

# THE SCIENCE INSPECTORS

BOOK THREE

## The Case of the Little Lost Dog



The Science Inspectors

[www.bakkenbooks.com](http://www.bakkenbooks.com)

Daniel Kenney

The Case of the Little Lost Dog by Daniel Kenney  
Copyright © 2023 Daniel Kenney  
All rights reserved.

Edition 1  
Published by Bakken Books  
ISBN: 978-1-955657-75-4

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system without the prior written consent from the publisher and author, except in the instance of quotes for reviews. No part of this book may be uploaded without the permission of the publisher and author, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is originally published.

This is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, actual events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters and names are products of the author's imagination and used fictitiously.

The publisher and author acknowledge the trademark status and trademark ownership of all trademarks, service marks and word marks mentioned in this book.



**BAKKEN**  
**BOOKS**

[www.bakkenbooks.com](http://www.bakkenbooks.com)

# Table of Contents

1. The Fall Project.....	1
2. Massive Disappointment .....	10
3. A Brand-New Case .....	19
4. Violently Allergic.....	26
5. Moving toward Chaos .....	34
6. The Doggy Olympics .....	46
7. Testing the Hypothesis.....	58
8. Mum's the Word .....	67
9. Big-Time Billiards .....	76
10. Always Thinking Ahead.....	87
11. Good People .....	99
12. Having a Ball.....	106
13. To Catch a Thief.....	115
14. Over Bover .....	123
15. The Knockout Punch .....	133
16. On One Condition.....	143





## CHAPTER 1

# THE FALL PROJECT

“I still think you guys should have let me build the world’s most powerful hot dog cannon,” Jamie said as the Science Inspectors walked away from their display table in Beveridge Middle School’s gym. “And before you go saying, ‘Jamie, isn’t that just another T-shirt cannon?’ the answer is still no. I have a completely new design for this bad boy, and when I say powerful, I’m talking blow-your-doors-off powerful. And who knows—if it’s good enough, maybe we could get a brand sponsorship deal with Vienna Hot Dogs. Think about it—‘A Chicago-Style Hot Dog Gun for a Chicago-Style Dog.’”

Norah folded her arms and directed a death stare at Jamie, then moved it toward Angela.

“Yes, Norah, I will explain it to him for the millionth time,” Angela said. “Jamie, as much as we love your

passion for the hot dog project, we voted on this a month ago, and you lost fair and square.”

“But *was* it fair and square? Because I know for a fact that Howie felt bullied into voting for Norah’s Big Bang Theory idea.”

“Okay, buddy,” Norah said, her patience obviously wearing thin. “As cool as I’m sure your hot dog thing-a-ma-wiener is, nobody in the history of the prestigious Beveridge Fall Project has ever won by shooting sausages at people, and I’m not chancing my future on a risk like that. But who in our school’s history *has* won the Fall Project and gotten their name on the plaque at the front of the school? To name just a few—James Peterson, astronaut. Kimberly Watkins, the third woman to lead a Fortune 500 company. Robert Edmondson, head of the New York City Library system for ten years, and finally Ally Poindexter, who wrote her dissertation on matrices and vertices while at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a dissertation that I have on the shelf next to my bed. So, what do you have to say about that?”

“That I think a hot dog cannon is way cooler. And by the way, that Thing-a-ma-wiener name you came up with is pretty good.”

Norah threw her hands up in the air in complete exasperation.

“I get it,” Jamie said. “I do. We needed this to be as official and smart-sounding as possible, and doing it on something like the Big Bang Theory accomplishes that... in theory. But I’m telling you, I know people, and as good as we did with the presentation, I think some of those judges were... well, bored.”

“Bored?” Norah said. And before she could launch herself at Jamie, Howie held her back.

Jamie put his hands up palms out. “I’m not saying *you* were boring. I’m just saying some of the judges looked bored.”

“Which is their problem,” Norah said. “It’s not my fault if they aren’t smart enough to realize how amazing our presentation was.”

“Sure,” Jamie said. “I guess. But they’re the ones who vote on it, so maybe we need to make it *our* problem.”

Angela nodded. “I can see where Jamie is coming from, but in defense of Norah, the presentation was brilliant and perfect. Maybe the other judges didn’t understand all of it, but Mrs. Dupree was sure eating it up. Hopefully she has enough sway with the other judges

and we'll find ourselves where we belong—in first place heading into the final assembly on Friday night. But here's what I know for sure. We did our best, and all we can do is wait. I really hate to wait. Did you guys know that about me?"

"Yes!" they all said in unison.

"Am I really that obvious?"

"Yes!" they said again.

"Fine. I'm going to walk around and work out this nervous energy."

"Not me," Norah said. "I'm going to review our poster and see what changes might need to be made by Friday."

Jamie pulled out his phone. "Howie and I have better plans. And now thanks to Norah, those plans have an even better name. I give you the schematical drawings for the Thing-a-ma-wiener!"

Norah sent a helpless look to Angela, who answered it with a shrug of her shoulders and a shake of her head. "Boys."

Angela walked around the Beveridge Middle School gymnasium, which was filled with tables and posters and students and teachers. Beveridge was one of the best middle schools in all of Chicago and was famous for two

long-standing traditions—the Fall Project, which took place near the end of October during the seventh-grade year, and the Spring Trip to London that happened at the end of the eighth-grade year.

Angela had been surprised how much emphasis the school put on the Fall Project since she'd arrived in Brundon Park. Most schools went hog wild crazy over sports, and Beveridge was no different when they played their biggest rivals in football and basketball. But the energy around the Fall Project was odd, and also kind of cool. And though Angela didn't obsess over the competition like Norah did, she still wanted to win.

The Fall Project worked like this—seventh graders formed into groups of three to four students. They picked a topic, they researched the topic, and they presented the topic on the Monday of Fall Project week. At that point, a small panel of judges made the decision about the top five. Using the judges' feedback, the top five refined their projects all week until they presented their projects to an assembly that Friday. These presentations occurred in front of the school and the parents. In fact, local news media attended as well. Again, odd—but kind of cool. The grand prize winner

was chosen by a combination of the judges' votes along with those present at the assembly.

It was pretty amazing to see the wide variety of topics her fellow seventh graders had chosen. Many had a significant Chicago vibe. For instance, one group did the history of Wrigley Field. Another did the secret to the perfect Italian beef sandwich. And yet another was titled "Researching Capone: Inside the Inner Workings of a Chicago Mob Boss." The three boys presenting it wore the kind of suits and hats Angela had seen in gangster movies about the 1920s, and even though she was interested in crime and mysteries, something about the mob sent shivers down her spine. She quickly moved on.

After surveying a dizzying array of projects about history, food, sports, and even the Seven Wonders of the World, Angela came to two conclusions. First, the quality of the projects was, generally, very high. So, kudos to Beveridge for that. And second, their project was the best. The smartest, the most detailed, the most backed by sources, and the most professional.

Just as Angela came to that conclusion, she saw a crowd forming around one particularly big poster near the front of the stage. Whatever was going on there was

causing quite a bit of excitement. When she finally got close enough to see, she realized why.

It was Nina Marcus and her friends, and they were putting on a fashion show. They'd created a small runway with special lights and loud music. They were showing off dresses that looked like they'd be perfectly at home during Fashion Week in Paris. In other words, they were expensive. And when they'd finished their show, everyone clapped and Nina, flanked by her friends, took a huge bow. Then she said, "And that is why high fashion is so incredibly important. No industry in the world is more generous to poor people. Hence our project, 'High Fashion Saves Poor People.' To learn more, please look at our poster or visit our website [www.highfashionsavespoorpeople.com](http://www.highfashionsavespoorpeople.com)." Then she flashed an obnoxious smile, waved to the crowd and the judges, and said, "See you Friday!" Then she finished it off by actually blowing the audience a kiss, a gesture that made Angela want to barf, but surprisingly had a different effect on the crowd. They loved it, which they showed by responding with thunderous applause.

That made Angela want to barf even more. She took

the nearest exit door to get some fresh air, and boy, did she get some. It was late October in Chicago, and the cool air had more than arrived. What had started out as the hottest October in history had quickly transformed into typical Midwest fare. Cold and windy—a brutal combination that could best be described as, to use Jamie’s phrase, “Chicago style.”

She was just about to go back inside when she noticed one of the judges talking to some man in the parking lot. The judge was Ms. Herringbone, one of the sixth-grade history teachers. She stood out because she was wearing a bright blue dress, and she just happened to be the judge who had appeared particularly bored during the presentation that day. She was talking to a distinguished-looking man with slicked-back gray hair and a salt-and-pepper beard adorning his sharp chin. The man was lean, a little over six feet, and wore an expensive jacket over gray wool pants. Angela knew this man. Or more appropriately, she knew of him. Though she’d never seen him in person before, she’d viewed pictures of him on the internet and had heard plenty about him. None of it good.

This was Chicago businessman and infamous

criminal Gregori Marcus. Nina's father. And then he did a most extraordinary thing.

He handed Ms. Herringbone a thick white envelope. Then he climbed into the back of a black SUV and left.



## CHAPTER 2

# MASSIVE DISAPPOINTMENT

Angela moved toward the crowd of students staring at the wall on the opposite side of the gymnasium. Turns out they weren't staring at the wall itself, but rather the piece of paper that had just been posted on the wall by one of the judges.

The seventh-grade project top five.

The three boys dressed like old-time gangsters pumped their fists and screamed—looked like they made the list. Then a finger went high into the air, followed by an obnoxious and familiar voice saying, “That’s right, ladies. Just as I expected. Number one.”

The crowd parted and Nina Marcus, along with her horrible friends, appeared in all their haute couture glory. Angela tried to get away, but it was too late.

“Ah, Moretti. Seems like once again, you are following in my wake. I would say best of luck, but first, I don’t mean it. And second, it wouldn’t help you. Come Friday, the Fall Project plaque is all mine.” Then she snapped her fingers, and she and her mean girls fashion-walked themselves away.

Angela had a sick feeling in her stomach, and as soon as she saw Norah emerge from the crowd, it was confirmed. Norah looked almost recognizable. Gone were her perfect upright posture and ever-focused eyes. They’d been replaced with slumped shoulders on a girl who looked like her puppy just died. She was flanked by Howie and Jamie.

“We didn’t make the list?” Angela asked, trying to take in the shock.

Norah said nothing. She just continued to hang her head. But Jamie rolled his eyes and smiled. “It’s all good. We made the list just fine.”

“Then what’s with all of this?” Angela asked as she pointed to her bummed-out friend.

Howie made a face that said something like it might be best to tread carefully. “We did make the list, but we came in third place. Which wasn’t exactly what Norah was expecting.”

Her head snapped up, her eyes suddenly full of fire. “We didn’t just come in third, Howie. We’re losing to Nina’s dumb fashion show and a project about the invention of the toaster. Did you hear me? Dresses and toasters are beating a college-level seminar on the origins of our universe. How is that even possible?”

She said that last line at a decibel just below a shout, and it attracted the attention of plenty of other students. But when she responded to those students with a cosmic death stare, the crowd quickly moved along. Norah was typically the rock of the group. Brilliant, logical, and measured, always keeping her cool and never letting her emotions get the best of her. She was Commander Spock for the seventh-grade crowd. Angela found Norah’s momentary outburst a little frightening, but also, if she was being honest, it was refreshing. Norah Sloan was human after all. And that’s when Angela thought about the meeting she’d just witnessed.

“I think I know how it was possible,” she said to Norah.

Norah focused her ire on Angela because she must have assumed Angela was about to critique her. But before Angela could explain, one of the judges, Mr.

Crenshaw, handed Howie a folder. “Well done, kids,” he said. “I look forward to seeing you again on Friday.”

As he walked off, Norah ripped the folder away from Howie and started reading through the judges’ comments. Almost immediately, she started jabbing her finger at the pages inside.

“See, Mrs. Dupree gets it. She called it brilliant. Thorough. Organized. Clear. And very professional. Even her constructive feedback is good. ‘Would like you to give your thoughts as to why the universe is expanding. Would love your answer to the question of what will eventually happen to the universe if it keeps expanding.’ And she gave us a ten out of ten.”

Her eyes moved down the page.

“But these other turkeys? Argh!”

The next two minutes were, from Angela’s perspective, a rather comical display. Norah assaulted the folder with her finger while grunting and mumbling incoherent nonsense that only communicated one thing—she was so very not happy with the judges. And finally, at the end of the comments, she read something that made her face turn an unnatural color.

“Ms. Herringbone,” she said, her voice shaking,

“called it boring. Repetitive. Underwhelming. Then she gave us a five out of ten?”

Angela thought Norah’s head might explode right then and there, which was why she desperately needed to explain what she had seen.

“Norah, I think I know what might be going on here, and you’re right to be frustrated. But I can’t go into it here. Not around all these people.”

Howie raised his hand. “Could we get into it while also eating?”

“What’d you have in mind?”

“I do enjoy your nonna.”

“You enjoy my nonna’s meatballs,” Angela clarified. “Thankfully, she likes you too. Come on, guys. We need to talk.”

The four friends made their way down the hallway behind the kitchen of Moretti’s Italian Restaurant, the restaurant owned and run by her nonna, her father, and a bunch of other loud and crazy relatives. Then they slipped into a small room Nonna reserved for quiet. A room she allowed Angela and her friends to use sometimes.

Nonna served them family style, setting out a huge bowl of pasta and another bowl with meatballs and

sauce. As usual, Norah pulled out her own set of utensils, always sterilized the Norah Sloan way just for these types of occasions. And once they had loaded up their plates with food, it was Angela's turn to talk.

"I don't think Ms. Herringbone is dumb. Nor do I think she actually hated our project. I think she's taking a bribe."

All three friends stopped eating at once. Norah craned her neck forward. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the meeting I saw between Ms. Herringbone and Gregori Marcus."

At the mention of the man's name, Howie dropped his fork and gulped the way a scared cartoon figure might.

"G-gregori Marcus?" he said.

"Yep. And not just a meeting. I saw Marcus give Ms. Herringbone a thick white envelope right before the judges' results were posted."

All three of them stared at Angela, taking it in. Then Norah slammed her fist onto the table and smiled. She actually smiled.

"I knew it!" she said. "I just knew something was off. There's no way we would get a five out of ten. No possible way."

“Yeah, Norah,” Jamie said, “you were right. The problem is, what do we do about it?”

“We rat Ms. Herringbone out. That’s what we do,” Norah said.

“Now you sound like Angela,” Jamie said. “But you’re not new to Brundon Park. You know how things work around here. Remember, you’re the one who warned Angela before. Gregori Marcus is not a man to be messed with. If he’s really involved in this, I’m not sure there’s anything we can do.”

Norah’s face instantly changed, and back was the sad droopy person Angela had first seen back at the gym. “You’re right. If he’s doing what we think he’s doing, then there’s really nothing we can do unless we want to get hurt. Or to get our families hurt, which I don’t. As much as I want to win, I would never want that.” She sighed. “Man, this really, really stinks.” She looked down at her plate of food, then stood up and grabbed her bag.

“Sorry, guys. I’m not so hungry anymore.”

“You sure?” Howie asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure. I just need some time alone to process. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Angela escorted Norah down the hallway and out the

back of the restaurant into the alley.

“I’m sorry, Norah. I know how much this means to you.”

“Thanks, Angela. It’s just such a helpless feeling. I wish there was something, anything we could do.”

“Well, maybe we can’t go up against Gregori Marcus, but remember the rules of the project. The top five can make any changes they want. Anything, as long as it’s done by Friday.”

“What are you saying?” Norah asked.

“Maybe, just maybe, there’s some way we could make the presentation so spectacularly good that Ms. Herringbone couldn’t possibly give us a bad score because everyone would know what she was doing.”

“I’d like to see that.”

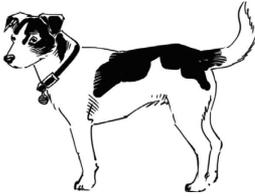
“Then let’s do it.”

She shrugged. “Do what? All I’ve done for the last four weeks is obsess over this project. I don’t know how we’d come up with something better in just four days.”

“I don’t know either. At least, not yet. I say we get a good night’s sleep and talk about it tomorrow.”

“Thanks, Angela. You’re a pretty good friend... for a misfit.”

Angela watched Norah walk down the alley and turn onto Hooper Street. As soon as she disappeared, barking started. Not the mean and ferocious barking of a big menacing dog—this sounded more like the crazy and frenetic barking of a smaller breed. Angela ran down the alley to see what was wrong, but when she got to Hooper Street, the barking had stopped and there was Norah, holding a cute little dog in her arms.



## CHAPTER 3

# A BRAND-NEW CASE

She was holding the dog at arm's length, the way a new dad might hold a baby with a dirty diaper. Gone was the incessant barking. This dog looked happy—its eyes wide open, tongue hanging out. But Norah looked at it suspiciously.

“He just ran up and jumped in my arms, the way Howie sometimes does when he's scared. I caught him out of habit. And now I don't know what to do.”

Angela walked over and petted him. “Who is this cute little guy?” she asked in that universal weird voice people always use when talking to dogs.

“I don't know,” Norah said. “And I'm afraid if I put him down, he'll start with that horrible barking again. What should I do?”

“I have an idea,” Angela said. She carefully nudged the dog until he was face-to-face with Norah. He

responded by licking her in the most affectionate way possible.

Problem was, Norah was not the most affectionate person.

“Why’d you do that, Moretti? I don’t like people touching me, let alone a dog licking my face! Do you know how unsanitary a dog’s mouth is? Do you realize how many germs I’m getting right now?”

“And yet, there you are, allowing him to do it. You could just set him down.”

Norah glared at Angela, which made her want to laugh because, deep down, Angela knew something. Though she’d never admit it, Norah was enjoying this.

“Fine, I’ll just hold him a little while longer. To make sure he doesn’t bark, of course.”

“Of course,” Angela said. She rubbed the dog’s back and inspected him. He was small and athletic-looking, with a white-and-brown coat. A Jack Russell Terrier, which Angela knew right away because every year she watched the Westminster Dog Show with her dad. Tony Moretti was a pretty tough guy who’d grown up in an Italian family in Chicago. The kind of guy you’d expect to love baseball and football and even hockey, which he

did, but strangely, not as much as he loved the Westminster Dog Show. Jack Russell Terriers often did great at the agility competition portion of the show, which was her favorite part. These terriers were fine dogs, and depending on where they came from, sometimes very expensive. That's why Angela found it strange that he had no collar or tags.

"I wonder who this little guy belongs to," Angela said.

"First, I hate it when you dangle your prepositions at the end of your sentences. And second, I have no idea. But I'll tell you this. I've never seen him before in the neighborhood."

"Which means," Angela said, "this dog might be lost."

"Well," Norah said, trying to act like she didn't love the dog's attention, "I need to go home now, so you're going to have to take him." She tried to hand the dog to Angela even though he was still licking her face.

But Angela waved her hands in front of her. "No way. I'm not about to get in the middle of a dog and his new best friend."

"Best friend? Oh, no. No way. I've already got a best friend, and it took me years to get Howie trained. I don't have the time or the energy for another puppy."

“Relax, Norah,” Angela said. “I’m not suggesting you take care of him forever. But if this little guy really is lost, he’s probably hungry, so let’s just start by getting him some food.”

# # #

Angela and Norah gathered up their friends and some food and set it up in the alley behind Moretti’s. The dog was on the ground, happily scarfing down some meatballs while they all looked on in amusement. When he finished, he looked up at them with a particularly saucy mouth, then moved his head to the water bowl they’d placed nearby and lapped up the entire thing.

“Poor little guy acted like he hadn’t eaten in a day,” Howie observed. “I’d say he’s definitely lost.”

“Well,” Angela said, “we can’t very well just let him go on the streets of Chicago on his own. Especially with it getting colder every day.”

“We can’t?” Norah asked.

“No, Norah, we can’t.”

“You’d better not be suggesting that I take him in. Because that germaphobe thing I’ve got going? It comes from my parents. I could never get a dog into my house.”

“Me neither,” Howie said. “I brought a big snake home one time. As you can imagine, it got loose and surprised one of the tenants, Mrs. Denglish, while she was in the shower. That’s the day Dad made the ‘no pets, not ever’ rule.”

“I’ll take him,” Jamie said. “There’s space in our garage, which is heated. And Uncle Nick likes dogs.” Jamie bent down, grabbed the dog, and pulled him to his face to snuggle. But just as soon as he did, he recoiled and violently sneezed.

“That’s weird,” he said. He brought the dog to his cheek again, and the same thing happened. He recoiled and sneezed, but not just once—three times in a row. The kind of sneezes that were so all-consuming that you feared the person might throw out a disk in their back.

“Whoa.”

“Someone’s allergic to dogs,” Angela said.

“I am not. I’ve never been allergic to dogs.”

“We just observed evidence to the contrary,” Norah said.

“But I’m not,” Jamie insisted. “This has never happened to me before.”

“Maybe,” Norah said. “But when was the last time you were this close to a dog?”

Jamie shrugged. “I don’t know. Maybe a month or two ago?”

“Well, allergies are complicated,” Norah said. “And they can develop at different times in our lives. Sorry to break it to you, Jamie, but I thought those sneezes might bring down all the old buildings on Hooper Street. Whether you like it or not, you, sir, are allergic to dogs.”

“Weird,” Jamie said. “And also, big-time bummer. I always wanted to have a dog when I grew up. Well, I guess I can’t take him in. Sorry, little guy.”

Norah, Jamie, and Howie now all turned toward Angela. Their hint was not subtle.

“Oh, no,” she said. “You think your parents are sticklers? My nonna’s on a whole ’nother level. She has never, ever allowed pets anywhere near her kitchen. I’m actually scared to be standing here with a dog in the alley. That woman might be tiny, but she is mighty with a wooden spoon, and surprisingly agile for a woman her age. There’s no way I can take in this dog, no matter how cute he is.”

“Then what are we going to do?” Jamie asked.

“It’s pretty simple, really,” Angela said. “None of us can take him in, and we know we can’t leave him on the streets

of Chicago to fend for himself. I think that means the Science Inspectors just found a new problem to solve.”

“Oh, no,” Norah said. “Not this week. Not with everything we have to do.”

“Oh, yes, Norah. We can do more than one thing at a time, and I know this because we’ve done it before.” Then she picked up the Jack Russell Terrier and held his face next to hers. They both looked at Norah with their best puppy-dog expressions. “You wouldn’t want to abandon a cute little feller like this, now would you?”

Norah placed one hand on her hip and glared at Angela. “I really hate you sometimes, Moretti.”

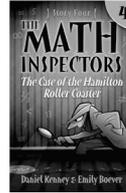
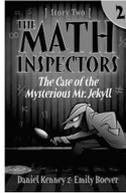
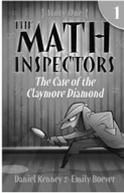
“Is that a yes?”

Norah sighed. “Not a yes, exactly. More like, I don’t know what else to do and I know you’re just going to annoy me until you get your way, so the sooner we figure this out, the sooner I can move on. More like that.”

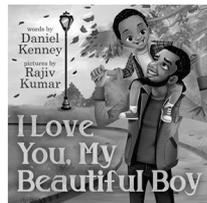
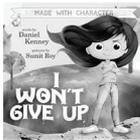
Angela lifted the dog’s right paw in triumph. “Yes! Then, Science Inspectors, we just got ourselves a brand-new case. The case of the little lost dog.”

# Chapter Books

For ages 8 to 12



# Picture Books



Find his work by visiting:

[www.authordanielkenney.com](http://www.authordanielkenney.com)

[www.bakkenbooks.com](http://www.bakkenbooks.com)