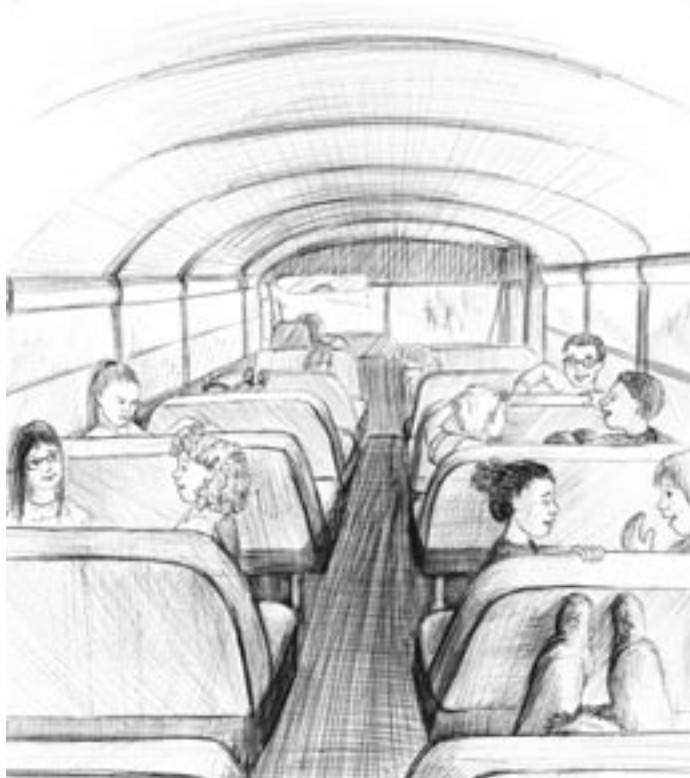


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Cozy Café Clue



It has been one month since I, Detective Nella Fishbone, moved from the city to the country with my mom, dad, and

twin brother, Allen. I left behind my favorite museum, bookstore, library, and most of all, my best friend, Lei.

I didn't think I would like living in the country. I'm not a big fan of hay bales and bugs. I didn't think I'd make any new friends here. But that was before I met Meg and her brother, Jake. Meg and Jake live just down the road from us, on a farm. Meg is a year older than me, but we are still new best friends.

There are other kids from my class who are my friends too. I glance around the school bus and see Ann, Zack, and Tia. They play with me at recess, sit by me at lunch, and don't laugh at me when I ask such questions as, "Are cow pies made with beef?" Well, okay, they *do* laugh. But not in a mean way.

Shauna, on the other hand, *does* laugh to be mean. She's in my class too. And even though she pretends to be my friend when other people are around, later I overhear her saying mean things about me. I think she's jealous because I'm new and getting more attention than she is.

I also didn't think there would be any mysteries for a detective (like me) to uncover in the country. But that was before Meg and I found the secret box behind the altar at old Saint Jacques Church. So far we've unlocked it with two of the five keys that came with the box.

Who are my neighbors?

Friends



“What do you think the next key will unlock inside the box?” Meg asks as we ride home together on the bus.

“Hmmm,” I say, thinking. “The top of the key is shaped like a person’s head, so maybe it will have something to do with . . . people?”



“Yeah, but which people?”

Meg asks as the bus comes to a

stop at the end of my driveway.

“There’s only one way to find out,” I say, standing up. “Meet us at Saint Jacques in half an hour!”

I wave good-bye to Meg and head down the aisle. But then I trip on something and almost fall. I look down and see a foot in the aisle. It’s attached to Shauna.

“Oops,” Shauna says, giving me a thin smile. She pulls her foot away, hiding a laugh behind her hand.

I ignore Shauna and head out the door. I know who my friends are, and the list *doesn’t* include Shauna.

A little later, Meg, Jake, Allen, and I bike up to the entrance of Saint Jacques Church. We park our bikes and I pull the secret box out of my backpack. I place the head-shaped key in the box’s lock and give it a turn.

Click!

Slowly, I open the lid. We all look inside. Jake pulls out a piece of paper. “Is it another riddle we need to solve?” Allen asks.

“It looks more like . . . an address,” Jake says, showing us the paper.



“The Cozy Café is on Main Street in Montreal,” Meg says. “But which neighbor is waiting there in the third booth?”

I pick up my backpack and stuff the secret box back inside it, along with my detective notebook and Bible. “To the Cozy Café!” I say.

We pedal down the dusty road that leads to the small town of Montreal. It’s a two-mile ride, so there’s no time to lose.

“Hurry up, you guys!” I call over my shoulder to Allen, Meg, and Jake.

“Right behind you!” Allen calls back.

I pedal hard up a small hill and then begin to coast down the other side. But as I do, I see a car with its hood up parked at the bottom of the hill. An elderly woman is standing next to the car, looking up and down the long dirt road. I can’t believe who is standing next to her with a huge frown on her face . . . Shauna.



“Look!” I hear Meg call from behind me. “It’s Shauna and her grandmother!”

I, Detective Nella Fishbone, have never fixed a broken car in my life, so what good would it do to stop and offer to help? Plus, I’m in the middle of some very important detective work. Plus, Shauna doesn’t exactly deserve my help after being so mean to me.

I zoom past the parked car, legs pumping, my sights set on the neighbor I will meet in the third booth of the Cozy Café.

As I get to the top of the next hill, I glance back. Meg, Allen, and Jake have stopped to talk to Shauna and her grandmother. I sigh and stop too. I turn my bike around and pedal back to where they are, feeling bad that I wasn’t being very neighborly by biking past in the first place.

Allen and I wait with Shauna and her grandmother while Meg and Jake bike to a nearby friend’s house and call a tow truck. Then Meg, Jake, Allen, and I bike the rest of the way to the Cozy Café.

When have you helped someone who was in need? How did you feel afterward?

We hurry inside and look at the third booth. But no one is sitting there.

“Looks like the mysterious neighbor left,” Allen says.

“It *did* take us a long time to call the tow truck and everything,” Meg says.

We slump into the third booth and order four sodas. I pull from my backpack the piece of paper we found in the secret box and read the words again. A *neighbor waits*, I think to myself, and think of Shauna and her grandma, waiting by their car. “Or maybe . . .” I say, looking at the others. “Maybe we already met the neighbor.”

“Nella,” Allen says to me. “The only *neighbor* waiting for us in this booth is a napkin container.” Allen picks up the container and pulls out a napkin. He waves it like a flag in front of us.

“Hey, look!” Jake says. “Something is written on the napkin!” He grabs the napkin out of Allen’s hand. “It says Luke 10:25-37.”

Quickly, I pull the Bible from my backpack and find the passage. “That’s the parable about the Good Samaritan,” Allen says, looking at the page. “We acted that out for worship, remember?” I nod and read the story aloud to the others.

“It’s like what happened to us today,” I say when I’m done reading. “On the way here. I biked right past Shauna and her grandmother without helping, like the priest and Levite walked by the man who needed help. But you three stopped and offered help, like the Good Samaritan. You were good neighbors.”

“But you came back,” Meg adds. “That’s being a good neighbor too.”

“So I guess the person key unlocks stories about neighbors?” Jake says.

Meg nods. “Like Shauna and her grandmother.”

I think about Shauna. “Even if they aren’t very neighborly back.”

Robbers, bandages, a donkey, an inn. What do these things have to do with being a good neighbor? Read Luke 10:25-37 to discover the answer!

