

## chapter one

### Snatched!

“Another Summer Snow is missing!”

Becky McGuffey burst into the kitchen and slumped in a chair. “What am I going to do?”

Across the table, her teenaged sister, Yvonne, didn’t even look up from her book.

Becky studied the book’s cover: *The Mystery of the Haunted Orchard*. The picture showed a sinister house with spindly apple trees, the branches reaching out like bony arms. Even with her troubles, she shivered. Becky loved a good mystery. In books—not real life.

*Having a mystery happen to me is no fun at all.*

“What am I going to do?”

This time Yvonne looked up and rolled her eyes. “It’s just a rose. You’ll have plenty more bloom before the fair.”

“Just a rose?!” That showed how much her sister knew. Becky sat up and pushed a yellow sun visor with purple flowers back from her sweaty forehead. “Summer Snow is my *best* white rose. It’s won first prize two years in a row at the junior garden show. It *has* to win the grand prize this year. The winner

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gets a gold plaque and a one-hundred-dollar gift card from Sam's Garden Center."

Not that she wanted to tell Yvonne, but Becky had secret plans for that contest prize. *I've been saving my birthday and Christmas money for two whole years now. If I win, the prize money will make exactly enough.*

Yvonne popped a bubble of purple gum. The grape scent tickled Becky's nose. Even though she liked the color purple, she didn't like grape anything.

"Why the worry? You couldn't enter that rose anyway. The fair is still weeks away."

"I know that."

Becky had the dates—September 4<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>—marked in red on her puppy-dog calendar. "I don't even care if someone takes a rose now and then—if they ask."

Sitting up straight, she tried to explain the problem to Yvonne. "Someone is taking my roses. Every day for the past two weeks I've found another rose gone. I have to stop the person taking them. What if they pick the rose that I'm going to enter in the fair?"

As a Junior Rose Grower, Becky had learned

the hard way not to count on any single rose when entering a competition. As the time drew near for the contest, she kept her eyes on her eight rose bushes. Only the most perfect blooms were picked for competition.

“You aren’t going to put umbrellas over your bushes this year are you?” Yvonne asked with suspicion in her dark eyes. “It looks weird. All my friends laughed and called us the Family Who Didn’t Want Wet Flowers.”

“Roses can be beaten down by the rain,” Becky said dodging the question. Last summer Yvonne squawked plenty about the polka-dotted umbrellas sheltering Summer Snow and Candy Apple Red. This year, Becky could add a Dora the Explorer umbrella and one with a clown. Yvonne would *not* be happy about those and right now Becky needed her sister’s advice. “What am I going to do? I have to find out who’s taking my roses before it’s too late.”

“Who knows?” Yvonne said as she shrugged and went back to her book. Another grape bubble popped, to Becky’s irritation.

Suddenly, Becky had an idea.

*I love mysteries too. Why can't I be like the girl*

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*detectives in books and solve this? Someone is taking my roses and I have to find out. I'll solve the mystery myself. But how?*

“When someone in one of your books wants to solve a mystery, what do they do?”

This was a topic Yvonne loved. A sparkle came into her eyes and she actually put down the book and looked interested. “The first thing is to look for clues or anyone suspicious.”

“Clues! That’s right.” Becky had read enough Nancy Drew mysteries to know that. “Where would I look?”

“That’s easy. You go to the scene of the crime.”

“Huh?”

“Your roses were taken from the garden right?”

“Yes.”

“Then that’s the place you start. See if any suspicious characters are hanging around. Then search to see if they left any clues.”

*I'll start in my rose garden, at the scene of the crime.*

Becky jumped off the chair and squared her shoulders. The first thing she needed before she could look for clues was a magnifying glass. Just like Nancy Drew. Becky wasn’t too sure what a detective

did with the magnifying glass, but it always helped the girls in books.

She tiptoed into the study where Mom worked and pantomimed borrowing from the supply box. Mom nodded, her dark curls bobbing.

Rummaging in the box of pencils, scissors and paper clips, Becky pulled out the magnifying glass. With a quick wave, although Mom didn't notice, Becky closed the study door without a squeak. Then she made a fast stop in her bedroom for a pink notebook with roses on the cover and a pencil.

*I'll find a clue and stop that rose thief. Today.  
No rosenapper is going to cheat me out of winning  
this year.*