

The Farm Mystery Series

Chapter One

Andy tossed and turned in bed. For some reason he couldn't seem to sleep. Drowsily, he rubbed his eyes. *I wonder what woke me up?* he thought. He looked over at his brothers, both of whom were snoring gently.

"Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark! Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark!"

Now, I remember. Andy lay there trying to figure it out. *Whose dog can that be? It sounds like it's close to the house.* He thought of all the dogs in the neighborhood. No, this dog didn't sound like any of the neighbor's dogs.

Andy got out of bed and looked out the window. It was a very dark night. Occasionally a flash of lightning would fill the sky with a brilliant light, revealing billowing layers of dark, angry-looking clouds. Glancing at the clock in his room, he noticed it was 12:01. "Midnight," he muttered to himself, crawling back into bed.

"Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark!" Over and over the dog continued to noisily make his presence known. It was always a single bark, then a slight pause followed by four rapid barks.

Andy was about to get up and look out the window when he heard the front door open. He lay very still, listening.

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“Get out of here! Go on, dog! You’re going to wake the whole house up!” Dad was obviously annoyed at the dog, and his tone of voice showed it. Even though Dad was trying to shout “quietly,” Andy noticed that both brothers, Jason and Ben, started stirring as Dad addressed the dog.

“Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark!” Dad’s commands seemed to have had no effect on the dog.

Silently, Andy slipped out of bed and quietly descended the stairs. He walked up right behind his dad who was looking out the front window. Dad seemed so intent on looking that Andy hated to say anything. So he didn’t. Instead he got closer and tried to see what Dad was looking at outside.

“Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark!” Dad suddenly spun around toward the door and ran right into Andy before seeing him in the darkened house.

“Oop . . . !” Dad sputtered, as the two fell to the floor. “Who are you?” Dad demanded. The room was very dark.

“I’m Andy, Dad!”

Dad immediately apologized. “I’m sorry! Are you all right, son?” When Andy assured him that he was okay, he continued. “What are you doing sneaking up on me like that, not making a sound?”

“I’m sorry, Dad, but I wasn’t trying to sneak up on you,” Andy replied. “You looked so busy watching out the window that I didn’t want to interrupt you.”

Dad gave a long sigh, then apologized again. “Any idea whose dog that is out there, serenading a family that doesn’t want to be serenaded?”

Andy moved to the window and looked out.

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Dad had flipped on the switch so the front yard was bathed in light. It was pouring down rain. The gutters were having such a hard time with the heavy spring rains that several waterfalls were running over the sides. “What a messy night!” Andy exclaimed. Then he saw the dog. It was a short, black dog with long curly hair hiding its eyes.

“Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark!”

“No sir,” Andy finally said. “I’ve never seen that dog before. I know all the dogs around here, but I’ve never seen him before.”

“Me, either,” Dad agreed. “What I can’t figure out is why he just insists on standing outside our door and barking. I’ve tried to scare him away, but it didn’t work. He acted like he wanted to come in!”

Now Dad and Andy were both staring out the window at the dog. He noticed them, and tail wagging, he walked over to the front door, as if expecting to be let in. The dog looked from the front door over to the window where Dad and Andy were looking out. “It looks like he’s saying, ‘Okay, enough fun now, it’s raining out here. Let me back in!’”

“I’ll try once more to get him to go home,” Dad said, moving toward the front door.

“Dad . . .” Andy spoke a little hesitantly. “Dad, you may want to shout a little quieter this time.”

Dad laughed. “You’re right! Here I am trying to get the dog to go away so we can get some sleep, and in the process, I am probably just waking up the rest of the household.” So instead of shouting he walked to the front door and opened it a crack. The sound of the rain was almost deafening. “Go on

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home!” Dad said in a whispered ‘shout.’ “Go on!”

The dog seemed to love this attention and tried to squeeze through the narrow crack offered by the door. Dad shut the door some more to keep the dog from coming in. “Go on!” he said one more time. However, it was obvious that either the dog didn’t understand Dad or had no intention of obeying. With tail wagging briskly, the dog whined and tried to push his nose through the doorway.

Dad closed the door and walked to the basement. He came back with his tall mud boots on, opened the front door and then closed it behind him.

Andy raced to the window and couldn’t help but laugh. Dad looked so funny with his pajamas and mud boots on, chasing the dog in the pouring down rain. He didn’t even have an umbrella to keep him dry.

Dad kept running toward the dog, which caused the dog to run toward the road. But when Dad started walking back toward the house, the dog followed right behind him, tail wagging happily. After a few attempts, Dad raced back to the house, flung open the door, and stepped inside. The dog tried to come in, but Dad closed the door before he could.

Andy laughed out loud. There stood Dad, water dripping from his hair, his pajamas soaked with rain. Dad, however, didn’t seem to be in a laughing mood. “It’s late, Andy. Time to get back in bed. We’ll have to see about the dog tomorrow, if he’s still here.” It was clear to Andy that Dad didn’t intend to talk about this any more tonight.

Andy slowly walked back to his bed, trying his

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best not laugh again. That was hard to do. Dad's boots squeaked as he walked down the stairs to the basement.

As Andy tucked himself into bed, his mind was whirling. *Whose dog is that? Why does it think it's supposed to come into our house? And why won't it stop barking?* Andy thought some more. *What if the dog's master is out there somewhere in the rain, maybe even hurt? What if the dog was trying to get them to come to his master's rescue?* Andy had read about such things happening before. He started to get out of bed and tell his dad about this possibility. No, it was obvious that Dad didn't want Andy to get out of bed again. Besides, Dad had probably already thought of that.

Andy was awake a long time. Finally, however, sleep began to overtake the tired boy. Just as he was about to go to sleep, the dog let him know that it was still there. "Bark! Bark, bark, bark, bark!" *What's going on?* Andy thought. *Maybe this will be something The Great Detective Agency can look into tomorrow. Sure, it will be the Case of the Unknown Dog.* With that thought, he finally dropped off to sleep.