

The best detective

Knock! Knock! Knock!

“Neo!” said Gogo. “Please see who is at the door.”

Neo ran to the front door. When he opened it he saw Bella and her mother. Bella was crying.



“What’s wrong?” asked Neo. Bella cried even louder.

Gogo ran up to the front door. “Come in. Why is Bella crying?”

“It’s Noodle,” said Bella’s mother. “We can’t find him.”

"Noodle's gone," sniffed Bella. "Have you seen him?"

"Sit down," said Gogo, giving Bella a tissue. "Dry your tears. We are going to help you. Neo, please phone Josh and ask him to come here."

While Neo phoned Josh, Gogo sat between Bella and her mother on the couch.

"When did you last see Noodle?" Gogo asked.

"This morning," said Bella. "He was playing on the field."

"He is always home by lunch time," said Bella's mother.

"Gogo," said Neo, "Josh said he and Hope will get here as quickly as they can."

"What are we going to do, Gogo?" asked Bella sniffing loudly.

"When Josh and Hope get here we'll make a plan. Right now we'll all have some tea."

Soon there was another *Knock! Knock! Knock!* at the door. Hope pushed Josh's wheelchair inside.

"Don't worry, Bella, we'll find Noodle," said Josh. "We'll all be like detectives and look for him."

"Yes," said Gogo. "Now help us with some clues, Bella. Tell us where Noodle likes to go."

Bella and her mother told them all the places where Noodle liked to play and visit.

"Good," said Gogo. "I'll put Mbali in her pushchair and we can all go and look for him."

"Maybe we should go in different directions. Then it will be quicker," suggested Josh. "Gogo, if you, Neo and Mbali go down River Road, then Bella and her mother can look at home and on the field again. Then they can go up School Street. Hope and I can go down Sambals Street."

"What a good idea," said Gogo. "You sound like a real detective, Josh."

"And we should all meet somewhere," said Hope. "Then we'll all know what is going on."

"We'll phone each other once while we're looking, and then we can meet at the shopping centre," said Josh.

"Can we go now?" asked Bella.

"Poor, Bella," said Mbali, patting Bella's hand.

Everyone left to search for Noodle. Hope pushed Josh's wheelchair along the pavement. They all called Noodle's name.



“He’s not in this street,” said Josh. Then his phone rang. “It’s Gogo,” he told Hope, “I hope they’ve found Noodle.”

Hope couldn’t hear what Gogo was saying to Josh, but she could hear Mbali shouting, *Pink! Pink! Pink!* loudly in the background.

“No,” said Josh when he had finished speaking to Gogo, “they haven’t found Noodle.” His phone rang again. “And that was Bella and her mother. They haven’t found him either.”

“Now what?” asked Hope.

“We should go and meet everyone at the shopping centre,” Josh said.

A few minutes later everyone stood in front of the shopping centre. Bella’s eyes were red from crying. Gogo looked worried.

“Should we walk back and look again?” Gogo asked.

“Noo ... Noodle ...” said a small voice.

They all turned to look.

“Noodle!” said Mbali again. She pointed at the corner shop.

“Mbali?” said Gogo. “Where?”

“There’s nothing there, Mbali,” said Neo.

“NOOOOOODLE!” shouted Mbali.

“We should go and have a look,” said Hope.

They walked to the shop on the corner. It sold bags and bangles, shirts and shoes. They all crowded in the doorway.

“In! In!” said Mbali pointing to inside the shop.

“Hello,” said the owner. “Welcome. Come inside. Let me just give my friend a biscuit, then I will help you.”

“NOODLE!” they all said together.

Bella rushed forward and hugged Noodle. “Where have you been? We’ve been looking everywhere.” Noodle’s tail wagged and he licked her face.

“Oh!” said the shop owner. “So he belongs to you. He comes to say hello at my home every morning.”

“Pink!” said Mbali.

“Yes. The pink house on the corner next to the field. He comes to play with my little dog, Trixie. I’m so sorry if you have been worried. It’s the first time he has come down to the shop.”

While everyone cuddled, stroked and patted Noodle, the shopkeeper told them that her name was Mrs Modise. She was new in town and had just opened her shop.

“Noodle made friends with Trixie the day we moved in,” she said. “They play every morning and then Noodle goes home. But today was a little different. Today there was a big surprise and I had to bring Trixie to work with me.”

Just then Mbali got out of her pushchair and started to shout.

“NOODLES!”

“Yes,” said Neo, “you found him.”

Bella kissed Mbali’s cheek. “Yes, thank you so much.”

“No, no, no!” shouted Mbali. “Noodle, Noodle, Noodle! LOOK!”

Gogo, Neo, Bella, her mother, Josh and Hope moved to where Mbali was standing. They crowded around Mbali and stared.

“Yes,” said Mrs Modise, “THAT was the big surprise.”

Noodle pushed passed everyone’s legs and sat down next to Trixie’s basket. He looked very proud.

“Look,” said Mbali, “Noodle, Noodle, Noodle!”

Trixie was in the basket with three tiny pinkish puppies and all three looked just like Noodle.



Everyone started talking at once. Mrs Modise was very happy to meet Noodle's owner. Bella was happy she had found Noodle. Josh and Hope were thinking about the puppies. Neo and Gogo were smiling. Then Neo turned and gave Mbali a big kiss and a hug.

"Mbali," he whispered, "you are the best detective ever."

Mbali giggled. "Pink," she said. "Pink Noodles."