

Alien Detectives

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My Aunt Sal was once abducted by aliens. At least that's what she says. She's an ultra-strange person. Maybe it's because of the aliens. When it rains, she goes shopping in her wetsuit. Sometimes, she reads books in her bathtub for a whole week—but she never, ever, puts any water in her bath. Weird, huh?

Aunt Sal has pretty flowers in her garden all year round. Not because she's a hot-shot gardener, but because she only ever plants plastic flowers. One other thing: she's always bubbling over with plans for top secret adventures.

My brother Lawson and I—my name's Rosie—think she's so cool. Mum and Dad think she's eccentric. It's their polite way of saying she's a weirdo.

Last night, Aunt Sal phoned and asked us over for lunch today. She was very excited. Now we're about to find out why.

Lawson presses the bell and instantly Aunt Sal flings open the door.

"Come in, come in," she says. "I can't wait to tell you my amazing news."

Aunt Sal is tall and thin. Her hair is silver and spiky. Her favourite colour is yellow and today she wears a yellow shirt, yellow pants, yellow shoes, and yellow socks. She looks like a tall, spiky canary.

We follow her to the kitchen, where she points to a pile of peanut butter and beetroot sandwiches, and a stack of meat pies with marmalade sauce. That's the kind of food she always eats.

As we munch, Aunt Sal tells us—for about the five hundredth time—about how she was abducted by aliens when she was little. She's up to the part where the aliens try to suck out her brain, when Lawson interrupts.

"This is old news," he says, not very politely. "You've told us this story lots of times."

"Yes, yes," Aunt Sal replies impatiently, "but I was about to tell you another alien story.

A story so different, so breathtaking, and so completely true, it'll knock your socks off!"

"The suspense is killing us," I say. "Tell us, Aunt Sal."

"Everything I say to you is top secret," she replies.

"At precisely 11:22 a.m. yesterday, while cleaning under the bed of your uncle—my dear departed brother—Morton Q. Dinsdale, I discovered a secret panel in the floor."

"This is excellent," I say. "I love it when you make up stories."

"Goodness me! Do you think I'm fibbing?" I feel my face reddening.

"Oh no, Aunt Sal. I'm sure everything you say is true."

"You might be a weirdo," adds Lawson, "but you're an honest one."

"Er, thank you, Lawson. Now, as I was saying, I slid open the secret panel, reached in, and found... this!"

A tattered black book suddenly appears in her hand. It's a diary. Like a magician pulling a rabbit from a hat, Aunt Sal plucks a yellowed map from inside the diary.

My heart pounds.

“Is it a treasure map?”

“No, Rosie. It’s a map of Hidden Swamp. A secret place unknown for centuries until your Uncle Morton discovered it. Now listen to what he wrote about the swamp in his diary.”

Aunt Sal used to be a school teacher. She still knows how to talk like a teacher. Her voice booms, loud and commanding, as she reads from Uncle Morton’s diary:

“Today I head back to investigate Hidden Swamp. My research leads me to believe that an alien spaceship has landed there.”

Aunt Sal looks up. “This is proof! Imagine that! Proof at last! I’ve been laughed at for years for saying I was abducted by aliens. But Morton knew they were here, too.”

Lawson gulps. “Aliens?” he asks. “Like real aliens from outer space?”

I elbow him. “Don’t interrupt, Lawson.”

“And this,” says Aunt Sal, “is the next entry in the diary, the very last...”

“Yes! Yes! I have found them! And such trusting creatures they are! Ha! I will make millions out of this! This is the greatest discovery in the world! To celebrate, I am going to eat two giant boxes of chocolates, all on my own! Yum! Yum!”



Aunt Sal points to the date on the top of the diary page. It is exactly five years ago.

“Poor Morton died on this day,” she says, her eyes misting over. “I hope he enjoyed those chocolates.”

“The aliens might have taken him away,” I say. My eyes bulge at the thought.

Lawson’s jaw snaps closed. “They probably ate him.”

“No,” says Aunt Sal. “It was just a plain old heart attack.”

I feel sad. How terrible to discover aliens and die before you have a chance to tell anyone.