

The Book Party Mystery

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CHAPTER 1

The Strange Letter

Brad waited at his desk. Where was Meg? He had an idea to talk over with her. It was for a story.

Here she came now. Cal Stone was with her. He worked at the News, too. His stories were about parties and events.

Brad frowned. What did Meg see in this guy? Cal always acted so smart.

Cal walked Meg to her desk. He grinned at Brad. "The Riddle Street Team does lots of

stories. But I bet Meg is the brains," he said.

Brad watched Cal walk away. "I don't like that guy. You have bad taste in men," he said.

Meg poked her nose in the air. "Cal's all right," she said.

Brad turned his back. His idea could wait. A stack of mail lay on his desk. He picked it up. That was better than talking to Meg right now.

The first two letters were from fans. They liked the Riddle Street stories in the News.

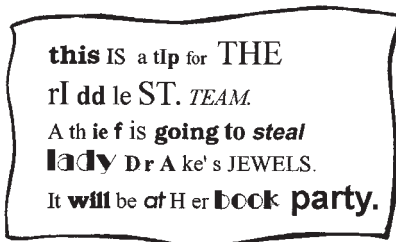
The third letter was odd. All the words were cut from a paper. They were glued on.

"This is strange," Brad said.

Meg looked up. "Is something wrong?" she asked.

Brad held up the letter. "Someone doesn't like to write or type," he said.

Meg rushed to his desk. She looked over his shoulder. Both of them read it. It said:



this IS a tlp for **THE**
rI dd le **ST. TEAM.**
A th ie f is **going to steal**
lady Dr A ke's **JEWELS.**
It **will** be at H er **book party.**

Meg gasped. "Lady Drake is a rich woman. She lives in a huge house. It's on a lane off Riddle Street," she said.

Brad nodded. "I know that. But what's the book party?" he asked.

"Cal might know. He writes about things like that for the News," Meg said.

"Forget it. I'll ask someone else," Brad



*She looked over his shoulder.
Both of them read it.*

didn't want to work with Cal.

But Meg rushed to her phone. The call to Cal didn't take long. Then she turned back to Brad.

"Lady Drake has written a book. It is called *Living with Riches*. She is giving a party tonight. It's at her house. She will sign her name in books. There's food and a dance after that," Meg told him.

Brad looked down at the letter. "Who sent this? Why did it come to us?" he asked.

Meg shook her head. "It should go to the police," she said.

"I think so, too," Brad told her.

Cal rushed toward them. There was a frown

on his face. "What's all this? You can't write about Lady Drake's party. That's my story. I'm doing it for the News," he said.

Brad didn't want to tell Cal about the letter. "We're not doing a story. It's just a chance to see Lady Drake's house," he said.

"We're going to have fun. Don't you like to dance?" Meg asked. She batted her eyes at Cal.

Cal's frown changed to a grin. "Sure, I do. Save a dance for me," he said.

Brad turned away. Meg was acting silly. She shouldn't waste time. A thief was going to rob Lady Drake. They had to stop him.

CHAPTER 2

The Jewels

The book signing party was tonight. Brad and Meg had to rush. They took the letter to the police.

Sergeant Ward looked at it. "I should talk to Lady Drake. Why don't you come with me?" he asked.

They drove to Lady Drake's house. Her lane turned off Riddle Street. It went through trees. The grounds were large. So was the house.

A maid opened the door. "May I help you?"

she asked.

Sergeant Ward showed his badge. "We'd like to see Lady Drake," he said.

The maid took them to a sitting room. A tall woman stood near the fireplace. A long necklace hung around her neck. The jewels flashed in the light.

"I'm Lady Drake. You must be here for the party. Are you the new guards?" she asked.

Sergeant Ward shook his head. "No, I'm from the police. Brad, show Lady Drake the letter. I want her to read it," he said.

Brad gave her the letter.

Lady Drake read it. She clutched at her necklace. "A thief is going to steal my jewels?"

she gasped.

"It sounds that way. Do you have other jewels in the house?" Sergeant Ward asked.

"Yes, I do. They're in my room. Most of the time I keep them in the bank's safe. But I brought the jewels home. I want to wear them when I sign books tonight," Lady Drake said.

"Let's take the jewels back to the safe now. My men will watch your room. We'll try to catch the thief," Sergeant Ward told her.

"What about the necklace on her neck? It looks like it costs a lot," Brad said.

Lady Drake nodded. "It's my best piece. Can't I wear it tonight? People will want me to wear jewels," she said.

"Your necklace should be safe. My men and I will be here. So will Brad and Meg. We'll all watch you," Sergeant Ward said.

Lady Drake led them up to her room. She opened her jewelry box. It was empty!

"My jewels are gone! The thief has robbed me!" Lady Drake gasped.

"When did you last see them?" Sergeant Ward asked.

Lady Drake started to cry. "They were here this morning. That's when I put this necklace on," she sobbed.

Sergeant Ward walked around the room. "The windows are locked. It must have been an inside job. Who was here today?" he asked.

Lady Drake thought for a minute. "Ed Cory publishes my books. He was here. So was Lark Jones. He and his band are playing tonight," she told him.

"Could they have come up here?" Sergeant Ward asked.

"I guess so. It was a busy morning. I didn't watch them all the time," she said.

"Some of my men will stay here. I'll be back in time for the party. Come on, Brad and Meg," Sergeant Ward said.

Brad put the letter in his pocket. It had been right. A thief did steal Lady Drake's jewels. But one thing was wrong. It was done before the book party.