

The View from the Cherry Tree by Willow Davis Roberts

Subject: Mystery and detective stories—Fiction

Book Lists: Grade 6, Reluctant Readers

Props: Binoculars, cat

J

11-year-old Rob Mallory was absolutely disgusted with his family. His oldest sister, Darcy, was getting married in three days. So what? Big deal! But that was all anyone in Rob's family could think about. His mother didn't have time for ordinary things like cooking. Lately, Rob had almost starved before he got a meal. The only thing his mother had said to him that day was, "Change the sheets on your bed, get out your sleeping bag, you're on the floor tonight, get your spiders out of the house and keep (*Bring out cat*) the cat out of the way or I'll send him to a kennel."

The cat had gotten in trouble yesterday and his mom was still mad. Old Lady Callaway, who lived next door, had called the police just because the cat had jumped through her window and eaten her goldfish. The window had been open, after all. What was a cat supposed to do? (*Put cat down*)

Anyway, Old Lady Calloway was just mean and nasty. (*Put on binoculars*) She wore binoculars around her neck so that she could spot everything that happened in the neighborhood. (*Survey with binoculars*) She had a room on her top floor where she spent hours of time snooping. If you so much as stepped foot on her grass, she called the cops.

Rob decided that the best thing for him and the cat (*Grab cat*) to do on that day was to get out of everyone's way. So, loaded up with a peanut butter sandwich, and a soda, he and the cat climbed into the cherry tree. The cherry tree was Rob's tree and his favorite place, even though it was very close to Old Lady Calloway's house and overlooked the window that the cat had jumped through. (*Put cat down*)

Actually, Rob didn't mind that it was close to her house. It was fun for Rob to spy and play tricks on her. In the branches of the cherry tree, he was completely hidden. On this day he decided to pick some cherries, eat them, and spit the pits onto Old Lady Calloway's window sill. When Old Lady Calloway saw the pits, she couldn't figure out how they had gotten there. She came up to the window to brush them off. That's when Rob noticed that she was arguing with someone. Rob couldn't see the other person but suddenly an arm appeared and pushed Old Lady Calloway out of the window. Right then the cat (*Show cat jumping*) jumped from the cherry tree through Old Lady Calloway's window and scratched the outstretched arm. Mrs. Calloway fell, (*Pull binocular strap to demonstrate hanging*) the strap of her binoculars caught on a branch of the cherry tree and she hung there . . . looking straight at Rob. Her eyes bulged and she was twitching (*Twitch*)—until suddenly she stopped.

Rob sat there—not moving, hardly breathing. Finally he climbed past her and got the police. She was dead all right and everyone thought it was an accident. Everyone, except Rob and the murderer.

Rob hadn't seen the murderer but he knew he or she was there. Had the murderer seen him? Would he be the next to die? (*Hold up book*) *The View from the Cherry Tree* by Willow Davis Roberts.