

## Chapter 6. Out of the Shadows



Startled, Luz blinked at the surprise of seeing Miss Moon's face. As she opened her eyes again, Luz saw that Miss Moon's veil was back in place, just the way it had always been. She looked at Dwight and Max, hoping that they had seen Miss Moon, but their backs had been turned.

Immediately, Luz began to question what she had seen. Had Miss Moon's face been *powdery white*--or *ghostly white*? Or had Luz simply imagined it?

"What happened to your—?" she started to ask, then stopped.  
"Where *were* you, Miss Moon?"

"Over here," she replied, taking another step out of the shadows at the edge of the room. "Starting time."

"How do you do that?" Dwight asked.

"A special device," Miss Moon said. "Now it's time for you all to go home and think about everything you did today and everything you saw. As for me, it's time to get a breath of fresh air."

"Will you be all right, Miss Moon?" Luz asked. "If you get some fresh air?"

"I will be fine," Miss Moon said, "at least for awhile."

"Did we do the wrong thing? Coming in this room?" Luz asked.

“Not at all,” Miss Moon said. “I was having a spell, and you didn’t know where I was.”

“Can we come back to the library?” Dwight asked.

“Any day you want, whenever the library is open. After all, you are members of the Mystery Club. But remember that the secret door only appears at four o’clock.”

“But what if it’s a cloudy day?” Luz asked. “Doesn’t the secret door need sun to work?”

“My dear, you worry too much,” Miss Moon said. “Cloudy days are such a rare occurrence in Phoenix. I wouldn’t worry about this possibility. I’d spend my time thinking about a mystery.”

“But there are *so many* mysteries,” Luz said.

“You must choose one that suits you and solve it before you move on to another,” Miss Moon said. She held out her arm and beckoned toward the open door.

The children walked past Miss Moon, into the room with the Memory Machine.

“Goodbye,” she said and shut the red door behind them.

They rode the elevator up to the library. This time they could see where they were going; the light bulb had been replaced. As they stepped out of the elevator, Luz saw the silent clock on the library wall. It read 4:32.

“Look what time it is,” she said, walking toward the clock.

Max was following Luz, when he suddenly spun around and raced back to the elevator—only now the door had vanished. He banged his fist on the wall.

“Come on, Max. It’ll be there again tomorrow,” Dwight told him.

Max sighed and began walking to the front door with Dwight and Luz. “I can’t believe we’ve only been here for half an hour,” Luz said.

“It feels like we were gone a week,” Dwight said.

“And that reminds me,” Luz said, glancing at Max. “When we went back in time to last week, I was looking around—not snooping--and I walked into your house. What’s the watch in your room all about? I don’t understand.

Immediately, Max dropped his head so that Dwight and Luz couldn’t see his eyes at all. His chin was pressed so tightly against his chest that the brim of his hat could have cut right into his heart.

Luz tried again. “Was it something valuable?”

Max began to shake his head, slowly at first, then faster, as if he had been attacked by a swarm of mad bees.

“Okay, okay,” Luz said. “I’m sorry.”

“What’d you think?” Dwight said. “That he was going to tell you? We’re back on the clock again. This is how Max is. Right, Max?”

Max nodded then.

“I’m really sorry, Max,” Luz added.

By then, they were standing at the front door, ready to go back into the outside world.

“Everything was all locked up before,” Dwight said, noticing that the shutters and shades were open again. “I hope that crazy man isn’t out there.”

Luz peered through the window.

"I don't see anyone," she said. "Are you going home?"

Dwight nodded. "Got to start dinner or I'll be in trouble. My grandma likes to eat on time."

"What are you making?" Luz asked. "Your chicken looked good last Tuesday."

"Root beer and chocolate cake," he said, smiling. "Nah, I'm making hamburgers tonight. I'm making them special like I saw on the Food Network, with cheese inside. But I'd make a chocolate cake if I could."

"Chocolate cake makes me want a candy bar," Luz said. "You want to go to the Circle K and get a candy bar, Max?"

He was still staring at the floor. His head shook once.

"I'm *really* sorry," Luz said. "I shouldn't have said anything. Please don't be mad at me."

Max shrugged and nodded once, but he never looked up.

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Outside, Luz hurried to the Circle K. She only had enough money for one candy bar, but she wished she could buy more. When she had made her purchase, she decided to savor it. She took a small bite and waited until it had dissolved in her mouth before she took another. She wanted the candy bar to last all the way home.

Halfway home and halfway through her candy bar, Luz reached the corner of Luna Drive. The street sign reminded her of everything that had happened that day, even if it seemed more like a dream. Only then did she remember the ghost of the man that she had seen in her house. She realized that the man's ghost could be in her house that afternoon, and she wouldn't be able to see him. But instead of being

scared, she felt relieved. She had her very own ghost now. He had looked nice and kind...and so, so sad. Somehow she was going to find out who he was.

As she approached her house, Luz saw Tía Rosa sitting on the front step.

“And where have *you* been?” her aunt asked. A heavy frown filled her face.

“School,” Luz said.

“Not at five o’clock,” her aunt said. “Do you know how long I’ve been waiting for you?”

“No,” Luz said quietly.

“I’ve been waiting over an hour. I thought something had happened to you. It’s September 9<sup>th</sup>. Don’t you remember that you had a dentist appointment today? You had to get some of those cavities filled.”

“Oh, no!” Luz clasped her hand over her mouth. “I can’t believe I forgot.”

“Well, it’s a good thing your mother hadn’t planned on taking you, especially when you come home eating a candy bar.”

Luz began to fold the candy back in its wrapper. “I won’t eat any more.”

“Your mother would be furious.” Luz lowered her head. “Why do you do this to her? She only wants a good daughter.” Luz shrugged.

“Well, you have some luck because Dr. Chiang’s office is so agreeable. They said you could go tomorrow afternoon. They are squeezing you in at the end of the day. Now, finish your candy bar.” Luz looked up. Tía Rosa was smiling. “I don’t want to upset your mother, so it is best to get rid of the evidence, don’t you think?”

Luz took one last bite and sat on the step beside her aunt.

“What’s the matter? Is something wrong at school?” Tía Rosa asked.

As the chocolate melted in her mouth, Luz thought hard about what to tell her aunt.

“Luzita, you can tell me,” her aunt said.  
Luz swallowed, then said, “I saw the ghost.”

“What?”

“The one that lives in this house.”

“Are you certain?”

When Luz nodded, Tía Rosa scooted next to Luz and leaned close.

“I didn’t want to tell you this,” her aunt whispered. “I had the key to the front door. I could have waited for you inside. But I remembered the feeling that I had in the hallway. It’s much safer out here where there’s no ghost.”

Luz turned to look at the front window. She saw the curtains and nothing more.

“What? Is something there?” Tía Rosa said.

“No,” Luz replied, “nothing.”

“Then don’t scare me like that. Tell me what happened,” Tía Rosa said.

“I saw a man’s ghost.”

“Where? In the hallway?”

“No, right here on the front porch,” Luz said. “He was standing there, just behind where you’re sitting.”

At that, Tía Rosa jumped up as if a spider had crawled down her blouse.

“How do you know he was a ghost?” her aunt asked, dusting herself off.

“Because I saw him walk through that wall,” Luz replied.

“Oh!” Tía Rosa gasped. She stepped backwards and almost stumbled on the edge of the sidewalk.

“He looked like a good person,” Luz said. “He wasn’t scary. He patted my head.”

“He patted your head?”

“Like he knew me.”

“What did he look like?”

“He had white hair and glasses, too. Big ones,” Luz said, holding up her fingers around her eyes. “Like this.”

“I see,” her aunt said. “And did you notice anything else? The color of his eyes? Perhaps something more distinctive, like a scar?”

“Why would he have a scar?”

“Just answer my question. Did you notice anything else?”

Luz tried to picture the ghost in her mind. She saw him standing at the window, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t remember anything else.



“I don’t know,” she said. “I don’t remember.”

Her aunt nodded toward the porch. “Is he here now?”

Again Luz looked at the front window.

“No...well, I don’t know. He could be, but then he’d be invisible.”

“And you’re certain that you saw him?”

“Yes,” Luz insisted.

“Well, I’m speaking to your mother tonight. She knew better than to move in here. It’s time for her to move out.”

“But *you* knew the house was haunted,” Luz reminded her.

“Of course, but I didn’t know who--” She stopped and looked at Luz.

“You didn’t know who it was?” Luz asked. “And now you do? Who? Who is it?” Luz pleaded. “You *have* to tell me.”

“I don’t have anything to tell,” Tía Rosa said. “It’s just the ghost of an old man.”

“But you know who this is! Why did you ask about the scar? Tía, please tell me.”



Tía Rosa drew a deep breath and exhaled loudly. “I can tell you nothing. Perhaps your mother will have something to say.” She looked at her watch. “I think it’s better for you not to tell your mother about this right now. Let me handle that part. I think this will upset her greatly.”

“But why can’t you tell me? I won’t say anything.”

Tía Rosa held out her hand to Luz, and Luz squeezed it tightly. “Sometimes a secret—if there is a secret--must be told by the right person. I am not that person.”

“A secret? What kind of secret? Now you *really* have to tell me.” “I have said too much,” Tía Rosa replied, taking her car keys from her purse.

“But it’s not fair!” Luz complained.

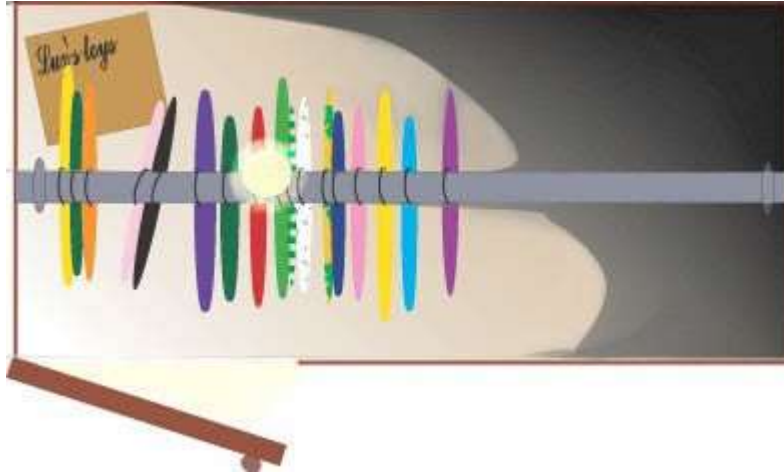
“I’m going home. I will see you tomorrow at 4:15 sharp. Dr. Chiang won’t be happy if you miss another appointment. And I hope you have a good story to tell your mother. She wasn’t happy when I told her you hadn’t come home.”

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As Tía Rosa drove away, Luz unlocked the front door and went inside. Immediately she locked the front door behind her and headed for her bedroom. Now she knew what she had to do. She was going to search her closet in order to discover who the ghost was and why he had disappeared there.

She had never liked her closet in this house. It was more like a long hallway than a closet. It extended six feet beyond the door; she could never see to the back of it unless she stooped down and looked under her dresses. That’s why she kept her clothes right by the door. The whole back part of the closet was empty, because she didn’t like

the idea of stepping so far inside. But that wasn't going to stop her now.



She turned on the closet light and took her clothes that were on hangers and piled them on her bed. Next she emptied the closet floor of her shoes and storage boxes. Then, as she stood in the closet doorway, she took a deep breath. It was time to go exploring.

She pictured herself as a brave explorer of a new world. No matter how ordinary or normal everything seemed, she was going to look at it a different way and try to figure out the mystery of her ghost.

The first thing she noticed was the linoleum that covered the floor. She stepped inside and noticed how the edges of the linoleum had been tacked down. As she reached the darker end of the closet, the linoleum stopped four inches short of the wall. She could see floorboards beneath it.

*I wonder, she thought to herself, I wonder if there's something hidden under this.*

Luz stooped down and inspected the end of the linoleum. Four tacks held it in place. She reached under and pulled hard; the tacks popped out. Then she began to roll it toward her. The tacks on the edges pulled out easily as she curled the linoleum into a roll and pushed it toward the doorway.

When she had removed about two feet of linoleum, she switched places. Now she was on the wooden floor where the linoleum had once been. As two more tacks popped out of the floor, Luz thought she heard something. She stopped and listened.

“Luz?”

Luz jumped up and hurried out of the closet. Her mother was standing in the doorway to her bedroom.

“What are you doing?”

“Uh—” Luz couldn’t help glancing at her alarm clock. *It’s only 5:45*, she thought.

“Tell me what you’re doing,” her mother repeated.

“Cleaning my closet,” she said. “Why are you home so early?”

“Because I was worried about you,” her mother said. “What do you think I’m going to do when I heard you hadn’t come home? You could at least be happy that I came home early.”

“Oh, I am,” Luz said. “*Very* happy.”

“So tell me what happened after school,” her mother said.

“I forgot,” Luz said.

“Yes, but where were you? Rosa said you didn’t get home till almost five o’clock.”

“I was working in the library,” Luz said. “I have a report.”

Her mother stared at her. “You didn’t get in trouble, did you?”

“No!” Luz said.

“Well, this isn’t like you,” her mother said.

“I just forgot,” Luz said. “I didn’t mean to. I won’t forget tomorrow. I promise.”

“Good, because Dr. Chiang runs a business, and you just can’t miss an appointment. Now let me go start dinner,” her mother said. She started to leave, then stopped. “Why don’t you come and help me? We can chop the veggies together, and you can tell me about the report you’re doing. What’s it about?”

“Oh,” Luz said, thinking quickly. “Arizona Statehood Day.”

“Good, I want to hear all about it.”

“But I wanted to finish my closet,” Luz said, motioning to the clothes on her bed.

“There’ll be time to do that later,” her mother said. “Come on.”

“Okay,” Luz said, forcing a smile. “I’ll be right there.”

As her mother headed for the kitchen, Luz took another look in her closet.

*I’ll be back*, she told her ghost. Then she turned out the closet light and shut the door.

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When the telephone rang after dinner that night, Luz knew that it was Tía Rosa. She stopped washing the dishes to listen as her mother answered.

Her mother took the phone to the couch in the living room. Luz lowered the water to a trickle, so that she could hear everything her mother said. But her mother wasn’t talking about anything important.

Luz was almost finished when her mother's voice suddenly changed.

"What?" her mother said loudly. "What are you saying?" Then her mother began to whisper into the phone.

Luz turned off the water and strained her ears. She took silent steps toward the door to the living room. She held her breath and waited, but she couldn't hear her mother's words. Then, a moment later, her mother stood up and took the phone down the hall to her bedroom. She closed the door behind her.

*What are they saying? Luz wanted to know. What is the secret Tía won't tell me?*

Luz hurried down the hallway. Outside her mother's door, she lingered a moment, trying to catch a word or two. But all she heard was silence.

She continued down the hall to her bedroom. She thought about reading a book, but she knew she wouldn't be able to concentrate. Instead, she decided to fix her closet. She turned on the closet light and started to work. The linoleum was harder to roll now, so she found that it was easier to push against it with her back. She leaned her back into the curling linoleum and pushed her feet on the wall at the dark end of the closet. Pop! Pop! The tacks flew from the linoleum, and the roll got bigger. A few more tacks, and she would reach the end of the closet.

But as the roll approached the doorframe, the tacks wouldn't budge. She shoved harder, and suddenly the tacks flew so fast that Luz landed on the floor with a loud thud.

She heard her mother's bedroom door open. "Luz?" her mother called.

"It's okay," Luz said.

As she stood up, Luz noticed something shiny on the floor where she had fallen. Before she could look closer, her mother came running into her bedroom. Luz quickly stepped out of the closet.

“What’s wrong?” her mother was asking. “What was that noise?”

“I just fell down, but I’m fine,” Luz assured her. “Nothing happened.”

Then her mother noticed the roll of linoleum behind Luz. “What were you doing in here?”

“I was trying to get rid of this.” Luz backed into the closet and pushed her foot against the roll. It unwound toward the dark end of the closet, covering up the floorboards again.

“And why is that?”

“Because I don’t like it. It’s ugly.”

Her mother frowned. “Or was it to find something?”

“What would I find?” Luz asked. “I’m not looking for anything.”

“A ghost, perhaps?”

“Is that what Tía Rosa said?”

“Yes, but I told her you were mistaken,” her mother said.

Luz couldn’t stop herself from telling the truth now. “But, Mom, I really did see him. He was old, with white hair and black glasses. And he disappeared in my closet.”

“Luz! I’ve had enough of this from my sister. I think you were dreaming and couldn’t tell the difference.”

“No, but Dwight and Max were with me—they saw him, too.”

“*Who* were you with?”

“Dwight and Max. They’re my friends from school.”

Luz’s mother crossed her arms. “You had friends from school in our house when I wasn’t here? Without asking?”

Luz sighed. She was getting herself in so much trouble now. “No, they were outside, talking to me on the front porch. And the man came through the wall.”

“Outside? But I thought he was in the closet. This isn’t making any sense, Luz. Don’t you see? I hope you weren’t inviting anyone in our house when I’m not here. You know how I feel about that. Don’t you think you must have had a dream?” her mother said and smiled.

Luz tried to smile back. “Maybe,” she said. “Maybe it was a dream.”

“I don’t want you believing in ghosts. My sister is crazy enough about that kind of thing.”

“But even if it was a dream,” Luz said, “who was the man in my dream? He acted like he knew me.”

“You are talking nonsense,” her mother said. “You don’t know people in dreams. It’s all made up.”

“But I’m not making this up,” Luz said.

“Enough, that’s enough,” her mother said. “I want you to put everything back the way it was. It must be there for a reason. I don’t have the money to fix your closet floor just because you don’t like how it looks.”

“Okay,” she told her mother.

But as soon as her mother was gone, Luz went back into the closet. She rolled the linoleum back up until a shiny gold ring appeared. It seemed to be lying on the closet floor. But when she reached to pick

it up, Luz found that one part of it was attached to the floor with a hinge. She realized that it wasn't jewelry at all, but a handle.

She was standing on a trapdoor!

She stepped onto the linoleum and put her finger through the ring. She pulled hard, and the wooden door groaned open. But the door was heavy, and Luz couldn't pull it very high. She wedged her foot into the opening, so that the trapdoor wouldn't fall back into place. Then she used her hands to push the door a little higher.

Her heart was pounding as she peered underneath. She saw a wooden step covered with shadows, and below it another and another, until they melted into blackness. She was confused. Her house didn't have a basement, but this old staircase led somewhere...somewhere in the darkness below her house.

"Luz?" she heard her mother call.

She tried to ease the trapdoor back into place, but it fell out of her hands and banged shut.

"Luz!" her mother called. "Leave your closet alone!"

Quickly Luz rolled out the linoleum to cover the trapdoor.

As she stood at her closet door, she wondered about the disappearing ghost. Maybe the man hadn't disappeared at all. Maybe he had just gone down the secret stairs. Like a good explorer, she made herself a promise. As soon as it was safe, she was going to go down the stairs herself, but she knew she would need some help. She hoped Dwight and Max were game.

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The next morning, Luz promised her mother that she would be home on time for her dentist appointment that afternoon.



“And please don’t keep your aunt waiting,” her mother said. She opened her purse and took out a handful of quarters. “Here’s some money for afterwards. Get yourself a drink. I think your mouth will be very dry after the Novocain for two cavities.”

“Thanks,” Luz said.

“But get lemonade, not soda.”

“Okay,” Luz agreed.

But on her way to school, Luz got a craving for candy. She couldn’t help it. Now that she had some money, she wanted to spend it on her favorite treat. She went right to Circle K and bought two candy bars with the money.

It was 90 degrees already, and the sun was burning a hole in the solid blue sky. Luz waited until she was under the shady overhang of the main door into the school to open the first candy bar. As she took the first bite, the chocolate was beginning to melt.

As she savored the sweet taste, Luz thought about all of the mysteries that had bubbled to the surface of her life in just one day. Her life had been so simple before, even if she hadn’t always liked it. Now, her life was filled with questions and, best of all, wonder about everything that was happening. *This place, this new place*, she thought, *is so strange and mysterious*.

She started to count all of the mysteries. First, there was the ghost in her house, and second, the secret stairs under the trapdoor in her closet. She didn’t know if they were part of the same mystery or not, but she decided to count them as two mysteries for now. The third mystery was the ghost in Dwight’s garage. Next came all of Max’s mysteries: the man’s photograph and the broken watch and the crying mother, which could make a total of six mysteries. The seventh mystery was Max himself, his silent face hidden under a Yankees’ cap. The final mysteries belonged to Miss Moon and Mrs. Norolla, but they were so complicated that she could easily come up with twenty mysteries, especially if she started to wonder how the invitations got

in the library books, and how the secret door appeared, and how the Memory Machine worked, and how Miss Moon hid her face under the veil. As for Mrs. Norolla, Luz wondered what was she doing outside Dwight's house that night one week ago and if she had she really bumped into her.

When she realized how many there were, Luz 's head started to spin. There were just too many mysteries for one person—too many for even three people to solve.

“Too many,” she found herself saying out loud.

“What? Are you talking to yourself?” Dwight said. He was standing beside her.

She took a bite of the chocolate bar.

“Breakfast,” she added. “Except it's too hot.” She licked some chocolate from her fingers. “It's melting.”

“I like chocolate for breakfast,” he said.

“Want one?” she asked. She pulled the second candy bar from her backpack.

“Thanks,” he said, taking it from her.

Luz sighed. “Everything is so confusing,” she told him. “But you'll never guess what. Last night I found a trapdoor in my closet floor.”

“Did you go down in it?” Dwight asked.

“No, it was too dark, and I didn't have time. I didn't even tell my mother. She doesn't want to know about things like that, especially if it has something to do with the ghost in my house. I want you guys there with me anyway. I'm not going down that trapdoor by myself,” she said. “Where's Max anyway? I wanted to ask him a question.”

“He’s coming,” Dwight said and took another bite of his candy. He nodded in the direction of the playground. Max was walking slowly across the basketball courts. The sun was so hot that the courts looked as if they were covered with water, and Max’s legs were wavering in the liquid mirage of the asphalt. “He was late today. That’s what his mother said.”

“Have you ever talked to her?”

“Not really.”

“Is she strange?”

“I don’t know,” Dwight said. “Why?”

“Well, when I went in Max’s house last Tuesday when we went in the Memory Machine, I saw her crying. He was watching a baseball game, and she was in her bed crying.”

“Were the Yankees playing the Red Sox?”

“Yeah,” Luz said.

“I don’t know about his Mom, but that game is the really strange thing. The Yankees didn’t play the Red Sox last Tuesday. He’s got that game on tape, and he plays it all the time like it’s his favorite movie. That’s all he watches when I go over to his house. I can tell you everything that happens in it all the way to the end. The Yankees won, 7-2.”

“That’s right,” Luz said. “I saw the score.”

Max was getting closer now.

“He’s such a big mystery,” Luz said. “What’re we going to do?”

“Do what Miss Moon said,” Dwight replied. “Pick one mystery and solve it. Isn’t that right, Max?”

Max stood beside them, but he didn't seem to hear.

"What if we don't pick the right mystery?" Luz asked.

"Then maybe we should each pick a different one," Dwight said. "I mean, I want to know about my ghost, but I also want to know about the library lady."

"But I want to know about my ghost and the trapdoor," Luz agreed. "Max, there's a trapdoor in my closet. I found it last night. Do you think the ghost could have walked into it? Did you see him walking down some stairs?"

They looked at Max, but he turned away.

"Are you still mad at me?" Luz asked.

He shook his head.

"Max can help me," Dwight said. "We'll find out about the ghost in my garage. I think we can figure out some things about the Wisely Mansion, too. But we are going to get to the bottom of another mystery first. I've got to go shake hands with the library lady."

"You want to do what?" Luz asked.

"Shake her hand. That way I'll find out if she's a ghost."

"How're you going to do that?" Luz asked.

"Watch me," Dwight said, then took his last bite of chocolate. "This is so messy. Come on."

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The school library was empty, except for Mrs. Norolla. She was seated at her usual place, checking and cleaning the books that had been returned the day before.

“May I help you?” she asked the children.

“Hi, Mrs. Norolla,” Dwight said, walking right up to her desk. Luz and Max lagged behind. “How are you today?”

“Fine, thank you,” she said.

“We’re here to do some research. But I want you to know that I’m going to be better in here,” Dwight said. “Six legs on the floor at all times, I promise.”

Mrs. Norolla smiled. “I’m glad you’ve come to your dollars and cents.”

Dwight stuck out his hand. “I’ll even shake on it,” he said.

Mrs. Norolla recoiled. “What?” she said.

“Let’s shake on it,” he said. “Just to prove I mean business.”

“Well, the proof is in the pudding and pie,” she said.

“No, really,” he insisted.

With that, Dwight stuck his right hand into Mrs. Norolla’s right glove. He tried to grip it, but her fingers seemed to collapse. She pulled her hand back from his grasp.

“Look at this!” she said.

She held out her gloved hand. A chocolate smear had appeared on one of the fingers.

“Whoops!” Dwight said. “I think you’re wearing my candy bar.”

“Now you understand why I do not shake hands with anyone. It’s time for you to leave the library.”

“But—”

“Chocolate candy for breakfast? I think you need to wake up and smell the coffee and cream! Goodbye.”

She stared at Dwight until he felt as if he were going to collapse. He slunk toward the door. Luz and Max pushed the door open and went into the hallway. The door clicked shut behind them.

“Oh, man,” Dwight said. “I just got myself in trouble again.”

“But you shook her hand,” Luz said. “She’s not a ghost.”

Then Dwight said, “But something wasn’t right.”

“What do you mean?” Luz asked.

“I don’t know exactly,” Dwight said. “Something about her hand. Her glove felt kind of crunchy.”

“You didn’t squeeze it too hard, did you?” Luz asked.

“No,” Dwight said. “It’s like there wasn’t anything in that glove. Like a balloon that goes pop. I shouldn’t have done what I did. She’s going to fry me like bacon if I don’t stop messing up.”

“Maybe you should go back in there and apologize,” Luz said.

“I’m not going to talk to that lady.”

“Then I’ll go say something,” Luz said.

Max shook his head.

“You can’t tell me what to do,” Luz told him. “I’m going.”

“See you,” Dwight said. “Let’s go, Max.”

But Max shook his head again. He was staring at the front of the library door. The door was plain and undecorated, except for one sign. It read:



Max stared at the sign as if he had just seen it for the first time. Then he reached into his backpack and pulled out a small notebook.

As Luz and Dwight watched, he began to write:

norolla  
orollan  
rollano

“Max, I think you’ve lost it,” Dwight said.

“You guys stay here. I’ll get this over with,” Luz told them and opened the library door.

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Mrs. Norolla wasn't at her desk in the front of the room. Luz glanced around the library. She didn't seem to be there at all. Then she noticed that a light seemed to be shining through the window in the door to Mrs. Norolla's office.

Luz approached the office door. She took a deep breath, ready to knock and make her apology. Instead, she peered through the window.

The office was dark except for the glow from a small desk lamp. Mrs. Norolla was sitting at her desk, her back to Luz. Luz watched the librarian open a drawer and remove a fresh pair of gloves. Then Mrs. Norolla pulled at the soiled glove on her right hand. Finger by finger, Mrs. Norolla tugged until the stubborn glove was ready to come off. At that moment Mrs. Norolla shifted slightly in her chair, blocking Luz's view. By her movements, Luz could tell that Mrs. Norolla was taking off the second glove now.

Then Mrs. Norolla spied her water bottle in the shadows at the edge of her desk. At the same time, she swiveled her chair and reached for the water. Luz watched in horror as she saw a skeleton hand—Mrs. Norolla's hand!--pick up the bottle of spring water.





Luz gasped loudly.

Mrs. Norolla turned her head. "Who's there?" she asked. "Who's in my library?"

Luz wished she could run. Better yet, she wished she had a blue stone in her hand. She wanted to disappear as fast as she could.