

PUFFIN BOOKS

**THE  
STREET  
ART  
MYSTERY**

Sharna Jackson is an award-winning author and curator who specializes in developing socially engaged initiatives for children across culture, publishing and entertainment. She was recently the artistic director at Site Gallery in Sheffield and was formerly the editor of the Tate Kids website. Sharna's debut novel *High-Rise Mystery* received numerous awards and accolades, including the Waterstones Children's Book Prize for the Best Book for Younger Readers. Sharna lives on a ship in Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

**SHARNA JACKSON**

**THE  
STREET  
ART  
MYSTERY**



PUFFIN

PUFFIN BOOKS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia  
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Puffin Books is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies  
whose addresses can be found at [global.penguinrandomhouse.com](http://global.penguinrandomhouse.com)

[www.penguin.co.uk](http://www.penguin.co.uk) [www.puffin.co.uk](http://www.puffin.co.uk) [www.ladybird.co.uk](http://www.ladybird.co.uk)



Penguin  
Random House  
UK

First published 2026

001

Text copyright © Sharna Jackson, 2026

The moral right of the author and illustrator has been asserted

Penguin Random House values and supports copyright.

Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes freedom of expression and supports a vibrant culture. Thank you for purchasing an authorized edition of this book and for respecting intellectual property laws by not reproducing, scanning or distributing any part of it by any means without permission. You are supporting authors and enabling

Penguin Random House to continue to publish books for everyone.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner for the purpose of training artificial intelligence technologies or systems. In accordance with Article 4(3) of the DSM Directive 2019/790, Penguin Random House expressly reserves this work from the text and data mining exception.

Set in 11.5/15.5 pt Baskerville MT Std

Typeset by Six Red Marbles UK, Thetford, Norfolk

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,  
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-52363-6

All correspondence to:

Puffin Books

Penguin Random House Children's

One Embassy Gardens, 8 Viaduct Gardens, London SW11 7BW



Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.

*To those of us who follow the clues – not the rules.*



Apologies in advance for any rambling because my voice and hands are truly trembling, my mind is moving fifty thousand miles a minute and, honestly, I'm troubled and a *little* conflicted. I can't admit this to Josie and/or Wes, or say any of this out loud anywhere near their ears or other body parts, but . . . I'm excited? I'm considerably more thrilled than chilled and that's not acceptable, is it? Not at a time like this, or . . . maybe ever? I shouldn't be thinking about writing right now, but it's impossible not to.

Because *this* is a real story.

Let's set the scene, shall we? I'm outside the Elgin in Notting Hill – Mumsie's second home – on this warm Thursday August evening. I'm gazing through the glass, into the pub, watching my friends and fellow investigators hover around the adults – or let's call them what they *really* are at this stage, suspects – as they clutch pale ales in tight fists, long, drawn faces with wide bloodshot eyes. Give one of them an Oscar for outstanding acting right now because someone absolutely did this – but who? Which one?

Could it be the ambitious new curator – the person who arranges exhibitions? What about that quiet art handler,

## SHARNA JACKSON

the guy who actually hangs the paintings? It could be the wannabe artist, couldn't it? Or maybe his super-rich and successful ex-wife wanted him dead? We can't rule out the desperate girlfriend at this stage either, can we?

Even if she is my mother.

I'm looking at each one of these could-be-culprits in turn, staring into their souls for their motives – their 'whys' and their 'hows', and I suppose I must be smiling, grinning even, as I'm doing so, because I've just caught Wes's eye and he's shaking his head and pursing his lips.

Busted.

He knows I'm *loving* this. That's his signal – and my sign it's time to be as serious as the situation we face.

Deep breaths, Margot Anderson. In through your nose, out through your mouth. You can do it; you can be empathetic and normal, can't you? Yep, I can. I'll choose my words and watch my tone. Sometimes I struggle doing both and it gets me into deep trouble. Honestly, I think that's why I like stories more than real life. In my stories I can be anywhere in this world – or others – and my characters *never* get mad with me and I can always change the ending.

But this story? This ending? This one might be out of my hands . . .

Let's start at the beginning, like most stories do. There's been a terrible turn of events, but it's brought the Copseys a brand-new case – our last case maybe, but let's not focus on that now. Instead let me introduce you to our victim.

Teddy, Theodore Wyndham, my mother Verity's new boyfriend, died – and when I say new, it's *very* new, like

## THE STREET ART MYSTERY

literally it's been a month, she said, so she barely knew him. He died! About an hour ago, in his gallery, right in front of us. Now, Mumsie says a lot of things – half her utterings make no sense and the other half I barely believe because, well, honestly, I think Mumsie loves Merlot and any other type of wine more than me, but – BUT – Mumsie thought Teddy was going to propose to her tonight. Yep, he was apparently planning to go down on one knee, but instead he slumped down dead at her feet. Sad stuff really, tragically poetic. Teddy was apologetic in what turned out to be his final moments too. He croaked out a final 'sorry' and then . . . you know, Xs for eyes. Mumsie was right about one thing. She said Teddy was deadly serious about art, and, well . . . look.

And you know what? I *did* look – very closely. So when I said he 'died', I wasn't telling the whole truth – I was keeping you in suspense because . . .

Deadly Teddy was killed! On purpose. And one of the adults did it; I just know it.

I must give you some backstory, because context matters, doesn't it? My friends and I came to London from Luton because, eugh, I really might *actually* have to go to high school here and live with Mumsie again in this new house of hers. I wasn't planning on thinking about that, though. The plan was to enjoy the final days of school-holiday freedom and go to Notting Hill Carnival – Wes's dream.

Tonight, though, our very first night here, we were at Teddy's gallery, the Wynd, for a private view of the work

## SHARNA JACKSON

of some super-secretive street artist called Trik, and, my gosh, did we get one. A tricky, sticky private view to murder. The adults aren't saying that though, the M-word, not in front of Josie, Wes and me – but let's think about it. Your left ear doesn't just start trickling blood if you've had a heart attack, does it? After you were sent awful artistic hate mail earlier that day *and* the house opposite your house – Mum's house actually – was covered in suspicious spray paint before your exhibition opened?

To me that's stacking up suspiciously. Someone wanted Teddy to stop, to be a permanent still life. To me, as a proud member of the crime-solving Copseys, that's evidence, a case we must accept – even if Wes and Josie don't believe it's real. Yet.

They'll see.

They think I'm spinning a story, weaving a web to distract myself from the impending disaster that is my life. I can see why they're saying that – it does make some sense; it is in character for me – but this time, they're wrong. Mostly. We're good sleuths, great even. We have a history of solving mysteries back in Luton, getting into all our neighbours' business and sorting it out, so why stop now? We must get started; there's not a second to waste – we only have until Sunday evening before Wes and Josie go home, and I might have to stay here forever.

No, our story does not end like this. Teddy's story cannot end like this.

We're going to solve his murder. We have to. It's what we Copseys do.

**THURSDAY 21 AUGUST**





# 1

Earlier that day, around four, before all the murdering and arty blackmail happened, Wes stepped backwards off the pavement on to the street and twisted his brown curls. I knew exactly what he was going to say next.

‘This is downsizing to you? Downsized where? This is the biggest house I’ve ever seen in real life!’ He nudged Josie. ‘Innit?’

Josie closed one eye to the sun and looked over at him. ‘Yeah, it’s pretty big —’

‘*Pretty big?* Jo, stop playing – it’s got four floors!’

‘Five, if you count the attic,’ I said, looking past the grey paint round the heavy navy-blue door, up to the black-tiled roof. 33 Ladbroke Gardens was a nice house, and the area is awesome; there’s nothing wrong with Notting Hill. It just wasn’t a patch on our old place in Hammersmith, right by the Thames, where I grew up, or the house on Copsey Close where I live with my dad

## SHARNA JACKSON

now. This was a house – a fine one for sure – it just wasn't my home. Yet.

33 Ladbroke Gardens was a random Mumsie purchase, a very 'her' thing to do. Mumsie loves making massive life choices on the flip of a coin, without thinking about the consequences to her, or to me. She thinks it makes her seem carefree, spontaneous and cool, but I beg to differ.

She's the opposite.

'Five *freaking* floors – that's three more than Primark in Luton, that is.' Wes chuckled and wagged a pointed finger at the house, starting at the bottom. 'Ten windows. *Ten!* And that's just the front!'

'Yes, that's a lot,' said Josie. 'But we just drove past Buckingham Palace and –'

'*Buckingham Palace?*' he spat. 'Be a serious person. That's a palace – the clue's in the name. That's not a *real* house, is it? Where people we know live?' He turned to me. 'Where people we know *will* live.' He put his hand on my shoulder and smiled. 'I know you love us, Margot, and you'll miss us – I'll think about you once in a while, I promise.'

'Wow, thanks,' I replied. 'Generous, but I don't know if I'm *definitely* moving –'

'You are,' said Josie quietly. 'Loads of your stuff is already here.'

I sighed. 'True – but that's just stuff. Just old journals and some clothes I'm about to grow out of. Stuff can be moved back easily; it's not like it's going to space, is it? Also, I haven't even been inside the house myself yet. I

## THE STREET ART MYSTERY

might not like it – if I don't, I'll just come back on the train with you.'

Wes and Josie glanced at each other quickly, then Wes looked down at the concrete. They didn't believe me.

'I don't like this either,' Josie continued. 'The thought of you leaving Luton? I hate it. But . . .'

'But what?' I asked, already knowing what was coming next – a mini therapy session from Doctor Google herself.

'You need to begin to accept it, Margot. Accepting difficult things is important; it helps you move forward, to grow, to develop as a person – that's what I read anyway.'

Wes shook his head. 'You need to leave the internet alone, Josie. Vodafone need to vote you off the island somehow. Anyway, look – let's focus on real life now, on this big bougie house, on the Carnival route, in the best city in the world apparently. After Luton.'

'Luton's a town,' said Josie, cutting in. 'The clue's in the name of the football team . . .'

'Yeah, yeah, whatever,' said Wes with a wave of his hand. He turned to me. 'What's *really* the problem here, Margot? Make it make sense.'

I've been trying to, but Wes just doesn't get it, not really.

He sees the 'nice' things I have – the huge house, the 'cool' clothes, the photos of holidays from faraway places – but he doesn't know how it feels to be lonely, a bit . . . empty sometimes. When I moved to Luton last summer after Mumsie and Dad got divorced, I was finally, *finally* having a good time. I had it all – real friends, real fun – all away from my mum. I existed in a calm, safe

## SHARNA JACKSON

space with my dad. Those were the things that mattered, to me at least.

Josie and Wes were just my neighbours at first, then we became best friends and Copseys – a group that Josie started that autumn. We did good things for good, worthy reasons, but we quickly turned into a mystery-solving trio, which was much better, way cooler and a great source for stories. The plots were plotting, believe me.

But I'm not just friends with them so I can write a novel about them when I'm older, even though I might – I'll defo give them different names and a cut of the money. I do love them, truly. Josie has been generally lovely. She was a bit miffed about her younger brother being born, though, which at eleven years old was *very* embarrassing, but understandable, I suppose. I don't know. I personally would *love* a sibling – the more characters the better. Wesley, my favourite moany mini-Marcus Rashford, has been calling me a spy for twelve whole months because I turned up, took notes and then things started getting exciting. It's not true, but I wish it was – my reality is unfortunately way more normal. I'm just a girl standing in front of her new house (possibly), ready to wear a fake smile for the long weekend (begrudgingly) and enjoy Carnival for Wes (somehow).

'Margot?' I could hear Josie's concern loud and clear. 'You all right?'

Wes laughed. 'Girl, you know she ain't. Margot's never been all right. Not one day in her life. Look at her

## THE STREET ART MYSTERY

face – she’s throwing herself a silent pity party. “Wah, wah, wah, poor little me in my big rich house.”

I laughed too; I couldn’t help it – even though I was still a bit sad inside. Like I said, Wes doesn’t get it. ‘Shut up, I’m fine.’ I looked at him. ‘But you’ll see what I mean.’

‘I won’t if you don’t knock on the door and get us in, will I?’ he replied. He looked around the street with his hands on his hips. ‘So *this* is Notting Hill, eh? So fancy, but . . .’

‘But what?’ asked Josie. ‘There’s already a “but”?’

‘Nah, not a “but” – an observation. There’s a lot of graffiti and boarded-up windows for such a bougie neighbourhood,’ Wes said with a shrug. ‘Unexpected.’

‘It’s very expected actually,’ said Josie in that way she does, slightly smug yet sweet. ‘I looked it up before we left.’

Wes nudged me and rolled his eyes. ‘Course she did. Go on then, Goog-girl. Out with it.’

She smiled. ‘First of all, you know I don’t just google stuff. I do all kinds of things on the internet.’

Wes raised an eyebrow. ‘Like what?’

She sighed. ‘I don’t know – I play games, find out facts –’

‘So, googling?’ said Wes.

‘No! I also do things . . . like looking at webcams from far-flung places,’ she said. ‘I’ve seen Tokyo, Madrid, New York – it’s like going on holiday without leaving the house.’

‘You’re tapped,’ he said and laughed.

‘Anyway,’ said Josie, rolling her eyes. ‘Those are

## SHARNA JACKSON

hoardings for the Carnival, aren't they? To protect the houses in case the celebrations get out of hand.'

'I thought you'd know that, Wes,' I said, smiling. 'Since you're such a Carnival fan and everything.'

He shrugged. 'It never crossed my mind, not even once. Makes sense, though.' He reached for his phone in his pocket. 'And the graffiti on those . . . what did you call them? Hoardings? Yeah, they're great for doing art on, aren't they? I mean, look at that –' he pointed directly across the street at what looked like a ginger-and-white spray-painted fox with red Xs for eyes. 'That's lit!' He took a photo and put his phone back in his pocket. 'You know my mum makes murals and things like that? Remember I told you?'

I nodded. Of course I remembered. Ella, Wesley's mum, was the best. Creative, cool and chill – all the Cs. Sometimes, more than a few times, I wished she was *my* mother, but we can't all be so lucky and blessed, can we? If I *really* was moving here, I would miss her so much – probably more than Wes. I made a note to tell him that later if he started to work my nerves.

'You know what?' Wes said, standing tall. 'No more buts. I love it here – it's a bit of me. If you won't live here, I will.' He walked up the seven stone steps towards the glossy front door, gripped the brass door knocker and tapped it against the wood. 'I don't know about you, Josie, but I'm ready to meet Mumsie. Adopt me, Mumsie!'

He put on a super-posh voice when he said 'Mumsie'.

I joined him on the top step. 'You don't want that, and I do *not* talk like that.'

## THE STREET ART MYSTERY

‘You do a bit, and it’s fine,’ said Josie from just behind us. She put her hand on my shoulder. ‘We’re Copseys, remember? We don’t discriminate – it would go against our code. *Point four: be a true ally and –*’

‘*Be a friend and support everyone,*’ I muttered, as the front door swung open. ‘I’ll do my best, but I don’t know . . .’

Mumsie stood in front of us in her brightly coloured striped socks, blue jeans and crisp white shirt. Her blonde hair was no longer long but shorn into a short sharp bob just below her ears. She looked classy, chic, different. Maybe she was different too? On the inside as well as out? Her green eyes widened when they met mine.

‘Hello, darling. I *cannot* believe you’re actually here, that you all made it! I’m so delighted, truly.’ She clutched her chest with her right hand, a thing she does when she’s trying to be sincere.

‘You’ve cut your hair.’

She swung her head for effect, narrowly missing the door. ‘I did. Do you like it?’

I nodded. I did.

‘Teddy says I look graceful.’ She waved her hand. ‘But enough about that.’ She tilted her head towards her shoulder and looked at my friends. ‘Josie Anderson and Wesley Evans.’ Her hand returned to her chest. ‘It is my honour to meet you, *finally*. Margot likes to keep me caged up and far away from her friends, so it’s a dream to host you this weekend – the first of many, hopefully.’ She glanced up at me and rolled her eyes playfully. ‘Please, let’s not stand outside all day – come in, come in!’

## **SHARNA JACKSON**

My friends grinned with delight and stepped past her into the hall. Mumsie outstretched her arms. 'Welcome home, Margot,' she said pulling me into a hug. As she sniffed my hair, I smelled wine on her breath.