



The Case of the Ruined Roses

featuring
Nina Chase and Max Decker

"That was a neat program on UFO's," said Nina to her cousin Max as they walked down the street. "I think what really amazed me was that UFO's were reported as early as 1800."

"That's pretty hard to believe," said Max. "Anyway, do you really believe there are such things?" Nina started to answer when they heard a loud scream coming from Coach Thornton's house.

"Come on," shouted Max. They ran into the yard where the coach was staring at ten rose bushes that had been pulled from the ground.

"Look at that!" he demanded. "Just look at that."

"That's terrible," cried Nina. "Who could have done it?"

Coach Thornton looked disgusted. "I had to bench three of my best football players for cutting class. They were pretty mad at me."

"First thing, we'd better get these roses back in the ground," said Max. "Then we'll figure out who did it."

Nina and Max helped Coach Thornton replant the roses. Then he invited them in for milk and cookies.

"Now," said Nina. "Am I right? You benched Sam Cartland, Mike Brooks, and Alex Avery."

"And you lost the game," added Max.

The coach rubbed his eyes. "I know, but rules are rules."

"I'll bet one of them did it to get even," said Nina. "How about we nose around a little?"

"Let's see," said Max after they left. "Coach said the roses were all right when he looked out at nine. But shortly after ten, he found them pulled up."

"So, we check to see who doesn't have an alibi between nine and ten. Look!" Nina pointed. "There's Alex Avery over at the Dairy Bar."

Alex looked up as they came in. "Hi kids," he drawled.

"Hello, yourself," said Max. "We missed seeing you in the football game."

"That was a bummer all right. But I guess the coach didn't have any choice."

"Where you been all morning?" asked Nina.

"I've been right here since nine." He turned to the girl behind the counter. "Isn't that right, Amy?"

"Uh huh. You helped me carry in that heavy box."

"So you weren't anywhere near Coach Thornton's house?" asked Max.

Alex looked surprised. "No, I'm not mad at him, but I don't intend to visit him."

After they left, Nina looked down the street. "That's Sam Cartland's house. Let's see what he's been doing."

"What do you two want," growled Sam when he came to the door.

"Hey, lighten up, Sam," said Max. "Can we talk with you?"

"Sure, come on in." He pressed a button on his remote control and turned off his VCR.

"I've been watching some football tapes to improve my game."

"We wondered what you were doing between nine and ten this morning," said Nina.

"I was right here watching that program on UFO's."

"That was a good program," said Nina. "Remember when that guy from Roswell, New Mexico insisted he had been abducted?"

"Yeah," laughed Sam. "The one with the bushy hair. Funny how this has been going on for so long. That pilot, Kenneth Arnold, started it back in 1947 with the stuff he saw."

"Very interesting," said Max, trying not to look bored. "But we have to get going."

"Maybe we can find Mike Brooks working out at the gym," said Nina as they left.

"Probably," agreed Max.

They found him on the treadmill. "Hey, you two want to join down here? It's a great place to work out."

"Not right now," said Max. "We were wondering about what you were doing from nine to ten this morning."

"Right here. You can check the log book. Why?"

"Just curious," said Nina with a smile as they went back to the desk. "Sure enough, Mike had signed in at five of nine."

"This is great," Nina groaned. "They all have alibis."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Max.