

Second Place Fiction ~ Ages 10-13

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Age 13

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“Bingo”

I ran down the beach toward the big, white lifeguard chair that was waiting for me. Every weekend, I, Ashley Barnum, worked as a lifeguard at the local beach.

It was a pretty boring job, watching the busy crowd of tourists in the water acting as if they'd never been to a beach before. I scanned the hordes of people for a while, and then I quickly glanced at my watch. “Excellent,” I thought, “Only 10 more minutes to go.” I looked up and I saw a worried old lady approaching my chair.

“Excuse me, little girl, but have you seen my lucky bingo necklace?”

“Wait, what did you say?” I asked. I mean really, what was going on here? Little girl? Lucky *bingo* necklace? Was this lady crazy or what?

“I was just wondering if you have seen my lucky bingo necklace,” the lady replied. “I think someone stole it!”

“Sorry, I haven’t seen it,” I answered. “I’ll look for it though. What does it look like?” That was definitely the wrong thing to say.

“Oh!” The little old lady exclaimed. “You’re one of those detective people, aren’t you! The ones who solve crimes and find stolen objects and all of that new-fangled nonsense.”

“Actually, I’m a lifeguard,” I stuttered, but she completely ignored me and continued to ramble on.

“Well, I hire you, newfangled or not! Here is my number. Call me in a bit so we can get my necklace back! I need it by Wednesday for the Coastal Bingo Tournament!” With that she turned and walked away, not even noticing the dumbfounded expression on my face.

As soon as I got home from work, I called the number. You probably think I’m crazy to get myself roped into such a thing, but I had to admit it, I was interested in this old lady and her queer case.

“Hello, Martha Grig residence, how may I help you?”

“Um, this is Ashley, you know from the beach? Anyway I’m calling because you asked me to help you solve a case.”

“Oh, yes, yes,” Martha replied. “Well go ahead dear, and solve the case.”

Did she think I was Nancy Drew or something? “Um, can you describe the necklace and maybe give me some names of people you suspect.”

“Well, the necklace is gold with a little bingo board charm on it,” Martha explained.

“And I think that awful Betsy Newberry stole it! She always was jealous of my bingo talent!”

“Okaaaaay,” I replied. “I’ll start, you know, solving.”

“Excellent, dear!” Martha exclaimed. “Let me know when you’ve tracked down the thief.” And with that, she hung up.

I paged through the phone book hoping to find a Betsy Newberry. “Yes!” I cried. “Betsy Newberry: 401-485-9821.” I picked up the phone and quickly dialed the number.

“Hello,” a grumpy old voice answered.

“Yes, this is Ashley Barnum, and I was just wondering if you have...”

“I hate Girl Scout cookies!” Betsy cried.

“I’m not selling Girl Scout cookies!” Why were the elderly so against the youth today? “And,” I responded politely, “I just wanted to ask whether or not you have seen Martha Grig’s bingo necklace.” I replied.

“Nope,” Betsy answered. “Why would I have that hideous old thing? She’s probably gone and lost it again. Every week she thinks someone “steals” her lucky bingo something. Then she finds it the next day! Well, let me tell you, nothing’s ever been stolen and nothing ever will! Humph! Crazy old bat.”

“Oh,” I said. I decided not to mention that she was a bit of a crazy old bat as well. “Well, thank you for your time and I hope you have a nice day.”

“Whatever,” Betsy replied.

So much for her being one of those sweet little old grannies who knit in the park! I quickly hung up to ponder the conversation. “If the necklace wasn’t stolen,” I thought. “Then where could it be?” Suddenly a thought flew into my head. I called Martha and asked her to meet me on the beach, and that I had found her necklace.

Martha finally showed up. “I found your necklace!” I called.

“Good job, honey,” Martha answered. “Where was it?”

“It’s on your neck, Mrs. Grig.”

“What!” She touched her neck. Sure enough, the necklace was there, gleaming gold in the sunlight. I knew I had glimpsed it from my lifeguard chair the other day! “Oh, you’re right dear!” Martha said. “Thank you so much! I would have never found it!”

“You’re welcome,” I said as I tried not to laugh. As I headed home I thought about my strangest day of work ever.

As I sat in my chair that following Wednesday, I noticed a large tent on the beach being flocked with old women. “It must be the Coastal Bingo Tournament,” I thought. I watched with a smile as Martha stormed the game, winning the “four corners round” and the “diagonal round”. I was surprised how competitive the old ladies got over the game, especially Betsy Newberry!

Once the Coastal Bingo Tournament ended, I saw Martha headed my way, looking disappointed.

“Good job, Mrs. Grig!” I exclaimed. “Wait, why do you look so upset?”

“I qualified for the Coastal Championship, but I’ll have to back out,” she sighed.

“Why?” I asked.

“Somebody’s stolen my lucky bingo shell!” She cried.

“My shift’s over at three,” I replied.