

Higgledy-Piggledy

By Wendy Wright

Prologue

You're not getting it, kid. And I just don't understand why. I mean, you're surrounded in clues—clue-after clue-after clue—the clues are everywhere, everywhere you are. Heck, they're even following you. But still, you're oblivious. And it doesn't seem like you're ever gonna figure it out by yourself, not with you being a human like you are. So...I was thinking... maybe I should go ahead and just tell you. Not supposed to...They're gonna blame me for whatever you do after I tell you. You know—you could've figured it out by yourself—If you'd paid a little more attention to what's around you and a little less time daydreaming. Got to tell ya kid—it's time you wake up. Do you really wanna go through life being thought of as a numbskull-head? Come on... You're better than that.

Look, you're a fairly, most-of-the-time-nice kid, so I'm gonna give it you straight—you're being duped. Ya know—tricked. I'm gonna pay for telling you this, but I don't care. I actually like being in the doghouse. So, OK... Thing is, not everyone in your life is all they pretend to be. You got spies, kid.

And notice I said spies, as in plural. It's true; some kids are assigned more than one agent; sometimes there are oodles of 'em in a kid's life. I bet you can figure out who these spies are if you think really hard. Here's a hint: just like in the movies, it's the character you're least self-conscious around—the most innocent, clueless, unaware acting sort— that'll be the one who's taking notes on you. Sometimes it's your best pal who sticks by your side, and sometimes it's a total stranger who's flitting through your day to check on you. No matter, they've got you numbered. Well, not literally; you're not a number to them; they actually know your name and a truckload of other stuff about you too.

So listen kid, you don't have as many secrets as you think. Are you catching on? This is a big deal. Someone knows all about those naughty things you've done. And no, I don't mean Santa, you goose. The next time

you think you're being sly, look over your shoulder or perhaps out the window. All those devious schemes, all those calculating sneaky little plots of yours—they're not such a secret, not like you think. That time you played computer games and told your mom you were doing homework—you thought you could get away with it—wrong. That time you snooped around in your sister's room without permission and you thought no one knew—nope, wrong again genius. OK, calm down; I won't turn you in—I get it; I have a sister too, snaps and barks a lot if I go near her precious stuff.

Anyway, like I was saying—you're being scrutinized alright, watched, stalked. And it's by someone hiding in plain sight. Someone like me—me, as in Dilbert—you must've heard of me, ya know the Fieldjoys' hound dog with long, floppy ears, electromagnetic whiskers, a built-in high-definition printer system attached to the inside of my eyeballs, a radar-activated tail, a bionic nose—you get the idea; I'm quite the sleuthhound. That's right, I know what I'm talking about 'cause I'm one of 'em—a spy, part of the whole sleuthing network, myself. In fact, I'm currently snout-deep in some serious espionage. Can't really talk about the details of the case, but I assure you this investigation requires some wholehearted sniffing—we're talking big-time intelligence. And before you start, I don't have time for any mockery of animal intelligence—no wisecracks about dopey dogs, birdbrains, dingbats, or any other wildlife putdown. I can't believe you humans haven't figured it out yet. Animals aren't stupid. THEY AREN'T. If you're up to something, they know it. You think they haven't a clue. You think they've no idea of your scheming ways, but they do. That sleepy-eyed cat of yours, that tail-chasing canine—it can add two and two. Secrets? Forget it. You're surrounded, pal—your pets, your backyard squirrels, birds, lizards, ducks, geese, cows, horses, the occasional gnome—they're all in cahoots. It's a web of intersecting serious snoopers, a network of critter agents. That bird in the tree outside your window, acting like it couldn't care less about you—spy. That sleepy-eyed pet of yours—it might yawn; it might appear to be fully focused on licking its paws; it might even pretend to look out the window. Don't be fooled. It's watching and recording your every move. And sooner or later—usually sooner—it'll figure out what you're up to.

And that's definitely the case at the Fieldjoys' farm.

Sincerely and Seriously,
Detective Dilbert

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