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Contents

An Unsolved Puzzle	1
A Reference Project	13
Mystery Headline	26
Who, Me?	33
Brainwave	42
Are You Receiving?	54
Spot-the-crook	64
On the Trail	78
The Key	97
Trapped!	111



1

An Unsolved Puzzle

'Knock, knock.'

Holly Adams screwed up her nose, closed her eyes, and pretended not to hear. There were times for bad jokes and, as far as she was concerned, this wasn't one of them.

'Come on, come on,' said her best friend, Amy Hunt, from the other side of the room. 'Knock, knock.'

Holly looked up. She knew she couldn't win. When Amy was testing jokes for *The Tom-tom,* the lower-school magazine, nothing could stop her. 'Who's there?' she sighed.

'Isadora.'

'Isadora who?'

'Isadora open arounda here? I'm freezing!'

In spite of herself, Holly smiled. 'Amy, that's terrible.'

'You really think so?'

'No,' said Holly. 'I was just being polite. Really, I think it's worse than terrible.'

'Good,' said Amy. 'It's definitely in then.'

She bent low over the sheet of paper on the coffee table, her corn-coloured hair flopping into her eyes as she wrote. She sat back with a grin. 'Right, that's the jokes column done. How are you getting on, Holly?'

'I'm not,' said Holly.

'How come?'

'Maybe because I keep getting interrupted by someone testing bad jokes on me.'

'Well, they've got to be tested on someone, haven't they?' said Amy. 'Our magazine has to keep its standards up.'

'Or down, where your jokes are concerned.'

Amy laughed. It wasn't one of her loudest laughs – they, in Holly's view, would qualify for a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* section on loud noises – but a fairly gentle laugh, doing no more than make the windows rattle.

'So, how *is* the mystery column getting on?' she said.

Holly slumped back in her armchair and pointed to the blank sheet of paper in front of her. 'There you are. That's it!'

'Oh dear,' said Amy. 'No ideas?'

Holly shook her head. She'd never had this trouble before.

'Maybe it was a bad idea to try to put together an issue of the magazine for the first week of term,' she said.

'No it wasn't,' said Amy. 'It was a great idea.'

'You think so?'

'I *know* so.' She waved a hand around the Adams's lounge. 'For one thing your house is more comfortable than the resources room at school . . .'

'Is that all?'

'Of course it isn't. You know what it's like when we go back to school after the holidays – everybody has a face as long as a wet weekend. But with a first-week issue of the magazine in their hands, just think how much happier they'll be!'

'Even with your jokes in it?'

'Especially with my jokes in it! Now, what's the problem with the mystery column?'

'Nothing's happening. Nothing at all.'

The idea of the mystery column was to report on the latest mystery books, or on mystery series showing on television. Usually it was a case of Holly having to decide what to leave out. But not today.

'I haven't seen a single new mystery book in the shops,' continued Holly, 'and absolutely everything on television is a repeat. They're even showing *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* again!'

'I know,' said Amy. 'My dad says they were repeats when *he* was a kid!'

Holly got to her feet and began to pace up and down. 'What we need,' she said thoughtfully, 'is something *new*.'

'Like my jokes, you mean?' said Amy.

'*Not* like your jokes,' began Holly. 'My dad says most of your jokes are old enough to have been taken on board by Noah . . .' She stopped, her eyes brightening as an idea came to her. 'Hey! Wait a minute. Why not?' She started pacing up and down the lounge again. 'Yes, why not . . .'

'Excuse me, can anybody join this conversation?' said Amy. 'Why not what?'

'Why not,' Holly said enthusiastically, 'an *old* mystery? Maybe . . .'

'Maybe, maybe?'

'Maybe one that's *never* been solved!'

Amy nodded approvingly. 'I like it! Hey – how about Jack the Ripper?'

Holly wrinkled her nose. 'For the lower-school magazine?'

'Hmm, perhaps not,' said Amy.

'But that sort of thing, definitely,' said Holly. She thought a bit more. 'Or maybe even a legend.'

'You mean, something that might or might not be true? Like . . .' Amy clicked her fingers as she searched for a good example. 'Like King Arthur and Camelot and all that lot?'

'No. Not exactly.'

'Yes, you're probably right,' sniffed Amy. She gave a sudden laugh, 'Hey! I've just thought – why was Camelot the dumbest place?'

'Huh?'

'Because it was ruled by King Arthur and the Nits of the Round Table!'

'Amy!' laughed Holly. But she'd got the point. 'OK, forget the legend idea. But an article about an unsolved mystery – that could be really good.'

She was still thinking as she drifted out to the kitchen to make another round of milk-shakes.

Holly's mother and father both worked during the day, her father as a solicitor and her mother as the assistant manager of a bank. Holly couldn't say she liked the arrangement, but it did mean she could make milk-shakes to her heart's content. She'd just stuck her head into the fridge when the front doorbell rang.

'Amy!' yelled Holly. 'Could you see who it is, please? And what flavour do you want – strawberry again?'

'Yes, please,' said Amy as she went to the front door. Then, moments later, she called, 'And chocolate for the paper boy.'

For the paper boy? What is Amy doing, thought Holly. *Inviting the whole street in for drinks?*

She popped her head out of the kitchen door, just in time to see Amy returning from the front door followed by a tall, skinny boy with a newspaper bag looped over his shoulder.

'Josh!' said Holly. 'You didn't say you were coming round.'

Josh Hamilton brushed his hair out of his eyes with one hand, and patted the paper bag with the other.

'I didn't know I'd be delivering the evening papers.'

'*Evening* papers?' said Amy. She looked at her watch. 'It's only half-past four.'

'They call it the evening edition,' said Josh – the third member of the K.I.D.Z. 'Actually there's another edition later in the day, but we don't deliver it.'

Josh smiled. He looked pleased with himself. 'One of the afternoon boys has gone away for the next two weeks, so I'm doing his round as well as my own. It means,' he said excitedly, 'that taking into account what I've saved so far, by the end of this week . . .' He paused to look at Holly, then at Amy, and then back at Holly again. '. . . I'll have enough money!'

Holly groaned. It had not been a good afternoon. First it had been Amy's jokes. Then her own lack of ideas for the mystery column. And now Josh's secret. He had been plaguing them with it all through the holidays.

Josh had first said he was saving up for something at the start of the holidays, explaining that he'd taken on a paper round especially for the purpose. But exactly *what* he was saving up for, he wouldn't say.

Since then, Holly and Amy had tried everything they knew to get him to say what it was. They'd

tried persuasion. They'd tried pretending they didn't care (which they certainly did!). Once Holly had said that she would set Jamie on to him, but even the threat of being interrogated by Holly's gruesome little brother hadn't budged Josh's resolve. His secret was still secret.

Once more, she told herself. She'd try once more. 'Have enough money for what, Josh?'

But Josh just smiled. 'I can't tell you – in case they're gone when I get there. But they were there the last time I looked.'

'You want a mystery, Holly?' said Amy. 'Meet Josh Hamilton, a boy who is a complete mystery!'

Josh laughed, but still said nothing.

Amy put her hands on Josh's shoulders. 'Josh,' she said sweetly, 'are we, or are we not, the K.I.D.Z.?'

'Yes, but—'

'Solving mysteries wherever we find them,' said Holly. 'Together.'

'All for one . . .' said Amy.

'And one for all,' said Holly.

'Yes, but—'

'So secrets between the K.I.D.Z. are out,' said Amy softly. 'Agreed?'

Josh nodded. 'Agreed. No secrets.'

'There you are, then!' Amy said triumphantly.

'And as soon as I get them, I'll tell you. But, if I were to tell you now and then didn't manage to get them, it would be even worse. I'd feel as though I'd let you both down. That would be awful, wouldn't it?'

'It can't be more awful than not knowing what you're on about, can it?' yelled Amy.

'You'll see,' said Josh. 'All I can say is, they're just what the K.I.D.Z. need.'

With an exasperated sigh, Holly took the newspaper that Josh was holding and flopped down into an armchair.

'Hey, don't crumple that paper up,' said Josh. 'It's for number seventy-four. You don't have an evening paper from Harry's One-Stop.'

'Then why did you bring us one?' said Holly, rifling through the pages.

'I didn't. I just called in to say hello.'

'Hello,' said Amy, still miffed. 'Say hello to Josh, Holly.'

'Hello,' Holly said absently.

'Well, that *was* nice wasn't it?' said Amy. She put her hand in the middle of Josh's back and pushed gently. 'Cheerio, Josh. Do call again.'

'OK, I get the message. But that newspaper . . .'

'Is for number seventy-four,' said Amy. 'Don't worry, Josh. I'll deliver it for you on my way home.' She looked across at Holly, still with her head in the newspaper. 'If I ever get to go home, that is.'

Josh looked at her questioningly. *'The Tom-tom,'* explained Amy. 'We've been trying to put an issue together for next week, but there's still a big hole where the mystery column is supposed to be.'

Holly looked up. 'We thought we'd have something about an unsolved mystery. Any ideas?'

'Holly,' said Amy in mock horror. 'You're asking Josh for ideas? You must be desperate!'

Josh shook his head. 'Not really . . .'

'There you are,' said Amy.

'Unless there's anything on page fifteen,' said Josh, pointing to the newspaper Holly was still flicking through. 'Bottom corner. I haven't had a chance to look at it myself yet.'

Mystified, Holly turned to page fifteen. 'What am I supposed to be looking for?'

'They have a little section on what happened years ago today. Fifty years, twenty-five years—'

He was stopped in his tracks by Holly's shout. Eyes open wide as she looked at the page, she yelled, 'Hey! This could be it!"

As Josh and Amy gathered round to look, Holly spread the newspaper out on the coffee table. 'Look, look. There!'

' "Ten years ago today . . ." ' Amy began to read. 'Is that all?'

Holly tapped excitedly at the page with her finger. 'Of course it isn't! Look!'

' ". . . blackmailer Ginger Kane . . ." ' read Josh.

'I couldn't see *that* bit,' said Amy. 'You had your finger on it.' She bent down to look at the next part of the paragraph, as Josh continued reading.

' ". . . got away with a ransom haul of fifty thousand pounds that had been left in a telephone booth outside Highgate station." '

As he gave a low whistle, Amy seized her chance to read the next bit.

' "But twenty-five minutes later, Kane was arrested by an off-duty policeman, PC Alan Jenkins, who spotted him and gave chase." 'Twenty-five minutes later!' exclaimed Amy. 'Well, *that's* not much of a mystery, is it?'

'No,' said Holly. 'But *this* is.'

She pointed again at the page. There was a simple, final sentence to the paragraph that Amy hadn't seen.

‘ “But, by then, Kane had got rid of the money. It has never been found.” ’

Holly looked at Josh. Josh looked at Amy. Amy looked at Holly. They all nodded together.

‘Now *there*’s a mystery!’

