



Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf

By Wendelin Van Draanen

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"The most winning junior detective ever in teen lit. (Take that, Nancy Drew!)" —Midwest Children's Book Review

The Christmas parade gets fury in a hurry when three pranksters dressed as wise men toss some cats onto Sammy's float. Dogs shoot off in all directions, and the prize Pomeranian Sammy's supposed to be watching disappears. Turns out the darn fuzzball's been kidnapped. The owner is demanding that Sammy find her doggone dog . . . and she's a woman who knows how to get what she wants.

But Sammy's a pretty tough cookie herself. Dognappers, blackmailers, and wise men be warned!

The Sammy Keyes mysteries are fast-paced, funny, thoroughly modern, and true whodunits. Each mystery is exciting and dramatic, but it's the drama in Sammy's personal life that keeps readers coming back to see what happens next with her love interest Casey, her soap-star mother, and her mysterious father.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Encyclopedia Brown's detective work might be enough to keep small-timers like Bugs Meany and Wilford Wiggins in line, but his hometown of Idaville may as well be Snoozeville compared to strange and surreal Santa Martina, where seventh-grade sharp-witted super-sleuth Sammy Keyes hangs her hat. Sammy doesn't go looking for cases to solve in this town: she's too busy pulling her rear end out of the fire, finding herself in one predicament after another.

In *Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf* (her fourth adventure, following *Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy*), Sammy gets snookered into dog-sitting Marique, a fury, orange, hoop-jumping Pomeranian, one of the 12 dogs-of-the-month riding atop the Canine Calendar Christmas float. But at the height of the parade, Marique disappears just as three people dressed as the Three Kings throw panicked cats onto the dog-laden float. Chaos ensues, and before the fake snow even settles, Sammy finds herself in the center of a dog-napping scheme, blackmailed by Marique's mean-old-lady owner into tracking the little Pom down before she has to pay \$50,000... or else.

It's just another week in Santa Martina, and just another case for Sammy. More clever clues and characterizations from the capable Wendelin Van Draanen, who spins another complex, satisfying, often laugh-out-loud installment in this quirky youth mystery series. *Encyclopedia Brown*'s got it easy. (Ages 9 to 12) --Paul Hughes

From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8-Sammy Keyes, that savvy seventh-grade sleuth, is back in another whodunit adventure. It may be Christmas, but that doesn't mean everybody in Santa Martina plans to be nice. The minute Sammy gets roped into working on the Canine Calendar float in the holiday parade, trouble erupts. The famous calendar cover dog, Marique, is dognapped, and the animal's owner holds the amateur detective responsible for finding her pet before the \$50,000 ransom comes due. However, the teen can't find the creature or many clues. The only thing that turns up is a young elflike girl named Elyssa, who has big problems of her own. Possible suspects and evil motivations abound as the story moves into overdrive. Sammy carefully closes in on the dognappers while at the same time strengthening her newly formed friendships with Elyssa and her grandmother's cranky neighbor. It's not often that 13-year-olds hang around with younger children or visit with senior citizens, and Van Draanen handles the relationships with style and sensitivity. A refreshing, well-rounded character in every sense of the word, Sammy is great fun to spend time with, and her newest adventure is a roller-coaster ride full of twists aplenty.

Linda Bindner, formerly at Athens Clarke County Library, GA

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From [Booklist](#)

Readers of Van Draanen's previous books know that 13-year-old Samantha Keyes is good but not a goody-goody. She has a lot more personality than most junior detectives in novels for this age group, and her varied adventures are usually more complicated and less predictable. That's certainly true in this story, which is set during the Christmas season. Rich Mrs. Landvogt's dog has been kidnapped, little Elyssa Keltner keeps running away from home, Gram's unpleasant neighbor has disappeared, and Sam's obnoxious classmate is up to her old tricks. Of course, Sam makes sense of it all, learning a thing or two about forgiveness in the bargain--which she applies when her estranged mother comes home for the holidays. There's a bit too much going on, and it may take children unfamiliar with the series a few pages to get up to speed with the

characters. But Van Draanen manages to pull things together in an entertaining way, at the same time delivering some nicely drawn secondary characters and a fitting theme that is seasonal but not intrusive.

Stephanie Zvirin

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christina Vallejo:

This Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is actually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. That Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf without we know teach the one who studying it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't be worry Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf can bring when you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even phone. This Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf having excellent arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

James Jones:

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