

CHAPTER SAMPLER

LARK

GOES THE DISTANCE



NATASHA DEEN

Illustrated by MARCUS CUTLER

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Summary: In this illustrated early chapter book, super sleuths Lark and Connor Ba must investigate a threatening note and stolen watch while they are helping set up for the Run in the Sun fundraiser.

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Lark Takes a Bow

Lark and the Dessert Disaster

Lark Has the Shivers

Lark Steals the Show



Chapter One

My name is Lark Ba, and I'm going the extra mile. Not really. I'm lying in my bed, and it's too early to go anywhere. Going the extra mile is something my halmoni—that's Korean for grandmother—says. It means giving an extra effort when completing a task. I'm not doing that yet—but I *will* be.

I woke up early because I am excited. Tomorrow is the Run in the Sun Obstacle Race at the park. Mr. Suzuki, the director of the animal shelter,

organized it to raise money for homeless animals. Participants in the race must run one mile and overcome different ~~obstickles~~ ~~ostackaels~~ obstacles.

My little brother, Connor, and I aren't in it, but our friend Kate is participating. Connor and I have been creating signs to cheer her on. A couple of our other friends, Sophie and Franklin, are ~~dezining~~ ~~deezhing~~ designing T-shirts for us to wear. Plus, we are all bringing pet food to donate to the shelter. All of us are going the extra mile in our own way.

Connor was still sleeping. I quietly crawled out of the top bunk and headed to the kitchen. I covered the table with a cloth so it wouldn't get messy and got my art supplies.

"What are you doing?" Connor asked when he came into the kitchen. Max, our dog, was beside him.

“I wanted to add some more glitter to the signs, and I had an idea for another one,” I said. “I’m sorry if I woke you. I was trying to be quiet.”

Connor sat down. “You can never be quiet, but it’s nice you’re trying. What’s your new idea for the sign?”

Max yawned, and I scratched his head. “We should stand at the start of the run and hold up this sign that says *It’s just a s-mile!*” I showed him my piece of paper.

“That’s cute,” he said, “but you mixed up some of the letters. It’s *s-m-i-l-e*, not *s-m-e-i-l*.”

Oops. I’m dyslexic, so sometimes that happens.

Connor helped me correct my spelling. While Max slept under the table, Connor and I worked on the sign. I reached for the jar of rainbow glitter. The bottle was empty.



“There’s some more in the cupboard,” Connor said.

“I can get it,” I told him. The glitter was hard to find, though. I finally saw it behind a big bottle of glue. “I don’t remember it being there.”

“Maybe Mom or Dad moved it,” said Connor. “That looks heavy. Do you want me to help?”

“I’m older,” I said. “I should do this.”

Connor rolled his eyes. “We’re twins. Anyway, I’m taller.”

“That’s a good point.” I stepped out of the way.

Connor tugged on the bottle. “Some glue must have spilled. The bottle’s stuck!”

“Let’s both pull,” I said. We must have been really good at tugging, because the bottle came free. Then it flew out of our hands and sailed into the air. It hit the floor, bounced, then rolled under the table.



Max jumped up and started barking at the bottle.

Down the hallway, a door opened, and footsteps sounded.

“It sounds like we woke Dad,” Connor whispered.

Uh-oh.



Chapter Two

Luckily, it wasn't Dad who came into the kitchen. It was Halmoni. She's Dad's mom, and she never gets grumpy with us. I think this is amazing because Connor sometimes brings out the grumps in me!

"Goodness, what happened?" she asked as Max ran into her arms.

I explained about the glue and glitter.

Connor crouched under the table and got the bottle. “Whew!” he said. “Nothing spilled.”

“All that work must make you hungry,” said Halmoni. “How about some confetti waffles for breakfast?”

We helped, and when the waffles came out, they were delicious! All fluffy and perfect, with whipped cream. We woke up Mom and Dad so they could have breakfast with us before they left for work. Mom brought her computer so that Babu—that’s Swahili for *grandfather*—could join us. Babu is Mom’s dad. He’s in Kenya studying elephants.

“How are the mysteries?” Babu asked as we ate. “Any new ones since I last visited?”

This summer Connor and I became P.I.s—that’s short for private investigators.

“We haven’t had any cases in a while,” said Connor. “My favorite one was when our friend



Sophie entered a baking contest. Someone destroyed her entry! We discovered who did it.”

Hearing Connor call Sophie *our* friend made me really happy. Sophie is my best friend, but she and Connor didn’t always get along. Now they’re such good friends, they even have nicknames for each other.

“I bet something will come up,” said Babu. “You two are magnets for mysteries.”

Mom, Dad and Halmoni laughed. I didn’t understand how Connor and I were magnets. But since the grown-ups were laughing, I laughed too.

“Hold on, Lark,” Mom said as I reached for another waffle. “You’ve had three. Halmoni’s only had one. Do you know what that means?”

“She should eat faster?” I said.

Mom sighed, and Dad looked at the ceiling.

“Just kidding,” I said. I placed the waffle on Halmoni’s plate.

“Food tastes better when it’s shared,” said Halmoni. She split her waffle into three for me, herself and Connor.

After we finished our breakfast and cleaned up, Mom and Dad got ready for work. Connor and I took Max for a walk with Halmoni. A storm had come through the night before, which he didn’t like because thunder scares him. But it had left lots of branches on the ground. Max loves sticks!



“Tell me more about this event we’re going to tomorrow. Is Kate very excited?” asked Halmoni.

“Kate loves anything sporty,” Connor said. “Plus, it’s helping raise money for the animal shelter. That’s where we got you,” he said, bending to rub Max’s ears. “And that’s where Kate got her cat, Solomon. So Kate really wants to help them.”

“Kate’s been training a lot,” I told Halmoni.

“She has to complete a mile-long run, a climbing wall, hanging rings and a tire obstacle course,” said Connor.

“Wow, no wonder she’s been training so hard,” said Halmoni. “That’s a lot!”

When we got back home, Franklin and Sophie were waiting for us.

“Hello, Lark Sheep and Connor Wool,” said Sophie.

“Hello, Sophie Sofa,” said Connor.

“Interesting nicknames,” said Halmoni. “I understand Lark’s because Ba is your last name and it’s the sound sheep make. But I don’t understand ‘Connor Wool’ and ‘Sophie Sofa.’”

“*Sophie* and *sofa* sound alike,” said Connor.

“And Connor is warm, like wool,” said Sophie.

“Ah,” said Halmoni. “Thank you for explaining it to me.”

Connor pointed at the bag in Franklin’s hand.

“Is that what I think it is?”



“Yes! We have the shirts!” He took one out and held it up.

“This is gorgeous!” said Halmoni. “What a great job the two of you did!”

She was right. Franklin and Sophie had drawn Kate crossing the finish line, with Solomon racing beside her.

“We made enough for everyone,” said Sophie.

“I heard the event could use some help,” Franklin said. “Last night’s storm brought down a bunch of trees and branches. Mr. Suzuki needs help to clear the course.”

Sophie nodded. “We stopped by to see if you want to come with us.”

“Is that okay, Halmoni?” I asked.

She nodded. “I’m sure they could use all the help they can get.”

After Halmoni made sure that Max was settled and I'd gotten a bag of pet food for the shelter, we headed out.

Even though we didn't have a mystery, I was excited to help with the event. Today was going to be the bestest day ever!