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This is an account of the last murder mystery the Detective Society will ever solve together.

My name is Hazel Wong, and I am heartbroken. I used to think that nothing could ever change, not really, not with my best friend Daisy and me. The rest of the world could spin out of true and smash like a Christmas bauble on the floor, but still nothing would be able to touch us. We were Wells and Wong, after all. We were the Detective Society, and we always came out on top.

But I see now that I got caught in the trick of thinking like Daisy. Her voice in my head and my own have become so mixed up by now that I hardly know which is which unless I pause to think about it, and I never wanted to pause, not about this. And, besides, Daisy promised me – she promised—

I ought to be grown-up enough now to know that promises can be broken, that no one is safe, and that the myth of Daisy Wells, the girl who can walk through mortal danger without even a scratch on her cheek, is only that. A myth.

I am beginning this account on the day before Christmas Eve, at Daisy's home, Fallingford. The last time I was here for Christmas, there were enormous fires in every hearth, a gorgeously lit tree that stretched all the way up beside the great central staircase, and plates and plates of mince pies, carried spiced and steaming from the kitchen by the Wellses' maid, Hetty. But this Christmas is quite different. The house is cold, and somehow still dark, no matter how many lamps and candles Chapman and Hetty light. Mrs Doherty, the cook, has burned the mince pies, and even the dogs look miserable. My littlest sister, May, tries to feed them biscuits, but they ignore her, so she shouts at them.

'I think I hate English Christmas,' says my other sister, Rose, and I agree with her.

But it isn't England I want to write about now, it's Egypt: the wide light of it, the sparks of sun off the Nile, the hum and churn of our cruise ship moving under my feet – and Daisy. From the moment we stepped into the cabin and saw the blood, I thought that this was just another exciting adventure, another

puzzle to solve, but I see now how wrong I was. I have held off writing up this case, but now, finally, I want to go back over those last days – our last murder mystery – to be with her again.

Perhaps that way I can bring Daisy back to life.