

Barking up the wrong tree

On a chilly autumn afternoon at Middleborough High, the serenity of the school was shattered. As the bell rang for lunch, an urgent message rippled through the corridor: Ram, the beloved therapy dog, had vanished! Mr Reyes, the stern, ex-theatre kid principal, gathered the children into the school yard, his voice stern. “We *must* find Ram. He brings joy and comfort to us all.”

Distressed, Mr Reyes sprinted to his office rotary phone and dialed the local police station. Immediately, he got an answer.

“Hello?” the voice on the other end of the phone began.

“Hello, this is Mr Reyes from Middleborough high. Our therapy dog, Ram, has been stolen by someone in our school!”

“I see, I’ll send one of our *best* detectives over,” the person on the other end of the phone replied.

Around ten minutes later, red and blue lights flashed outside the school as the unfamiliar siren sounded from the police car. With semi-wide eyes and upturned brows, Mr Reyes rushed out the school and ran towards the car. The door slowly opened to reveal a woman in a navy blue cardigan and a long, dark grey skirt with shoulder length brunette hair tied into a small ponytail at the

back of her neck, who looked to be in her late twenties or mid thirties.

“Greetings, I’m Veronica Sawyer, I’ll be helping to find your beloved dog today.”

“Oh great,” said Mr Reyes.

With a serious look on her face, detective Sawyer placed a hand on her hip.

“Have you found any sort of clues the criminal may have left behind?” asked detective Sawyer.

“Yes,” replied Mr Reyes as he pulled out a crumpled up post it note out of his dull, brown suit pocket.



As her hand gripped onto the note and her brows furrowed, she let out a sigh.

“I see...” detective Sawyer muttered. She slowly began to look up at the older man in front of her, “I’ll get to the bottom of this. Don’t you worry, sir.”

“Excellent!” Mr Reyes exclaimed.

As the pair entered the school, detective Sawyer could tell the *entire* place was filled with worry and discomfort.

“Now, if you don’t mind, I have important business to attend to in my office. Please don’t be afraid to ask me anything,” stated Mr Reyes. Detective Sawyer began to wander the school, her eyes scanning every crevice of every hallway and classroom. As her eyes were perusing the area, her eyes caught onto red-ish maroon dog fur piled near the entrance of one of the many classrooms.

“What’s this?” detective Sawyer asked herself. Her eyes began to look up at the sign on the door of the classroom.

Art classroom.

With a raised brow and a droopy mouth, she slowly began to open the door to the art classroom. The second she entered she saw a group of three children crowded near one canvas. There was one girl, who was the *centre* of the other two’s attention; she had wavy, blonde hair that was cloaking a small part of her yellow

cardigan. Detective Sawyer took a step closer, fully entering the classroom, which earned her a confused look from the teacher.

She took a closer look at the blonde teen's painting, it was a painting of... *Ram*. Detective Sawyer's eyes widened at the sight of the painting. Was this blonde haired woman the culprit?!

She took a few steps closer towards the duo and made sure that they were aware of her presence. The other child, a tall teen with dark brown hair swooped upwards, noticed detective Sawyer and was the first to speak, "Uhm, who are you?" he questioned.

"Apologies, I'm Veronica Sawyer," she stated, "I was called by your principal to find your lost therapy dog, Ram."

"Oh my gosh!" exclaimed the blonde girl in the yellow cardigan "We've been looking for Ram for *ages*! Thank you so much for coming here! I'm Brooke!" she said a *bit too* enthusiastically as she took detective Sawyer's hand and shook it.

"Right," detective Sawyer muttered.

"You know," the tall teen started "I saw this kid from the football team with some of this... uh... red-ish fur on his jacket?"

"Great! I'll go look for him," Detective Sawyer stated.

"Oh, I'm Jake by the way,"

“And just so you know,” Brooke began, “Last time I saw him, he was on the school field practicing.” Detective Sawyer nodded in response to Brooke’s information.

Detective Sawyer waved goodbye to the two of them and made her way to the school field, navigating through the bustling halls. Eventually, she arrived at said school field and saw a teen, who looked to be around 17 years old, with scruffy brunette hair and a red and white letterman jacket. He was messing around with what *seemed* to be a red-ish maroon american football. But the second detective Sawyer took a closer look, she discovered that it was actually...

RAM!

Detective Sawyer stomped up to the culprit and placed a hand on his shoulder, making him jump. “AH!” he exclaimed, hiding the dog behind his back as he turned to face her. “Uh... Hi! I... I’m Kurt! You’re the... uh... detective Mr Reyes called, right? I am *totally not* doing anything suspicious at all!” he said with a nervous yet guilty smile on his face.

“I know it was you, kid,” detective Sawyer stated, “hand over the dog,” she demanded. Kurt sighed and reluctantly took his hands away from behind his back and handed detective Sawyer the dog.

“Dammit...” he muttered quietly as detective Sawyer began to take him to Mr Reyes’ office.

Story by Elisha Stonock.