

Uncle Bill wasn't just dead - he'd been *killed*.  
Horrifically.

He was sitting up in his chair at his desk, a metal arrow in the middle of his chest.

'This is disgusting,' Joseph said with discernible delight.

'Oh my goodness,' his dad gasped. 'Kids - get out of here!'

But he was too busy shouting the names of all the adults in the house to make us leave. On the floor next to Uncle Bill's body was an empty box.

'Joseph, look - whatever was in his heirloom box isn't there any more. It must have been stolen by the killer!'

'Are you sure?' He dived to the floor, looking under the bed and under the desk, brushing aside staples, pens and a

rubber that must have fallen off the desk, and lots of little bits of metal that must have come from the broken lock. 'Yeah, you're right. Nothing I can see . . .'

'What the . . . Joseph! Marcel! You should *not* be here!'

Mum gasped behind us. 'Out! Out of this room!'

'Oh, Mum!' I implored. 'There might be clues!'

'Get out of here!' she screamed.

'Wait, Mum, listen! Uncle Bill's been killed because the killer wanted whatever was in his box!'

'Get out! Someone call the police!'

We tumbled down the marble staircase. 'Wow,' Joseph sighed. 'That was the most horribly amazing thing I've ever seen.'

The staircase resonated with hiccoughs and sobs: Danielle was sitting on the bottom step, blowing her nose on a sheet of kitchen roll.

We sat down on either side of her. 'Danielle,' I whispered, 'who else had the key to the green room?'

She stared at us as if she didn't understand. Then she said, 'No one. There's no other key.'

'Well, *someone* must have a key. The killer must have run away and locked it behind him.'

She shook her head, and blew her nose hard. 'The key was in the lock, inside.'

Joseph and I exchanged puzzled glances. 'Then maybe

the killer went through the window,' I suggested.

'It was closed,' Joseph remembered.

*Rrrring!*

The doorbell made Danielle leap up like a cat that's heard the Hoover being taken out of the cupboard. Behind us, the parents came running down the stairs. They opened the door, and the only local policeman walked in.

'Brigadier Gaston Mabile,' said the policeman. He looked tired, and clearly in complete disbelief that a serious crime could have happened on the island. 'I doubt it's a murder,' he said as he walked down the corridor to the green room. 'I'm very sorry for your loss and all, but we often jump to conclusions when, in fact, there's generally a very simple explana-

Silence as he pushed the door open, and then: 'OK, we've got a murder case.'

'**W**e've got more than a murder case: we've got a *locked-room* murder case,' I added.

'Marcel, for Heaven's sake! You're still here?' Dad exploded. 'A *locked room* is where you and Joseph are going to end up right now. With a murderer on the loose . . .'

All the other adults shuddered - they hadn't thought about that. A few minutes later, Joseph and I had been locked by Dad into my yellow bedroom. Infuriating, but we

knew we could easily exit through the window.

And we immediately did.

'The first thing to do is to figure out how the killer got in,' said Joseph as we landed in the freezing, coal-black garden. 'We need to check if the ivy outside Uncle Bill's window looks like it's been climbed on.'

We ran down to the path below the green bedroom window. There was no ivy at all on that external wall: just hard, sleek brick. And because the garden was sloped, first floor windows were much higher up on this side of the house than the other. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to climb . . .

'Is it possible,' I suggested, 'that Uncle Bill opened the window to get some fresh air, got shot in the chest by an arrow, and then closed the window again and sat down at his desk?'

'Sure,' sniggered Joseph. 'And then he clipped his nails, phoned his best friend, played the guitar and finally decided it was time to die . . .'

'All right, it was just a hypothesis,' I grumbled. 'So the killer was definitely *inside* the room - perhaps standing opposite Bill with a bow and arrow. *That's* really weird. Who would use a bow and arrow to kill someone?'

Joseph twitched. 'Actually,' he muttered, 'that rings a bell . . . Come on!'