

A beautiful place to stay

‘Hey, Dan, watch out! Alex has got her camera out again!’ laughed Matt.

‘Alex, how many photos of us do you need?’ said Dan.

‘My phone can take photos too, you know,’ said Matt. He held up his phone and took a photo of Alex.

‘Ha! A camera takes much better photos than a phone,’ said Alex. ‘One day my photographs will be famous.’

‘Let her take some photos. It makes her happy,’ said Hannah. ‘How long is this coach ride anyway?’

‘Not much longer,’ said Alex. ‘I’m really looking forward to this week. I looked at Mayfield House on the Internet. It looks like a beautiful place to stay.’

The four friends were on a coach with a lot of other students. It was Monday morning and they were beginning a week-long school trip. Mayfield House was one of the most famous stately homes in England. Now it was a museum full of historical treasures, with a lodge and study centre for school groups.

‘We’re not staying in the main house, remember,’ said Matt.

‘Why not?’ said Hannah.

‘They can’t let a group of school students stay in a nice house like that,’ said Dan.

From the seat in front of them, Ethan said, ‘Yeah, someone might steal some of the historical treasures!’ He turned around and looked over the seat at Dan.

‘Shut up, Ethan,’ said Matt. He looked at his friend. Dan was standing up, and his face was red with anger.

‘Dan, don’t listen to him,’ Matt said quickly. ‘Forget about it. Sit down.’

Twenty minutes later the coach drove into the grounds of Mayfield House.

Hannah, Alex, Matt and Dan got off the coach and looked up at the house. It was very large. Some steps led



up to a big old wooden door. There were lines of windows on each side of the door. There were more windows on the first floor, and some in the roof.

‘Wow! What a beautiful place,’ said Alex. ‘I can’t wait to –’

‘– take some photos!’ shouted her three friends together.

‘Oh, you guys!’ said Alex.

They all laughed and picked up their bags.

One of the teachers, Mr Jones, stood on the steps of the house with a lady beside him. He called out, ‘Everyone listen, please! I would like to introduce Miss Holt. She’s the director of Mayfield House.’

Miss Holt smiled and said, ‘Good morning. Welcome to Mayfield House. I know you will have a wonderful week here. In a moment, we will take you over to the lodge, where you are going to stay. You’ll have everything you need there. Mayfield House is full of historical treasures. We must ask that you do not enter the house without a teacher. You will have a tour of the house later in the week. I hope you have a wonderful stay.’

‘Thank you,’ said Mrs Turner, another of the teachers. ‘I know we will have a good week.’

Two hours later the students had unpacked and eaten lunch. They were in the dining room of the lodge. Their teachers stood up.

‘Okay, everyone. I hope you are all ready to work hard this week,’ said Mrs Turner. ‘You’ve all got your history projects to work on.’

A few students groaned and everyone laughed.

‘Don’t worry,’ she added. ‘We’ll have lots of fun too.’

Then Mr Jones said, 'We've organised lots of good activities for you. Tomorrow you'll all be doing an orienteering activity. You'll be in small groups and you'll use maps to find your way across the countryside. It will be a race to see who can get back to the house first.'

There were some more groans from the students.

'A day of fresh air and exercise will be good for you,' said Mr Jones.

'Why do adults love fresh air and exercise so much?' Matt said quietly to Hannah.

'Oh, it will be fun,' said Hannah. 'Better than sitting in a classroom. And maybe we can win.'

'You always want to win,' said Matt.

Mr Jones continued, 'This afternoon you'll work in your groups. You'll do some map-reading practice. We'll finish at four o'clock, and then you can look around the grounds before supper. But please remember you cannot go in Mayfield House. So, when I call out your name, please go outside and wait in your groups.'

Mr Jones began calling out students' names. The four friends waited for him to call theirs. But he didn't, and he left the room with the other students. The friends looked at each other.

'What's going on?' whispered Alex.

'I don't know,' said Hannah.

'I think I do,' said Dan, looking angry.

Mrs Turner came over to them.

'I need to talk to Dan,' she said. 'But you four are working as a team, so I want you all to hear this. Perhaps you know, Dan, that some teachers did not want you to come this week.'

'But that's —' Dan started angrily.

Mrs Turner held up her hand. 'Dan, please let me finish. I am not one of those teachers. I think you can be a good student, if you can control your anger. I know it has been a difficult year for you. I know that your father left home.'

Dan looked at the floor. His cheeks were red. He hated the teachers talking about him. Mrs Turner was right. His dad had left a year ago. His mum and sister were very sad. Dan was just angry. He hated to see them so sad. He hated his dad for leaving.

Dan looked up. Mrs Turner was still talking. '...but it was wrong to have those fights with Ethan and Chris. And it was very wrong to steal things from that shop. You got into trouble with the police. The head teacher has told me that you have no more chances, Dan. If you get into any trouble this week, we will have to send you home. The head teacher will want to speak to you, and he may ask you to leave our school. Do you understand?'

Dan nodded his head and said, 'Yes, Mrs Turner.'

Then Mrs Turner said to the others, 'I hope you three are going to help Dan this week. He does need to control his anger.'

Hannah, Alex and Matt nodded too.

As they turned to leave, Mrs Turner said, 'And Dan, try to stay away from Ethan and Chris. I want you to stay at our school.'

Alex stepped forward and said, 'It's okay, Mrs Turner. We'll help Dan. There won't be any more trouble.'

Mrs Turner smiled, 'Thank you, Alex. Dan is very lucky to have friends like you.'

This is the German version of **The Secret in the Farmhouse**

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Created and developed by
International Language Teaching Services Ltd
Business and Technology Centre, Shire Hill
Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3AQ, UK

help@ilts.info
www.ilts.info

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Author: Paula Smith
Series editor: James Bean
Illustrations: Elizabeth Botté
Text design: ILTS Ltd
Origination: Prepress-Solutions.com

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2020 19 18 17 16 | bezeichnen Zahl und Jahr des Druckes.
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1. Auflage

© 2012 Hueber Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, 85737 Ismaning, Deutschland

Redaktion: Stephanie Pfeiffer, Hueber Verlag, Ismaning

Umschlaggestaltung: creative partners gmbh, München

Umschlagfoto: Farmhaus © iStockphoto/shaunli;

Scheinwerfer © iStockphoto/nikamata

Druck und Bindung: Kessler Druck + Medien GmbH & Co. KG, Bobingen

Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-19-002993-8

Art. 530_13281_001_02