



Road Trip Detectives

THE SEA CENTER SNEAK

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*Grace and Luke Makris like to solve mysteries!
This summer, their friend David Delgado
is helping them.*

They are the Road Trip Detectives!

*Grace and Luke's dad, Nick, writes books
about travel. Nick and the three kids are on
a road trip around the country. At each stop
on the trip, the kids find a mystery.*

Can the Road Trip Detectives solve it?

CHAPTER 1

Trouble at the Sea Center

Grace Makris and her brother, Luke, were on a road trip. Their dad, Nick, was driving their truck. Their friend David Delgado was also with them. Grace was 14 years old. Luke was 12. David was 13.

Nick drove them all over the country. He wrote books about interesting places to visit. People read the books to learn about those places.

Today, Nick and the kids were in a town called Bayport. Bayport was next to the sea. A new sea center was there. There were all kinds of sea animals at the center. Scientists went there to study the animals.

Now, Grace rolled her wheelchair up a ramp. She stopped at a door to the sea center.

“I can’t wait to see the animals,” she said.

“Do you think they have a whale?”
Luke asked.

“We’ll find out,” Nick said. “We’re really lucky that we can visit now. The Bayport Sea Center is not open until next month. We’re some of the first people to go inside.”

“Thank you for taking us here, Mr. Makris,” David said.

“You’re welcome,” Nick said.

A woman was waiting inside. She said, “Hello! I’m Tess Hill. Welcome to the Bayport Sea Center.”

“Are you a scientist?” Grace asked. “I’d like to be a scientist.”

“I am,” Tess said. “I’m also the director of the center. I study sea mammals.”

“Whales and otters are sea mammals,”
Grace told Luke and David.

“Is there a whale?” Luke asked. “I really

want to see a whale!”

“Calm down, Luke,” Nick said. “Let Tess show us.”

“It’s all right,” Tess said, smiling. “We do have a whale. Come on.”

They all walked down a hall. Then they went into a room with two huge tanks. The tanks were filled with water. There was a big white animal in one tank. The tank was set into the wall. The kids could see that the back of the tank went outside.

“This white whale is called Bella,” Tess said. “Whales like her live in the Arctic Ocean. But Bella got sick. She was found on a beach. We built a huge pool for her. Her tank is partly outside so she has more room to swim. She’s much better now.”

Luke heard noises in the tank. The noises sounded like chirps and squeaks. “Is that Bella?” he asked.



*“This white whale is called Bella,” Tess said.
“Whales like her live in the Arctic Ocean.”*

“Yes,” Tess said. “Whales talk with those sounds.” She smiled. “Some day, we hope to learn what she’s saying.”

“Maybe she wants food,” Luke said.

“You’re the one who always thinks about food!” Grace said.

Tess smiled again. “Oh, she gets lots of food.”

“Is that an octopus over there?” David asked, pointing at the other tank.

“It sure is!” Tess said.

“Wow!” David said. “It’s huge!”

“This is Max,” Tess said. “Max is a giant Pacific octopus.”

“How big is he?” Luke asked.

“He’s about 15 feet across,” Tess said. “That includes his arms. But some of these guys can get much bigger. The largest giant Pacific octopus was 30 feet across! It weighed about 600 pounds. They’re about as smart

as a three-year-old person.”

Tess showed them many different sea animals on the tour. The center had jellyfish. It had penguins. It had starfish.

“But the sea otters are my favorite animals here,” Tess said. She pointed at the otters playing in the water. “These are Mel and Jeff,” she said. “Almost all sea otters live in the water near Alaska. They can dive as deep as 250 feet to find food.”

“Cool!” Luke said.

“Tess, this is great,” Nick said. “But we should let you get back to work.”

“Yes, we have plenty to do before the center opens,” she said. “And we have to try to get rid of our ghost.”

“Ghost?” Grace said with surprise.

Tess laughed. “I don’t think it’s a ghost. But some days when I come to work, the lights are on. I also find papers on the floor.

I know we turn the lights off when we leave the center.”

“Is anything missing?” David asked.

“No,” Tess said.

“Does the center have video cameras?”

Luke asked.

“Only at the front door,” Tess said. “We’ll have more soon. Then maybe we will know what is going on.”

Nick and the kids thanked Tess and went back to the truck.

“Do you really think they have a ghost?”

Luke asked Grace.

“I don’t know,” Grace said. “But I’d like to find out.”

CHAPTER 2

The Third Leg

Nick drove to their hotel. Grace did not say anything. “What are you thinking about?” Nick asked.

“About the ghost,” Grace said.

“I think it’s cool that there could be a ghost!” Luke said.

“I’m sure it’s not a ghost,” Nick said.

“Me, too,” Grace said.

“But someone has been inside the sea center at night,” David said.

“Right,” Grace said. “But who?”

“Maybe Tess will show us the front-door video,” David said. “Maybe we can see something.”

“Dad, will you call her and ask?” Grace said.

“OK, Grace,” Nick said. “I’ll call her tomorrow.”

The next day, Nick talked to Tess. She agreed to let the kids look at the video. Nick drove them to the sea center. Tess led the kids into a room next to her office. The room had a TV screen and a computer.

“I’ve looked at these videos a few times,” Tess said. “I’ve never seen anything strange. There *are* three people in the videos. But we know them all.”

“Who?” Luke asked.

“There are two guards,” said Tess. “Their names are Dawn and Tom. A man named Charlie cleans the center. He leaves around nine.”

“Who spends the most time inside?” Grace asked.

“That’s Dawn. She’s here every night except on the weekend. We trust her.” Tess

started a video. “See? There she is.”

The screen showed Dawn at the front door. Then it showed her going inside the center.

“What about Tom?” Grace asked.

“He’s my cousin,” Tess said. “He only comes on the weekends.”

“Did they ever see anyone around at night?” David asked.

“No one,” Tess said.

“What a mystery this is!” Grace said.

Then Tess said, “I have some work to do in my office. You can watch more of the videos. Let me know if you need me.”

The kids sat close to the TV screen. They watched several nights of video from the front-door camera. Each night, they saw Dawn walk to the door and go inside.

Then David jumped up. “Stop the video!” he said.



*The kids watched several nights of video
from the front-door camera.*

Luke hit the stop button.

“Play it again,” David said.

Luke played the video again. David said, “Stop!” He pointed to the TV screen. It showed Dawn walking into the center. “What does that look like?” David asked.

“I don’t see anything,” Luke said.

David said, “Look at Dawn’s legs.”

“I see another leg!” Grace said, pointing.

David hit a button to zoom in on the picture. “It *is* a third leg,” he said.

“Did Dawn bring someone into the center?” Grace asked. “Luke, would you please get Tess?”

Tess came back into the room. Grace told Tess about the leg. “See for yourself,” she said. David pointed to the screen.

“I guess that could be a leg,” Tess said. “But it’s hard to tell. I don’t know why Dawn would bring someone into the center. She

knows she can't do that.”

“Can we talk to Dawn?” Grace asked.

“She'll be here tonight at eight,” Tess said. “Why don't you come back then? I'll ask her some questions. You can listen, if it's OK with her.”

Grace called Nick on her cell phone. She told him about the video. She hung up and said to Tess, “We'll be here tonight.”

CHAPTER 3

The Wet Floor

Nick picked up the kids at the sea center. They drove to the beach.

“Do you think we’ll see any whales?” David asked.

“Maybe one will come onto the beach and eat Grace,” Luke said.

“Luke, be nice to your sister,” Nick said.

“Whales don’t eat people,” Grace said.

“I know that. I’m just kidding,” Luke said, grinning.

After the beach, Nick took them all out to dinner. Then he dropped the kids off at the sea center. Tess was waiting by the door.

“Dawn is inside,” Tess said.

The kids went in. Dawn was sitting at a table. She looked at Grace. “I know you

have some questions,” she said. “You like to solve mysteries?”

“We try,” Grace said.

Tess sat across from Dawn. She asked, “When you’re inside here, have you ever seen anyone outside?”

“No,” Dawn said. “Sometimes, Charlie is inside the center when I get here. He cleans the place and then he leaves. He always turns off the lights when he’s done cleaning a room.”

“You’ve never heard strange noises?” Grace asked.

“Just that whale talking,” Dawn said.

“And you never saw any papers on the floor?” Grace asked.

“No,” Dawn said.

“We want to show you a video,” Tess said. “It’s from the camera by the front door.” They all went into the room with the TV



Tess asked, “When you’re inside here, have you ever seen anyone outside?”