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Opening extract from

Mystery Pups - Missing

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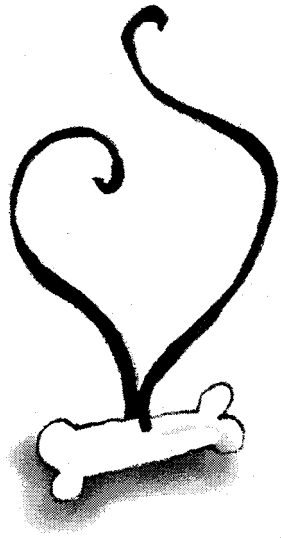
Mystery Pups



MISSING!

by Jodie Mellor
Illustrated by Penny Dann

SIMON AND SCHUSTER



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CHAPTER ONE

"I can't wait to get back to Sleuth City," Lauren said, sitting with her puppy, Buster, on the grass in her friend Megan's garden. "It's the only place where exciting things happen!"

Megan brushed her own puppy's sleek black coat. Dylan sat perfectly still beside her with his eyes half closed in pleasure. "We have to wait for Caitlin and Daisy," Megan reminded her friend.

"Sleuth City is so cool!" Lauren sighed dreamily, then gave Buster a hug. "The man at Magic Mountain Rescue Centre *told* us that our puppies were special."

"But not *how* special!" Megan grinned.

"Magic-special!"

"Super-special!"

"Like no other puppies in the whole world!" Lauren tickled Buster's tummy.

Buster rolled, then jumped up. *Yap!* He ran up and down the long lawn with Dylan close behind.

"Hurry up, Caitlin!" Lauren went to the garden gate to look along the street. "What's keeping her? This is Saturday - Puppy Club day!"

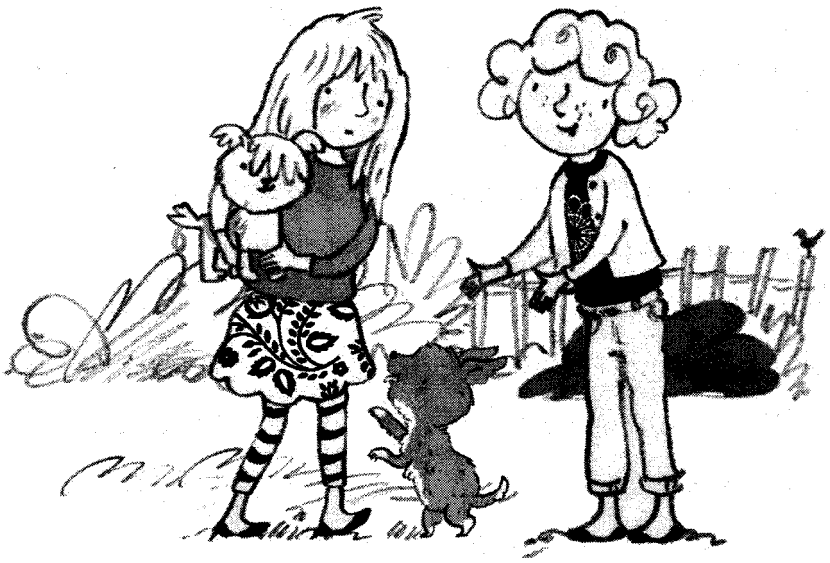
Just then she saw Caitlin turn the corner with her little toy dog, Daisy, tucked under her arm. "Here she comes!"

Megan joined Lauren at the gate. Caitlin was walking slowly with her head down. "What's up with her?" she wondered.

"What's wrong?" Lauren asked, running down the street to meet Caitlin.

"Oh hi, Lauren. Nothing's wrong."

"You look sad," Megan said, as she held the gate open. Their friend's face was pale, her long,



golden-red hair loose around her shoulders.

"And you should be happy," Lauren insisted, letting lively Buster jump up at her as she came back into the garden. "Today's Saturday!"

"Today we get to go back to Sleuth City – we hope!" Megan picked Dylan up and let him say hi to Daisy. "I've got Dylan's medallion in my pocket."

"And I've got Buster's!" Lauren pulled the medal out of her pocket and let it dangle on its

bright red ribbon. Buster pricked up his ears and yelped. "How about you, Caitlin? Have you brought Daisy's medallion and your badge?"

Caitlin nodded. "Sorry I'm late," she muttered. "Mum took me up to Magic Mountain Rescue Centre. We only just got back."

Lauren and Megan gasped.

"Say that again!" Lauren cried. "Your mum took you to Magic Mountain? Wow!"

"To get you a puppy?" Megan asked. "A real live puppy?"

"Hush!" Covering Daisy's ears, Caitlin nodded. "Mum feels sorry for me 'cos you two have got Dylan and Buster and I've only got Daisy. She said I could choose a dog and bring it home."

"So why aren't you grinning and laughing and jumping up and down like a crazy person?" Lauren demanded. "Isn't that what you've always wanted?"

"Did you choose a puppy?" Megan asked

more quietly.

"Not yet. The man at Magic Mountain said I should take my time, not rush into things. We just had a look then came away again."

"I don't get it." Lauren frowned, picking Buster up. The three girls stood in a small circle in the middle of the lawn. "If it had been me, I'd have chosen the cutest one and brought it home right away!"

"But Caitlin's *not* you," Megan pointed out. She thought she understood Caitlin's problem. 'You're thinking about Daisy, aren't you?"

Caitlin sighed and nodded. "Sshh, I don't want her to hear! I really want a live puppy, but Daisy will be jealous if I get one. I know she will."

"But Daisy's not real. She's a toy," Lauren pointed out.

"Not in Sleuth City," Megan said. In Sleuth City Daisy was as alive as Dylan and Buster – a silky little Yorkshire terrier hot on the trail of

dognappers and art thieves.

"Ah!" Lauren realised.

"Exactly!" Caitlin said, setting Daisy down on the grass and taking out her medallion. "Anyway, let's not talk about it any more in front of Daisy. Let's put our badges on and say our Puppy Club promises."

"Yes, let's do it!" Lauren agreed. "Sleuth City, here we come!"

"Sit!" Megan told Dylan.

The little black Labrador sat with his ears pricked and his brown eyes shining.

"Sit, Buster!" Lauren said.

The creamy mongrel pup fidgeted and panted beside Dylan.

"Sit!" Caitlin popped Daisy down beside Dylan and Buster. Daisy's eyes stared blankly back.

Megan, Lauren and Caitlin put on their badges. They knew the Puppy Club promises off by heart.

"We promise to look after our puppies well. We promise to train them properly. We promise to feed them and play with them..."

"Ready?" Megan asked.

Lauren and Caitlin nodded and leaned forward. Together they hung the three gold medallions around their puppies' necks.

"Whoa!" Straight away Megan felt dizzy. She put her hands on the ground to steady herself.



"Whoo!" Lauren cried. "Here we go!" She was floating through the air, beginning to spin

round and round with Buster beside her.

Caitlin saw Daisy's medallion glitter in the sun. She gasped as Daisy blinked and twitched her ears. "Hold on, wait for us!" she cried as they all whirled upwards into a dazzling white light.

And the three girls and their magic puppies spun high into the air, until Megan's garden looked tiny and her street stretched away like a grey ribbon into the green, blurred distance below.

