



## *Peeled* by Joan Bauer

**Subjects:** Reporters and reporting—Juvenile fiction; Journalism—Juvenile fiction; Farm life—New York (State)—Juvenile fiction; Haunted houses—Juvenile fiction; High schools—Juvenile fiction

**Book List:** North America

**Props:** Pencil behind ear, tablet



*(Begin with pencil behind ear, tablet in hand)* I'm Hildy Biddle, reporter at large, eager to stand for the truth, to get the scope, to break the big story. But right now I must be content to stand in front of Frankie's Funny Fun Mirrors. I'm watching them stretch my legs and elongate my neck and head. I'm covering the Apple Blossom Festival for my high school newspaper. It's called *The Core*. My editor and fellow student, Darrell, had said, "Stay on the festival, Hildy. It could be big. Bigger than big. I want the story behind the story." He always says that.

But although I'm desperate for a big story, the only interesting thing about the festival is a very sick Bonnie Sue. Bonnie Sue is to be crowned the Apple Blossom Queen at 10AM this morning. But I found her yesterday throwing up in the school cafeteria. If she is too sick to accept her crown, the runner up will be crowned instead. This could be quite an upset, "a cliffhanger" Darrell had said. However, Mrs. Perth, the festival coordinator and the secretary in the high school's front office had kicked us out of the cafeteria and slammed the door in our face. According to Mrs. Perth, and I quote, *(Refer to tablet)* "You can't report on Bonnie Sue. The Apple Blossom Festival is about the hope of the harvest yet to come. It is the symbol of unbridled joy and farm-fresh produce. We wouldn't want that symbol to be tarnished in any way, would we?"

I understand Mrs. Perth's point of view, really I do, but if the Apple Blossom Festival's queen is sick, the folks of my small town, Banessville, deserve to know. After all, Banessville is an upstate New York orchard-growing community where apples are our livelihood and the core of our existence. The festival queen is big news indeed.

Well I thought the queen was big news. But then there was the break in at the Old Ludlow house and I knew it could be my big break, my big story. Darrell, my editor, called me and told me to get to the old Ludlow house immediately. As soon as I arrived, I started to take notes and ask questions. The sheriff would only say, *(Refer to tablet)* "We'll be issuing a statement. There's nothing to see. Everyone go home." But then I heard a voice behind me. *(Use an old man's voice)* "If you ask me, old man Ludlow's ghost is making his presence known." I turned and asked the man why he had said that. He replied, "You got two mysterious deaths that happened here thirty years ago. Everyone figures the old man did it. The ghosts in this place aren't happy, not one bit." A woman in a bathrobe added, *(Use a female voice)* "Don't forget poor little Sallie Miner. Remember, five years ago, a tree branch crashed in front of her as she rode her little bicycle past that house. That tree branch hurled her into the street in front of an SUV. She died three days later. But remember what she told folks before she died? She said she had seen an old man laughing in the Ludlow house window. Now you all know that house has been abandoned for years." *(Go back to using your original voice)* A break-in, ghosts, people being killed. Something is definitely going on at the Old Ludlow House, but what? Well it is a good thing for my town of Banessville that I'm here, because I'm going to get to the bottom of this. *(Put down tablet and pencil)*

As Hildy unpeels the mystery, she and her fellow reporters will discover that one bad apple can truly spoil a town forever. Will Hildy be able to stand for the truth and save her town? *(Hold up book)* Read *Peeled* by Joan Bauer.

