



Just Right
Reader

BOOK
#4



NEXT-DOOR DETECTIVE AGENCY

The Case of the
Runaway Dogs

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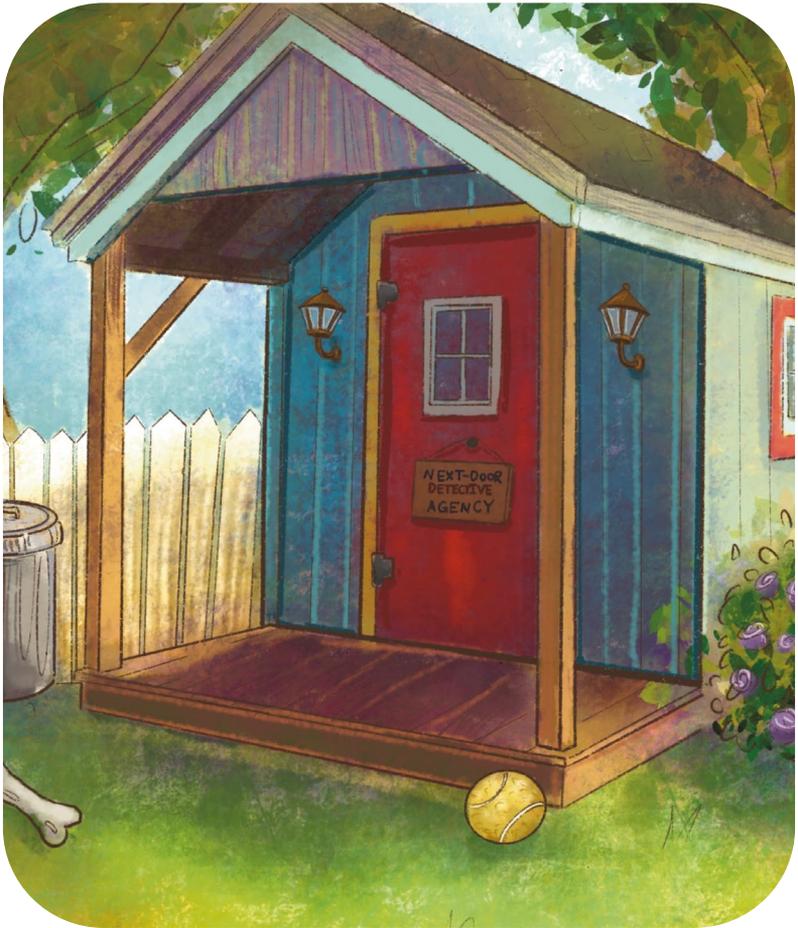
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1

Open For Business

Dante hopped out of bed. His mind raced with excitement.



He and Olivia had decided to start their own detective agency. They even had a name for it: Next-Door Detective Agency.

They spent all week getting ready. They cleaned the shed in Olivia's backyard. They hung a sign on the door. They made flyers to **promote** their agency. They put the flyers up all over town.

They were ready.

Dante grabbed his bike helmet. Then, he headed for his front door. But his mom stopped him.

"Your dad and I are leaving soon," she said. "We want to get to the festival early. We are trying something new this year!"

Oh no. He'd forgotten! Every year, they **organized** a Health Food Festival. It was an **opportunity** to share healthy recipes with the **community**.



The event was today. He'd promised to hand out samples from their bakery truck.

"I'm sorry, Mom," Dante said. "I'm meeting Olivia. Today is our big opening."

"That's right!" his mom said. "Good luck! Bike over to the festival if you finish early."

It only took a few minutes to ride to Olivia's house. He stopped and stared. He couldn't believe it! A long line of kids had formed by the shed.

Olivia was waiting for him. She held something furry. Was that a dog? Dante had never seen it before.

"This is Cookie," she said when he walked up. "I'm watching her for my neighbor."

She looked at the line of kids. "We should get started," she said. "Looks like we have a lot of work to do!"

Dante opened the door. They all went inside.

The room was filled with kids. Many looked worried.



"My dog ran away this morning!" said one boy.
"I can't find him anywhere."

"My dog is missing too!" a girl cried.

Everyone started talking at the same time. It seemed like all of their dogs were missing.

Dante held up his hand. "Hold on!" he shouted. "One at a time!"

"Let's get organized," Olivia said.

She set Cookie on the floor. But the dog immediately ran out the open door.

"Cookie!" Olivia yelled.

She and Dante raced after Cookie. But it was too late. Now her neighbor's dog was gone too.

2

So Many Dogs

Olivia's eyes grew watery.

"It's all my fault," she said. She bit her lip.

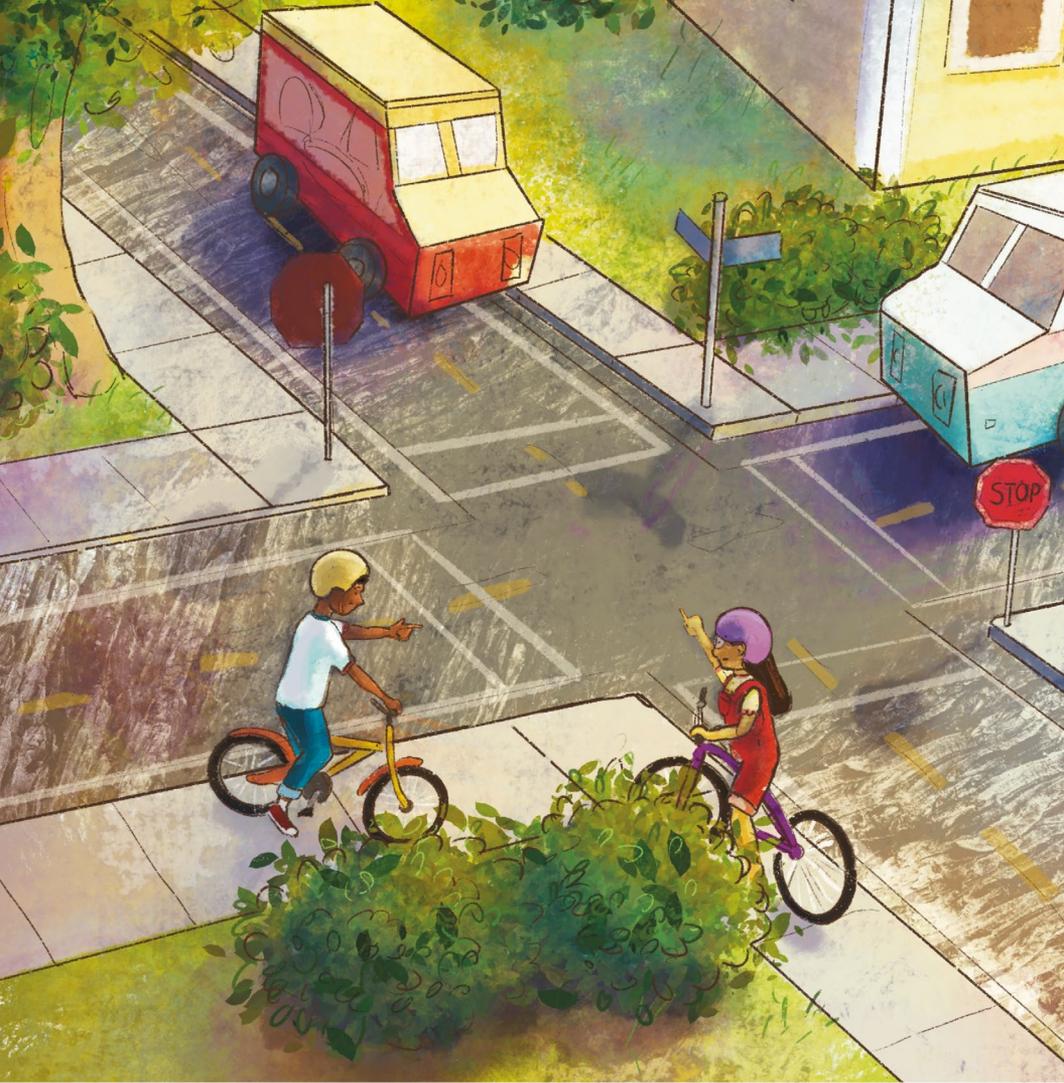
"Don't worry. We'll find her," said Dante.

The other kids followed them outside. "See?" said one. "The dogs keep running off!"

Dante frowned. "It is strange," he said. "Look. We're going to find them. But you can all go home for now. We'll let you know when we learn something."

Everyone left. Dante turned to Olivia. "Did you see which way Cookie ran?" he asked.

She pointed. "That way."



“Let’s ride our bikes,” Dante said. “Maybe we’ll find her. Or get a clue about why all these dogs have gone missing.”

They put on their helmets and set off.

“Isn’t today the Health Food Festival?” Olivia asked.

Dante nodded. “My mom said they are trying something new.”

They stopped at an **intersection**. Dante noticed two food trucks had stopped too. One was blue. The other was red.

He knew the driver of the blue truck. He sold healthy food. Just like Dante’s parents. He was probably going to the festival too.

Dante waved. The driver waved back.

He didn’t **recognize** the red truck. But he figured it was probably going to the festival too.

He started to wave. But as the truck passed, Dante gasped.

A familiar brown dog sat in the front seat.



Olivia's eyes grew wide. "Cookie!" she yelled.

"Come on!" Dante said to her.

They raced after the truck. It turned left at the corner.

“Hurry!” Dante said. “Or we’ll lose it!” They both pedaled harder.

They rounded the corner. **Immediately**, Dante saw food trucks lining the street. The Health Food Festival!

He scanned all the trucks. None of them were the red truck.

“Maybe we should find your parents first,” Olivia said. “They can help us look for Cookie.”

“Good idea,” said Dante.

They locked their bikes to a bike rack. Then, they started searching. They wove in and out of the crowd.

“Seems like there are more dogs here this year,” Olivia said. A fluffy white one stopped to sniff her shoes.

She was right. It seemed like everyone had brought their dog that day.

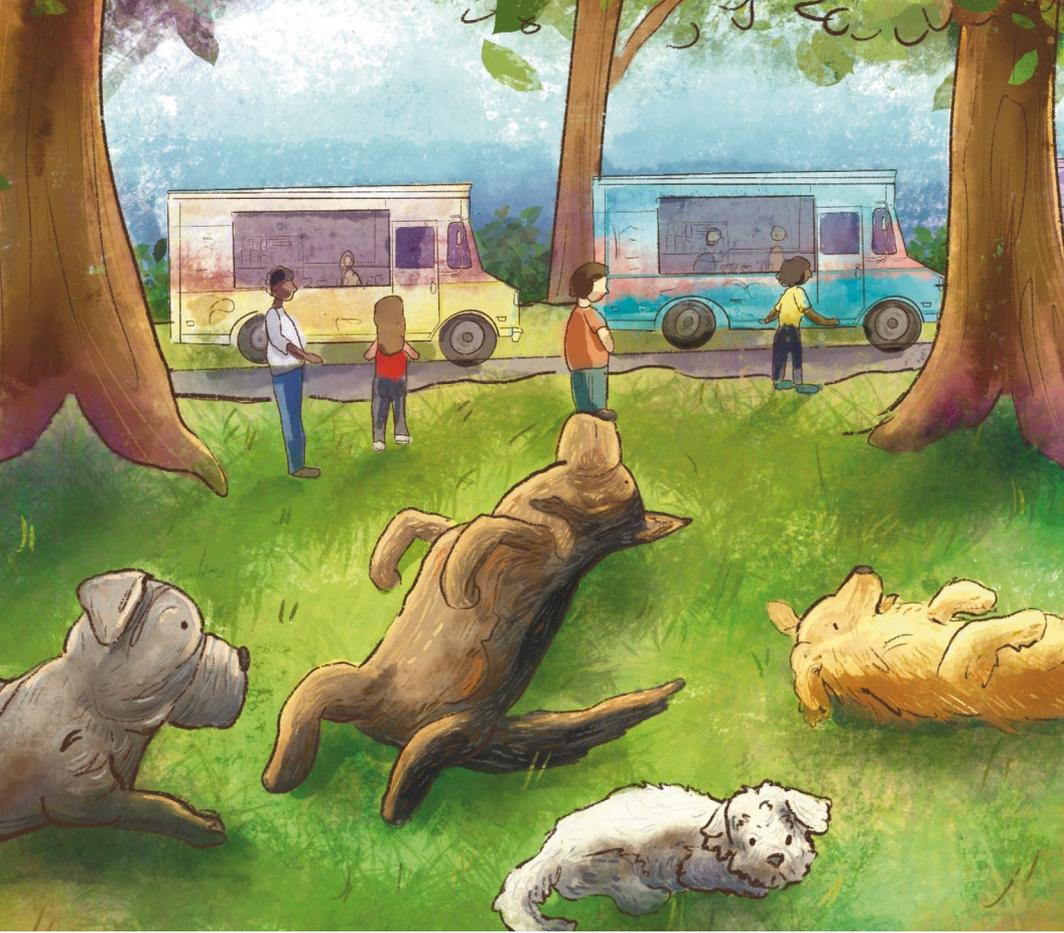
Suddenly, Dante stopped. His eyes widened with amazement. On the other side of the trucks was a large grassy area. It was full of dogs!

“Come on!” he said to Olivia.

They ran toward the dogs. There were dozens of them. Playing with each other. Barking. Rolling on the grass.

Dante was puzzled. Why were all these dogs here?

Then, he thought of a more important question. Where were their owners?



3

Hungry Pups

“Do you think these are the missing dogs?”
Dante asked.

Olivia’s eyes were wide. “Maybe. But why did they come here?”

Dante scanned the **assortment** of dogs. There were big dogs. Little dogs. Dogs of every color. But no Cookie.

Dante spotted his Mom. She was talking to a woman he didn’t recognize. Behind them was a food truck. It was red.

Dante gasped. It was the truck that took Cookie.

He took off. He could hear Olivia running behind him.

“Mom!” he yelled.

As he got closer, he could see the woman next to her. She was holding something brown and furry. Cookie!

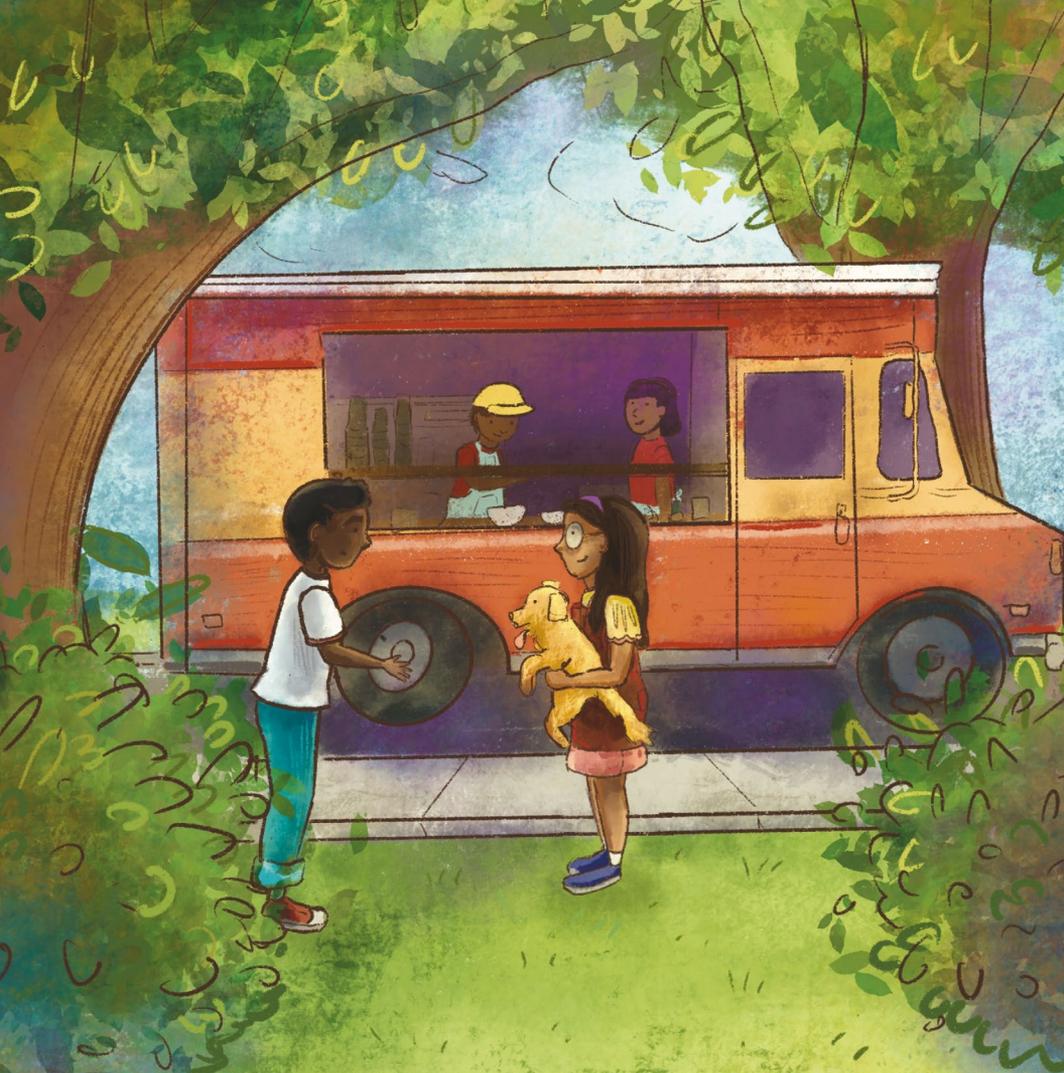
His mom waved. “Come meet Mrs. Raymond,” she said. “She owns a new business in town.”

Cookie’s tail wagged when she saw Olivia.

“We’ve been looking for Cookie everywhere!” he said to Mrs. Raymond. “She ran off this morning. Then, we saw her in your truck.”

Mrs. Raymond smiled. She patted Cookie’s head. “I think she smelled the dog treats we were baking,” she said. “We decided to pick her up until we could find her owner.”

Mrs. Raymond handed Cookie to Olivia. “I’m glad you showed up,” she said. “Cookie was eating all of our dog treats!”



Dante saw the dog treats. And then he looked again at all the dogs at the festival.

Suddenly, he **realized** what was going on.

"Mom," Dante said slowly. "What is the new thing you're trying this year?"

She grinned. "We decided to focus on healthy food for pets. It's been a huge success!"

Dante let out a sigh of relief. "That's why all the dogs are coming here," he said. "They smell the treats."

Olivia chuckled. "They aren't running away. They're just hungry!"

Dante's mom walked off with Mrs. Raymond. Olivia patted Cookie. "I guess we can **post**pone your dinner," she said. "Since you've eaten so many treats today!"

Dante looked at the dogs playing in the grass. "Good news," he said. "We can tell the rest of the kids where to find their dogs."

"Is there bad news?" Olivia asked.

“We don’t get to try any of the food at the festival this year,” he said.

Olivia laughed. “We can grab something to eat at my house,” she said. “Something for humans.”

She set Cookie on the ground. They started walking back to their bikes.

“I’d say our first official day as detectives was paw-some,” Dante said.

Olivia groaned. “Let’s stick to being detectives. And leave the jokes to somebody else.”

Dante laughed. “Good idea,” he said.



NEXT-DOOR
DETECTIVE
AGENCY

Glossary

assortment

a collection of different things

intersection

where two streets come together

promote

to try to increase the growth or sales of something

Set 54

Phonics Skills

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

Word Part	Meaning	Example in Text
im-	in/on or not	impossible
post-	after	postpone
pro-	forward or before	promised
-ery	character of or act	watery
-ity	quality or state	community
-ize	cause to be or treat like	organize
-ment	quality or condition	amazement



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Patents Pending

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