



THE
SLEEPOVER
CLUB ON THE
BEACH

DEFINITELY NOT FOR BOYS!



Angie Bates

The Sleepover Club on the Beach

Аннотация

Join the Sleepover Club: Frankie, Kenny, Felicity, Rosie and Lyndsey, five girls who want to have fun – but who always end up in mischief! A long weekend of camping by the seaside offers a few surprises for the Sleepover Club. Their first surprise is that there are no funfairs or arcades near the campsite – boring! But then they find a mysterious message in a bottle, washed up by the tide... Roll up your combats and paddle on over! AGE 7-9

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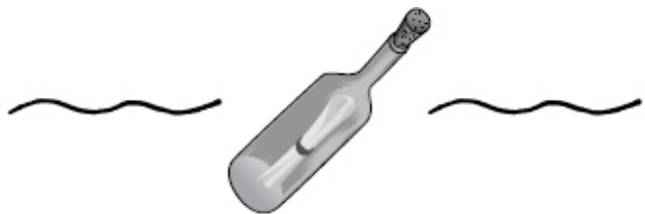
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The Sleepover Club

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Angie Bates



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by Angie Bates

HarperCollinsChildren'sBooks

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CHAPTER ONE



Hiya! Come in, don't be shy! I always lurve catching up with Sleepover fans. Oops, sorry, something's blocking my door! Let me shift this rubbish. You'll have to pick your way through the bin bags. As you can see, I've been spring cleaning for hours.

You wouldn't BELIEVE what I found under my bed! Bald Barbies with missing limbs, ancient board games, plus something very fuzzy on a plate, which I'm ashamed to say just *might* be a

slice of old pizza...

Yeah yeah, Lyndsey Collins cleans her room. It should be posted on the internet, ha ha. So what brought THIS on, you're wondering?

Well, I'll tell you, but I warn you – it's horribly humiliating. Yesterday all my mates came over in this big posse, looking incredibly serious.

Oh, hang on! Before I get into that, I'd better quickly remind you who everyone in the Sleepover Club is!

First comes Frankie Thomas. That's our Frankie through and through, she just naturally jumps to the head of the queue. (Hey, did you hear that? I'm a poet!) I'm not implying Frankie's pushy, but that girl could totally run her own chat show without any guests! She used to be a typical only child. But Frankie's really mellowed since her little sister was born. She's so-o gooey about baby Izzy, it's unbelievable!

Kenny's the youngest in her family. Her full name is Laura McKenzie, but to us she's just Kenny or Kenz. Kenny's a real laugh. She's also a football fanatic, a real sports nut, a bit of a brainbox and as mad as they come!

Next comes Fliss, or "Felicity", as absolutely NO one calls her! It's not like Fliss is a total bimbo, just a *deeply* dedicated follower of fashion. She's constantly worrying she's not pretty or skinny enough and going on stupid diets, which can get just a bit boring. Fliss has the WORST luck with surnames. She *used* to be Felicity Sidebotham. But her mum recently married her

long-term boyfriend, a builder called Andy Proudlove, so poor ol' Fliss is now Felicity Proudlove. Major improvement, huh!!

Last, but definitely not least – tada! Yess! Take a bow, Rosie Cartwright!

Mum says Rosie's an "old head on young shoulders", which I think means she often acts too grown-up for her age. Rosie's dad walked out on them, unfortunately, so now Rosie just lives with her mum, her big sister Tiff and her brother Adam, who has cerebral palsy. When Rosie first joined the Sleepover Club, she was seriously down in the dumps. It took us ages to convince her we wanted to be her friends. But now she's really chilled, just one of the gang!

Phew! That's the intro out of the way. No, I *didn't* forget about me! I promise you, by the time I've finished telling you about our latest sleepover, you'll feel like you know me WAY too well!

Besides, I'm dying to get back to telling you what happened yesterday. Like I said, my mates all looked so serious that I went all wobbly inside.

"What's wrong?" I said nervously.

They must have appointed Frankie official spokesperson, because Kenny gave her a meaningful nudge.

"Lyndz, this is going to sound really horrible," Frankie gulped, "but there's no nice way to put this and *someone* has to tell you. The fact is, your room is a total pigsty!"

I was shocked. I don't tend to notice my room, to be honest. I just like, sleep in it.

“What’s wrong with it?” I quavered.

“Well, this for a start.” Frankie picked up one of my old trainers and tipped it upside down. A handful of stale Smarties fell out. My baby brother’s always hiding stuff in our shoes. Mum swears Spike is half baby, half squirrel!

“Plus this!” Rosie pointed sternly at my wastepaper basket, merrily spilling rubbish everywhere.

“It’s only old tissues and apple cores,” I said defensively. “Not like, droppings from *plague* rats or anything.”

Fliss crinkled her nose. “Lyndz, maybe you haven’t noticed, but lately it’s got really whiffy in here too.”

“I’ll say,” Kenny agreed. “If you’re not careful, the council will stick plastic tape across your door and declare you a health hazard.”

“Hey, stop right there!” I told them fiercely. I was really hurt. “I like my room just the way it is, thanks. It’s cosy and homey.”

Kenny shrugged. “Yeah, right. Homey. If you’re a dust bunny!” She fished out several lumps of icky grey fluff from under my radiator and held them out with an accusing expression.

I was incredibly embarrassed, but I tried to put a brave face on it. “That’s just dust,” I said breezily. “A bit of dust never hurt anybody.”

“Dust breeds house mites,” Fliss said in her prissiest voice. “And mites cause allergies. That’s probably why you get those terrible hiccups all the time, Lyndz.” And she started on about some special vacuum cleaner her mum got from a catalogue,

which sucks all this invisible dirt out of your mattress.

I completely fell about. I mean, *invisible* dirt? Give me a break!

“Mum says you can tell a lot about a girl’s personality from looking at her bedroom,” Fliss went on.

She’s not kidding! Fliss’s bedroom is so pink and perfect, it’s like being beamed to Barbie World!

“We honestly don’t mean to upset you,” Rosie said earnestly. “I mean, if we all help, we could get your room cleaned up in no time.”

I’d gone into a major sulk. “I don’t need any help, because I’m not doing it. I told you, I *like* my room. So what if it’s untidy? I’ve got more important things to think about, OK?”

But Fliss’s remark stuck in my mind all day. She had a point. My mates’ bedrooms do reflect their very different personalities.

Kenny’s room is a total shrine to Leicester City football club, with eerie overtones of *Casualty*. Can you believe she owns a life-sized skeleton? (Don’t panic, it’s plastic!) Kenny’s excuse is that she’s going to be a doctor like her dad, but the rest of us think she takes an unnatural interest in gore.

Frankie’s pad is TOTALLY futuristic. Not a pad so much as a *pod* – a silvery hi-tech space pod. If it was up to her, she’d probably come to school wearing jumpsuits with diagonal zips, like a girl in a sci-fi series.

Rosie used to hate *her* room. When her dad left, they’d only just moved in, poor things, so their house was still a real tip. Then

one time when we were staying over, we all helped her decorate it. Now she says it's her favourite place in the entire universe.

Anyway, this morning, when I got up, I stood in the middle of my bedroom in my PJs and forced myself to take a good hard look.

Oh dear, I thought. This place is *seriously* unsavoury. Three mugs of icky cold tea. Dirty clothes all mixed up with my dressing-up clothes. Crayons mashed into the carpet, along with a tube of body glitter. Plus my pony pictures had been up so long, they'd all peeled away at the corners. And all my riding trophies were thick with grime. Yeuch!

That's the problem with having four brothers. If you're not careful, you kind of adjust to living in a tip. My little brothers, Ben and Spike, are at the stage where they drop bits of biscuit and apple everywhere. My big brothers are equally messy – they just drop *bigger* stuff. With Tom, it's stinky socks and crumpled-up artwork. In Stu's case, muddy wellies and bits of tractor gearbox.

But today I've decided it's high time I set a good example. I mean, most of this stuff dates back to the last century! From now on I intend to be a genuine twenty-first-century girl. I'm going to save up and buy some of those really cool files to store things in. And I'm definitely asking Dad to make me a grown-up-type desk, to replace the old kiddies' one I inherited from Stu and Tom. Who knows – maybe my parents will even buy me that new computer I've been begging and pleading for (Yeah, well, I can dream!).

Anyway, I've made up my mind. With or without a computer, by the time I've finished, my new-look bedroom is going to make my Sleepover Club mates sick with envy!

But right now I could do with a rest. In fact, you must be a total mind-reader! I was just unpacking my rucksack when you walked in, but now I've got a better idea. I'll empty everything out, and you see if you can figure out what we got up to on our last sleepover.

Heavens, where did all this sand come from, hint hint!

Ooh, and this teeny strand of pink seaweed!

Hmmn, what else is there? Old rubber flipflops, sunglasses, assorted pebbles and pretty shells... Oh, and right down at the bottom, four absolutely ancient, hopelessly sandy adventure books.

Don't laugh! The characters might look like kids from a 1940s knitting pattern, but they provided crucial inspiration for our latest sleepover.

And let me tell you this sleepover had EVERYTHING. Sun, sand, sea and a thrilling race against time to find hidden treasure.

Yeah, that's what I said. Hidden treasure!

No, I'm not having you on. I'm deadly serious.

Want me to tell you all about it? Look, shove those boxes out of the way and sit on my bed. Squish back against my cushions, go on, that's what I do.

Now are you sitting comfortably?

Then I'll begin...



CHAPTER TWO



It all started with an earache.

You know the kind of illnesses where you feel very slightly fragile and everyone spoils you rotten? I *lurve* those. Sometimes Dad buys me silly treats on the way home from work: sherbet necklaces and stick-on tattoos and puzzle books.

Well, my ear infection was nothing *like* that. It made me totally miz, even after the antibiotics had kicked in. And I had to miss

loads of school. I didn't mind about lessons, obviously, but I hated not seeing my mates. Plus, my illness **TOTALLY** disrupted our Sleepover schedule.

I was praying I'd recover in time to go on our school trip. But when the day came, Mum said I was nowhere near well enough to go bombing off to Skeggy on a coach.

On the other hand, she saw absolutely **NO** reason to cancel the paddling party she'd arranged. She'd invited her best mates and all their little kids to our house. Which, if you include my little brothers, makes eight screaming, sticky-fingered under-fives in total! Lucky ol' me, eh.

Things weren't too bad at the start. The sun shone and the mums nattered and the little ones splashed around in our ancient paddling pool, like cute little water babies. I just sprawled in a deckchair, looking interestingly pale in my sunglasses, pretending to read a magazine. Also privately wondering how I'd *ever* squeezed into that teeny weeny plastic pool. If I jumped in now, I'd create a major tidal wave!

Then quite suddenly the heavens opened and it **POURED**. The mums scooped up toddlers and plates of sandwiches and ran for shelter.

Unfortunately Dad had started one of his famous DIY projects, putting our sitting room completely out of action. (My dad makes *Changing Rooms* look like a bunch of wimpy amateurs!) So the paddling party had to picnic in the kitchen.

Just imagine it. Eight screaming toddlers all spilling juice

and trampling on sandwiches and occasionally on each other's fingers. *Total* nightmare!

I just couldn't take the mayhem. So I sneaked off to the bombsite formerly known as our sitting room, to watch TV by myself.

But the telly was swathed in several sheets of industrial plastic.

My star sign is Libra, and I'm a really easygoing person. My mates will tell you that normally I take things like disappearing tellies completely in my stride.

But you've to got remember I was seriously stressed out. My house was filled with rampaging rugrats and there was completely nowhere to run. And my ear still hurt, a LOT. And the no-telly-situation was just the last straw.

And I'm sorry, OK, but I completely lost it. Actually, I went totally ballistic. "ARGH!" I yelled. And again. "AAARGH!!!"

But no-one heard me. This was because Mum and her mates had finally succeeded in persuading all the kiddiwinks to sing Five Fat Sausages at the tops of their cute little voices.

I started ripping at the plastic in a frenzy.

"I'm not asking for the moon," I stormed. "I want to veg out in front of the TV, that's all. But no! I've got to play Pass the blooming TV Parcel..."

Finally I'd peeled my way down to the last layer. Then I dragged our TV to the nearest electrical socket and plugged it in. But all the channels had gone completely skew-whiff!

Now I was *really* mad. I stomped back to the kitchen,

glowering at everyone like the evil fairy in a panto. I generally go all starry-eyed when I hear pre-schoolers singing in their little off-key voices. But my heart had entirely turned to stone.

“Excuse ME for breaking up the party!” I yelled rudely. “But I’m still really ill, in case you’ve forgotten, Mum, and I *need* to watch TV, but Dad’s sabotaged the channels, hasn’t he?”

All the tinies gawped at me in pure astonishment.

I could tell Mum was silently counting to ten. “Why don’t you go and watch Stuart’s?” she suggested at last.

“THAT heap of junk!” I snarled. “I’d get a bigger buzz watching Grandma’s snowstorm paperweight!”

My brother’s ancient Sony recently went on the blink, which means you have to watch programmes through this permanent blizzard.

“I know,” said Mum, in her best playgroup leader’s voice. “Why don’t you help yourself to one of those lovely juicy peaches, curl up in a comfy chair and read a library book?”

“Yeah, right,” I sneered. “First find a chair, then—”

“I’m sure we can find you a chair,” Mum interrupted, laughing.

“But I’ve read those books heaps of times,” I moaned. “I can practically recite them from memory.”

My little brother, Ben, slipped a sticky hand into mine. “Don’t worry, I’ll lend you my library books if you like,” he whispered.

I’ll just explain that Ben’s favourite toddler fact-book explains *exactly* where your poo goes to, with v. colourful diagrams.

“That’s sweet, Ben,” I shuddered. “But I’d just want to lose myself in a good story. You know, *escape*.” My voice came out in a feeble little wail. To my horror I realised I was going to cry.

“Tell you what,” said my mum’s mate Teresa. “I’ve got some kids’ books in the car. I’m meant to be taking them to the charity shop. My dad’s been clearing out his attic.”

“Oh,” I said. “Erm...”

But before I could explain that this wasn’t exactly the reading I had in mind, Teresa had nipped out to her car. In no time, she was back with two bulging carrier bags.

Inside were the foggiest, most depressing hard-backed books I have EVER seen. No doubt they looked incredibly hip when they came out in the 1940s or whatever. But over the years all the covers had faded to the colour of bogey slime (I’m sorry, but it’s true!).

It didn’t help that Mum and her mates were obviously expecting me to leap around with gratitude.

I pasted a fake smile on my face. “Oh wow,” I said politely. “Thanks, Teresa.”

And I lugged the awful things upstairs. I wasn’t planning to read them. I just didn’t want to hurt Teresa’s feelings. But after ten minutes or so, I’d had as much as I could take of scowling up at my ceiling.

So very grudgingly I took a book from the pile. I suppose it might be good for a laugh, I told myself.

After an hour or so, I heard a polite cough. Mum was hovering

in the doorway. “I reprogrammed the TV if you want to come back down,” she said.

“Cheers,” I said vaguely. “Just got to finish this chapter.”

I was still reading when my brother Tom called me to have my tea!! I rushed downstairs, gulped a few mouthfuls of shepherd’s pie, then bolted back to my room and carried on reading feverishly. The characters were trapped in a disused mine, and frankly things weren’t looking good.

When Mum suddenly appeared with the phone, I almost jumped out of my skin. I’d never even heard it ring! I glanced at my alarm clock and was astonished to see it was practically bedtime! How had *that* happened?

“It’s Frankie!” said Mum.

I took the phone, still really out of it. “Hiya, Spaceman!” I said groggily. “How was Skegness?”

“Oh, fab and groovy. NOT. Emily Berryman was sick on the coach. All over my trainers, would you believe.” Frankie had obviously rung up for a good moan.

“Oh, poor old you,” I said vaguely, looking longingly at my book.

Frankie sounded slightly huffy. “What are you up to, anyway?” she said. “You sound weird.”

I explained sheepishly about my new addiction.

Frankie snorted. “Oh, those! I totally despise those books.”

“Oh, me too,” I agreed. “It’s just that Dad—”

But Frankie was off on one of her rants. “Have you noticed

how they all have samey titles? The Mystery of the Thingybobby, or The Thingybobby of Adventure, or The Secret Thingybobby? And it doesn't matter which one you read, they're all exactly the same."

"Yeah, but once you get into them, they're surprisingly—"

But Frankie wouldn't let me get a word in. "Have you noticed how the grown-ups in those books always find some convenient excuse to pack all the kids off to stay with this like, long-lost relative?" she said in a scornful voice. "I mean, how many long-lost rellies have *you* come across recently, Lyndz?"

"Well, none really—" I began.

"Exactly!" said Frankie triumphantly. "And before you can say 'gosh, golly and jolly good fun', the little dears are running around in their big baggy shorts and seriously sad knitwear, on the trail of some totally daft mystery – smugglers, secret tunnels, messages in bottles and I don't know what!"

Once Frankie gets on her high horse, it's pointless arguing. You just have to let her run down like an old-fashioned record.

"The thing which REALLY annoys me," she continued, "is how the girls always get so girly and upset. And the boy with the pet rat always finds disgusting old toffees in his pockets, and they're all fluffy and icky and I'm like – 'DON'T put it in your mouth, Betty-Ann or whatever your silly name is. It's got rat germs!'"

I giggled. "He keeps the rat in his *other* pocket, you lamebrain!"

“But the dopey girl EATS it,” Frankie went on. “Not only that, but she like, cheers up INSTANTLY! I mean what is IN these sweeties, Lyndz? I think we deserve to be told!”

That *did* crack me up. In fact I laughed so much, I started hiccuping. Ever had hiccups while you’re still recovering from earache?

It’s AGONY.

“Sorry, hic (ow!) hic, Frankie,” I whimpered. “Gotta, HIC (ow!) go!”

Snivelling with pain, I rushed to find Mum, who was helping Dad measure alcoves for shelves.

I hate being the middle child. My parents showed me absolutely NO sympathy.

“Oh, not again!” Dad groaned.

“Just hold your breath,” Mum said impatiently.

Now I am the world expert on hiccups, OK? And I’ve tried every hiccup cure going and that holding-the-breath thing never worked for me ONCE. I was getting genuinely hysterical, but then my brother Tom came up with the most ingenious hiccup remedy since hiccups began.

He put one arm around me and drew one of his lightning-fast cartoons with his free hand. And as I watched, hiccuping miserably, Tom’s scribbles suddenly turned into a brilliant caricature of me hiccuping and going “Ouch!”.

I giggled. “My nose isn’t *that* big.”

Then I clutched my chest. “Tom! You are *such* a cool brother!

They've gone!"

"Tom Collins, Hiccup Wizard!" he joked. "That's me!"

"Yippee, yippee! I'm hiccup free!" I sang idiotically.

And I flew back upstairs to finish my book. Everything Frankie said was true, but I didn't give a hoot. I had totally fallen in love with those old stories. Actually, what I really wanted was to climb *inside* that world and stay there for ever.

I was still reading when Mum came in to give me my last dose of medicine. She gave me a goodnight kiss, then firmly switched off my light.

But I still couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned for ages, trying to find a cool patch of pillow. I wasn't depressed any more. The books had completely cured me. But I *was* unusually restless. Which isn't exactly surprising. My head was filled with faithful dogs and foreign-sounding villains and flashing lights far out at sea!

Maybe I was still feverish, or maybe Teresa's dad's books had cast a strange spell on me. But suddenly I found myself talking in the dark.

"I wish all the Sleepover gang could have exciting adventures like the kids in those stories," I said. "Though in trendier clothes, obviously," I added hastily.

You know what they say. Be careful what you wish for. It might happen. And it did. It happened so fast that I was still tossing and turning when Mum got her mysterious late-night phone call from a long-lost relative...



CHAPTER THREE



OK, I'll come clean. Uncle Phil isn't exactly a long-lost rellie. But he's *terrible* at staying in touch! I think maybe he has phone phobia. He and Auntie Roz been living in Australia and we hadn't heard from him for *years*.

But it turned out that recently, Auntie Roz had inherited some huge old house in Suffolk by the sea.

Mum told us about it next morning. "They're going to run the

house as a B&B,” she explained. “They’ve been working seven days a week since they got here, getting everything straight, and they’ve invited us for the weekend.”

But Dad is a real home bird at heart, so he came up with all these excuses. He had exam papers to mark, plus his DIY was at a crucial stage, etcetera etcetera. “You go,” he offered suddenly. “And I’ll look after the boys. How about that?”

Mum looked seriously tempted. Not only was she keen to see her big brother, I got the sneaky feeling she was ready for a break.

When we were alone (except for baby Spike, who doesn’t count), Mum said hopefully, “Fancy going to Suffolk this weekend, Lyndz? Bring a friend if you like. The sea air would do you good.”

My heart totally skipped a beat. That’s what grown-ups always say at the beginning of Thingybobby stories! That’s how you know the adventure is starting! Was it possible my late-night wish could be coming true?

Don’t be daft, Lyndz, I told myself. I shook my head wistfully. “Sorry, Mum. I can’t just take one of my mates.”

She sighed. “You’re right. Oh, well.”

I thought that was the end of it. But like Stu says, Mum’s like our Jack Russell, Buster. Once he gets his teeth into something, he totally won’t let go. And Mum was determined to see her brother.

That evening, she disappeared into her bedroom with the phone. She came out all smiles. “They said yes!” she announced.

“Isn’t that great?”

I stared at her. “Huh?”

“Your friends’ parents. They said yes,” she said impatiently.

“Erm, did I miss something?” I said.

“They agreed to me taking you all down to Suffolk, of course,” she said, as if I was being particularly slow.

I was stunned. “You want to take the *entire* Sleepover Club away for the weekend? Does Uncle Phil know?”

“He can’t wait. He says he and Roz really miss having kids around, now theirs have left home.”

“What about school?” I was shaky with excitement. Suddenly my life seemed to be turning into a story. There had to be a hitch somewhere.

“No problem,” Mum said absent-mindedly. “Friday’s a training day. I can’t believe you’ve forgotten that! We’ll have to make an early start. It’s a long drive to Suffolk. Where *did* I put that road map?”

My head was spinning. My mates and I were going to stay with my long-lost uncle in a rambling old house by the sea, and have a thrilling adventure like the ones in Teresa’s dad’s books. And all thanks to my brilliant mum!

But before things could get mushy, the phone rang.

Fliiss sounds just like a Munchkin when she gets excited. “Is your mum really taking us to the seaside?” she squeaked. “That is so-o cool! I’ve got the cutest bikini! It’s pink with darling little ___”

I pretended to gasp. “Pink! Wow! You don’t say?”

My mates were on the phone all evening, babbling happily about sunbathing and candy floss and amusement arcades. But instead of getting excited with them, I started to feel slightly fed up. It didn’t seem to occur to my mates that I might have ideas of my own. I kept saying, “There’s more to Suffolk than amusements, you know.”

“Like what?” demanded Kenny.

Like, it’s the perfect place for adventures!

But I just said carelessly, “Oh, Mum’s got loads of local info. There’s this old city which totally disappeared under the sea.”

“Big hairy deal!” said Kenny scornfully. “I can’t exactly see us playing the fruit machines underwater!”

Modern kids are so unromantic! Thingybobby kids would fall over themselves at the prospect of a drowned city.

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