

# THE BOBBSEY TWINS®

## Mystery at School



**By Laura Lee Hope**

New edition! Revised and abridged









# **Mystery at School**

New edition! Revised and abridged

By Laura Lee Hope

Illustrated by Pepe Gonzalez

Publishers • GROSSET & DUNLAP • New York

*Look for these new*  
**BOBBSEY TWINS®** *reissues:*

- 1 • The Bobbsey Twins of Lakeport
- 2 • Adventure in the Country
- 3 • The Secret at the Seashore
- 4 • Mystery at School
- 5 • The Mystery at Snow Lodge
- 6 • The Bobbsey Twins on a Houseboat
- 7 • Mystery at Meadowbrook
- 8 • Big Adventure at Home

Revised and abridged by Nancy S. Axelrad.

Copyright © 1989 by Simon & Schuster, Inc. All rights reserved. Published by Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., a member of The Putnam Publishing Group, New York. THE BOBBSEY TWINS is a registered trademark of Simon & Schuster, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. Published simultaneously in Canada. Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 88-80423 ISBN 0-448-09074-0  
D E F G H I J

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Trick Dog .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Snap Decision .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Ping-Pong Puppets .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Twin Traps .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>A Bald Clue .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Circus Star .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>The Red Connection .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>More Riddles .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Double Discovery .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Gum Giveaway .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>A New Catch .....</b>	<b>96</b>





# ■ 1 ■

## Trick Dog

"I suppose the Bobbsey twins have been solving mysteries all summer!" Danny Rugg said with a scornful laugh.

"As a matter of fact, we have," Bert replied coolly. He and his dark-haired sister, Nan, were twelve, the same age as their troublesome classmate.

Before Danny could speak again, Mr. Tetlow, their school principal, stepped toward the microphone on the stage of the auditorium.

"I am very pleased to tell all of you about our brand-new museum here at Lakeport Elementary School this year," he said. "We have some things already on display, but we will need more." His owlsh eyes fixed on Bert. "That is why I've decided to form a special committee. Bert Bobbsey, will you please stand up?"

Six-year-old Freddie and Flossie, who were

seated in the front row, turned with the other first-graders and beamed at their brother.

"Bert," Mr. Tetlow continued, "you're in charge."

The boy cleared his throat nervously. "I am, sir?" he asked, hearing a snicker from behind.

"Tetlow's pet," Danny muttered under his breath while the principal explained that he hoped as many children as possible would help with the special museum project.

"Personally, I think it's a dumb idea," Danny said to his friend Jack Westley, whose nickname was Sneaker. "And besides, Bert Bobbsey's always made head of everything. It's really disgusting."

Sneaker agreed, causing Bert to flush angrily. Still, he had resolved that he would not let Danny annoy him this year, and so he said nothing as they made their way back to their classrooms.

When the final school bell rang, both sets of twins and their friends went immediately to the new museum room. It had been an empty classroom. Over the summer workers had painted it and had installed shelves and several glass cases.

"Ooh, look at this!" Flossie exclaimed, peering at a vase.

It had a large egg-shaped body and a narrow neck with a handle on each side. Small red

horses pranced against a black background.

"I see you like my vase," Mr. Tetlow remarked from the doorway.

"It's bee-yoo-ti-ful!" Flossie said.

"It's called an amphora."

"Aaam-phaw-ruh?" Flossie's best friend, Susie Larker, repeated slowly.

"Yes. It was made in Greece several thousand years ago."

"I like the horses!" Freddie added. "They're chasing each other around and around."

Mr. Tetlow smiled. "The scene is a horse race," he said. "No doubt the amphora was given to the winner of one of the great athletic games."

"I like this statue best," Nan remarked, admiring a little female figure about eight inches tall. It had a regal-looking headdress of brilliant red and a dress of creamy-white and blue.

"Who is she?" asked Nellie Parks, a girl of Nan's age with silky blond hair and blue eyes.

"That is a statuette of the snake goddess," the principal replied. "She came from the ruins of an ancient palace in Crete. That's the largest of the Greek islands, in the eastern Mediterranean Sea."

As the other children gathered to look at the piece, Mr. Tetlow said, "She's the most valuable thing in our museum. A friend of mine, Mr.

Thomas Nelson, has loaned it to us while he is in Europe."

"We'll take extra special care of it, Mr. Tetlow," Bert promised.

"Good. I know Mr. Nelson is counting on that," the principal said, smiling. "So am I."

Although their visit was over, Bert and Charlie Mason lingered by a collection of Indian flints and arrowheads while Freddie and Teddy Blake stopped to look at the bows and arrows one more time. Finally they thanked Mr. Tetlow and started home. But talk about the new museum went on even after the group had separated at the corner.

"We'll have to get busy and find some more things to put on the shelves," Bert told his twin.

"The room is sort of empty, isn't it?" Nan said. "I know! We can ask everyone at school to bring in exhibits!"

"Yeah! That's a great idea! I just wish—" Bert stopped abruptly and looked around. "Did you hear that?"

"What?" Nan asked.

"That *pit-pat* sound. Someone is following us."

"I don't see anything," Freddie said, craning his neck.

"I do! I do!" Flossie exclaimed.

Again Bert shot around. "Where?" he asked, ready to swoop on the mysterious creature.

"There!" She giggled and pointed at a crest of shaggy white fur behind some shrubbery.

"It's a dog!" Bert laughed as the animal bounded forward, wagging his tail hello.

"Isn't he nice?" Nan said. "I wonder where he came from."

"Here, boy!" Bert snapped his fingers.

Instantly the dog hopped up on his hind legs and began to dance in a circle.

"What a funny doggy!" Flossie exclaimed.

At once he dropped on all fours again and ran over to the little girl, waving his fluffy tail.

"He's smiling at me!" Flossie exclaimed.

"Shake hands with him, Floss!" Freddie urged as the dog held out one paw.

When each of the children had shaken the dog's paw, Nan said, "He's very well trained, but don't play with him anymore. We don't want him to follow us home. His owner wouldn't like it."

"I wish he was ours!" Freddie said wistfully.

"Come on," his older sister said. "Let's go."

But as they turned down the next block, Bert observed the dog padding after them. "Go home!" he called out sternly.

The dog stopped, lay down, and put his head between his paws.

"He wants to come with us," Flossie said.

"Maybe he doesn't belong to anyone!"

"She's right. He's probably just a stray," Bert put in. "He doesn't have a collar or a license."

"Even so, he can still have an owner," Nan countered, striding ahead of her brother.

"Don't you like doggies?" Flossie asked.

"Of course I do," Nan said, "but he doesn't belong to us." The dog barked as if he objected, and trotted after her. "Go home!" Nan said, and then she tried to ignore him. But the dog barked again.

By now the children had reached the sidewalk in front of their large rambling white house, and Dinah Johnson, the Bobbseys' housekeeper, hurried out. Upon seeing the furry creature, she narrowed her eyes and frowned.

"What's that?" she asked.

"A dog!" Flossie answered, giggling.

"I know it's a dog. But where did he come from?"

The small girl shrugged. "He followed us and he wants to live here."

"Live here!" The housekeeper gulped. "With Snoop? I don't think *he's* going to like that very much."

As she spoke, the black cat appeared in the doorway. Seeing the other animal, he hissed and arched his back, barring the entrance.

"See what I mean?" Dinah said.

"Come on, Snoop!" Bert pleaded. "The dog's not going to hurt you!"

The cat hissed again, arching his back higher.

Again Bert snapped his fingers, and the dog stood on his hind legs, prancing in a circle, while Snoop's eyes followed every move. Then the dog lay down in front of the cat, rolled over on his back, and held his paws helplessly in the air.

Freddie and Flossie cheered as Snoop's fur flattened out and he began to purr. The next moment he walked over to the dog and rubbed against his shoulder.

"They're going to be friends!" Freddie cried, running up and throwing his arms around both animals.

"Now all we have to do is persuade Mom and Dad to let us keep him," Bert said to Nan. "That is, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind if Snoop doesn't." She grinned.

At suppertime, after Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey had met the shaggy new visitor, Dinah took the dog out to the kitchen. Soon he was eating side by side with Snoop.

"What shall we call him?" Flossie asked.

"How about Bongo?" Freddie suggested.

"Or Wrinkle Nose or Waggle Tail?" their father said teasingly.

The twins laughed.

"Why not call him Snap, because he does tricks when Bert snaps his fingers?" Nan said.

"What a good name!" said Bert. The other children agreed.

"Snoop and Snap?" said Dinah, shaking her head as she appeared in the doorway. "That's too much."

"I think it's cute," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Just remember," Mr. Bobbsey cautioned, "the dog isn't yours, and he probably has a name already."

"But, Daddy, we can keep him, can't we?" Freddie said in distress. He looked dolefully at his father. "Can't we, Daddy?"

Mr. Bobbsey shook his head. "That wouldn't be fair, son. The dog seems to be a valuable animal. His owner taught him a lot of tricks. We'll have to try to find him!"

Freddie sprang to his feet and ran over to his father, staring him right in the face. "You wouldn't make us give Snap back, would you?" he pleaded.



## ■ 2 ■

# Snap Decision

"Freddie, dear," said Mrs. Bobbsey, "let's wait until morning to do anything further. We'll fix up a bed for Snap in the garage."

"Flossie and I can do it!" Freddie offered eagerly.

"Not tonight. You have school tomorrow. Dinah and I will do it," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

The children *were* tired after their first day back at school, and they went to bed early and fell asleep almost immediately.

Freddie and Flossie were up bright and early and ran out to the garage to see Snap.

"Snap!" Flossie cried, opening the door wide. The animal leapt toward them, then stood on his hind legs and marched a few steps.

"He likes it here!" Freddie said triumphantly.

During breakfast, the Bobbseys discussed ways of finding Snap's owner.

"We could put an ad in the paper," Bert suggested halfheartedly.

Nan ran to get some paper and a pencil, and the twins composed a notice for the "Found" column of the newspaper. It read:

*FOUND: Trick dog. White, shaggy.  
Near Lakeport Elementary School.  
Owner please phone the Bobbseys at  
389-9204.*

"I'll call the ad in," Mrs. Bobbsey said. "You go on to school."

Just then Dinah called Bert to the phone. "It's Mrs. Mason," she told him.

Charlie's mother told Bert that her son had twisted his ankle the evening before. "I think he should stay off it today. He wants you to bring him the paper bag he left in his desk. Will you do that, please?"

"Of course, Mrs. Mason. I'll bring it at noon. I just hope it doesn't have yesterday's lunch in it." Bert chuckled.

But at noon Bert forgot about Charlie's message and went straight home. On the way back, however, he suddenly thought of it. "I'll get it now," he said to Nan. "There's still time to run over to the Masons'."

"Okay. I see Nellie anyhow. I want to talk to her."

While Bert ran into the school building, Nan walked toward her friend. She was standing with a group of children in front of a small green panel truck. Most of them were eating ice-cream cones, which they had bought at a newly opened shop down the street.

"Want a taste?" Nellie asked Nan, licking off some chocolate.

"No, thanks."

"Maybe she likes vanilla better," came a snickering voice from behind. Danny Rugg held out a half-eaten ice-cream cone.

Nan wrinkled her face disdainfully and stalked off. Bert was just coming out of the school with Charlie's package under his arm. He stopped to speak to the girls just as Freddie and Flossie, followed by Snap, ran toward them.

Gazing longingly at the rainbow of ice-cream cones, Freddie said, "I want one!"

"After school," Bert replied, catching sight of Snap, who was romping playfully among the children. "You shouldn't have brought *him* here!"

Flossie laughed. "He's smart enough!"

"He followed us," Freddie explained, "and we couldn't make him go back!"

"Oh, well, he'll probably leave when we go into the building. I hope so anyway," Bert said, starting off toward Charlie's house.

Just then a man in dirty coveralls came hurrying toward the truck. He was carrying a paper parcel, which he put in the back of the vehicle. Instantly Snap began to bark fiercely and ran forward.

The man, however, paid no attention and opened the door, ready to climb inside. Snap gave a flying leap, landing on the seat instead. Distracted by the noise, Bert turned around.

"Get out of here!" the driver snarled at Snap. He gave the dog a violent shove, which sent him sprawling to the ground. Then the man got in and started the engine.

"Snap!" Nan screamed. "Get out of the way!"

Like a streak of lightning, the dog scrambled to avoid being hit by the oncoming vehicle.

Bert, meantime, had pulled a small notebook out of his pocket and written down the license number.

"That man ought to be arrested!" the boy thought angrily, watching the truck race down the street.

"At least Snap wasn't hurt," Nan said. She leaned down to pet the whimpering animal. "Good boy, Snap. Good fella."

"Why did Snap bark at that man?" Flossie asked.

Bert shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe the man looks like someone Snap doesn't like!" he said. "See you later. I've got to run!"

Despite the interruption, the boy managed to get to and from Charlie's before the afternoon bell rang. He slipped into his classroom just as his teacher, Ms. Vandermeer, was about to close the door.

When school was finally over, Bert packed up his books and homework assignments and hurried to the museum room.

"Everyone's gone home. I guess I can lock up now," he decided.

Before turning out the lights, he glanced around. Everything appeared to be in order—until he noticed a strangely empty space on the shelf where the valuable statuette of the Cretan snake goddess had been!

"Oh, no!" Bert muttered in horror. "Who could have taken it?"

Frantic, he searched the room from one end to the other, but there was no sign of the little figure. Then he raced down the hall to the principal's office. Mr. Tetlow's secretary had left for the day, and the inner door was open.



"Excuse me, Mr. Tetlow," the boy said breathlessly.

The principal, who had been reading, looked up. "What's the matter, Bert?" he asked.

As quickly as he could, Bert blurted out the story of the missing statuette.

"But that's the most valuable thing we have in the museum!" Mr. Tetlow exclaimed. "We have to find it right away!"

His face grim and troubled, the principal bolted out of his office, followed by Bert. Despite Bert's previous search, they scanned each shelf in the museum room and opened all the cupboards. But the statuette was not there!

"We'll go through the whole building if we have to," Mr. Tetlow said. "I hope this isn't somebody's idea of a joke."

Bert couldn't help but think of Danny. He had said the museum was a dumb idea, and he was jealous of Bert for being given the honor of running it. But without proof, Bert knew he could not accuse the other boy.

After investigating every classroom and storage place and not finding the statue, Mr. Tetlow summoned the janitor. "Mr. Carter," the principal said, addressing the short chubby man, "were there any strangers in the building today?"

The man stared up at the basement ceiling as

he thought. "Yes, as a matter of fact, there were two. A man from some cleaning service. He said the district office sent him over."

"*Our* school district office?" Mr. Tetlow asked, obviously surprised.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tetlow. They sent him over to see if he could help me with a couple of big jobs."

"But you said there were two people who came," Bert put in.

"The other man was from the electric company. He told me he had orders to check all the lights."

"What did he look like?" the principal inquired.

"I'd say pretty ordinary. Bald. And oh, he wore blue jeans. The cleaning-service guy was about my height and had real light-colored hair—almost white."

"Could one of them have taken the statuette?" Bert asked anxiously, looking at Mr. Carter.

"I guess so. But they both had ID's," the janitor said.

"Just the same, maybe we should call both companies," Bert said. "One of the ID's might have been fake."

"Good idea," said Mr. Tetlow. "If you're still as good at solving mysteries as you were, maybe you can solve this one!"



Mr. Carter gave Mr. Tetlow and Bert the number of the cleaning service, which they called right away. The manager confirmed the janitor's story, adding that his employee was extremely reliable.

Mr. Tetlow thanked him for the information. Then he phoned the electric company. When he asked about the man who had come to check the lights, the official sounded surprised. "I don't know what you're talking about. We didn't send anyone to your school today."

Mr. Tetlow persisted and gave as complete a description of the visitor as he could.

"All our men wear shirts with the company name on it," said the voice on the phone. "It's against regulations not to."

Mr. Tetlow put down the phone and frowned. "It must have been the guy who told Carter he was from the electric company!" the principal said gloomily.

"Let's notify the police at once," Bert said, and Mr. Tetlow nodded.

When he was finished talking to the police department, he advised Bert to stay awhile. "Chief Mahoney is sending someone over to talk to us."

Within a few minutes a police car stopped in front of the school, and an officer darted into the building.

"Just where was the statue when it was stolen?" Officer Jim Murphy asked briskly.

Mr. Tetlow and Bert led the way to the museum and showed him the shelf where the snake goddess had stood on display. Officer Murphy gazed intently at the now-empty space.

"It's impossible to tell anything from fingerprints. There are too many of them," he said, strangely puzzled. "You say this is the only thing missing?"

Bert nodded.

"It also happens to be worth the most money," Mr. Tetlow revealed. "Whoever stole the statue must've known its value."

As the questioning continued, Bert told about the mysterious man who had told the janitor he had come to check the lights. "The electric company says it didn't send anyone," Bert added.

After getting a full description from Mr. Carter, Officer Murphy closed his little notebook. "I hope we can pick him up soon."

While all of this was happening, Freddie and Flossie were at home with Nan. Curled up comfortably on the living-room couch, Nan was reading a mystery story and did not hear the younger children go outside with Snap.

Flossie picked up a long stick, at which Snap

made little whining sounds. "I think he wants to jump over it," she said.

"Try him," Freddie urged.

Flossie held the stick straight out about two feet off the ground. "Come on, Snappy," she said as the animal backed away. With his tongue hanging out, he bolted forward with a high leap. "Snap knows another trick!" the little girl exclaimed.

"I wonder if he'll jump over the water from the hose," Freddie said, attaching it to the outlet. "I'll squirt it over there. You stand on the other side and call Snap. Okay?"

Flossie obeyed gleefully, but the dog refused to jump. Instead, he hopped about, barking sharply.

"Come on, Snappy!" Flossie encouraged him. "You won't get wet if you jump high enough!"

Freddie lowered the stream and his sister called again. This time the dog cleared the water perfectly. Then he turned around and leapt back again.

"See! He likes it!" Flossie cried excitedly.

Snap jumped back and forth until he was dripping wet. Just then Dinah poked her head through the front door. "Hey, what's going on out here?" she called.

As Flossie ran toward her, the dog trotted be-

hind. When he had finally caught up, he shook himself vigorously and sneezed.

"Stop!" Flossie exclaimed. "You're getting me all wet!"

Without thinking, Freddie, who was still holding the water hose, swung it in Flossie's direction. Flossie jumped aside but slid on the slippery grass.

"Flossie! You come in here this minute and put on some dry clothes!" Dinah commanded, casting a serious glance at Freddie. "And you put that hose away, you hear me?"

"Oh, all right," Freddie said meekly.

He had just started dragging the long green tube across the lawn when Danny Rugg passed by. "Hi, Freddie!" he said cheerfully.

Freddie, who did not trust Danny, murmured a greeting and went on with his work.

"Sneaker just told me something was stolen from the museum! He was at school when it happened," Danny volunteered.

Freddie said nothing.

"And I know who stole it, too!" the other boy went on, preening like a peacock.

"Who?" Freddie asked curiously.

"Your brother, Bert!"

### ■ 3 ■

## Ping-Pong Puppets

"My brother never stole anything!" Freddie declared hotly.

"Oh, no?" Danny smirked. "Well, I saw him with my very own eyes. He was coming out of school after lunch with a package under his arm. And it *wasn't* his lunch!"

"He was taking something to Charlie Mason!" Freddie's voice rose to a shout.

"Sure, sure," Danny jeered.

By this time Freddie was so furious he could hardly speak. He wanted to punch Danny, but he knew he was too little to hurt him.

"You get out of here!" Freddie cried, blasting the hose in the other boy's direction.

Caught by surprise, Danny froze in the misty spray. Then, with a yell, he ran to the end of the sidewalk.

Water dripping from his face, Danny shook his fist at Freddie. "I'll get even with you, Fred-



die Bobbsey!" he spouted as he dashed away.

Snap, who had been watching the two boys, raced after Danny, barking ferociously.

"Come back, Snap!" Freddie called, stopping the dog in his tracks.

Hearing the commotion, Nan put down her book and went to the window. Bert, with a glum expression on his face, was just coming up the front steps with Freddie and Snap.

"What happened?" she asked, opening the door quickly.

Bert explained about the disappearance of the ancient statuette. "It's all my fault," he said gloomily. "I'm supposed to be in charge of the museum!"

"That was my favorite exhibit, too!" Nan lamented. "But it's not your fault if somebody took it."

Freddie spoke up. "Danny came by before. He says you did it, Bert."

Overhearing the remark from the stairway, Flossie said, "Bert never stole anything! Never ever!"

"That's what I told Danny!" her twin explained. "I turned the hose on Danny and he ran!"

"You did?" Flossie said in awe. Then she laughed.

"I hope he doesn't start spreading the story

around school. He's mean enough," Nan said to Bert.

"Well, what am I supposed to do?" Bert grumbled.

"I told Danny you were taking something over to Charlie," Freddie said.

But Bert knew how little the truth mattered to Danny. He would twist it any way he could to make trouble for the twins.

"I wonder who did take the snake goddess," Nan put in.

"For a split second I thought maybe it was Danny," Bert admitted. "Mr. Tetlow and I looked all over the building before we called the police. Now we think it was a guy pretending to be from the electric company."

Although nothing more was said about the missing statuette that evening or at school the next morning, Bert had not forgotten Danny's accusation.

At noon, as he was leaving school, he challenged Danny. "So, you think I stole the statue!" Bert said angrily.

"Yes, I do, and I'm going to tell the police everything!" the bully declared. "That peanut brother of yours can't turn the hose on me and get away with it!"

"Apologize!" Bert persisted.



"Me, apologize?"

"Yes, you!"

By this time the boys had reached the playground. Danny gave Bert a shove that sent him staggering against the side of the building.

Although smaller than Danny, Bert was strong. He regained his balance quickly and advanced on the other boy with clenched fists, causing Danny to punch back as hard as he could.

Suddenly Mr. Tetlow saw the boys and shouted, "Hey, you two, quit it!" Bert and Danny turned quickly as the principal strode forward.

"He started it!" Danny complained.

Mr. Tetlow folded his arms and looked at Bert. "Go ahead," he said. "I'm waiting for an explanation."

"He told my brother I stole the statue," Bert replied.

"Danny, I'm ashamed of you," Mr. Tetlow said. "You know that isn't true."

The freckle-faced bully dug his heel into the dirt. "Yes, sir," he replied.

"Now, apologize to Bert and go on home to lunch!"

Gritting his teeth, Danny mumbled something and hurried away.

Mr. Tetlow put his hand on Bert's shoulder. "Don't worry about the statuette," he said kindly. "I'm sure the police will find it."

"I hope so, Mr. Tetlow."

But at the end of the afternoon Bert was gloomier than ever. Nan called to him and Charlie as they were leaving their classroom.

She had discussed the situation with Nellie, and between them they had decided to try cheering the downhearted boy.

"Nell and I got some stuff to make puppets out of," Nan said. "We thought maybe we could have a show and raise money for the museum."

Bert smiled bleakly.

"Do you want to help us?"

"Sure," Charlie said, pulling his friend along. "Come on, sourpuss."

In a little while the four children were settled around the Bobbseys' dining-room table. Paste, crayons, and bits of material were strewn everywhere.

"What are the Ping-Pong balls for?" Charlie asked, letting one skitter across the table.

"They're for the heads," Nellie explained. "The man at the store made a hole in each one just big enough for a finger to fit inside. All we have to do is draw faces on the balls and make costumes."

"I guess we could've bought hand puppets,"

Nan said, "but we thought this would be more fun."

Charlie said he wanted to make a policeman, while Nan and Nellie decided on animals—an ostrich and a sweet little kitten.

"What about you, Bert?" his sister asked. "What are you going to make?"

Bert, who had been staring out the window, didn't answer.

"How about a clown?" Nellie said. "A happy one with a great big smile!"

"Okay." Bert sighed. As it turned out, his was the easiest to do. He drew a wide red mouth on the Ping-Pong ball, a round black nose, and two big gaping eyes. Then he folded a piece of red paper into the shape of a cone and pasted it onto the head.

"I'll make the suit if you'll fix the ostrich head," Nan offered.

For the first time since they had gotten home, Bert smiled. He set to work covering the ball with gray crayon and drew large eyes with long lashes on them. Then he made a wide bill from a piece of brown paper and pasted it on.

"This will be the long neck," he said, holding up a tube of cardboard. He fastened one end to the hole in the Ping-Pong ball.

In a little while Nan had finished the clown suit. It was made of red-and-white-dotted mate-

rial, and at the ends of the sleeves she had attached tiny red-cloth hands stuffed with cotton.

Bert pasted the suit to the head. Then he stuck his index finger into the hole at the back and put his middle finger and thumb into the two arms.

"Ho, ho!" he laughed, making the clown's hands beat against its chest while the head tossed back and forth.

"That's fantastic, Bert!" Charlie said admiringly. "But wait until I finish my policeman! Your clown won't have much to laugh about!"

Charlie had colored his Ping-Pong ball tan and began drawing a very serious face on it, including a red line for the mouth, over which he pasted a paper mustache.

"The only thing missing is his cap," the boy said, cutting some blue paper.

— When the puppet was finished, Nellie cried, "He's terrific! Can you make a kitten's head for me, too?"

While Charlie did this, the girls sewed the bodies for the other three puppets.

Then Nellie looked at the clock. "Oh!" she exclaimed. "It's getting late. I'd better go home."

"I guess I should, too," Charlie said, helping Nan and Bert put everything away.

Afterward, Nan mentioned the ad about Snap

they had put in the newspaper. "I wonder why no one has answered it yet."

"Maybe Flossie was right. Maybe he doesn't belong to anyone and we can keep him!" Bert observed, putting the top on the paste jar.

All this time the younger twins had been at Susie Larker's house playing. Now they came running up the front steps. As Freddie turned the doorknob, Flossie leaned over to pick up something on the landing.

"It's a letter! It must have dropped out of the mailbox!" she said, stepping inside with Freddie. "Nan? Bert? Here's a letter, and it says it's for the Bobbsey twins!"

"We're in the dining room!" Nan called back. In the next moment she was opening the envelope and pulling out a piece of lined paper.

"It's from a man who says he thinks we have his trick dog!"

"Really?" Bert said.

"Where does he live?" Freddie asked while Flossie sniffled back tears.

Nan studied the letter again, then turned the envelope over in her hand.

"That's funny," she said. "He doesn't give any address or telephone number."

"What's his name?" Bert said anxiously.

"James Smith."

"Maybe we can find him in the phone book."

Bert went to the hall table to get it. He flipped the pages until he came to the Smiths and ran his finger down the column.

"There are three James Smiths and two J. Smiths," he announced. "I suppose we'll have to call all of them."

"I want to call first!" Flossie declared.

"Okay," said Nan. Flossie ran to the hall phone and pressed the numbers as Bert gave them.

There was a long wait, then a little voice said, "Hello."

"Is this James Smith?" Flossie asked. "And did you lose a dog?"

"I'm Sally Smith," the voice answered indignantly. "I don't have a dog."

"Sally!" Flossie exclaimed. "This is Flossie!"

The girls were in the same room at school. "Are you sure your daddy didn't write us a letter?"

"I don't think so," came the uncertain answer, "but I'll ask him when he comes home."

"You have the wrong Smith, Flossie," Nan whispered. "Say good-bye and hang up!"

Freddie made the next call. This time the person who answered had a thin, quavery voice. "What's that?" the old man asked.

The little boy repeated the question. "Haven't

had a dog for fifty, sixty years! But if you want to get rid of yours, I'd be glad to take him!" he cackled.

"Oh, no! We want to *keep* him!" The little boy dropped the receiver as if it had turned red-hot.

After Bert and Nan had made the last three calls, Nan said, "You know what? I have a hunch that letter wasn't written by any James Smith! And I think I know who did write it!"

## ■ 4 ■

# Twin Traps

"What makes you think James Smith didn't write the letter?" Bert asked Nan.

"I just remembered that we never put our address in the ad," said Nan.

"Mr. Smith could have looked up our address in the phone book," Bert replied.

"If he went to all that bother, why wouldn't he just have phoned?"

For once, Bert had no answer.

"Besides," Nan continued, "the writing doesn't look like a grown-up's. Also, if the person really thought Snap was his dog, why didn't he give us his address?"

Bert took the letter and examined it carefully. "You're right," he said.

"I think our letter writer is none other than Danny Rugg!" said Nan.

"Then we can still keep Snap!" Flossie cried.

"Yes, but first we have to prove the letter is a



hoax," her brother mused. He thought for a minute. "I've got it!" He told the others his plan.

The next morning on the way to school Bert told Nellie and Charlie what he was going to do. Then before the bell rang he had a conversation with Ms. Vandermeer.

As soon as the children were all assembled, she told them that Bert had an announcement to make.

He rose from his desk and walked past Danny, who was slouched in his chair as usual. "Teacher's pet," Danny whispered nastily, watching Bert saunter to the front of the room.

Bert's eyes traveled past Danny's as he spoke. "You know Mr. Tetlow is hoping that all of us can bring something to exhibit in the museum," Bert told the children. "Nellie, Charlie, and I would like to know what you have. So will you write down anything you can contribute?"

When everyone had finished, Charlie collected the papers and gave them to Bert.

"Thanks," he said. "The committee will let you know what we can use."

At recess time Bert and Nan joined their friends in a corner of the room, where they had already started to sort through the mountain of paper. There were all kinds of suggestions.

"Hey, here's one for a rattlesnake skin!" Charlie exclaimed.

"And somebody else has an old embroidered shawl from Spain!" Nellie said.

"Where is Danny's paper?" Nan asked.

"Here it is!" The other girl held up a piece of lined notebook paper. "I've got a big fat NOTHING for your dumb museum" was scrawled across it in giant letters.

Nan took the paper while Bert pulled the mysterious letter from his pocket. They laid them on a desk side by side. The paper and the writing matched perfectly!

"So it *was* Danny!" Nan said, narrowing her eyes.

"What are you going to do?" her girlfriend asked.

Before either twin could answer, however, the bell signaling the end of the recess period rang. The other children came in and took their seats. Danny, the last to arrive, seemed strangely flustered.

"Something's happened! Look at him!" Nan whispered to Bert, who glanced at his troublesome classmate with mild curiosity.

During recess Freddie and Flossie had met the bully in the hall.

"Hi! How's the little hose squirt?" Danny said to Freddie.

The little boy did not answer.

"Can't talk, huh? Do you want to see another good trick?"

"What is it?" Freddie asked uncertainly.

Danny led the small twins to a drinking fountain that stood against the wall of the corridor.

"See this?" he asked, pointing to the water-spout.

Freddie nodded.

"Well, you step on the pedal to start the water," Danny explained, "while you put your finger over the hole."

Freddie looked doubtful.

"Go on! Do it and see what happens!"

Still somewhat hesitant, Freddie put his finger over the spout and stepped on the pedal. The water spurted in all directions!

Mr. Tetlow had just come out of his office and started down the hall when a long stream of cold water caught him right in the eye! Danny fled down the hall and disappeared into the classroom.

"Freddie Bobbsey!" the principal said sternly. "Follow me!"

With Flossie at his side, the small boy walked slowly into the principal's office. Angry, Mr. Tetlow sat down behind his desk.

"Don't you know that it is against the rules of



this school to play with the water fountain?"

Freddie hung his head. "Y-y-yes," he confessed.

Flossie spoke up. "It wasn't his fault, Mr. Tetlow. Danny Rugg said he'd show him a good trick. Freddie didn't know what it was."

Mr. Tetlow sighed. "Danny Rugg again! Well, you stay away from him," he warned. "But if I ever see you playing with that drinking fountain again, you will be punished!"

Freddie gulped. "Yes, sir," he said. "I won't do it again."

"All right. You and Flossie go back to your room. I'll see Danny Rugg later."

That afternoon Bert met the principal in the hall. "Have you heard anything about the statue?" the boy inquired.

"Not a word."

"May I call the police? Maybe they've found something and just haven't told us yet."

Mr. Tetlow stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Do it now, why don't you?"

Accepting the suggestion, Bert put in the call and was shortly connected with Chief Mahoney. He asked if there had been any progress in the search for the missing statue.

"None so far," the officer said. "But we did have a report from the police in Sanderville. There has been a whole string of thefts at the

museum over there. Each one was different, and museum security wasn't able to do a thing about them."

"Do you think they're connected with ours?" Bert asked.

"Let's say that in every case, only the most valuable exhibits were stolen," the chief said. "The thief seems to know something about fine art."

Bert thanked the chief for the information and hung up. When he told Mr. Tetlow the details, the principal sat back in his chair. "I hope they catch the thief before Mr. Nelson comes back from Europe. I don't want to have to tell him his snake goddess is gone!" he said.

When classes were over, Bert and Nan met their friends in a specially assigned room to work on the puppet show. Bert and Nan had brought the puppets to school for a rehearsal. They didn't know that Freddie and Flossie were hanging around outside.

"Bert's really upset about that statue!" Flossie said sadly.

"Maybe we can help him! We know how to look for clues!" Freddie exclaimed.

Hopeful, the two children went back into the school and down the hall to the museum room.

"We need a magnifying glass!" Freddie said.

"Daddy has one!" Flossie replied.

"But we need it now!"

The pair walked slowly around the room, examining the shelves and the floor as well.

"Here's something!" Freddie said. He stooped to pick up a chewing-gum wrapper that lay behind the door. "I'll bet the thief dropped it!"

"Oh, Freddie! Anyone could have dropped that!"

"But we're not allowed to have gum in school," the boy pointed out. "And anyway, I never saw any of our friends chewing this kind. Let's see if we can find something else."

The twins explored all the classrooms and the auditorium, too. They found schoolbooks, notebooks, pencils, combs—all sorts of misplaced articles—but nothing else.

"We should look outside under the museum window," Freddie suggested finally. "The thief might have left footprints."

Outside the building Freddie and Flossie hurried around to the side. To their dismay they found no footprints, and the plantings appeared undisturbed.

"I guess he didn't go in through the window," Flossie remarked.

Disappointed, they started toward the rear door. Then suddenly, just as they reached it, Flossie noticed something in the shrubbery. She reached into the prickly bushes and pulled out an odd-looking item.

## ■ 5 ■

# A Bald Clue

"What's this?" Flossie asked in bewilderment. She held up a piece of flesh-colored rubber with a fringe of human hair around the edge.

"Yuck!" the little girl cried, dangling the strange find at arm's length.

Freddie took it from her. "Maybe you've found a clue!" he said excitedly. "Let's show it to Bert."

At once the children hurried back into the school building.

When they came to the room where their brother and sister were rehearsing, Freddie burst out, "Look what Flossie found!"

Nan put down the ostrich puppet as her little brother explained that he and Flossie had been hunting for clues to the thief of the snake goddess. "And Flossie saw this in the shrubbery by the back door!" he ended, waving it in the air.



Bert asked to see it. "I think it's part of a wig," he said.

"But it has so little hair," Nan objected as the younger children gathered close to Bert.

"It's a bald wig!" he explained. "You know, the kind someone would wear to look bald."

"Bert!" Nan gasped suddenly. "Didn't Mr. Carter say that the phony electrician was bald?"

Her brother's eyes glistened. "Yes!"

"So if the man wasn't really bald," Nan continued, "he could even have been that truck driver—the one who tried to run down Snap!"

"The truck driver!" Nellie exclaimed.

"He was here the same day the statue was taken! And when he came back to the truck, I remember he was carrying a package!"

"I'm going to call Chief Mahoney from the principal's office right now and tell him!"

"Well, it's a help knowing we're not looking for a bald man," said the chief when he heard about Flossie's discovery. "Your hunch about the connection between him and the truck driver sounds good to me. But what *did* the man look like?"

Bert tried to remember. "Light-brown hair, I think. Average height, average build. I mostly remember his dirty coveralls and all the commotion Snap caused."

The chief thanked Bert and said, "I'll send

Officer Murphy out to get the piece of wig for evidence."

The children were too excited to continue the puppet rehearsal. They talked to Mr. Tetlow a few minutes, then went outside and sat on the front steps to wait for the policeman.

When Officer Murphy arrived, Bert explained how Flossie had discovered the clue behind the school building. "It's just a hunch, but we think the thief was a truck driver who parked over there." He pointed toward the curb next to the driveway.

"When no one was watching," Bert continued, "he put on a bald wig to disguise himself and told the school janitor he was sent to check the lights. What we can't figure out, though, is why he was wearing different clothes. Mr. Carter said he was wearing jeans, but we saw him in coveralls."

"He probably took off the jeans and his shirt to be sure no one recognized him when he left. After all, he was parked in plain view of the school."

"I've been wondering about that, too," Nan said. "Why would a thief park right in front like that?"

"Well, most likely, he was working alone and wanted to get away as fast as possible."

"But it was just after lunch and a whole bunch of us saw him leave. We can identify him."

"Maybe. Do you think any of the other kids got a good look?" the officer asked. "Chances are he had planned to escape before you all came back for the afternoon session and maybe he was delayed. In any case, he didn't seem too concerned about it."

Bert flashed a grin. "I wrote down the license number of his truck!" he clucked, putting his hand in one pocket, then another. "I don't have my notebook with me. It must be at home. I'll get the number and call you."

"Fine. I'll take this new evidence to headquarters right away!" Officer Murphy replied, congratulating the children. "Keep up the good work!"

Eager to look for his notebook, Bert said good-bye to Nellie and Charlie and rushed home with his brother and sisters. The moment they arrived, he began to hunt for the notebook. Unable to find it, he went to see if Dinah was around. She was in the basement, dusting and vacuuming the closet where the family stored their summer clothes.

"Did anyone phone about the ad for Snap?" Bert asked.

Sneezing into a tissue, Dinah pulled herself

out of the closet and looked up. "What did you say?"

The boy detective repeated the question.

"The phone hasn't rung all day."

"Also, have you seen that little brown notebook I had? I can't find it anywhere."

"Did you check the kitchen?" Dinah said sneezing again. "Excuse me."

Bert nodded. "God bless you."

"How about the shelf in the garage? Maybe you left it there when you cleaned the car yesterday."

"Thanks!" Bert hurried out the back door. But in a few minutes he returned with a worried look. "It isn't there," he reported. "And I think I did leave it on that shelf!"

"It has to be someplace," Nan insisted. "Come on. I'll help you look for it."

They searched thoroughly, but with no success. "Officer Murphy won't think I'm such a good detective now!" the boy concluded miserably.

"He will, too," Nan consoled her twin. "I'm sure it'll turn up!"

Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey were interested to hear about the wig clue when Nan told them about it at supper. "I think you children are doing a very good job!" their mother said proudly.

At that moment Snap nudged open the door from the kitchen.

"What's that in his mouth?" Mr. Bobbsey asked.

"Here, boy!" Bert called.

Obediently Snap trotted toward him and laid something on Bert's knee.

It was the missing notebook!

"Snap found your notebook!" Flossie exclaimed.

Her brother picked up the little brown book and leaned down to pat the dog. "I wonder where it was," Bert said, letting Snap nuzzle his leg. "If only you could talk."

"He sleeps in the garage. Maybe he took it off the shelf where you left it!" Nan proposed.

"Ask him!" Freddie urged.

"Snap's smart, but he's not that smart!" Bert said.

After supper he telephoned police headquarters. Officer Murphy had gone off duty, but the boy left the license number of the truck with the policeman in charge.

"We'll track it down as fast as we can," the officer promised. "Thanks."

The next afternoon Nan and Bert met Nellie and Charlie to finish rehearsing for the puppet show. When they were done, Nellie mentioned

Danny Rugg. "We still haven't figured out how to pay him back for sending you that awful note about Snap!" she said.

"He's always making fun of us solving mysteries," Nan commented.

"I know!" Bert broke in. "Let's make him think he can find the missing statue!"

"How?" Nellie asked. "Even we don't know where it is."

Bert thought hard. "Why not write Danny a note telling him he can find the statue at some deserted place?"

Everyone agreed on the plan, and Nellie printed a message that said:

*If you want to show you're a better detective than the Bobbseys, you can find the missing snake goddess at Jimmy's Pizza Plaza on Route 16.*

*A friend*

Nan laughed. "Perfect! Can't you just see Danny's face when he gets this?"

Charlie and Nellie agreed to mail the note on their way home. "He'll have it tomorrow afternoon!" Charlie said, chortling to himself.

That evening, however, as Bert settled down to do his homework, the telephone rang. It was Chief Mahoney.

"We've checked that license number, Bert," he reported, and explained that the license had been issued to a car-rental agency. Upon checking with the company, he learned that the truck had been rented to a man named Ernie Perry.

"Ernie Perry? Who's he?" Bert asked.

"He works at the home of a Mr. Nelson."

The boy's lips parted in astonishment. "Mr. Nelson owns the statuette! Perry couldn't be the thief!"

"It does seem strange, I know," Chief Mahoney admitted. "We're going to send a detective over to Nelson's house to talk to Perry. I'll let you know what we find out."

Bert thanked the chief, then went to tell Nan and the other twins the news. They all agreed it was a very odd situation indeed.

"But if Perry works for Mr. Nelson, why would he go to all the trouble of stealing the statuette from the school? He could've taken it from the house when he had the chance," Nan said.

"Maybe he was planning to steal it after his boss went away," Bert replied.

"You mean he didn't count on Mr. Nelson loaning it to the school?"

"Exactly. But then he realized he had the perfect cover-up," the boy went on. "No one would

suspect Mr. Nelson's employee of taking the statuette from the school."

"Least of all Mr. Nelson," Nan concluded.

During recess the next day the boy told Mr. Tetlow what the police had learned about the truck driver.

"Do you know what Ernie Perry looks like, sir?" Bert inquired.

"I've never met the man," Mr. Tetlow replied, adding that Mr. Nelson had always spoken well of Perry. "Apparently he has been a great help to Mr. Nelson. An all-around caretaker, you might say, with an interest in art."

"Has he been there a long time?" Bert asked.

"With Mr. Nelson? Oh, maybe six months. He started right after the previous man retired to Arizona."

"Chief Mahoney is going to send an officer to investigate. Maybe that will solve the mystery."

But when Bert went home a little while later, he received disappointing news from the police chief. "Our men couldn't locate Perry this morning. There was no one at the Nelson house."

After reporting this to the other children, Bert said, "It looks as if the disappearance of the statuette is as much of a mystery as it ever was!"



## ■ 6 ■

# Circus Star

Nan gave a mischievous laugh. "Don't forget Danny is going to find it for you!"

"I wonder if he got the letter," Bert replied. "Charlie and I are ready to follow him on our bicycles if he takes off after school!"

All afternoon Danny seemed to be in a triumphant mood. He even volunteered to help Ms. Vandermeer when she had difficulty opening a window.

"Thank you, Danny," she said, pleased by his change of attitude.

"Oh, you're welcome," the boy answered modestly.

"He is such a phony," Bert told his sister at the end of the day.

As they stood outside the building waiting for Danny to appear, he strolled right up to them. "I thought you were such great detectives!" he

said. "You can't even find an old statue that was stolen out from under your noses!"

Bert winked at Nan. "Maybe you can do better!"

"I know I can!" Danny exclaimed cheerfully, and sauntered off.

Bert caught Charlie's eye as they watched Danny go over to the bicycle rack. He pulled his bike out, hopped on, and rode down the driveway. When he had turned the corner, Bert and Charlie ran to get *their* bicycles.

"Good luck!" Nan called after them.

"He's going to Route Sixteen!" Charlie observed as the boys spotted Danny ahead of them.

"I'd love to be there when he rides up!" Bert snickered.

"We can take a shortcut by going up Elm Street!"

"You're on!" Bert said, and they began to pedal faster.

The two boys rode in silence until they were out of town. Then, as they veered onto a road that brought them to Route 16, the young detective remarked, "I'm sure we've beaten him!"

Charlie looked back along the highway. There was no sign of Danny. "If he doesn't show up, the joke's on us!"

"When he talked to Nan and me, he sounded

as if he knew just where to find the snake goddess!"

Jimmy's Pizza Plaza was a low clapboard building with counters all around the outside. The kitchen, in the middle, had wooden blinds drawn over it, and fastened to them was a large sign that said:

CLOSED FOR THE WINTER

OPEN MAY 15

Bert and Charlie rode up to the deserted restaurant. "Let's hide behind one of these front counters," Bert suggested. "We can watch him when he comes."

"He'll see our bikes," Charlie objected.

"No he won't. We can put them behind that little building over there!" Bert pointed to a nearby shack.

The two boys quickly slid off their seats and stood the bicycles against the far wall of the dilapidated structure.

"Hurry!" Charlie cried. "I see him!"

They had just climbed over the front counter and hidden themselves when Danny arrived on his bicycle. He dismounted and peered around uneasily. Then, trying to appear confident, he leaned against the counter and stared out at the road.



It was all Bert and Charlie could do to keep from laughing out loud! After a few minutes Danny began to pace up and down. Then he strolled around the outside of the building.

But as he returned to the front again, an old car drove up and a rough-looking man got out. He walked toward the restaurant. For a moment Danny acted uncertain, but raised his courage long enough to say hello.

"Do you know where the snake goddess is?" he asked somewhat shakily.

Stopping abruptly, the stranger glared at Danny from head to toe. "What are you talking about, kid?" he asked hoarsely. "I don't know anything about snakes or goddesses. I just want to get a pizza."

"S-sorry!" Danny stammered. "The r-restaurant's closed!"

Giving the boy a disgusted look, the stranger stepped back into his car and left. Bert and Charlie whooped with laughter!

"Who's there?" Danny shot back, staring at the counter. The two boys stood up.

"Are you James Smith, by any chance?" Bert asked innocently, breaking into laughter again.

"You—you!" Danny sputtered. "You wrote that letter!"

"Just answering your little note, Danny-boy!" Bert said triumphantly.

Danny's freckled face turned bright red. He ran over to his bicycle, jumped on it, and raced away like a rocket!

Doubling over once more, Charlie guffawed loudly. "The look on his face"—the boy gasped for air—"it was *so* funny!"

Later, when they returned to the Bobbseys' house, they found Nellie and the others waiting to hear what had happened.

Flossie clapped her hands. "It serves him right for trying to scare us about Snap!"

"He won't do that again," Nellie added.

On Saturday the twins gathered around the breakfast table a little later than usual. Nan had been glancing at the morning newspaper when she cried, "The circus is in Sanderville!"

"A circus!" Freddie and Flossie both put down their spoons. "Wowee! Let's go!"

"I wonder," Nan said, letting her thoughts drift.

"What?" Bert asked.

"I wonder if Snap's owner is connected with the circus."

Freddie's face practically fell into his cereal. "That's the worst news I've ever heard!" he said.

"He knows so many tricks," Nan went on. When her mother came into the dining room, Nan showed her the paper. "May we go, Mom?"

"I don't want to," Flossie said.

"You don't want to go to the circus?" Mrs. Bobbsey said in disbelief.

"No."

"I don't want to go either," Freddie chimed in.

"They're afraid we'll locate Snap's owner there," Nan explained.

"Oh, I see," her mother replied, gazing at the younger children. "You both know that we can't keep the dog if he belongs to someone else."

"Maybe Daddy will buy him for us!" Freddie said hopefully.

Mrs. Bobbsey smiled. "Maybe."

Her husband, however, had already left for his office at the lumberyard, so she phoned him about the circus.

"Why don't you take Snap and the children over to Sanderville this afternoon?" he suggested. "See what you can find out. I'd come, too, but I'm very busy here." He paused. "I suppose we could try to buy the dog."

"That's what the twins are hoping," Mrs. Bobbsey said.

Now that there was a possibility of keeping the pet, Freddie and Flossie were happy once again. Sanderville was several miles away and considerably larger than Lakeport. When Mrs.

Bobbsey reached the outskirts of the city, she inquired at a service station about the location of the circus grounds.

"Go straight through on Main Street," the attendant informed her. "You can't miss it. Have fun!" The children waved happily.

Traffic was heavy now, and by the time the family arrived, the show had already started. Mrs. Bobbsey parked the van and asked a guard where they could find the manager. He pointed to a small nearby tent.

Eagerly Flossie snapped a leash on the dog's collar, and they walked toward the manager's quarters as the sound of band music and applause came from the main tent.

Mrs. Bobbsey stepped into the office ahead of the children. The smell of stale cigar smoke hung in the air as they watched two men talking. One of them was short and paunchy with a fat unlit cigar in his mouth, while the other was dressed like an elegant black bird, in a black-sequined jumpsuit with feathers on the shoulders. Seeing Mrs. Bobbsey, the man with the cigar came forward.

"Are you looking for me?" he asked pleasantly, glancing past her. "Bob!" he exclaimed in amazement. "Where did you come from?"

"Bob?" Mrs. Bobbsey repeated as Snap whined and strained at his leash.



"This is Bob, Red Rankin's trick dog. He got away one night and we thought he must've been hurt or killed on the highway." He looked at the Bobbseys. "Are you from around here?"

"We're from Lakeport, Mr. uh—" Mrs. Bobbsey said.

"The name's Tiny Hayden. I own the circus."

"We found him near our house," Bert put in.

"Humph. We were traveling around the state all summer. This is probably the closest we've been to Lakeport. I wonder if Bob walked there all by himself," Mr. Hayden said.

"His name's not Bob. It's Snap!" Flossie protested. "He followed us home, and he lives with us!"

Mr. Hayden walked over to the dog and put out his hand, letting Snap lick it gently. Then Snap jumped up and put his front paws on the man's shoulder.

"It's Bob, all right, honey. He's a good dog. He and Red had a terrific act!"

"We'd like to talk to Mr. Rankin," Mrs. Bobbsey said. "Is he here?"

"Sorry. When Bob disappeared, Red's act was finished. He left the circus. I miss that red-headed son-of-a-gun. He always made me laugh."

"We put an ad in the local paper," Nan said.

"Well, no one here saw it."

"But you must know where he went!"

"Don't you worry about Mr. Rankin. He was getting tired of circus life anyhow." Mr. Hayden pulled out some folding chairs. "Please, sit down," he said.

Taking a seat, Mrs. Bobbsey sighed. "What shall we do about the dog? Leave him here?"

The circus manager lit his cigar and took a long, deep puff. "Your children seem very fond of Bob," he said. "I imagine he'll have a good home with you. Why don't you keep him for now?"

The children were greatly relieved. "Thank you very much," Nan said.

Mr. Hayden took another puff. "And if I hear from Red Rankin, I'll give him your address, so you people can work the problem out between you. How does that sound?"

"Terrific!" Nan exclaimed.

Snap seemed to approve of the arrangement also. He pranced about and let out a contented howl.

"How about staying for the rest of the show—on the house?" said Mr. Hayden.

"Thank you, but no," said Mrs. Bobbsey, sensing that the children just wanted to get Snap as far away from the circus as possible. "We'll come to see the show next summer, when you return here."

As everyone was walking back to the van, Flossie threw her arms about the shaggy dog. "I hope Mr. Rankin has gone to the moon and never comes back to get you!" she said as Snap whimpered happily.

Once more, Mrs. Bobbsey threaded her way through the city traffic toward Lakeport. Then, as if from nowhere, a small green truck turned onto the highway in front of her. She put on the brakes and slowed down. The truck swayed a moment, but finally picked up speed and raced along the road.

"That's him!" Nan shrieked. "That's the guy who was parked at school the day the statue was stolen!"

## The Red Connection

"What's the license number, Bert?" Freddie asked, peering at the truck through the windshield.

"Can you drive faster, Mom? We have to catch that man!" the older boy exclaimed.

Mrs. Bobbsey pressed down on the gas pedal. But the faster she drove, the faster the truck seemed to go. Suddenly it careened into a side road. Mrs. Bobbsey was going too fast to turn safely.

"Mother!" Nan sank against the car seat. "You've lost him!"

"Not yet I haven't!" Mrs. Bobbsey said, entering into the spirit of the chase.

She backed into the side road quickly, turned, and sped down it. The road, however, was narrow and full of potholes, making the van bump and rock from side to side.

Finally she slowed to a crawl. "Now we *have*

lost the truck," she said, clamping her hands over the steering wheel. "I just can't go any faster on this road. There are too many ruts."

In spite of the twins' protests, she swung back to the highway. As they neared the outskirts of Lakeport, Bert asked to stop at police headquarters. "I'd like to see if Chief Mahoney has any more news for us."

While Mrs. Bobbsey and Snap waited in the van, the four children went into the building. Upon seeing them, Chief Mahoney smiled. "Do you have some more clues for me?"

Immediately Freddie told about the panel truck they had seen on the highway. "He was going so fast, we couldn't catch him!" the little boy said, ending his story.

"Very interesting," the chief said. "My men have been watching the Nelson place, and Perry isn't there. They talked to the neighbors and found out that he had planned to take his vacation while Mr. Nelson was in Europe."

The police officer continued, "We've also had a report that a gang of art thieves from New York has been operating in this area. I'm inclined to believe that the man who stole Mr. Nelson's statuette was a member of that gang."

"Do you think he has left Lakeport?" Bert asked.

"By now I'd say yes. We've sent our report to

the New York police and hope they'll have news for us soon."

Discouraged, the twins were convinced they were not going to be able to solve the mystery of the missing snake goddess after all.

"I'll let you know if we find out anything," the chief called after the twins as they left.

"This has to be the toughest case we've ever had," Bert commented, getting back in the van.

"What happened?" his mother inquired.

"Zero," Freddie replied as the engine started to hum again.

"Not zero really," Nan said. "More like sub-zero." She related what Chief Mahoney had told them.

When they were home again, Snap bounded into the backyard while everybody went inside. But a short time later Bert wandered to the back door and gazed out.

"I wonder what Snap has in his mouth," he said. "He's holding something in his teeth and running around the yard in circles!"

"Let's see!" Flossie exclaimed, dashing outside, followed by the others.

"It's only a piece of red cloth," Freddie said. Suddenly Snap dashed to the back of the yard, skidded to a stop, turned, and ran back, the red cloth flying in the wind. He shook it with a growl, then raced off again.

"Catch him, Bert!" Nan cried.

The next time Snap raced past the twins, Bert reached out and grabbed his collar. "Steady there, old boy!" Bert called.

With his ears pricked up and his tail wagging, Snap permitted Bert to take the cloth from his jaws. It was a large square of paisley-patterned red cotton.

"It's a bandanna!" Nan exclaimed. "Where do you suppose it came from?"

His fun over, Snap stretched out on the grass, panting. Dinah, who had been watching the excitement from the door, came outside.

"Do you know whose this is, Dinah?" Bert asked, flashing the big handkerchief.

The housekeeper shook her head. "Well, it's not mine. It most likely belongs to that man who was here."

"What man?" Nan inquired.

Dinah explained that while the twins were gone a man had come to the back door asking for work. She had sent him to the Bobbsey lumberyard. "I told him to talk to Sam," she said. Dinah's husband, Sam, was Mr. Bobbsey's foreman. "He was a nice-looking man with thick red hair."

"Red hair!" Bert exclaimed, glancing at his sister. "Do you suppose he's the guy from the circus, Red Rankin?"

Nan gaped. "Lots of men have red hair," she said. But then she looked worried. "Do you think he was here hunting for Snap?"

"He didn't mention a dog," Dinah noted.

"Even so, he may have come to Lakeport after he left the circus," Bert said. "Mr. Hayden did say he was going to look for some other kind of work."

"And you believe he dropped the handkerchief and Snap recognized it," Dinah said.

"Right. And now that he's got the scent, he wants to find him! I guess we've got to see if he did go to the lumberyard."

Mr. Bobbsey's lumberyard was located on Lake Metoka, at the edge of Lakeport, not too far from the Bobbsey house. The four children set out at once, along with Snap.

Snap stopped now and then to sniff at a leaf or patch of grass.

"Perhaps he's picked up the scent of Red Rankin!" Nan said.

When they finally reached the lakeshore, Snap leapt in the direction of the lumberyard. But before reaching it, he turned again and bolted to the Bobbseys' boathouse, where he stood by the door, whining.

"Red Rankin must be inside!" Nan exclaimed.

"Oh, this is 'citing," Flossie cried, taking her sister's hand.



Bert shoved the door open, and Snap dashed in. He ran to a corner where an old blanket lay.

"Nobody's here!" Flossie said, disappointed.

"Where did the blanket come from?" Nan asked. "I never saw it before!"

"Snap seems to recognize it!" Bert replied. "Maybe it's Red Rankin's."

The dog pushed the blanket with his nose. Then he ran from the boathouse onto the dock and stood there yapping.

"The man must be near here," Bert concluded. "Let's keep looking."

The twins ran along the shore, peering around the other boathouses, but saw no one.

"Let's just go to Daddy's lumberyard," Flossie suggested to the others. "Maybe he's there!"

Mr. Bobbsey was just coming from his office when the children ran up to the small building. "Hi, kids!" he called. "What are you doing here?"

"We're looking for Snap's owner," Freddie said. "Did he come here?"

"Tell me who he is, and I'll answer the question," Mr. Bobbsey said teasingly.

The children told him the story of their trip to Sanderville and about the man who had come to their house looking for work.

"Red hair, huh," Mr. Bobbsey said thought-

fully. "I did see a red-haired man talking to Sam. Let's ask him."

But the foreman could give little information. He said someone had asked about a job, but when told there was none, he had refused to leave his name and address.

"Then we can still keep Snap," Flossie said gaily, climbing into her father's car for the trip home.

"It sure looks that way," Mr. Bobbsey replied. "What do you think, Snap?" The dog sat forward on the back seat and barked in consent.

The following Monday, when the older twins were leaving school, Bert pulled Nan aside. "How about walking with me to the Nelson house? I'd like to find out if Ernie Perry is the truck driver we saw."

"All right," Nan agreed, dashing off to tell Freddie and Flossie their plan.

In a moment Bert and Nan set out for the Nelson house. It was about a mile from the school, on a shady street where all the houses were old and large and set back from the sidewalks on spacious grounds.

"I think this is where Mr. Nelson lives," Bert said. He stopped in front of a tall colonial frame house that was surrounded by a magnificent lawn and an iron fence. A driveway at the side

led back to what had been a barn and was now an oversize garage. It was closed.

"What do we do?" Nan asked, trying to ignore the lump in her throat.

"Ring the doorbell and ask if Mr. Perry is in. That's all," Bert said firmly.

The two children unlatched the iron gate and walked confidently up the path to the front door. There was an old-fashioned bell in the middle of the lacquered door, which Bert twisted.

Hearing the loud ring inside, Nan jumped.

"Calm down," her brother said. They waited a moment, but no one came to answer.

"I guess the police are right," Nan remarked. "No one's here."

"Let's look around a little before we leave," Bert suggested.

The twins circled the house. All the windows were shut tight, and the shades on the second floor were down.

"Come on, Bert," Nan said. "We're not getting anywhere. We might as well go home."

The children let themselves out the gate and hurried down the sidewalk. But Nan paused to look back one more time.

"Bert!" she gasped. "There's someone at that upstairs window!"

## ■ 8 ■

---

# More Riddles

Instantly Bert glanced up. "I don't see anyone!" he protested.

"Look there—where the window shade is raised!" Nan pointed. "He's gone now, but I'm sure I saw a man watching us!"

"Whoever he is, I don't think he wants us to know he's there," Bert said. "Let's go home and call the police. Maybe they'll be able to get him to open up the door."

But when Chief Mahoney called Bert back that evening, he had nothing to report. "My men can't just break into the house," he said, "much as they'd like to see if something is going on there."

The next afternoon was the puppet show at school. Bert and Nan hurried to a basement meeting room, along with Nellie and Charlie, to set up the puppet stage. Mr. Carter had put a

long table on the platform that stood at one end of the room.

"Dinah hemmed this for us," Nan told Nellie as she pulled some purple cloth out of the bag she and Bert had carried to school at noon. "It'll hide us from the audience while we're working the puppets."

"It's great," Nellie said, helping Nan tack it to the edge of the table.

Bert and Charlie had made a stage out of cardboard, which they set on top of the table. Then Bert brought in four low stools from the kindergarten room.

"We can sit on these," he said. "Even if we have to crouch a little, it'll be better than squatting."

Nan gazed around. "We're all set except for the music. I'll ask Mr. Carter to get the record player."

It wasn't long before the dismissal bell echoed through the halls and the sound of footsteps rippled down the steps.

Nan smiled as Charlie eagerly collected the admission tickets from their schoolmates. "And now," she announced a moment later, "here are those world-famous Lakeport Puppets!"

"Yea! The Lakeport Puppets!" the audience cheered.

Quickly Nan took her place behind the table,

and the four little figures popped up on the stage.

There was the clown in his red-and-white suit, the blue-coated policeman holding a tiny club, and the ostrich with her rhinestone collar and long eyelashes that fluttered as she bobbed her head. Last came the cuddly white kitten.

All the puppets made deep bows. Then the kitten and the ostrich disappeared, leaving the clown and the policeman onstage.

The policeman addressed the audience first. "Do you like riddles?" he asked in a deep husky voice.

"Yes! Yes!" the children shouted.

Cupping his tiny hand around his mouth, the policeman pretended to whisper. "I'll ask this clown if he knows the answers to these."

His listeners giggled.

"Now, sir," the policeman said to the clown, shaking his stick, "what has a face but no head, hands but no feet, and runs all the time?"

The clown put his hands up to tap his head. Then a card with the word *clock* printed on it appeared behind him.

"Clock!" the audience exclaimed.

The clown repeated the word in a squeaky voice.

"You heard that!" the policeman objected, beating the clown on the head with his club.

The audience shrieked with laughter.

"I'll give him another chance," the policeman said. "When is a boat like a heap of snow?"

The clown repeated the question and again tapped the side of his head.

Again a card appeared over his head. It said *When it is adrift*. Once more the audience called out the answer, and the clown repeated it. The policeman seemed to be beside himself with anger. He paced up and down, shaking his stick and muttering.

Then he stopped and turned to the audience. "Once more!" he said. Facing the clown, he said very slowly, "What animal took the most luggage into the ark?"

Another card rose up behind the clown which said, *The elephant took a trunk*.

This time the policeman did not give the clown a chance to speak. He hit him on the head and dragged him off the stage.

Loud cheers and applause followed. The clown and the policeman popped up again and bowed deeply. When the clapping died down, they disappeared and the ostrich and the kitten sprang up.

"Meow!" the kitten said. The little children in the audience giggled. "My friend Miss Ostrich would like to sing for you!"

Bert, who had slid out from behind the table

and taken a seat in the front row, got up and started the record player. The melody of a familiar folk song floated out over the audience.

Nan, who was working the ostrich puppet, made her sway to the beat of the music. On the high notes the ostrich would fling back her head and open her wings wide.

Danny Rugg, who was seated in the front row, crossed his legs and hit the edge of the platform accidentally, causing the needle to skip and lose part of the song.

Flustered momentarily, Nan forgot to move the puppet, which made the audience laugh. Then Danny kicked the platform on purpose, and the needle slid over the record more.

"Please don't joggle the platform, Danny," Bert said. "You're spoiling everything!"

"I can't help it if your old platform is rickety!" Danny answered rudely as Bert reset the needle.

However, as the song continued and the singer reached a high note, Danny joggled the platform again, making the needle jump off the record entirely.

Mr. Tetlow, who could see the troublemaker from the back row, strode forward. "I suggest you leave," he said briskly to Danny.

The audience fell silent as the boy got up and stalked out of the room. Then the ostrich and kitten put on a little dance, which drew more





applause. At the end, the clown and the policeman reappeared, and the four little puppets did a bouncing jig before taking their farewell bows.

When the applause had stopped, Mr. Tetlow stepped to the platform. "We are off to a good start in raising money for our school museum!" he announced.

There were cheers and whistles as the principal went on. "I want to thank those children who worked so hard to make this program a big success. Come on out, everybody."

Still holding their puppets, Bert, Nan, Nellie, and Charlie stepped in front of the table.

"Hooray!" the audience shouted as the puppeteers bowed. "Hooray!"

"You were really great," Flossie said to the older children after everything had been packed away.

Nan hugged her little sister. "Thanks," she said.

"I'm glad Mr. Tetlow made Danny leave," Nellie remarked. "He's the biggest pest I know."

To their surprise, the boy had hung around, waiting for the children to come outside.

"You think you're so smart," he said to Bert, mounting his bicycle. "You'll be sorry!"

"I didn't do anything to you," Bert answered defensively.

“Don’t pay any attention to him,” Charlie advised, watching Danny ride away.

“See you tomorrow!” Bert called as his friend departed with Nellie.

When the twins reached the Bobbseys’ house, no one was there. “Where is everybody?” Flossie asked.

“Mother had to go to a meeting, I know,” Nan replied, “but Dinah should be here.”

Just then they heard the back door slam and ran to the kitchen. Looking very worried, Dinah leaned against the counter.

“What’s the matter?” Nan asked.

“Was Snap at school with all of you?” came the reply.

“No, why?”

“Then I don’t know where he is! He has been gone all afternoon!”

“Snap’s gone?” Flossie wailed. “Maybe Red Rankin came and took him away!”

“When was the last time you saw him?” Nan questioned the housekeeper.

Dinah dropped into a chair and began fanning herself. “He was in the backyard after lunch. And then the next thing I knew, he wasn’t. I called and called. I’ve been out hunting for him.”

“Let’s scout the neighborhood,” Nan suggested. “Maybe he’s playing with other dogs.”

Nan and Flossie went one way while Bert and Freddie went the other way. There was no sign of the shaggy white dog anywhere.

"I can't understand why he would run away," Nan said when they all had met again at the house.

"Remember, he ran away from the circus," said Bert.

"You're right," Nan said gloomily.

"Maybe he went to the boathouse!" Freddie cried.

"That's a thought!" Bert started off on a run, pulling the others along.

When they reached the boathouse, it was empty. The blanket still lay in the corner, apparently undisturbed.

Tears trickling slowly down her cheek, Flossie said, "I'll never see him again!"

"Don't say that," Nan said. "He'll come back. I'm sure he will."

Later, when their parents heard the story of Snap's disappearance, Mr. Bobbsey telephoned the police and reported the missing dog.

"If Snap doesn't come back in a day or two, we'll put an ad in the paper," he promised the children.

They tried to remain hopeful, but before going to bed, Bert and Nan made another tour

of the neighborhood. As they had expected, Snap was still nowhere in sight.

The next afternoon, when school was over, Bert told his friend Charlie about the dog's mysterious disappearance.

"I'm going to look for him on my bike. Do you want to come?" Bert asked.

"Lead the way," Charlie said brightly.

For an hour they went up one street and down another, searching for Snap. Then Bert noticed a boy he knew standing on a corner and rode toward him. Quickly he described Snap. "Have you seen a dog like that around here?" he inquired.

"Hmm. Sort of. But a kid had him on a leash. He went in that house over there." He indicated a pale-yellow frame house with black shutters at the end of the street.

"That's where Danny's friend Sneaker lives!" Bert exclaimed.

## Double Discovery

After thanking the boy, Bert pedaled back to Charlie, who had been waiting for him farther up the street. Bert told Charlie what the boy had said. "And the house he pointed to is Sneaker's!" he said angrily.

"I'll bet Danny and Jack took Snap!" Charlie declared. "Let's go get him!"

The two boys parked their bicycles in front of the Westleys' house and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Westley answered.

"Jack's out with his new dog," she said, smiling, when Bert asked to see him.

"Oh, Sneaker has a new dog?" Charlie inquired. Upon hearing her son's nickname, Mrs. Westley bristled, making Charlie shift uneasily from side to side. "Where did he get it?"

"He bought him from a friend at school," she said coolly.

The boys thanked Sneaker's mother and hurried away.

"The 'friend' was probably Danny!" Bert muttered.

"Let's ambush Sneaker!" Charlie proposed as they hopped on their bicycles again. "We can hide behind those bushes across the street and grab Snap when they walk by."

"Okay!"

At the moment, the street was deserted. They rode across to a clump of shrubbery in front of an empty house and hid the bicycles carefully. Then they crouched behind the bushes, where they could still see both ends of the street clearly.

The two detectives had been there only a few minutes when Charlie whispered, "Here they come now!"

Less than a block away were a boy and a large white dog. "That's not Snap!" Bert groaned, observing the short-haired terrier.

"I hope Sneaker doesn't catch us hiding here," Charlie said.

Their classmate was paying no attention to anything except his new pet. Whistling to the dog, he ran around to the side of the house and vanished. Cautiously Bert and Charlie got on their bicycles and rode off.

"We're not too far from the Nelson house," Bert said. "I'd like to take a ride over there. Maybe we'll get a look at the face in the window that Nan saw."

"Sounds spooky! But nothing scares me!" Charlie answered bravely.

In a few minutes they were in front of the old house. Bert gazed up at the windows. All the shades on the second floor were down. Then he glanced at the garage.

"Look! The garage door's open, and I think there's a small green truck inside!"

"The same one that was parked at school?" Charlie asked excitedly.

"I'll let you know in a minute!" Bert jumped off his bike and began to walk up the driveway.

When he reached the garage, he took out his pocket notebook and compared the license number of the truck with the one he had jotted down at school. It was the same!

He sped down the driveway to Charlie. "I have to call Chief Mahoney. Perry has to be the man we're looking for. I just hope he doesn't leave before the police get here!"

"I'll stay," Charlie volunteered, "and watch the garage. If he leaves, I'll follow him!"

"Good!" Bert jumped on his bicycle and pedaled off at full speed.

There were no stores in the immediate area,



but in a few minutes Bert found a pay phone at the corner of a gasoline station and pulled in.

When Bert had given his report, the police chief said, "I'll send Officer Murphy and another man right over."

His pulse racing, Bert sped back to where he had left Charlie. No one was there. Then he heard a *psst!*

"Bert," his friend whispered loudly, "I'm over here!" He beckoned from behind a large maple tree.

Bert hurried toward him. "What happened?" he asked.

"Nothing. I figured I'd better get out of sight," Charlie explained. "Someone might see me watching the house."

"The police will be here any minute. Then we'll find out if Perry is inside."

No sooner had Bert finished talking than a police car rolled to a stop on the other side of the street. Two officers got out—followed by Nan, Freddie, and Flossie!

Seeing Bert's surprise, Nan smiled.

"We had to pass right by your house," Officer Murphy told Bert. "I decided that if we're going to capture anyone, your brother and sisters should be in on it. So we stopped and picked them up."

Bert grinned at the other children. Then he

asked the policeman, "Now what do we do?"

"You all stay here on the sidewalk while Selby and I go up to the house," Officer Murphy directed. "I don't want you in any danger."

The twins and Charlie watched as the police officers strutted up to the door of the old house. They rang the bell firmly several times without getting any response.

Then Officer Murphy pounded his fist on the door. "Open up! Police!"

Suddenly Flossie shouted, "There goes someone!" She dashed up the walk to the two officers. "I just saw a man run away from the back of the house. He's in the garage!" she cried, panting.

By this time the other twins had caught up to her. Motioning them to stay behind, the policemen started toward the garage. As they approached the former barn, there was a roar, and the truck started to roll back.

"Halt!" Murphy shouted, running behind it.

At the sight of the policeman blocking his path, the driver leaned against the wheel, then climbed out, his face apple-red.

"What are you trying to do? Get run over?" he blustered. "I've got a right to leave this place if I want to!"

Officer Murphy called the children. "Have you seen this man before?" he asked them.

"Yes!" they chorused.

"We saw him at school," Nan said. "He tried to run over our dog."

"What's your name?" the officer asked the man.

"Ernest Perry. I work for Mr. Nelson, who lives in this house," he said defiantly.

"Where is the statuette you stole from the school?" Murphy continued.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Open up the truck," Officer Murphy said.

With a glare at the officer, Perry unlocked the back of the truck. "Go ahead!" he snarled. "Look all you want! You won't find anything!"

The two officers looked inside the truck. Except for a small supply of rags, it was empty.

"Satisfied?" Perry hissed. "I told you there wasn't anything in there. I don't know why these brats are picking on me."

"I guess I was wrong," Bert said.

"He could have stashed it somewhere," Nan said.

Suddenly Bert got an idea, and he whispered it to Officer Murphy.

"You're right, Bert!" the policeman exclaimed. "I don't know why I didn't think of that!"

He motioned to the other officer. "Come on, Selby," he called. "We've got work to do!"

## ■ 10 ■

# Gum Giveaway

Officer Murphy stepped close to the truck. "Help me pry up this floor," he said to his partner.

Ernie Perry gulped. "You can't do that!" he protested. "You'll ruin my truck!"

"Okay," the policeman said. "If you don't want us to do it, then you do it!"

Still grumbling, Perry pushed two concealed buttons and lifted a portion of the truck's floor. Beneath it was a space filled with packages.

One by one, the police officers began to remove them until there were six bundles on the grass next to the driveway.

"Is the snake goddess there?" Nan asked hopefully.

"We'll see!" Murphy picked up a brown paper bag and peered into it, then handed it to Bert.

He opened it quickly. "It's the statuette!" he cried happily.



"I know valuable art when I see it," Perry boasted. "That's the best thing Nelson ever bought! It belongs to him. I didn't take it for myself."

"Are you telling us that you were planning to return it?" Selby questioned, giving the man a steely glance.

"What's in the other packages?" Flossie piped up eagerly.

While the children watched with interest, each of the bags was opened. All contained Greek art objects. There were two vases. One of them was like the vase in the school museum collection.

"That's an amphora!" Freddie announced. He was very proud that he had remembered the name Mr. Tetlow had told the children.

The remaining three objects were ornamental gold cups.

"Those are Vaphio gold cups!" Perry said. "They were made in Crete thousands of years ago. And they are also Mr. Nelson's. I was afraid to leave them in the house with nobody home, so I carried them around with me."

Officer Murphy scowled. "I believe they were stolen from the museum in Sanderville," he said. "It wasn't a gang from New York who took their art objects. It was you!"

Ernie Perry shrugged his shoulders. "You have no proof."

"Oh, no?" Bert said, his anger ready to flare. "You put on a bald wig and pretended to be an electrician when you took the statuette from school."

"That's the silliest thing I ever heard." The suspect laughed. He took a stick of gum from his pocket and began to unwrap it nervously.

"And that's the same kind of gum wrapper Freddie found in the museum room!" Flossie declared.

Perry glared at the girl.

"And here's the wig!" Freddie cried.

The little boy had climbed into the truck and searched the corners under the floor. He held up what was left of a bald wig!

"I guess that's proof enough," said Officer Murphy. Perry slumped to the ground, too weak to stand. "Help him up, Selby."

"We'd better make sure you don't go anywhere," the second officer said, taking Perry's arm as he stumbled to his feet. He advised him of his rights, then took a pair of handcuffs out of his pocket, fastened one end to Perry's wrist and the other to a support in the doorway of the garage.

"I told you I . . . I didn't do anything wrong." The prisoner trembled.

"How did you expect to dispose of all of this?" Murphy questioned.

The prisoner looked at the twins and the evidence that had been collected against him. "If these kids hadn't snooped around, we'd have done all right," he said.

"Who's we?"

"A friend of mine out west. That's where the museum is that wanted the stuff." He glowered at the children. "But you had to mess everything up."

"We wouldn't have if you hadn't been so mean to our dog, Snap!" Freddie replied.

"Your dog, Snap!" Perry said scornfully. "You mean the mutt that tried to attack me?"

"He didn't attack you!" Nan retorted.

"Well, anyway, that was Bob, Red Rankin's trick dog."

"How do you know that?"

"I used to work for the Hayden Circus before I came here. That dog never liked me, and I never liked him either!"

Officer Murphy nodded to the other policeman. "Selby, let's put these things in the trunk of our car and take them down to headquarters with Mr. Perry here."

Bert looked pleadingly at the policeman. "I wonder if I could take the snake goddess back to school. After all, I'm responsible for it, and I'd like to see it safe in the museum."

The officer patted Bert on the back. "You've



done a good job catching this fellow. Take the statuette. I'll explain to Chief Mahoney."

Bert's face shone. "Thank you, Officer Murphy!" he cried. He rewrapped the little figure in the paper and placed it carefully in the basket of his bicycle.

"Could you take us to school, too?" Flossie asked as she, Freddie, and Nan climbed into the police car.

"Oh, could you? I'd like to see Mr. Tetlow's face when Bert presents the snake goddess!" Nan chimed in.

By this time Bert and Charlie had ridden off on their bicycles. "We'll take Perry to headquarters first, then drive you children to school," Officer Murphy said, pulling away from the Nelson house.

A while later, when everyone had finally gathered in front of the school building, Bert glanced at his watch. "I hope Mr. Tetlow is still here! It's after five already."

To the children's delight, they found the principal working on some reports when they walked in. He looked up in surprise.

"Well, what brings you to school at this hour?" he asked, taking off his glasses.

Bert's voice shook with excitement as he spoke. "We've brought the statuette!" He laid the package on Mr. Tetlow's desk.

"You have? How wonderful! Where did you find it?"

As the story of Ernie Perry unfolded, the principal said he was absolutely astounded. "So it *was* Mr. Nelson's employee after all!" he exclaimed. "Of course, he would know the value of the museum pieces!"

"And he was the phony 'lectric-light man!" Flossie put in.

Mr. Tetlow smiled. "Without you twins, and you, too, Charlie," he said solemnly, "I doubt if we could have recovered the statuette so quickly. I'm very, very happy to have it back."

"May we put it back in the museum?" Nan inquired.

"By all means. I'm sure Mr. Carter will take extra special care of it!"

Once again the little figure was placed on the shelf in the museum room.

"Am I glad that mystery is solved!" Bert said as the children left the building.

"Now all we have to do is find Snap!" Flossie added.

"And his owner," Nan reminded her, making Freddie wrinkle his nose in disapproval.

"So long as he lets us buy Snap," the little boy said, waving good-bye to Charlie.

Later, when the Bobbseys were seated around the supper table, Bert told his exciting story.

"I'm very proud of all of you," Mr. Bobbsey said when his son had finished. "You solved the mystery of that stolen statue and saved Mr. Tetlow from a great deal of embarrassment. Just imagine if he had had to tell Mr. Nelson one of his prize possessions was missing—"

As he spoke, a shrill whistle interrupted. Everyone stopped talking and listened. Then two more whistles came.

"It's a fire!" Freddie shouted, springing up from his chair.

As the others jumped, too, they heard the clang of fire engines rushing down the street. Bert ran to the window. A flare lighted the sky.

"It looks like it's near the lake, Dad!" Bert said.

At once Mr. Bobbsey dashed to the telephone and called the firehouse. A moment later he turned back to his family.

"It's our boathouse," he said grimly. "It's on fire!"

"Your boats, Dad, and my canoe will be ruined!" Bert cried, dashing out the door.

"I'll put out the fire!" Freddie exclaimed. "I'll get my fire engine!"

"Just a minute!" Mr. Bobbsey called. "It's too dangerous!"

"Oh, please, Dad!" Nan begged. "It's *our* boathouse, too!"

"They can stay in the van with me, Dick," the twins' mother said.

Mr. Bobbsey relented. "We'll all go. You may be able to help, Bert. The wood in our boathouse has been treated and will resist fire for a little while anyway."

As everyone got into the van, the streets started to fill with streams of people hurrying toward the lakefront. Then another fire truck sped past, its siren blasting as the glow in the evening sky reddened.

"Hurry, Daddy!" Freddie urged.

His father drove as fast as he dared through the growing traffic. But no sooner had they left a busy intersection than the Bobbseys heard a loud *crash!*

The hook-and-ladder truck that had just passed had hit something!

Frantic, Mr. Bobbsey stopped the van and darted into the street. He could see the fire engine clearly. It had struck a parked car and skidded across the street, blocking it completely!

"We have to get to the fire!" Freddie cried.

By now the firemen and several passersby were surveying the wreck. The rear bumper of the car had caught under the front of the fire truck, and the driver could not move!

"We may be able to jiggle the car out from under the truck," Mr. Bobbsey told the firemen.

At his direction two men stood on the bumper while he and two others yanked the car loose, freeing the truck at last.

Waving their thanks, the firemen hurried away to the lake. The Bobbseys followed. But when they reached the waterfront, the children gasped. Not only was the Bobbseys' boathouse on fire, but several others were ablaze as well! The wind had increased, and red sparks crackled high in the smoky sky as water from three engines poured onto the flames. Throughout, the firemen worked furiously, hacking through windows and spraying chemicals onto fuel tanks to keep them from exploding.

Now and then a hissing sound would erupt and more white smoke would billow forth from the boathouses.

Recognizing Mr. Bobbsey as he ran forward, one of the firemen said, "I hope you don't have any boats in there. The fire's pretty bad!"

"There are three of them," Mr. Bobbsey replied, looking toward the entrance. "The fire seems to be mostly on the left side, though. Maybe I can save one of the boats anyway."

"Let me go with you, Dad," Bert said, catching up to his father. "I'll be careful."

The fireman didn't want to let them pass, but they burst past him. At the same time, Sam and another man from the lumberyard joined Bert



and his father. "We'll get the big boat out!" Sam cried.

"Okay," Mr. Bobbsey said. "Bert and I will see about the rest."

Quickly the men ran the larger launch out into the lake while Mr. Bobbsey jumped into his motorboat and started the engine.

"Paddle down the lake!" he yelled to Bert, who was already in his canoe. "Pull in at the first dock. I'll meet you!"

Suddenly, to Bert's horror, the wall next to him began to cave in!

## ■ 11 ■

# A New Catch

Hearing the sound of burning wood, Bert paddled fast and hard until he reached the welcome cool air of the lake. He wiped his moist forehead shakily and let out a long sigh of relief.

As he rowed past the boathouse next door, a large spark fell into the canoe. It landed on a cushion that had been left in the bow, and began to crackle.

Instantly Bert put his paddle on the bottom of the canoe, and holding on to the gunwales, inched his way forward. The craft rocked from side to side, causing him to sway. But finally he stretched out one hand and grasped the edge of the burning cushion and tossed it overboard!

"Whew!" Bert blinked his eyes.

A few minutes later he joined his father and



the two lumbermen at the dock. They had tied up their boats and helped pull Bert's canoe onto the shore.

Mr. Bobbsey gave Bert a hug. "Good work," he said, gazing back at the yellow flames.

When they returned to the others, the crowd was silent.

"Where's Freddie?" Mr. Bobbsey asked his wife.

She pointed toward one of the fire engines, where Freddie was talking to the fire chief.

"Freddie!" Mr. Bobbsey called. "Leave the man alone. He's busy."

The fire chief took Freddie's hand and led him back to the others. "We've been having a nice chat," he said. "By the way, was anyone in your boathouse this afternoon?" he asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Not that I know of. Why? Did the fire start there?"

"Looks like it. My men examined the place the minute they got here. They found a partly burned blanket in one corner. Someone could have dropped a lighted match on it."

"I haven't used any of the boats for several days," Mr. Bobbsey said. "Perhaps some prowler broke into the boathouse."

The same thought on all their minds, the

twins looked at one another. Had Red Rankin set the fire?

Before anyone could speak, however, the chief produced a battered-looking book. "Ever see this before?"

Bert gasped. It was a geography textbook! "Where did you get this?" he asked.

"We found it right outside your boathouse."

"May I look at it?" Bert asked. He took the book and opened the cover.

"Whose is it?" Nan inquired.

Her brother held the book under a nearby streetlamp. "It's Danny Rugg's!" he exclaimed. "Hmm. I wonder how his book got here!"

"There's Danny now!" Flossie blurted out as she pointed to a group of boys standing around one of the fire engines.

"Ask him to come over here, will you, Bert?" the fire chief directed. "I want to talk to him."

Bert strode toward Danny and Sneaker, who were talking to another fireman. When Bert relayed the chief's message, the freckle-faced bully twitched nervously. "Why does he want to see me?"

"He found your geography book outside our boathouse," Bert said. "He—"

"I don't know anything about it, and I'm not going over there!" Danny said rudely.

He turned to flee, but not before Bert had

reached out to stop him. Danny shoved him hard, making Bert trip over a fire hose and fall backward.

"Get out of my way!" the bully snapped angrily.

Nan had seen everything and started forward as Danny ran off. "Catch him!" she cried as her twin struggled to his feet.

"We'll get him!" Freddie and Flossie shouted, racing after Danny. Bert and Nan joined in the chase.

The next minute Danny stumbled over a hose himself and fell to the ground with a thud.

"Listen," Bert said when Danny stood up again, "it's not going to do you any good to run away. The chief wants to talk to you, and if you don't do it, he'll come after you."

The other boy hung his head. "I'll go back," he said.

Soon he was standing face to face with the fire chief. "Is this yours?" the chief asked Danny quietly, holding up the geography book.

"I don't know anything about it," came the somber reply.

"It has your name on it," Bert said.

"So?"

"I told you it was found by our boathouse," Bert continued.

Danny looked worried but said, "For all I

know, you took the book and put it by the boathouse yourself!"

"Watch it, young man!" Mr. Bobbsey warned.

Under further questioning by the fire chief, Danny finally admitted that he and Sneaker had been in the Bobbseys' boathouse just before supertime.

"Where is your friend?" the chief inquired.

"Sneaker!" Danny's sharp cry rang out loudly, drawing the second boy to his side.

"Now, tell me, young man," the chief said, his eyes glued to Sneaker, "what exactly were you two boys doing in that boathouse?"

For a few seconds there was no reply. Then Danny spoke up defiantly. "We were looking for clues!"

"Clues!" Bert said in amazement. "To what?"

"We thought maybe we could find that old statuette," Danny said. "Sneaker and I are just as good detectives as you are!"

Flossie giggled. "The snake goddess is back in the school museum, Danny!" she exclaimed. "Bert found it this afternoon!"

The boy looked downcast but said nothing.

"Did you light any matches while you were in the boathouse?" the fire chief continued. Sneaker glanced at Danny but did not answer. "Tell the truth."

"Maybe we did light one or two," Sneaker ad-

mitted finally. "But we didn't start the fire!"

"It probably hadn't started when you left," the man explained. "However, if a match landed on that blanket before the flame was completely out, it may have smoldered there. Eventually the blanket set fire to the boathouse!"

Danny and Sneaker trembled. "We—we didn't mean to hurt anything!" Danny stuttered.

"Maybe not," the fire chief acknowledged. "But even so, you're old enough to know that it's dangerous to play with matches! Get into my car over there!"

"Wh-what are you going to do to us?" Sneaker asked.

"I'm going to take you both home and explain to your parents what has happened. It'll be up to them to punish you!"

When the boys had left, Flossie climbed into the van with the other three children. "I'm glad our boats didn't burn up," she declared.

"Maybe I really will be a fireman someday," her twin said blissfully.

Just then they heard loud barking.

"What's that?" Freddie asked as a shaggy white dog leapt out of the bushes and into the glare of the headlights. "Snap!"

At once the children tumbled out of the van. Flossie threw her arms around the dog.

"Oh, Snap!" she cried. "Where were you?"

Snap wagged his tail, pranced on his hind legs, and barked again.

"Isn't he funny?" Freddie said.

But then the dog stopped and bolted toward the woods.

"Stop him!" Nan shouted. "He's going away!"

Snap barked again, then looked at the twins mournfully and ran toward the woods once more.

By this time, Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey, flashlight in hand, had joined the children. "I think he wants us to follow him," their mother said.

"I think so too," Nan agreed.

With Mr. Bobbsey in the lead, the group walked into the woods. Farther and farther they went, following the dog, who trotted at an even pace.

"I hope he knows where he's taking us," Mr. Bobbsey said.

At last Snap halted, running around in circles and sniffing at the ground.

"Now where's he going?" Nan asked as he struck off toward the lake.

Just as she spoke, the dog gave a yelp and bounded forward. A short distance ahead was a man seated on a rock by the water.

"Hello there, Bob!" he said, pulling the dog's ears affectionately. "I'm glad to see you—thought you'd run away again!"

Then he heard the footsteps behind him and jumped up. When he saw the flashlight beam and the six onlookers, he looked startled. Mr. Bobbsey introduced himself.

"And—and I'm Red Rankin," said the other man, his hair giving off a coppery glow in the flashlight.

"Mr. Hayden at the circus told us about you," Bert put in quickly.

"Did you happen to use a boathouse to sleep in?" Mr. Bobbsey asked suddenly, thinking of the blanket that had been found.

"Yes, I did, but I'm sure I didn't cause the fire!"

"Perhaps we'd better go back to the van and discuss everything."

"Were those your boats in there?" Red inquired.

"Yes, but we got all of them out safely," Bert said.

"Well, I'm glad to hear it." On the way to the Bobbsey house the circus man explained that he had had very little money when he left the circus. "I came to Lakeport hoping to find a job. I wandered down to the lake and figured I'd spend my nights in one of those boathouses until I did."

Fear growing in his eyes, he looked at Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey. "I was very careful not to disturb





anything, and I never lighted any matches. I had no reason to. You've got to believe me. That fire wasn't my fault!"

"Don't worry, Mr. Rankin!" Mr. Bobbsey said in a kindly voice. "We know who caused the fire, and it wasn't you."

"But when did Snap find you?" Freddie asked impatiently.

"Snap? Who's Snap?"

"We named your dog Snap," Bert explained. "We hope you don't mind. We didn't know what his real name was."

"Oh, that's all right." The man laughed, relaxing, as the children explained how the dog had followed them home from school.

"He wanted to stay with us all the time," Flossie said.

"Well, I can see why. You seem to be real nice people."

It wasn't long before everyone had reached the Bobbseys' house, where Dinah threw open the door and practically leapt down the front steps.

"I've been so worried about you! Is the fire out? Sam came home an hour ago!"

Then she saw Snap. "Where did you find him?" she asked, shaking the dog's paw. "Welcome back, Mr. Snap!"

Now Flossie took their visitor's hand and in-

roduced him. "This is Mr. Red Rankin," she announced. "Snap belongs to him," she added sadly.

Dinah peered at the man. "How do you do?" she said. "Weren't you here the other day looking for work?"

"Yes, I was." He laughed sheepishly as Mr. Bobbsey led the way into the living room. "I think we should sit down and talk a little," he said.

The twins' mother added, "Dinah, I think we could all use something hot to drink. All of a sudden I feel rather chilly."

"Coming right up," Dinah said, bustling toward the kitchen.

Freddie and Flossie followed her. There, in breathless detail, they told the housekeeper about the miraculous rescue of the boats, the discovery of Danny Rugg's geography book by the burning boathouse, and how Snap had suddenly appeared and led them to Red Rankin.

"My, my, you've had quite a night!" Dinah exclaimed.

"We sure have!" The little twins laughed gaily.

They helped her carry in cups of steaming cocoa and a big plate of homemade cookies. As Mr. Bobbsey took a cup, he addressed Red Rankin.

"Suppose you tell us about yourself," he said.

Speaking in a soft, low voice, the trainer said that after his trick dog had disappeared, he had stayed in Lakeport, hoping to find the dog and rejoin the show.

"But I couldn't locate Bob," he went on, "so I started looking for any kind of work. Then yesterday I spotted Bob by your boathouse!"

"He knew you were around here because you dropped your bandanna in our backyard," Nan said. "We had heard you were heading to the lumberyard, and Snap picked up your scent in the boathouse."

"We were with him, but we couldn't find you," Bert added.

"I didn't spend too much time in the boathouse," Red explained, taking a sip of cocoa.

"What are your plans now?" Mr. Bobbsey asked.

Red Rankin looked uncertain. "Frankly I don't know. I was just offered something with a construction company," he said.

"That's great," Mrs. Bobbsey remarked.

"They want to send me to Central America. To tell you the truth, I'm a little tired of circus life. I'd really like to try something else."

"If you go to Central America," Bert said with some hesitation in his voice, "will you take Snap—I mean Bob—with you?"

Red gazed at the dog, now lying contentedly in front of the children. "That's a tough question," he said.

As he pondered the answer, the twins thought about the exciting events of recent days. How long would it be before they had another mystery to solve? They would find out when they discovered *The Mystery at Snow Lodge*.

"I'd like to buy your dog," Mr. Bobbsey said, breaking the silence. "We're all very fond of him."

"Well, Bob and I are old friends," Red replied. "I'd hate to part with him. But"—he glanced at the forlorn faces around him—"I'd be glad to let him stay in such a good home."

"You would?" Nan cried. "Oh, thank you! Thank you!"

Freddie and Flossie jumped up and threw their arms around the man while Bert shook his hand.

"Snap is ours!" Freddie exclaimed joyfully. "Hooray!"

"Now that we know his name, will we have to call him Bob?" asked Flossie.

"Bob Bobbsey?" said Dinah mischievously as she appeared in the doorway. "That's *really* too much. I think Snap is a good name after all."



## THE BOBBSEY TWINS®

## Mystery at School

When school was finally over, Bert packed up his books and hurried to the museum room.

Everything appeared to be in order—until he noticed a strangely empty space on the shelf where the valuable statuette of the Cretan snake goddess had been!

“Oh, no!” Bert muttered in horror. “Who could have taken it?”

The Bobbsey Twins—Bert and Nan, Freddie and Flossie—have won millions of fans since their first adventure in 1904. While remaining true to the spirit of the original editions, these latest revisions of the classic Grosset & Dunlap mysteries have fast-moving plots and exciting illustrations especially for today's young readers.

*Look inside for a listing of  
BOBBSEY TWINS titles.*

ISBN 0-448-09074-0



0 70918 09074 5

Grosset & Dunlap