

CASE FILE

Confidential

The Ghost in the Garden

Cloverville Detective Agency

You reach over and catch Mr. Cuoco just in time before he collapses. “Here,” you say, guiding him to a chair. “Sit down. You are safe here.”

“Thank you,” he smiles faintly.

“Can I get you anything?”

“No, thank you. I just need a minute.” He wipes his forehead with his hat.

“Okay. I’ll be right here if you change your mind.” You pretend to work on some paperwork at your desk so you can keep an eye on him, just in case he takes another turn for the worse. The color slowly returns to his cheeks.

“Mr. Cuoco? You doing okay?” you ask.

“Thank you, my friend,” he responds. His voice is stronger, steadier.

“Do you feel up to talking about the ghost?”

He sighs. “I suppose that’s why I am here, yes?”

“Unless there is a different mystery you need me to solve?” You smile a little to try to lighten the mood.

He smiles back. “No, no, one mystery is more than enough.”

“Well then, tell me about the ghost.”

Mr. Cuoco shifts in his chair. “My Angela, she, last year, you know-”

“Yes, I remember,” you say, trying to spare him the pain of having to speak about her death.

“Yes, well,” he clears his throat. “Um, yes, you see, I think she is back.”

“What makes you say that?” you ask.

He glances around. “Strange things keep happening right before dawn. Like, the lights will flicker. And I hear strange noises, and things move around. Like a candlestick was in the same spot since last January, and then, poof, it was gone.

And then, this morning, I woke up early, like when the sun was just coming up. I went outside to the gardens. She always loved her greenhouses and growing things for our restaurant. It was never really my thing, though. She grew the food; I cooked the food. But today, for some reason, I decided to go out into her garden. It’s like I knew she would be there or something,” He shakes his head. “I

haven't been to her greenhouses since she... Since the restaurant shut down, I didn't really need to go to her gardens anyway. Marvin would come by every now and then to check on me and he would always make sure the irrigation was working for Angela's plants. And then a couple of weeks ago, I let Bess and Toni plant some of the basil seeds Angela had saved, just in case any of them could still grow. You know, in case the restaurant could reopen as more people got vaccinated. But me, I stayed away until today. And then..." He pauses.

"Go on," you prompt him to continue.

"I saw from across her garden, there was someone inside one of her greenhouses. They were bathed in light. I called out, but there was no response. I started walking towards Angela's greenhouse to try and get a closer look, but then there was a flash of blinding light. When my eyes adjusted and I could see again, the greenhouse was completely empty. Even the basil seedlings were gone."

"Could they have been in a different greenhouse?" you inquire.

Mr. Cuoco shook his head. "No. I looked around, but didn't see anything. It was like they just...vanished. And the person, too. And that's when I realized it: I didn't see a person. I saw my Angela. She had come back for her plants and then disappeared with them."

"Did anyone else see the ghost?"

"I was the only one. When I went inside, Toni was in the kitchen frying up some bacon for us, but she said she didn't see anything. She had just come out of the shower, though, so that might be why. That Toni, she doesn't know anything about anything when I ask her. She says it's all in my head, that I forget where I put things, or that I need to get a new hearing aid or get my eyes checked or something."

"Is Toni at the house right now?"

"I don't think so," he says. "She took the car to go run some errands this morning. I don't think she will be home until later today."

"Wait, did Toni bring you here? How did you get here if she has the car?"

"I took the bus," he says proudly. "That Toni, saying I shouldn't be driving at my age. Don't get me wrong, I love my baby and I am so glad she has come home, but she has forgotten who is the parent and who is the child." Mr. Cuoco winks at you. "I am not so old yet where I am stuck in my room; I can still get around from place to place all by myself."

Just then, you hear the squeal of brakes followed by the hiss of the bus door opening. Looking out the window, you see the city bus close its doors and take off on its route once more.

“Would you like a ride back home?” you ask.

Complete the **Basil Seed Necklace Science Activity**.

To unlock Level 2: Basil seeds need adequate moisture, oxygen, and proper _____ to germinate.

Enter the password without capital letters, spaces, or any punctuation.
