

Mystery #1: House Sitting

My old friend, Miss Grinder, had gone away to Disneyland® for a vacation and asked me to watch her house. She was in her seventies and lived by herself in a big old adobe house in my neighborhood. An only child, she inherited the house when her parents died. As she never married, she had lived in it all her life. I loved to wander through the house. She had so many interesting things in it: old books, rock collections, tea sets.

I brought Noche with me when I went to take care of the house. He would give the house a good sniffing and be sure no one had been there. I watered the plants and brought in her mail and read a book, rocking in her velvet-covered rocking chair. She told me to stay in the house for a while. "That way it won't look so lonely," she said.

So Noche and I went over there the day before she was supposed to come home and did our usual activities. When I was sitting in the rocking chair reading, someone came in the back door. Noche barked and growled at them and I screamed.

The young woman looked as surprised to see us.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I've come to visit my aunt."

"Oh, Miss Grinder isn't back from vacation yet."

The young woman set down her purse and said, "That's okay. She said I could stay in the house until she got here."

Just then a knock came on the front door. It was the next-door neighbor, asking if everything was all right. She had heard the barking. I whispered to her to get the police. After she left, I turned back to the young woman and smiled and said, "What memories do you have growing up with Miss Grinder?" How did I know she wasn't who she claimed to be?



Mystery #2: School Daze



One day during school, the principal pulled me out of my classroom. I was embarrassed. What had I done wrong? But when I got to his office, he explained.

There had been a box of chocolates sitting on his desk when he went to lunch, but when he came back, half the chocolates had been missing. Three students had been sitting in detention during the lunch period and he suspected that one of them took the chocolate. But he could hardly get them to talk. He had brought them into his office one at a time, but they were all keeping their mouths closed about the candy.

"Can you help out here, Bella? Maybe they will talk to you. I've been hearing that you are the school detective. I need your help."

I went out to the front part of the office where the students were sitting on a bench. There was Billy Budd, Bobby Beef, and Buddy Blue. I talked to each of them separately.

Billy Budd was very brief. "I didn't see nothing and I didn't eat nothing. I try to use this time of detention to catch a little sleep."

Bobby Beef seemed more upset. "I already told the principal I didn't do it. Even when he dragged me back into his office, I didn't put up a fuss. I've never even set foot in his office. It wasn't me."

Buddy Blue seemed kind of bored with it all. "I didn't have anything to do with it. I don't even like chocolate."

I walked back into the principal's office and closed the door. "I think I know who did it." What gave the culprit away?



Mystery #3: It's Only A Game

My friend, Ronni Gonzalez, had a lot of video games. Ron lent me a video game and said I could keep it for a whole week. I was pretty excited because I didn't have many games and it was a really good one—lots of levels, lots of creatures. I had had it for three days and was just starting to get really good at it.

My brother liked to play with it too. We had contests.

The other person who liked to play this video game was Fred Stonehead. He lived down the block from me. He only had a couple video games. He would come over and watch me play. Usually I would give him some time with the game. He wasn't very good, but that was probably because he never got a chance to play.

On the third day Fred came over and asked me if he could play. I let him play for about fifteen minutes and then said he had to give it back to me. He wouldn't. Finally I got mad and told him to leave.

Later that day, I saw him walking toward my house. I wondered what he was up to. He came into my yard and knocked on the door.

"You have to give me the game," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Ron said it was my turn."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah."

"I'll just go and call her."

"You can't. She went out of town for a few days. She gave me a note to give to you."

He handed me this note: *"Please give Fred my video game for the rest of the week. Thanks, Ronny."*

He put his hand out.

"I'm not giving you the game. That note is not from Ron." How did I know?



Solution to Mystery #1:

Miss Grinder couldn't have a niece since she had no sibling and hadn't married.

Solution to Mystery #2:

Aside from the fact that he protested too much, Bobby Beef said he had never been in the office, but then he slipped and said that the principal had brought him "back" into the office. Obviously he had been there once before.

Solution to Mystery #3:

Ronni spells her full name with an "i," in the note it is spelled with a "y."

