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Dawn has a lot to do this summer: spend time with her family, see her Stoneybrook friends, and, of course, baby-sit as much as possible! Then she and the BSC land some new clients: a feuding family, searching for a treasure that will settle a tricky will left by their eccentric father.

Now Dawn has even more things she'd like to do. She's going to take care of her new charges. . . and while she's at it, she'll try to patch up the feud and solve the inheritance mystery. Can she do it all before she has to go back to California?

Dawn Schafer, Undercover Baby-sitter Details

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Ciara says

dawn takes a job with a new client, sitting for her kids at some big manor in kristy's posh neighborhood. then a second new client calls for a sitter...for the same afternoon, at the same house. kristy takes the job. when the girls show up to babysit, they discover that the new clients are sisters who do not get along with each other. they are each living in separate wings of the house while they deal with the details related to their father's death the year previous (it was his house). they hired separate sitters because they have convinced the kids that they don't get along with each other...but actually, the moms just don't want the kids to be friends. there are two other people living in the house: the sisters' youngest sister amy, & a young foxy butler named john.

dawn gets the scoop from the kiddos: they have been told that they once had a big fight with their cousins & don't get along. but they don't remember the fight & are interested in meeting their cousins again. the sisters' need regular sitters for a little while as they wrap up their father's estate, so dawn decides to introduce the kids to each other. lo & behold, they get along just fine & are playing together like old friends in no time.

dawn overhears richard chatting with one of his lawyer buddies after one of her sitting jobs at the manor. apparently the deal is that the sisters have always always been competitive & their father kind of stoked that quality in them, pitting them against each other while they were growing up. amy is way younger than them & was kind of the pet. they always had a younger brother, but he died in an accident. after old rich dude died, he gave each sister a clue which would lead them to his fortune. whichever sister finds it first will get to keep the entire fortune. so that's why they are in the house--they're trying to solve their clues. the lawyer points out that they have a better chance of cracking the code if they pool their clues & work together, but it seems unlikely to happen.

dawn decides that somehow she will find out what the clues are & solve the puzzle, & also somehow get the sisters to work together. it wouldn't be the babysitters club if they didn't meddle in shit that didn't concern them, right? she drops hints about the puzzle to the kids, & at one point, startles amy in the house library. amy, for whatever weird reason, uses this as an opportunity to tell dawn what her clue is. it's something like, "the first is always the most important."

turns out one of the moms told her older daughter what her clue is. something about how, "the signature tells all." everyone gets all excited about figuring out what the clues mean & when dawn explains to the feuding moms what's going on, they drop their frosty demeanors & admit the final clue to evidence, "it wasn't me i was ---".

obvious, right? they're looking for a painting. preferably the first in a series. & the house is decorated in a series of paintings that old rich dude had painted of himself every single year. clearly the first painting has the code on the back that will enable the sisters to access the fortune. but they're like, "it wasn't me...i was...hmmm...the first is the most important...WHAT COULD IT MEAN?"

dawn goes home & thinks about it & has some idiotic deus ex machina dream full of angry portraits. she calls the manor first thing in the morning & is like, "i cracked the code, dudes!" richard drives her over to the manor on his way to work & after stalling for like a chapter & a half, she's like, "we're looking for a painting." they finally figure out which painting & call their lawyer. they explain that they all worked

together to solve the puzzle (actually, dawn solved it), so they are setting aside their differences & sharing the fortune. the lawyer confirms that they cracked the code...& then they hear sneezing behind a wall. a bookcase slides out of the way & the butler emerges, looking sheepish. he admits that he is their long-lost baby brother, believed by everyone to be dead. amy knew he wasn't dead, but had agreed not to tell. the older sisters & so relieved that he's not dead (WTF? did they have a funeral for him? i think finding out that a sibling is not in fact dead should warrant a bigger response than this) that they cut him in on the fortune. they all agree that rich old dude was kind of a bastard, always fucking with his kids' heads & telling them that their siblings had died, & that they have the best fortune of all now that he's not around to fuck it up: each other. awww. *puke*

in the B-plot, dawn is preparing to move back to california for the next school year & keeps pissing mary anne off by making plans with her & then forgetting & making plans with someone else. finally dawn decides to have a day when she has a big picnic with her babysitting charges, & then a barbecue & sleepover with the babysitters club, & then a special all-day family day. &...no one cares. learn to use an appointment book, dawn. you're only 13. i'm sure you're not that in demand.

Alex says

Thanks to years of searching at Half Price Books, I finally own almost the entire BSC collection. Unfortunately, I'm still missing a few of the mysteries and have been really itching to re-read them lately. So, I'm putting them all on hold through Interlibrary Loan and hoping for the best. This is the first one that came in.

I don't know if I just remembered the ending too clearly, but this mystery seemed incredibly easy to solve. But, I did like the subplot with Dawn overbooking plans all summer, even though I don't recall her being especially good friends with people like Emily and Erica.

Samantha says

This book has the world hellion in it! I AM SO SCANDALIZED RIGHT NOW!

This book gets three stars just for that! Also because the baby-sitting plots were actually just part of the main plots, so two birds with one stone.

Maria Elmvang says

Since when did Dawn get so disorganized? Also, I'm feeling pretty chuffed that I solved the mystery before the BSC did... but then, it wasn't exactly difficult...

Shira says

this is my first time reading this book!

in this FINAL DAWN-NARRATED BOOK (not including chapters in Super Specials, and not including the California Diaries series) by ghostwriter Ellen Miles, the bsc start sitting for a new family and are surprised to discover that they want two separate sitters for the two sets of cousins and don't want the cousins comingling. the mothers are in town trying to get their recently deceased father, arthur livingston's business in order, and they don't get along, so they don't want their kids to get along either (with each other or their third sister amy who has no kids and lives in the mansion full time). the bsc start to uncover a mystery of mr. livingston's fortune: he has given each of his three daughters a clue to a treasure, and whichever one solves the mystery and finds the treasure first gets his whole fortune. he's always fostered competition (read: resentment) among his daughters, and even though he's dead he's still haunting them with this obnoxious competition. there's also something vaguely spooky going on in the mansion. dawn thinks that all of mr. livingston's portraits' eyes are following her (yes, the many had many portraits of himself hanging in his own house -- this says everything you need to know about this douchebag). when they go in the attic to try to find the treasure they discover that some sections of it are completely dust-free and have some of mr. livingston's clothes that appear to have been recently used. they start to believe that mr. livingston is still alive, living in the walls or something (a la the ending of that surprisingly good horror movie about the doll). also their very young butler seems unnaturally involved in the treasure case. the bsc members attempt to make the fighting sisters reconcile and share their clues with one another. turns out that mr. livingston isn't alive but that the butler is actually patrick (who HAS been peering through the eyes of the portraits to try to find info about the treasure), the livingston sisters' little brother who mr. livingston was so disapproving of that HE TOLD HIS DAUGHTERS THAT THEIR BROTHER WAS DEAD. he had really just run away. what a true scumbag mr. livingston was, right? anyway, the sisters and brother band together and solve the mystery (see lowlights/nitpicks for more, slash see the clues below) and decide to split the fortune evenly and keep the mansion so they can take family vacations there together because they all love each other now. and in a totally nonsensical and infuriating subplot, dawn keeps overbooking herself. all of her sms friends that are not in the bsc (see nitpicks for the likelihood that dawn even has these friends in the first place), plus all the bsc kids, plus her actual family all want to hang out with her all the time. eventually she has a friends day: a party with the bsc kids in the morning, then a party with the sms kids in the afternoon, then a bsc sleepover, as well as a family day devoted to hanging with her mom, richard, and mary anne. and then she goes back to california to kick off the wonderful california diaries spinoff, with her first book, Dawn: Diary 1!

highlights:

- a reference to mallory having chestnut hair! we haven't gotten a reference to her hair being any color other than red in SO LONG.
- the fake butler's name is John Irving
- dawn notices a really ugly painting of mr. livingston and narrates it as looking like a cross between george washington, whistler's mother, and the elephant man.
- man, I'm just so glad that arthur livingston is dead. what a true jerk to end all jerks.
- dawn has a twin peaks dream where one of the portraits of mr. livingston winks at her and talks to her and then she wakes up knowing the answer: look for the FIRST portrait of him which was painted by his wife (the signature) and the code is on the back. I guess twin peaks dream parodies were the style of the time:

lowlights/nitpicks:

- the subplot where everyone wants to hang out with dawn. emily bernstein calls to make plans while erica blumberg stops by to try to hang out with her. do these people really like dawn so much that they need to hang out with her? they're really just school chums that she never saw outside of school, so what's the deal?
- the butler is described as being a cute older guy with a beard. how old is older? if he's old enough to have a beard then is he really young enough that it would make sense that dawn would describe him as cute? if he's

an adult I'd think they'd call him handsome or something.

-ANOTHER POGS REFERENCE. the kids are playing pogs. why does every kid in this universe still play pogs in 1996?

-the clues are really obvious (see below). I knew all along and am surprised it took them so long to figure it out. I solved it from two clues.

-dawn narrates that at the pool they play marco polo, "which is sort of a wet version of blindman's bluff." who in the world knows what blindman's bluff is but doesn't know what marco polo is?

-they find a check with the signature "a. livingston" and are shocked because he's been dead since before the check was written BUT HE HAS A DAUGHTER NAMED AMY. and turns out that it was her check. because occam's razor, you silly kids.

-how rich was mr. livingston? they describe the mansion as basically being the white house. I'd guess that he has a fortune beyond just the mansion, but how is it that four kids and their families are able to split that money and have enough that they feel like it's appropriate to keep/not sell the mansion, which is obviously the biggest asset in mr. livingston's estate. unless he had a bunch of original renaissance paintings or something that they could sell and make a ton of money, I just don't buy that they would keep the mansion.

-dawn and her mom go to a nearby restaurant called tofu express. really, that exists? I'd believe veggie express, but TOFU EXPRESS?

the clues:

-I didn't do it, I was --- (answer: framed, indicates the frame of a painting)

-the signature tells all (answer: the first painting was painted by mr. livingston's wife)

-the first is always the most important (answer: the "treasure" is on mr. livingston's earliest portrait)

claudia outfit:

- "...The outfit she was wearing that day: a bright yellow pair of overall shorts over a tie-dyed baby-T in all the colors of the rainbow. She wore purple jellies, and her toenails, which showed through the plastic, were painted scarlet. A green scrunchie, holding her hair into a cool-looking Pebbles 'do, topped off the look."

stacey outfit:

- "Stacey was wearing a pair of tailored khaki shorts, brown moccasins--no socks--and a simple, classic white shirt."

snacks in claudia's room:

-dots beneath her pillow

-tootsie pops under her bed
