



KEY HUNTERS

**THE
MYSTERIOUS
MOONSTONE**

by Eric Luper

Illustrated by Lisa K. Weber

SCHOLASTIC INC.

*For Linda Pratt and her most
excellent okie-dokies*

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Summary: Neither Cleo nor Evan like the new school librarian, Ms. Crowley, but they are very curious about where she disappears to at the back of the library, so one day they follow her—and find a secret door, a magical library full of locked books, and a letter from the previous librarian telling them that she is trapped somewhere between the covers of one of the enchanted books and they must travel through the stories in order to save her.

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CHAPTER 1

“There she goes again,” Cleo whispered.

Evan closed his joke book. “There who goes again?” he asked.

“Ms. Crowley,” Cleo said. “Every day, she disappears into the back of the library.”

Not one kid in school liked the new librarian. After Ms. Hilliard left mysteriously at the end of last year, Ms. Crowley swooped in to take the job. Although they both had the same brown eyes, Ms. Hilliard’s were warm

and welcoming while Ms. Crowley's were dark and piercing.

Ms. Hilliard also had a sparkly purple book cart. She taught Evan how to find any fact in a moment and helped Cleo find books she liked. Ms. Crowley only made them sit in their seats and stay quiet.

"She's probably shelving books," Evan said. "Librarians love shelving books. Hey, do you know why an elephant uses his trunk as a bookmark?"

"I don't care," Cleo said, peering down the aisle where Ms. Crowley had vanished.

"So he always *nose* where he stopped reading," Evan said. "Get it? An elephant trunk? *Nose?*"

Cleo ignored him and tightened her ponytail. "I'm going to find out what she's up to."

“Bad idea,” Evan said, tucking his joke book into his backpack. “Why do you lose recess every day?”

“Because I don’t stay in my seat,” Cleo said. “But I had a good reason today.”

“I’m sure,” Evan said.

“Ellie Fishbein took my pencil. I had to get a new one from the pencil cup.”

“You didn’t have one in your desk?” Evan asked.

“The pencils in the pencil cup are sharper.”

“Uh-huh.”

“And they fit better in my hand.”

“Uh-huh.”

“And they have softer erasers.” Cleo looked over her shoulder. “I’m going,” she said.

“You’re *going* to get punished,” Evan said. “A *lifetime* without recess.”

“Ms. Crowley will be the one who gets punished,” Cleo said. “A teacher should never leave two kids alone. We could get hurt.”

With that, Cleo darted between the shelves.

Evan knew following her would only lead to trouble, but he didn’t want Cleo to think he was chicken. They twisted through the maze of shelves. Every book he’d ever read smiled out at him like a friend. Here, in the library, he had tons of friends.

“Drat!” a voice said. “Which book is it?”

It came from the next aisle. Ms. Crowley was tugging at books and shoving them back into place. “Literature no longer used,” she muttered. “What sort of clue is that? All literature is used!”

“Ms. Crowley,” Cleo said. “Is everything okay?”



Ms. Crowley spun to face them. An old-looking brass key hung around her neck. “What do you want?”

“We heard a noise back here,” Evan said.

“And I suppose you’ve come to investigate like two little super-sleuths,” Ms. Crowley said.

“We thought you might be in trouble,” Cleo said.

“Trouble?” Ms. Crowley stood her full height and towered over the kids. Her black shoes had the pointiest toes and the highest heels Evan had ever seen. “What sort of trouble might one find in a school library?”

“A paper cut?” Evan said.

“Go back to your seats,” Ms. Crowley said.

“But we were just—” Cleo began.

“You were *just* going back to your seats,” Ms. Crowley said. “Not another word from my junior Frank Hardy and Nancy Drew.”

Cleo and Evan headed back to their table.

“Awesome,” Cleo whispered. “She called me Nancy Drew.”

“So what?” Evan said. “I read one of those books once. Nancy Drew sipped tea and ate something called fancy cakes.”

“That’s the *old* Nancy Drew,” Cleo said. “The new Nancy Drew has a hybrid car and a cell phone. Plus, she solves mysteries!”

Suddenly, Ms. Crowley cried out and the kids heard a sliding sound. Cleo and Evan ran back to look, but Ms. Crowley was gone.