic, Natalie and Amber were at the end of the jetty. Becky and Richard ran to join them.

'We think we saw a dugong or something,' said Amber.

'A dugong?' Becky looked over the edge into the water. 'Where?'

'Let's just wait and watch,' said Dominic.

They all stood there in the quiet night, watching the dark water. The sky was full of stars. The air was warm. The water moved in gentle waves around them.

'There!' said Richard softly. He moved close to Becky and pointed.

Something moved just below the surface of the water. Something big and dark. They only saw it for a moment but it looked ancient - like a creature from long ago. It was just a shape, a shadow, and then it was gone.

CHAPTER NINE

Buried treasure

A little later, returning to their cottages, the girls invited the boys in for a coffee. They pulled extra chairs outside and sat on the verandah.

'Do you really think it was a dugong?' Natalie asked Dominic. 'It could have just been a seal.'

'It was too big,' said Amber.

'I didn't think dugongs swam this far south,' said Natalie. 'Yeah, but I've never seen a seal around here either,' said Dominic. 'And it was big.'

'It was like something from another time,' said Becky. 'Anyway,' said Amber, looking from Richard to Becky and back again, 'what were you two talking about during your little walk together?'

'Nothing,' answered Becky. 'I was just... I was just telling him about our tour of the lighthouse.'

'Oh.' Amber looked disappointed.

'Actually, that's reminded me of something,' said Richard. He laughed. 'I haven't thought about it for years.'

'What?' asked Dominic.

'Well, when I was little I used to come to Rottnest a lot with my family. And my brother and I used to play up near the lighthouse. Not Wadjemup - the other one near Pinky Beach. We used to pretend to be pirates. We built ships in the sand hills and made a really bad pirate flag.'

The girls laughed.

'Did you bury some treasure?' asked Becky.

'Oh, yeah, lots,' grinned Richard. 'Mum gave us a biscuit tin. That was our treasure chest.' Richard sat forward, his elbows resting on his knees. 'In fact, it's probably still buried there.'

'Really?' said Amber.

'Well, I can't remember bringing it home. I can't remember what happened to it. You know what it's like when you're little. One minute the best game in the world is being a pirate and the next it's something else. As far as I know the tin's still buried up there near the lighthouse.'

'Yeah, but it wouldn't be, would it?' said Dominic. 'Someone would have found it by now.'

'Probably,' agreed Richard.

'Imagine that,' said Dominic. 'You're seven or eight years old and you're playing and digging a hole and suddenly you find a box full of treasure. You'd be so excited.'

'Yeah, it wouldn't still be there after all these years,' said Richard.

But as the boys left to go back to their own cottage, Richard pulled Becky aside and whispered, 'Listen, I know my old treasure chest is probably gone by now, but do you want to go to the lighthouse with me tomorrow and have a look?'

Becky nodded.

The next morning they set off on their bikes. It was only a short ride to the other end of Thomson Bay and then up the small hill where the lighthouse stood. Soon they were leaning their bikes against the white tower and looking at the sand hills and the sparkling sea beyond.

'Where do we start?' asked Becky. They were surrounded by sand. The treasure chest could be anywhere.

Richard grinned at her. 'Um...'

The whole idea was starting to look crazy.

'I'm sure we buried it over there somewhere.'

He walked a few steps away from Becky. 'There used to be a rock sticking out of the sand somewhere around here. We'd always bury it near that so we could find it again. I guess the sand has moved and covered the rock now.' He looked back at Becky.

She laughed, walked over to him and knelt on the sand. 'Well, come on. Let's have a look.'

They began to dig.

Twenty minutes later, they had found nothing. Becky sat back on the sand.

'I can't dig anymore,' she laughed. 'Even if it is here we'll never find it. It's hopeless.'

Richard sat down next to her. They looked out at the water.

Richard said, 'I've been thinking about all that stuff you told me last night.'

'So have I,' said Becky.

'I suppose Radcliff's death could be connected to this man Newman, but -'

'I know, I know,' said Becky. 'It's all coincidence and guessing. It's stupid. I'm just guessing.'

'It's not stupid,' said Richard gently. 'You sat with a dead man for half an hour. You just want to know why he died.' He paused. 'But maybe you should let the police deal with it, eh? It's only making you upset. You,' he looked at her, 'should be enjoying your holiday.'

'I know, I know.' Becky threw out her arms and lay back on the sand. 'Ow!' she said, pulling her left arm back towards her.

'What is it?' asked Richard.

'Something sharp,' said Becky. 'Under the sand.'

Richard jumped up to have a look.

'It's the rock!' he said.

They both began to dig again, pushing the loose dry sand to one side.

Suddenly Becky's fingers touched something hard. 'Here!' she said.

Richard swept the sand away with his hand and there it was - a rusty old biscuit tin.

'This is it!' he said.

'I can't believe it's still here,' breathed Becky.

Richard pulled the tin out. 'Come on,' he said. 'Let's have a look inside.'

They went to sit on the sand in the shade of the lighthouse. With a bit of effort Richard got the lid off.

'Oh, my old plane,' he said as soon as he saw the things inside. He took a little toy plane out of the tin. 'I used to love this.'

He put it down on the sand and ran his fingers through the other things in the tin.

'Not much of a treasure, is it?' he laughed.

There were broken gold and silver chains, brightly coloured glass 'jewels', lots of brown one - and two-cent coins and some paper money from a children's game.

'What's this?' asked Becky, taking out a silver medal.

'Oh, that's Pete's,' said Richard. 'My brother Peter's. He won it in a swimming race.' He took the medal from Becky. 'He was so proud when he won that. I'll give it to him.' He put the medal back in the tin.

'Oh,' he said, picking up a folded tissue. 'I'd forgotten about this. This was our best treasure. I found it. I was sure it was real gold.' He unfolded the tissue and showed Becky what was inside. 'Actually, it doesn't look too bad,' he said. 'I don't think it's expensive but it looks like it is real gold.'

'It's sweet,' said Becky, picking it up.

It was a thin gold chain necklace with a small gold heart hanging from it. The shape of a flower was cut into the top of one side of the heart and there was a very small green jewel at the flower's centre.

'Here,' said Richard. 'Try it on.'

He took the chain and fastened it around her neck. He turned her to face him.

'It looks good on you,' he said. 'Keep it.'

Becky looked down at the necklace and smiled.

Later that afternoon, as Becky was walking back from the shops, she saw Shirl sitting on the front wall of the opposite cottage, her towel over one shoulder.

'Hi,' said Becky.

'Hello, love,' said Shirl. 'I'm just waiting for Ruth. We're going for a quick swim at The Basin.'

Ruth appeared at the door. 'I'm coming. I'm coming,' she said smiling, as she ran down the path. Then, as she got closer to them, the smile suddenly dropped from her face. She stood still and stared at Becky.

'What do you think you're doing?' she demanded.

'Sorry?' said Becky.

'I said, what do you think you're doing? You come here asking questions and then... Where did you get that?'

'What?' asked Becky.

'That necklace.' Ruth was shouting now. 'Where did you get it?'

Becky looked at Shirl.

'Ruth?' said Shirl. 'What are you talking about?'

Ruth was pale and shaking.

'You don't know,' she said. 'You don't know.'

Shirl took Ruth's arm and guided her up the path. 'Come back and sit on the verandah,' she said.

Becky followed them.

Shirl sat Ruth down and went to get her a glass of water.

Ruth looked at Becky. She was calmer now.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'I'm sorry. I...'

Shirl returned with the water and gave it to Ruth.

'Now, what's all this about?' she asked, sitting down next to her.

'I'm sorry,' said Ruth again. 'It's silly. I...'

She took a drink of the water. She looked at the glass.

'There's something you don't know,' she said. 'I didn't see any reason to tell you before. It all happened such a long time ago.' She looked at Shirl. 'You only know me by my married name, but my maiden name was Ruth Keegan. I'm Lizzie Keegan's younger sister.'

CHAPTER TEN

A coincidence

'Oh my God.' Shirl slowly sat back in her chair. 'That poor girl was your sister?'

Ruth looked at Becky.

'That necklace,' she said, 'is just like one Lizzie had. I remember it because I was with her when she bought it.' She looked away. 'She loved it. She never took it off. But when they found her body, the necklace wasn't there. I remember my mother screaming about it. She went on and on. I remember thinking, It's just a necklace. What about Lizzie?'

'I didn't come back to Rottnest for a long time. I was frightened of remembering. But then I met all of you girls,' she looked at Shirl, 'and that made it a good place again. When I did think of Lizzie here, I felt close to her. All my last memories of her are here.' She turned to Becky. 'Then the other day you came asking questions, and now here you are wearing that necklace. I just got a fright, that's all. For a moment, I thought it was Lizzie's. It was silly. It's not an unusual necklace. There are probably thousands of them around. It was just seeing it again here, on Rottnest, after all these years.'

'Oh Ruth, I'm so sorry,' said Shirl, putting her hand on Ruth's arm.

Becky put her hand to her throat to cover the necklace.

'I had no idea,' she said. 'I didn't mean to upset you. I had no idea.'

'It's all right, dear. I know. It was all a long time ago.' Ruth stood up. 'Let's go for that swim now, Shirl. I think I need it.'

Becky followed the two women down to the gate and then watched as they walked arm in arm up the road. She put her hand again to the necklace at her throat. She couldn't believe this! She and her friends find a murdered man who has the same unusual middle name as a man who, in 1962, committed suicide because he was accused of killing a girl. And now she discovers she has been talking to the sister of that girl? And wearing a necklace exactly like the dead girl wore? Was this just another coincidence? If so, it was one coincidence too many.

She started to cross the road then stopped, frozen. A new thought had crept in. Was the necklace like the one Lizzie Keegan wore, or could it actually be hers? Becky shook her head. Richard must have put the necklace in his 'treasure chest' more than thirty years after the girl died. It couldn't be the same one. Could it? But where did it come from?

That night, after dinner, Becky went to sit on the little wall at the front of the cottage hoping Richard would see her and join her. She didn't have to wait long. She heard the front door of the cottage next door open and then Richard came out of their gate and walked over to her.

'Is this seat taken?' he asked very formally, pointing at the empty space on the wall next to Becky.

She smiled and shook her head.

'May I?' he asked politely.

Becky laughed and rolled her eyes. 'Just sit down,' she said.

Richard sat beside her and they looked through the tea trees at the fading light on the water.

'I love it here,' said Becky.

Richard looked at her.

'Nice necklace you're wearing,' he said.

Becky smiled. She was hoping he might mention it, that he would introduce it into the conversation.

'Oh, yes,' she said. 'A rather nice young man gave it to me.'

'Ah, rather nice, is he?'

'Yes.' Becky laughed and put her hand up to the necklace. 'By the way, where did you get it? I mean, can you remember where you found it?'

'Yeah,' said Richard, thinking. 'Yeah, it was at home. It must have been the day before we were coming to Rottnest and Mum had given us the biscuit tin. Pete and I were looking for things to fill it.'

'Oh, so you found it at home,' said Becky lightly.

'Yeah,' said Richard. 'I remember it was in the back of the old wardrobe in the spare room.' He laughed. 'Pete and I used to love that big old wardrobe. It was ancient. It belonged to my grandfather when he was young. We used to climb inside it and shut the doors and frighten ourselves silly in the dark. Anyway, Pete was swinging from the rail that you hang your clothes on and it suddenly broke. He crashed his head on the side of the wardrobe and went off crying to Mum. And I looked down and there was the necklace. I don't know where it came from. Maybe it was stuck in the hole where the rail joined the wall.' He looked at Becky. 'I never knew it would end up on such a pretty neck, though.'

Becky looked straight ahead at the sea.

'Your grandfather's old wardrobe.' She laughed lightly. 'You know, I've just realized I don't know your surname.'

'It's Scanlon,' said the boy beside her. 'Richard Scanlon.'

Becky sat very still but her mind was racing. What was it Ruth had said? One of the Scanlon boys said they saw Newman with Lizzie. Scanlon! Becky's head was ringing with the sound of Ruth's voice. Scanlon was the name of the boy who had accused the lighthouse keeper!

Slowly, Becky stood up.

'I'm a bit cold,' she said, 'I think I'll go inside.'

'Oh,' said Richard, surprised.

Carefully, Becky smiled at him.

'Goodnight,' she said.

'Goodnight.'

Becky went inside, her mind still racing. She put on her pyjamas and lay on her bed looking up at the ceiling. Her thoughts twisted, one around the other.

Was Richard's grandfather the witness who said he saw Newman with Lizzie? If so, had he been lying? And if he had, been lying, why? Because he was the real murderer? How old would he have been in 1961? He must be about seventy now, so he would have been in his early twenties back then. A strong, young man. Did he kill Lizzie Keegan? And point the blame somewhere else? Did Radcliff find this out, tell Scanlon and threaten to go to the police or the newspapers or something? But then, why didn't he go to the police? Perhaps he only suspected Scanlon. Maybe he didn't have the proof. But now the old man knew Radcliff might ruin him. Suddenly Becky thought of Richard and a sick feeling rose in her stomach. Scanlon knew. Did anyone else know? Did Richard know?

Becky turned onto her side, her hand to her mouth. A terrible thought came to her. Did Richard kill Radcliff to protect his grandfather? Becky thought about the last few days. Amber and Natalie and Dominic didn't want to talk about the body on the rocks. It was only Richard. Richard had taken a special interest. Was he really interested in helping Becky or did he only want to find out how much she knew?

She reached up and felt the necklace. She quickly sat up, took it off and threw it on the bed. She stared at it for a moment, her thoughts slowing. This was crazy. If Richard was trying to protect his grandfather or was guilty of anything himself, why would he give her the necklace? And, Becky suddenly

remembered with relief, Dominic and Richard didn't arrive on the island until the morning the girls found the body. Radcliff had been killed the night before. It couldn't have been Richard. Richard didn't do it.

Becky lay down again and before long, she was asleep. That night she dreamed she was Lizzie Keegan.

Lizzie! Lizzie! Someone was calling her name. It was dark. Where was she? She was running, trying to get away. Come on, Lizzie! The voice was getting closer. Let's have some fun! She was on the sand, digging. If she could just dig a big hole, she could get away. But the sand kept sliding back into the hole. The faster she dug, the faster it fell back in. Lizzie! Lizzie! She was crying now, crying and digging. She felt hands around her neck. She felt them tighten. Shh, Lizzie. Come on, shh!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The tunnel

'Becky, wake up.'

Becky rolled over and looked towards the door. It was Natalie.

'You slept in. It's nearly ten o'clock.' Natalie picked up some clothes from a chair in the corner and threw them onto the bed.

Becky rubbed her eyes.

'You have to get dressed,' said Natalie. 'We've arranged with Richard and Dominic to ride to Oliver Hill.'

'Oliver Hill?' asked Becky. She was still lying down and her eyes were closed.

'Yeah,' said Natalie. 'You know, there's a big gun on the hill from World War Two.'

Becky opened one eye. 'We're going to see the gun?'

Natalie laughed, grabbed Becky's arm and dragged her up.

'Come on,' she said. 'It's not just the gun. There are secret tunnels underneath it. If we get there by eleven, we can go on a tour of the tunnels.'

Becky sat on the edge of the bed.

'It's all arranged,' said Natalie.

'Hey, Nat!' called Amber from the verandah.

'Yeah?' Natalie walked to the door. She turned back to Becky. 'We need to leave in fifteen minutes, okay?' she said and then walked out of the room.

Wide awake now, Becky slowly dressed. She looked at the necklace lying on the sheets. She tried to stay calm. She needed to go to the police to tell them about Richard's grandfather but first she wanted to be absolutely sure that she was right. She picked up the necklace and put it on.

Riding to Oliver Hill, Richard stayed close to Becky. They would all race down a hill or sometimes stop to look at something, but he would always find his way back to her side. His smile seemed secret and special, just for her.

As they joined the tour group to look at the gun and the, underground tunnels beneath it, Becky watched Richard. He said something funny to make the crowd laugh. He was so good-looking, so charming. He caught her looking at him, and smiled.

Their guide, an elderly man called Keith, led them around the large base of the nine-inch gun and then up to the gun itself, explaining how it worked and giving the history of the army on the island.

Then they started down a long set of shallow steps which led to the entrance to the underground tunnels. Becky was walking behind Amber and Dominic and Richard and Natalie were behind her.

'Now,' said Keith, 'the tunnels are quite narrow and dark in places so I hope no one's claustrophobic.'

'I don't like small spaces. I might be a bit claustrophobic,' said Amber quietly.

'Don't worry. I'll look after you,' said Dominic.

'You get seasick and you're claustrophobic?' asked Natalie.

'I got seasick coming over on the ferry,' Amber explained to Dominic.

'Yeah, it can get a bit rough,' he replied. 'I'm not a good sailor, either. Not like him.' He pointed back at Richard. 'He sails across here all the time on his grandfather's yacht.'

Becky glanced quickly back at Richard.

'Your grandfather has a yacht?' she asked lightly.

'Yeah,' he answered.

'It's a beauty,' said Dominic.

They had reached the bottom of the steps. Keith began talking again.

'But you both came on the ferry the other day, didn't you?' whispered Becky.

'No,' said Dominic, trying to listen to the guide. 'Rich sailed over with his grandfather a few days before I arrived.'

The group moved forward and entered the first tunnel.

Becky's mind was racing again. The guide's voice seemed a long way away. 'If any of the soldiers working the gun were hurt, this is the place...' Becky stopped listening altogether.

So Richard and his grandfather were both on the island when the murder was committed. Either one of them could have killed Radcliff. Or both. Becky had never felt claustrophobic before, but now the tunnel walls seemed too close and she couldn't get enough air.

The first tunnel ended and the group could go either right or left. Keith led them down the tunnel to the right. It turned a corner and led into a large room. There was a glass case showing some things used during the war. Becky found herself face-to-face with a gas mask - its hollow eyes staring at her, its strange round mouth crying out.

Richard was beside her. 'Imagine wearing that,' he said.

Becky didn't take her eyes off the gas mask. She needed to go to the police now. She needed to go back.

'Now,' said Keith, 'if you'll follow me out into the next tunnel, you'll see a uniform hanging on the wall.'

The group started moving. Becky stayed where she was.

'The men couldn't wear their uniforms into the next room we're going to look at,' continued Keith. 'They had to change into other clothes here - clothes without buttons or metal of any kind. The smallest spark from the metal could cause an explosion...'

His voice faded into the distance. Becky was alone. She waited a moment and then walked towards the door.

Suddenly Richard appeared. 'What are you doing?' he said.

'Nothing,' she answered.

He smiled, grabbed her hand and dragged her to the other side of the room. He spun her around so that her back was against the wall. He touched her face and moved closer. He smiled. His hand moved down to her neck.

Becky wanted to cry out but she couldn't. She was frozen with fear. He was going to kill her.

Suddenly she pushed his hand down and tried to get away. He grabbed her around the waist and held her. 'Come on, Becky. Don't go.'

She broke away and ran out of the room. Is this what happened to Lizzie Keegan all those years ago?

Richard called after her.

She ran down the tunnel, hoping to find her way back to the entrance. She heard footsteps behind her. She kept running. Then the tunnel started going steeply downhill. This was wrong - this wasn't the way to the entrance!

Richard's voice was calling in a sharp whisper somewhere behind her. 'Becky! Becky!'

She couldn't turn back. She kept going down the tunnel, deeper and deeper into the earth. There were a few lights on the low ceiling but they weren't bright. She was always running into darkness. The tunnel seemed to go on and on.

Then suddenly she came to a room full of machines. She stopped and looked around but the only escape was the continuing tunnel on the other side.

Richard's footsteps were getting closer and louder. Becky ran.

The tunnel went downwards again and then became level. And suddenly Becky could see a door. Did it lead outside? Please don't be locked, she prayed.

Please let me out!

She threw herself at the door, turned the handle and burst out into the midday sun. For a moment, she was blinded by the light. Her foot struck something metal and she fell forward onto the sand.

'Are you all right?' asked a man's voice. 'Let me help you.'

Strong arms helped her to her feet. She looked up into the man's face. He was wearing a red and white cap.

Richard burst out of the tunnel. 'Granddad!' he said.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Ho escape?

'Richard?' said his grandfather, smiling. 'You're not chasing this poor girl, are you?' He still held Becky's arms. He may have been old but he was obviously still strong and fit. His skin was brown from the sun.

Richard stood bent over with his hands on his knees, trying to get his breath.

'Why did you run like that, Becky?' he gasped. 'I thought you liked me. I didn't mean to...'

But Becky wasn't listening. She was looking at the old man. His smile had dropped away and he was staring at her in horror - not at her face, but at her neck and the little gold heart on the chain. Instantly she knew that she was right - that it was he who had killed Lizzie Keegan.

'It was you,' she breathed.

His fingers tightened around her arms but he smiled broadly.

'You'd better introduce us,' he said to Richard, not taking his eyes off Becky.

'Oh, yeah. Sorry,' replied Richard. 'This is Becky. Becky, this is my grandfather, Charles Scanlon.'

But the words were hardly out of his mouth before Becky started shouting.

'It was you!' she said to the old man. 'You did it! All alone the first time. And then what? You got him to help you the second time?' She turned her head to look at Richard. 'Is that what happened? The second murder to cover up the first?'

Richard stared at her. 'Becky? What are you talking about?'

Scanlon kept smiling. 'Well, you've found yourself an interesting one here, Richard,' he said. 'Although she doesn't seem to be talking a lot of sense.' His fingers dug into her flesh 'In fact, she seems a little mad.'

'You're hurting me,' cried Becky. She looked around her. They were standing on an old railway track surrounded by sand and a group of dead trees - their bare black branches like something out of a bad dream. Where were they? The tunnel had seemed to go deep underground, so where had they come out? Were they at the bottom of Oliver Hill? Was anybody near? Would they hear her if she screamed?

Richard moved forward. 'Granddad? You're hurting her arms.'

Scanlon released her.

'Becky, calm down,' said Richard. 'Why are you shouting?'

'Don't pretend you don't know,' Becky cried. 'Don't pretend you don't know your grandfather killed Lizzie Keegan!'

'What!' said Richard. 'My grandfather?' He started to laugh. 'What are you talking about?'

Becky grabbed the necklace and pulled it from her neck. She held it up in front of his face. 'This is hers. It belonged to her.' She searched his face for any sign of understanding. There was none.

'Becky, what are you talking about?' he said. 'This is crazy.' Then she knew.

'No, I was wrong, Richard,' she said. 'It wasn't you.' She turned and pointed at Scanlon. 'It was only him. He did it all.'

'She is crazy,' said Scanlon. 'Come on, Richard. Let's get out of here.'

'Richard, it was him!' Becky cried. 'Do you remember the other night when I told you what those women told me about Lizzie Keegan's death?' She didn't wait for an answer. 'Well, I didn't say who the chief witness was - who it was who pointed the finger at Newman. One of the women, Ruth, remembered quite clearly. It was one of the Scanlon boys, she said.' She spun around to look at the old man. 'How old were you, Mr Scanlon? How old were you in 1961?' Again, she didn't wait for an answer. She swung back to Richard. 'And do you know why Ruth remembered it so well? Lizzie Keegan was her sister!'

'This is ridiculous!' exploded Scanlon. 'I don't know who this friend of yours is, Richard, but I'm not going to stand here and listen to this rubbish any longer.'

'He's the man in the cap, Richard,' Becky cried. 'The man who was following me.'

'Following you?' said Scanlon scornfully. 'Don't be ridiculous, girl. Why would I be following you?'

'So, why are you here?' Becky shouted. 'Why were you waiting outside the door to the tunnel?'

'Oh dear, oh dear,' said Scanlon. He spoke slowly, as if he was talking to an unreasonable child. 'I was waiting for my old friend, Keith, who is a tour guide here. We'd arranged to meet to catch up with each other between tours.'

For a moment, Becky hesitated. Then she recovered. 'Maybe that's true,' she said. 'But it doesn't change anything.'

'I've had enough of this,' Scanlon said. 'Come on, Richard,' he ordered.

But before Richard could move, they all heard voices in the tunnel. The tour was coming to an end.

'Aren't you going to wait for your friend Keith?' said Becky. 'I'm sure he'd like to hear all about Lizzie Keegan and John Radcliff.'

'Becky, stop this!' said Richard.

'For God's sake, girl,' said Scanlon.

Richard looked at him. There was a look in his grandfather's eyes he had never seen before - a look of fear.

Becky didn't stop. Her voice got louder and louder as the tour group, one by one, came slowly out of the tunnel.

'John Radcliff was Leslie Newman's son, wasn't he?' she shouted. 'Did he always know that you killed her? Or did he only find out recently? Did he threaten to tell everyone that you murdered Lizzie Keegan? Is that why you killed him?'

'Charles?' It was Keith.

Everyone was out of the tunnel now, standing in little groups. Amber, Natalie and Dominic stared at Becky.

'Charles, what's going on here?'

Scanlon threw his arms up in the air and smiled broadly at Keith. 'I have no idea. It's ridiculous! I was just standing here, waiting for you, when this girl came running out of the tunnel shouting and screaming. She seems to think I'm someone else. He tapped his head. 'She's a bit mixed-up.'

'I'm not mixed-up,' cried Becky. 'I know exactly what I'm saying. You have to believe me.' She went over to Keith. 'Listen,' she said. 'Did you use to come to Rottnest when you were young? Did you ever hear about a girl called. Lizzie Keegan? In 1961.'

'The girl who was murdered?' asked Keith slowly.

'Yes. Yes. Do you remember who told the police he saw the lighthouse keeper with Lizzie?'

'Well,' said Keith, 'actually, it was Charles. But -'

Becky didn't let him finish. She held the necklace up for all to see. 'The girl was wearing a necklace when she died, but it wasn't there when they found her body. The necklace looked like this.' Then she turned and walked towards Richard. 'Except it didn't just look like this necklace. It was this necklace.' She stopped shouting. 'This necklace was buried in a tin for more than ten years, and before that it was found in the back of a wardrobe!' She pointed at Scanlon. 'A wardrobe belonging to him!'

'Don't be ridiculous,' said Richard. 'It can't be the same necklace.'

'Ruth Keegan recognised it as soon as she saw it,' said Becky. 'You'd never seen it in the wardrobe before, had you? It was hidden there!'

Richard looked at Becky, then at his grandfather.

Scanlon tried to laugh. 'I don't believe this. You're not going to listen to this crazy girl, are you? Sorry about this, Keith. I don't know who she is or what she's talking about, but I think it might be best if you take your tour group back up to the top of the tunnels. Richard and I can deal with this.'

But nobody moved.

Except Richard. Very slowly, he took the necklace from Becky and walked towards his grandfather.

'It's not true, is it?' he asked quietly.

'For God's sake, boy,' said Scanlon. 'I'm your grandfather. She's crazy. She's all mixed-up.'

'But I did find the necklace in your old wardrobe. Where did it come from?'

Scanlon threw up his hands. 'How should I know?'

'And where were you on Saturday night?' Richard continued softly. 'You said you were going for a drink at the hotel and later I thought I'd join you. But when I got there, I looked everywhere and couldn't find you. Where did you go?'

Every pair of eyes in the gathering was on Scanlon.

'For a walk,' he said shortly.

There was a pause.

'For a walk to kill Radcliff?' asked Richard.

His grandfather's eyes narrowed. His voice dropped low. 'Be careful, boy. Remember your name is Scanlon too. Do you want it dragged through the mud?' He grabbed the necklace. 'I've had enough of this!' he said and turned to go.

Richard stared at him for a moment and then suddenly ran after him. He grabbed his grandfather's arm and tried to get the necklace. The old man struggled with him. He didn't want to let it go. He was strong, but his grandson was stronger. Richard forced his hand open and took the necklace away from him. He held it up to his grandfather's face.

'Tell me this isn't Lizzie Keegan's!' he shouted. 'Tell me you didn't do it! Tell me! Tell me!' With the hand that held the necklace, Richard punched at his grandfather's chest. 'Tell me! Tell me!'

'It was a mistake!' cried the old man, putting his hands up to try to protect himself. 'My life was just getting started. I didn't mean to hurt her! It was all a mistake!'

Richard's hand froze in mid-air and his grandfather looked at the ground. The two men stood defeated, the necklace hanging between them.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Wealth and influence

Three days later Becky and Amber sat on the verandah of the cottage eating a late breakfast.

'I still can't believe you stood up to Scanlon like that,' said Amber. And that you thought Richard was trying to kill you. You must have been so frightened.'

'It all happened so fast,' said Becky. She stood up and walked a few steps down the yard to look at the empty cottage next door.

They heard Natalie returning.

'I've got it,' she called. She came outside holding the morning newspaper. 'It's on the front page again,' she said, dropping into a chair. 'And page four and page five. Scanlon's confessed everything. They searched his boat and found Leslie Tavis Newman's diary from the time the girl was killed. Apparently Scanlon took it from Radcliff before he killed him. Listen to this.'

Becky moved to sit down as Natalie read from the newspaper.

"It is clear from the diary that Leslie Newman knew the Keegan family," said Detective Troy Jameson late yesterday afternoon. "However, Newman denies having killed the girl."

In the diary, Newman also describes his feelings of hopelessness after being accused and says that he feels unable to stand up to a family of wealth and influence like the Scanlon's. He is deeply upset by the effect of the scandal on his family. He writes that at the time Charles Scanlon said he had seen him with Lizzie Keegan, Newman had, in fact, been playing on the beach with his son. He remembers seeing a Keegan girl in the distance but it wasn't Lizzie. It was her younger sister, Ruth Keegan.'

Natalie put the paper down.

'He saw Ruth?' said Becky, puzzled.

'Did she mention that she saw him?' asked Natalie.

'No,' said Becky. She looked at the newspaper. 'I'd better go and see her. She'll be upset if she's seen this.'

Becky read a bit more of the newspaper story and then went over the road to see Ruth. She was down on the beach, Shirl told her, not far from the cottages. Becky went to find her.

'The police wanted to see me yesterday,' said Ruth as Becky sat down next to her on the sand. 'Have you read the newspaper?'

'Yes,' said Becky.

'Radcliff was his mother's maiden name,' said Ruth, looking out at the sea.

Becky nodded.

'I suppose she changed her name because of the scandal. And the horror of it all.'

Becky looked at her. 'Are you all right, Ruth?'

Ruth didn't answer the question. 'She never really recovered,' she said, 'and she never told John Radcliff about his father's diary. He only found it about a month ago, when his mother died. Apparently, before that he didn't know it existed. The police got the story from a neighbour.' Ruth let out a long breath. 'After Radcliff read the diary he couldn't stop talking about what he thought he'd discovered. He told anyone who'd listen that he was going to talk to Scanlon and find out the truth. Apparently, no one really believed him. They thought he was just an ex-criminal talking big.'

A man and a boy ran into the water in front of them.

'But he did go to see Scanlon,' said Becky. 'At his house.'

'Yes,' replied Ruth. They watched the man and the boy playing.'

'The police think John Radcliff came to Rottnest to find me,' she said quietly.

'Because, in his diary, Newman said he saw you that day? And thought you could clear his name?'

'Yes. The police said Radcliff told his neighbour that all he needed was to "find this woman, Ruth Keegan. She must remember seeing my father that day".'

'And he told Scanlon,' said Becky, nodding. 'And Scanlon got scared and followed Radcliff to Rottnest.'

The man and the boy sat down at the water's edge.

'Scanlon probably couldn't believe his luck when Radcliff rode out to West End,' said Ruth. 'It was the perfect opportunity to get rid of him.'

Becky looked at her. 'I wonder why he did ride all the way out there to West End. Radcliff, I mean.'

Ruth spoke slowly. 'I guess we'll never know. Maybe he wanted to see the place where Lizzie died. That was the start of everything that changed his life so completely - Lizzie's death and then his father's.' She looked at Becky. 'But he shouldn't have come to find me.' She looked away again. And Scanlon didn't need to worry. Newman told the police he had seen me on the beach that day. I remember they asked me again and again about it. But I was only seven years old. I was building a wonderful sandcastle. I didn't see anyone.'

Becky left Ruth and walked along the beach back to the cottage. Natalie and Amber were still sitting on the verandah. Becky walked through the gate and stood in the yard.

'Did you speak to Ruth?' asked Natalie.

'Yes,' said Becky.

'Is she okay?'

'I don't know.'

Natalie and Amber came to join her. Natalie put her arm around Becky's waist.

'Are you okay?' she asked.

'I think so,' said Becky.

'Well, it's over now,' said Natalie. 'And we've still got a few days before we have to go home. So I say, let's forget about Scanlon and Richard and Lizzie Keegan and anybody who's got Tavis in their name,' she smiled, 'and really enjoy the last few days of our holiday. Just the three of us.'

'Yes,' said Amber, putting her arm around Becky's shoulder. 'And we won't talk to any boys.'

Becky and Natalie looked at each other and laughed.

'Come on, let's go for a swim,' said Natalie.

And they jumped on their bikes and rode through the middle of the island - between the shallow salt lakes and the tea trees, past the barrel of the old gun

and the lighthouse on the hill - until they reached Salmon Bay. And they spread their towels on the white sand and ran into the cool, clear green water.

- THE END -