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DOMINOES

Mystery in Muscat



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DOMINOES

Series Editors: Bill Bowler and Sue Parminter

Mystery in Muscat

Julie Till

Illustrated by Sebastian Camagajevac

Julie Till was born and grew up in Liverpool in the north of England. She has lived and worked in the Middle East for over twenty years as a journalist, a teacher, an author, and a teacher-trainer. She has run workshops for teachers in many countries, including Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Morocco. Her husband is Lebanese and they have one son. She now lives in Dubai, but often travels for work. She enjoys speaking Arabic as she travels around the countries of the Middle East. In her free time she likes to read. She has also written *The Drive to Dubai* for Dominoes.

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ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

- 1 The people in this story live in Oman, but come from different countries. Match each photo with two phrases.



1 London, England



2 Beirut, Lebanon



3 Sydney, Australia



4 Muscat, Oman

- | | |
|---|---|
| a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It's next to the Arabian Sea. | e <input type="checkbox"/> It's next to the Mediterranean Sea. |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> It's not very hot in summer. | f <input type="checkbox"/> It's on the River Thames. |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> It's near the Tasman Sea. | g <input type="checkbox"/> Many people there speak Arabic, English, and French. |
| d <input type="checkbox"/> It's very hot from June to October. | h <input type="checkbox"/> It's hot from November to February. |

- 2 What mysteries do you read about in this story? Tick three boxes.

mystery /'mɪstri/ noun (pl. -ies)

Something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain.

- | | |
|---|---|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> Why do two men want to kill an English woman on holiday in Muscat? | d <input type="checkbox"/> Why do some thieves put a painting in a house in the mountains? |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> Why do the airport security guards want to find a woman in red? | e <input type="checkbox"/> Why does a black car drive after an English family in the mountains? |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> Why do two boys go to a party in a big hotel to talk to an English minister? | f <input type="checkbox"/> Where do some thieves put the Sultan's expensive silver dagger? |

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Chapter 1 A new country

I didn't want to come to Oman. I was happy back home in England with my friends. I didn't have any friends in Oman. My mum didn't listen. 'It's going to be **boring** in Oman,' I said. 'No friends, and nothing to do.' My sister Sarah was angry, too. She didn't want to leave *her* friends. But it was no good. My dad had work in Muscat, the **capital** of Oman. So we went.

We arrived in Muscat at ten o'clock at night – and it was hot. Most men wore white: a long, white dress – it was called a 'thobe', my mum said – and a little white hat. Everything was very different from England.

A man helped us with our bags. A car was there for us with a driver. We got in, and he drove off.

boring not interesting

capital the most important city in a country



1

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It was dark, and I was tired. I closed my eyes. I didn't want to see Oman. I wasn't interested. After about thirty or forty minutes, the car stopped suddenly. We were at our new house. It was big and white, with a garden at the front and back. We carried our bags into the house. My dad brought two cold drinks for Sarah and me. Mum went

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upstairs to make our beds ready. When I went upstairs, the **air conditioning** was on in my room. It was wonderful to feel cold again! I changed my **clothes**, got into bed, and soon slept.

I opened my eyes early the next morning. Why was everything white? Where was I? Why was there nothing in my room? Then I remembered. I closed my eyes, but I couldn't sleep again. I got up. When I went downstairs, I saw my mum and sister at the breakfast table.

I ate my breakfast with them. The bread was different here. 'Everything's different,' I thought.

'I have lots of things to do today,' said my mum. 'You can help me or you can go to the **swimming pool** across the road. But it's best to go now before it's very hot.'

Sarah and I ran upstairs and found our things. We didn't want to stay in our new house! Five minutes later, Mum, Sarah, and I went across the road. There were about forty buildings there – **flats**, not houses. They were white and not very tall. There was one flat on the **ground floor** and a second flat on the **first floor** in every building. And every building had a little garden in front and a bigger garden at the back, too.

'You can come here often,' said Mum. 'This swimming pool is for the people in these flats and our house, too. The sea's over there, but it's better to come here when it's hot.'

There were some more children at the swimming pool. First I saw a boy and a girl. The two of them were about twelve or thirteen. They had dark hair and dark eyes. Then I saw a girl with them. She was a year or two younger than them. She had red hair, and a **pink** face.

My mum looked at the children, and then looked at us.

air conditioning
this makes your house cold when it's hot

clothes people wear these

swimming pool
this has lots of water in it

flat a number of rooms in a house where people live

ground floor
where you walk when you first go into a building

first floor
upstairs in a building, over the ground floor

pink a colour between red and white

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‘You see, Jamie, you can make new friends here in Muscat,’ she said noisily. ‘They’re nice children. You can go and play with them.’

I looked down at my feet. My face was very pink. The children in the swimming pool looked at us. The older girl smiled. Perhaps she felt sorry for us. My mum gave Sarah and me two bottles of cold water and left. It was only ten o’clock, but it was very hot.

We quickly went into the swimming pool. The water was wonderfully cold. I **swam** up and down. I wanted to make

swim (*past swam*) to go through the water moving your arms and legs

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new friends, but it wasn't easy. I don't like talking to people for the first time. But then the girl with the pink face swam over to Sarah and me.

'Hi, I'm Ruth. I'm from Australia. I moved here six months ago. My mum and dad work at one of the big hotels here. Those two are my friends. They're from Lebanon. He's called Taymour and she's called Nadine. We come to the swimming pool every day in the summer. They arrived here about two years ago. They speak Arabic, English, and French. I'm learning Arabic, but I can't say a lot. That's good for my Arabic teacher, my mum says. Usually I talk a lot! What are your names?' she asked, and then she stopped speaking. So we told her.

Taymour and Nadine swam nearer. They were **twins**, and they were thirteen.

'Do you like it here in Oman?' I asked.

'Yes, it's nice. I like the winter. It's very hot now, but in the winter it's good. Sometimes we stay all weekend by the sea. There's a lot to do in the winter,' said Taymour.

'You can see **turtles** and swim with **dolphins**,' said Ruth.

'The weather is better here in a month or two. It's colder then,' said Taymour.

'What do you do now, in the summer?' I asked.

'There isn't much to do. We come to the swimming pool every day. A lot of people leave Oman in the summer because it's very hot here. We were in Lebanon earlier this month and we came back only last week. It's very quiet here in the summer. Nothing much happens when it's very hot,' said Taymour.

But he was wrong. Very wrong!

twins brothers or sisters who were born on one day

turtle an animal with four legs that lives in the sea

dolphin a clever animal that lives in the sea and comes up for air

YOU HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE SAMPLE.

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