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Opening extract from

Mystery Pups: Framed!

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Chapter One

"Caitlin, wake up – Megan and Lauren are here!"

From under the covers of her warm bed, Caitlin heard her mum call.

"Time to get up!" Caitlin's friend Lauren yelled as she sprinted upstairs.

Megan stayed downstairs in the hallway to keep an eye on Buster and Dylan. "Sit!" she told the two pups sternly.

Buster, the cute pale brown mongrel, and Dylan, the sleek black Labrador, sat. They gazed up at Megan, tails swishing gently over the shiny floor.

Upstairs, Lauren charged into Caitlin's bedroom



and dragged back the covers. "Get up, lazy bones. It's nine o'clock!"

Caitlin tried to pull the duvet back up over her head.

"Get up!" Lauren repeated, sitting on the bed and jiggling up and down. "Today's the day for our second Puppy Club meeting. You need to get up and bring Daisy to Megan's house."

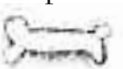
Caitlin sat up straight. "Wow, yes, I forgot!" she said. "We're going to do the Puppy Club promises again, and give the pups their medallions!"

"Exactly!" Lauren's brown eyes shone. "And we'll wear our Puppy Club badges, just like last time…"

Caitlin jumped out of bed and scrambled into her jeans and a pale blue sweatshirt, stuffed her feet into a pair of trainers, tucked her toy pup Daisy under her arm, then dashed downstairs to join the others.

"No time for breakfast!" Caitlin called to her mum, as she, Lauren and Megan shot out of the front door. "Bye!"

The Magic Mountain Puppy Club was on the move, heading for Megan's place, rushing full-tilt towards another super-sleuth adventure.



"We are members of the Magic Mountain Puppy Club." With serious faces, Lauren, Caitlin and Megan read out their promises.

Bouncy Buster, cute Daisy and clever Dylan stared eagerly at the gold medallions which the girls held in their hands.

"Where's your badge?" Megan whispered to Caitlin.

"Here!" Caitlin replied, pushing back her long hair to reveal her Puppy Club Members' badge.

"Just checking!" Megan muttered, satisfied that she, Caitlin and Lauren were all wearing their badges.

"We promise to feed our puppies and play with them," they chanted. "We promise to take them for long walks."

The sun shone down on the pups and their owners. Dylan and Buster's tails wagged. Daisy's eyes sparkled in the bright light.

Then Lauren, Megan and Caitlin leant forward and hung the magic gold medallions around their puppies' necks.

The girls waited for something to happen.

Lauren sighed and shook her head. "I don't feel dizzy like last time!"

"Me neither," a disappointed Megan agreed.



But Caitlin had been staring at Daisy and was sure one ear had moved. "Look – Daisy's coming alive!" she whispered.

Then, as the puppies' medallions glinted in the sun, Lauren felt the lawn start to tilt and turn, and Megan saw the green trees blur and spin.

"*Now* I'm dizzy!" Lauren cried.

Whizz! The world tilted and turned like a ride at the fairground. The girls seemed to float up from the ground then spin and spin towards a brilliant white light.

"Wow, it's happening!" Megan gasped.

Buster, Dylan and Daisy bounded ahead into the centre of the light.

"Yippee – Daisy's come back to life!" Caitlin rushed after her magical pup and was lost in the dazzle.

"Wait for us!" Lauren begged, as the three Mystery Pups led her, Megan and Caitlin into a magical world.





Chapter Two

Zap! Lauren, Caitlin and Megan made a hard landing. They hit the ground running, five metres behind Buster, Daisy and Dylan, who raced ahead across a dimly-lit hallway.

"This is Sleuth City by Night, playing mellow music to snooze to," a voice on the radio schmoozed as the Mystery Pups charged through an open door into the biggest, grandest living room the girls had ever seen.

There were three cream leather sofas and a huge crimson rug in the middle of a marble floor. Six gleaming glass chandeliers hung from

the ceiling, and the walls were crammed with paintings framed in gold.

"Who lives here?" Caitlin asked, her mouth open in amazement.

"Someone mega-rich," Megan pointed out.

"Whoa!" Lauren cried, as Buster bashed against a table leg and made a lamp wobble. She rushed to catch it before it toppled to the floor. "That was close!"

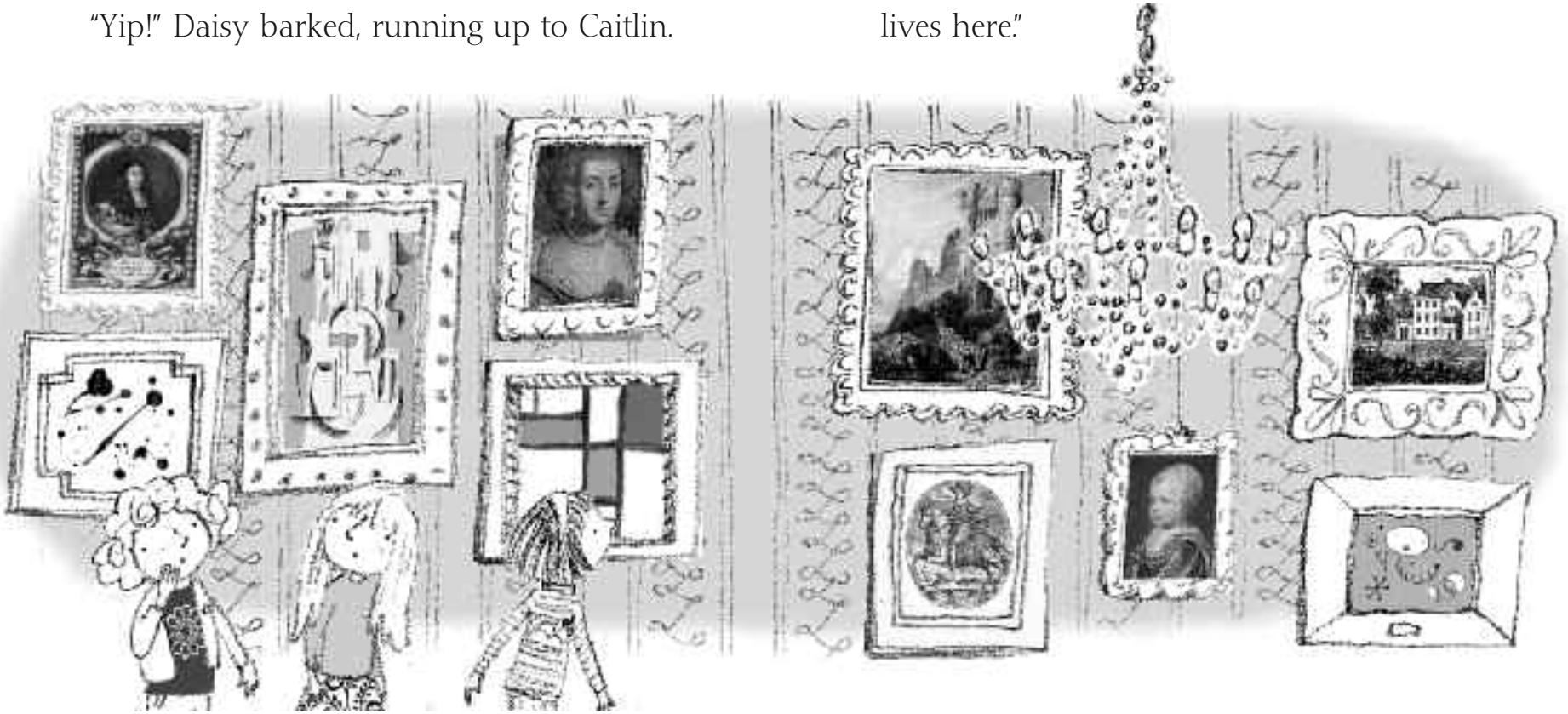
"Yip!" Daisy barked, running up to Caitlin.

"What is it? What do you want?" Caitlin asked. *And why are we here?*

"Take a look at this place!" Megan said to Lauren and Caitlin. "It's crammed with … stuff!"

"Maybe it's a museum," Lauren suggested as she circled a marble statue.

But Megan spotted two half-empty wine glasses on one of the tables and a pair of red high heeled shoes under a sofa. "No. Someone lives here."





Dylan darted under the sofa and grabbed a red shoe. He brought it straight to Megan and dropped it at her feet.

"You want me to find who this belongs to?" she asked him thoughtfully.

"Yap!" Then, *sniff-sniff, snuffle-snuffle* – Dylan trotted towards a stairway at the far side of the room.

"Hey!" Lauren's voice brought the girls and the pups running. They gathered by the marble fireplace, staring up at the wall. "Look!" Lauren whispered, pointing to the empty space above the mantelpiece.

"There should be another picture there!" Megan said slowly. "The wallpaper has faded everywhere except here."

"Someone took it down. Maybe it needed cleaning," Caitlin guessed.

"Yip-yip-yap-yap!" The three pups barked and jumped up against the fireplace.

"Or maybe someone broke in and stole it!" exclaimed Lauren.

"Yip-yip-yip!"

"Dylan, Daisy, Buster – ssshhh!" Caitlin, Megan and Lauren raised their fingers to their lips.

"And here is some breaking news from Sleuth City Police Department." The radio announcer broke through the singer's fading warble. "We're getting reports of a major art theft from the luxury apartment of rock legend Jimmi Diamond."

Megan, Caitlin and Lauren's eyes almost popped out of their heads as they stared at the empty wall above the fireplace. "That's where we are – right here, right now!" Caitlin gasped, spotting a diamond-studded guitar in the corner.

"According to early police reports, thieves broke into the Diamonds' apartment in central Sleuth City earlier tonight. They made off with a

masterpiece by French artist, Claude Rosier. The portrait was recently valued at a cool five million! Now that, guys and girls, is enough cash to wake every one of us from our beauty sleep!"

Megan swallowed hard. If the police caught the girls and their pups in the Diamonds' apartment, they'd be in real trouble.

Caitlin scooped little Daisy up from the floor. "Uh-oh, we need to get out!" she whispered.

Lauren turned to see if she could spot the exit. "We so-o-o do!" she agreed.

Suddenly the dim lights turned bright and an alarm shattered the silence. "Too late!" Megan and Caitlin groaned.

Buster jumped up and tugged at Lauren's T-shirt. Clever Dylan trotted to a bookcase behind a sofa then gave a high yelp.

Just in time, Megan, Caitlin and Daisy, Lauren and Buster ran for cover. They dived behind the sofa then into the gap under the bookcase.



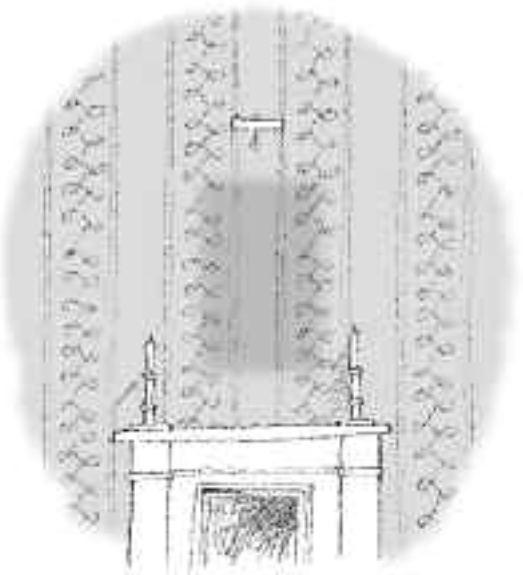
Weird, thought Megan. *Why should the alarm go off right now?*

Lauren was picturing policemen dragging them out of their hiding place, asking them questions about the theft which they wouldn't be able to answer. "How did you get into the apartment? Where's the painting? Come on, spill the beans!"

"Try not to breathe," Caitlin warned, peering out and wondering what had happened to

Jimmi Diamond and the woman who owned the red shoes.

The burglar alarm jangled on, sirens sounded in the street below and the gaping space above the fireplace screamed "Stop thief!" to all who saw it.





Chapter three

A buzzer sounded alongside the alarm and at last two people came down the glass stairs.

One was a tall, blonde woman dressed in a red silk dressing gown. The other was a man – smaller and older than the woman and wearing his thin grey hair in a ponytail. He walked to the door and pressed a button. A small screen lit up, showing the street scene below. "Who's there?" he asked.

"This is Agent Greene from the Police Department," the man on the screen answered.

"OK, come on up." The ponytail man pressed another button then turned to the

woman. "They took their time," he muttered.

The woman checked her hair in a mirror, fluffing it up with her fingertips. "They're here now, Jimmi, and that's what matters."

From under the bookcase, Megan, Lauren and Caitlin listened hard. They held their breaths and prayed that the pups wouldn't give them away.

"Yip!" Daisy let out the smallest yelp and wriggled in Caitlin's arms. Luckily for them, at the same moment there was a knock on the main door of the apartment and Jimmi Diamond went to answer it. "Come right on in," he told Greene. "Man, are we glad to see you!"

"Try to stay calm, Mr Diamond," the cop said, scanning the room and spotting the empty space above the fireplace. "I have agents guarding the entrance to the building and a couple more posted on the street corner. If the thieves are still around, my men will get them."

"Thank goodness!" Helen Diamond sobbed, trembling and looking as if her legs were about to give way. She sat on the sofa closest to where the girls and the pups hid.

"Yip!" Daisy yelped again.

"Ssshhh!" Caitlin begged, holding her tight.

"Now, Sir." Turning to Jimmi D, the cop hooked his thumbs into his belt and gave the rock star a hard stare. "Do you know anyone who could be behind this theft? Any friend or tradesman who could have worked out how to fool the security system?"

Jimmi Diamond looked blank. "This came as a complete shock," he answered. "Look at Helen – you can see how hard she's taking it."

"Grrrr … !" Buster growled and looked as if he was about to break cover, until Lauren held him back.

"Such a beautiful painting!" Helen sobbed.

"And worth a fortune," Jimmi added with a frown.