

MySTERY
RyDERs #2

The

Scrambled

Ski Lodge



by
Criswell & Carli
Freeman

Sample Chapters

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Ski
Lodge



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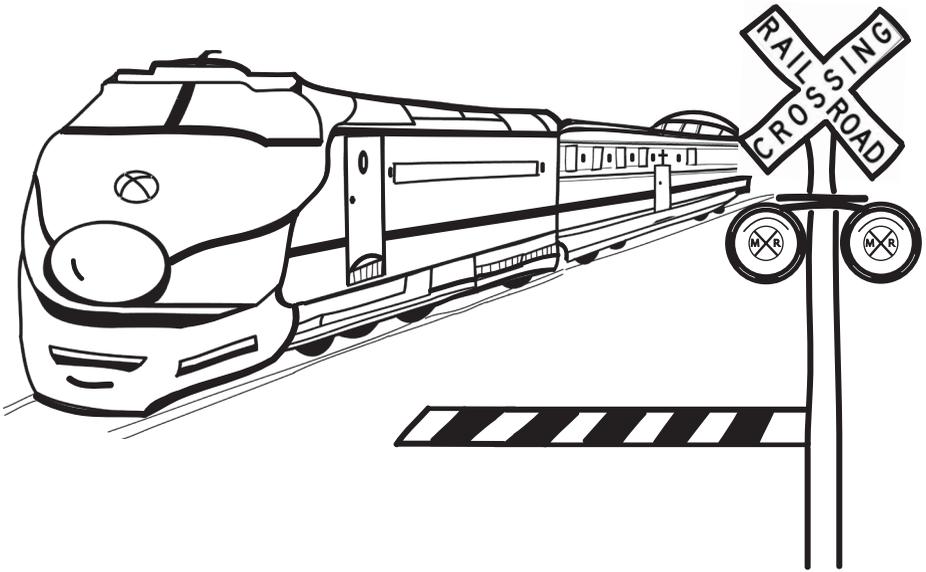
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THE

Mystery

Riders



Hi! My name is Mary Catharine Ryder, but everybody calls me May. I'm twelve, and I live on a train...some of the time. The rest of the time, I live at 4722 Bluefield Court in Spring Valley, Missouri.

I have one dog, two parents, and two brothers, Hutson and Quinn. My older brother, Hut, is fourteen and very tall. Quinn is six and kind of short. My mother's name is Catharine, and she still calls my father John.

But, most people know my dad as Jonathan Ryder, world-famous mystery writer. A few months ago, Dad got tired of traveling to book-signings by airplane, so his publisher said, "Forget the plane and take a train!"

Now, Dad travels in his own private passenger train car that is big enough to carry our whole family. Some people call us the mystery riders, since we ride across America while Dad writes mysteries. But, we're also *Mystery Ryders*, since we discover *real* mysteries along the way. Like this one...

CHAPTER ONE



Riding the Rails to a Mystery

“Quinn, what are you doing in my room?”
I asked my six-year-old brother.

“Playing in it,” he replied.

“I can see that,” I said. “But why are you and Fudge playing in *my* room? You two should be playing in *your* room.”

“Fudge likes your room better,” Quinn answered.

“Fudge is a dog,” I said. “He can play anywhere on the whole train.”

“Don’t blame me,” said Quinn. “Fudge decides where we play. I just follow him around. If you don’t like it, blame Fudge.”

It’s hard to reason with a six-year-old, but it’s even harder to reason with a cocker spaniel. So, I decided to let them stay in my room, at least for a while.

Just then, my father stuck his head in the door and said, “Hey, May, when you get a chance, could you come up to the observation deck? I have something I want to talk to you about.

“We’re going to a ski lodge that belongs to a friend of mine, and he’s having trouble with pranksters,” said Dad. “He thinks I might be able to help him figure out what’s going on.”

I couldn’t keep from smiling. I knew that my world-famous, mystery-writing, head-in-the-clouds father could write *fictional* mysteries far better than he could solve *real* ones.

I mean, Dad can’t even find his own socks!

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

My father must've read my mind because he smiled back and said, "Okay, I know what you're thinking, and you're right. A real-life detective I'm not. But, if you and your big brother can give me a few good ideas, maybe I won't sound so clueless when we get there."

I almost couldn't believe my ears.

It sounded to me like there might just be another mystery in the making.

CHAPTER TWO



Go East, Young Detectives...and Up!

The most interesting place on our train is the observation deck. It's a crystal-clear wall of windows that's a perfect spot to watch the world go by. With comfy couches and kid-friendly cushions, the observation deck is also a great place to talk, which is exactly what Dad and Hut were doing when I walked in.

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

My father smiled and said, “Have a seat, May. I was just telling Hut about the ski lodge in Utah where we’ll be staying for the next few days. The lodge belongs to a friend of mine named Lyle Stanton.”

“Mr. Stanton’s got a problem,” interrupted Hut. “Somebody keeps trashing his lodge.”

“Teenage pranks,” added my father.



“Do you think Mr. Stanton expects us to solve the case?” I asked, unable to disguise the excitement in my voice.

“Don’t get your hopes up,” said Hut. “This whole mess will probably be over by the time we get there.”

“But,” my father added, “if they haven’t caught the crooks by the time we arrive, I imagine Lyle will want some tips on solving his prankster problem.”

“Tips? You mean from us, Dad?” I asked.

“Yes, I figure you and Hut can help me think like teenagers,” said Dad.

“I’m *not* a teenager,” I said. “I’m still twelve. Remember?”

“Oh, I haven’t forgotten how old you are, May,” Dad said with a grin. “But, you obviously know more about the way girls think than I do.”

Dad had a good point.

“And Hut knows more about the way guys think,” said Dad. “So, let’s just say I need a quick refresher course on juvenile *misbehavior*.”

“Well, I don’t know much about teenage pranks,” I said. “But, I do know about girls, and most girl troublemakers don’t usually travel alone; they like to travel in packs.”

Dad turned to Hut and asked, “What about teenage guys?”

“Well,” said Hut, “guys think it’s cool to take risks. So, if there’s risky behavior involved, odds are it’s a guy.”

My father listened while we told him some of the silliest pranks we’d ever seen. All Dad could do was shake his head and laugh.

I admit that during much of the talk with Dad and Hut, I had been gazing out the windows. Since I love riding on trains, it’s really nice to see America-the-beautiful from the ground, not from six miles up in some airplane. At ground level, everything seems more natural.

I was looking out the window when, shortly before sunset, the Sierra Nevada Mountains appeared in the distance. I was excited to be heading for those snowy peaks.

Soon, our train slowed down. Our engine was pulling a little harder as the train began its long climb up the mountains.

“Help!” yelled Quinn. “Something weird is happening to my soda glass. It’s scooting down the dining-room table all by itself!”

We were experiencing a true mountain range, up close and vertical.

I heard Mom explaining gravity and angles to Quinn. Then, she called us all to supper.

When it was time for bed, the rhythmic clicking of the wheels on the track put me to sleep in a hurry. Fudge slept well, too, curled up at the foot of my bed.

The next morning, we woke, had breakfast, and did schoolwork. By noon, our train pulled into the station where a friendly-looking man was standing on the platform waiting for us. The man greeted my dad with a handshake and a hug.

“It’s great to see you, John. Welcome to Utah,” he said. “I can’t wait for you to see the lodge *if* the place is still there when I get back.”

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

“Are you having more trouble?” asked Dad.

“Lots of it,” said Mr. Stanton as he shook his head. “I’ll tell you all about it on our drive up the mountain.”

After we all climbed into Mr. Stanton’s van, he pulled onto the highway and began telling us the whole story.

CHAPTER THREE



Mixed-Up Lodge

“Fox Creek Ski Lodge is a family business,” said Mr. Stanton. “My sister Jane and I own it together, but she moved East years ago. Jane works in New York, so I manage the ski lodge for both of us.

“Jane only gets back here a couple of times a year. And, every time she comes back, she tries to convince me to sell the lodge. Of course, I always say *no*,” explained Mr. Stanton.

“I can see why,” said my father. “From the pictures, it looks like Fox Creek Ski Lodge is just about perfect.”

“It *was* just about perfect,” Lyle replied, “until two weeks ago, the day after Jane arrived. That’s when everything started going crazy. At first, the pranks seemed harmless. But, now the damage is starting to add up.”

“What kind of damage?” asked Dad.

“Well,” replied Mr. Stanton, “the first night somebody tossed rolls of bathroom tissue through every single tree at the lodge.”

Mr. Stanton let out a sigh and said, “That’s bad enough, but somehow the prankster managed to swipe the bathroom tissue from our own supply closet, which we always keep locked. So, someone used *our* paper to pull *his* prank.”

Lyle paused for a moment, shook his head, and added, “It took me and my maintenance man all day to clean things up. Next, someone poured five pounds of laundry detergent into our outdoor hot tub.”

MIXED-UP LODGE

Mr. Stanton almost laughed, but he didn't.

"Five pounds of soap powder turned our hot tub into a gigantic bubble-blowing machine. It took two days for us to get that tub back in shape.

"Then," Lyle continued, "somebody poured food coloring in the lodge's indoor swimming pool. It took us another whole day to get *that* catastrophe cleaned up."

"Ugh," said Dad.

"But, that's not all," said Mr. Stanton. "Next, the practical joker squirted liquid soap on every hallway carpet in the entire lodge. We had to steam-clean every carpet *twice*."

From the back seat of the van, Hut asked the question both of us were wondering about.

"Mr. Stanton, do you have security cameras?"

"No, Hut," answered Mr. Stanton. "We've never needed cameras. We run a quiet little ski lodge, and Fox Creek has always been a very peaceful place," he paused for a moment and then added, "*until now*."

My father seemed puzzled.

Mom seemed genuinely concerned. But, Quinn just seemed antsy.

“Are we there yet?” asked my little brother.

“*Quinn*,” my mother replied, “we haven’t been in this van five minutes.”

Quinn’s little interruption gave Hut and me just the opening we’d been looking for. We both began asking Mr. Stanton a few more questions.

Hut and I learned quite a bit on the ride to Fox Creek Ski Lodge.

We discovered that Mr. Stanton and his wife ran the lodge with a small, loyal staff that consisted of a maintenance man named Bob, a housekeeper named Marie, a ski instructor named Jenny, and a woman named Heidi who greeted guests and checked them in.

Although none of the pranks at the Fox Creek Ski Lodge had caused any permanent damage, the gags *had* caused plenty of trouble and many long hours of extra work for the employees.

We also learned that Mr. Stanton’s sister Jane

MIXED-UP LODGE

had already been at the lodge for two weeks and that she was planning to stay a few more days.

Plus, we found out that plenty of people wanted to buy the tiny hotel because of its excellent location on 200 gorgeous acres of prime, mountaintop land, near the peak of one of the most prized ski slopes in North America.

While listening to Mr. Stanton, I quietly pulled out my pad to take notes.



All of these facts gave Hut and me a lot to think about. But we didn't have much time to think, because the next practical joke was about to be played—*on us*.

That's The End of This Sample

Congratulations! You've made it to the end of this Mystery Ryders sample. If you liked the first few chapters, you can purchase the entire book at:

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