

Emily and Sam: The Mad Scientist Next Door

Dave Cole

Matty Mitchell, Illustrator

Common Deer Press (Sep 17, 2024)

Softcover \$7.99 (102pp)

978-1-988761-96-1

Fun and illustrated with cartoon humor, the mystery novel Emily and Sam: The Mad Scientist Next Door follows twins who take a less than scientific approach to investigating their new neighbor.

In Dave Cole's entertaining mystery novel *Emily and Sam: The Mad Scientist Next Door*, siblings test the scientific method when they suspect that a new neighbor is involved in dognapping.

Emily and Sam are twins. Emily is impetuous and passionate, while Sam curbs some of Emily's impulses with his calmer nature. Sam, in his own estimation, is the "big picture" thinker between the two of them. They tussle and engage in sibling banter, but they also work together well.

When Mr. X moves in next door, Emily is suspicious. The new neighbor wears a splotched white laboratory coat and is secretive. He receives frequent deliveries too. When Emily spies a flyer about a friend's missing dogs, Thunder and Lightning, she thinks that Mr. X might be involved. Reluctant to confront him, she and Sam begin to investigate—measuring a muddy footprint, surveilling Mr. X's garage through their window blinds, and formulating an elaborate plan to gain a better view of his garage with a remote-controlled car and cellular phone. There's some silliness and fumbling involved, as with a friend's unforeseen interruption. But when the twins at last seek the advice of an adult, they learn the truth about Mr. X and are forced to converse with the subject of their investigation.

The plot is straightforward but urgent. The twins' concerns about possible dangers to animals fuel them to act, and their belief that the grown-ups will need to be persuaded to their side prompts them to seek proof. Emily's hypothesis that Mr. X is a dog thief who is conducting experiments on them is built on somewhat flawed reasoning; she jumps to conclusions and seeks to confirm her own biases, proceeding without care. This is pointed out to her later; she learns a valuable lesson, and her decisions are juxtaposed to notes about how the scientific method should be applied. The conclusion is upbeat and informative, retracing the twins' steps with Mr. X's useful input to show where their thinking went awry.

An educational mystery novel, *Emily and Sam: The Mad Scientist Next Door* introduces a spirited duo who test their skills in their search for missing dogs, learning how to be good neighbors along the way.

KAREN RIGBY (August 2, 2024)

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