

Don't Open That Locker

As soon as Nora walked through the front door, she knew there was something terribly wrong with her new school. It wasn't just the fact that a girl had disappeared here last year and never been found; it was the uneasy feeling that something unseen walked beside her!

Students hurried past her, looking for their lockers and classrooms. Nora looked at the sheet she had received at orientation last night with her locker number. She looked at the row of lockers and walked along until she came to the one assigned to her.

She read the numbers of the combination and carefully followed the directions. Nothing happened. She tried again, but the locker wouldn't open.

"Having trouble?" asked a girl at the next locker.

Nora had been so absorbed in trying to open her own locker that she hadn't heard this girl come up.

"Yes," said Nora. "I've followed the instructions twice, but it won't open. I'm going to be late for class."

“Teachers are usually understanding the first day. Lots of kids have problems with their lockers. You’ll get the hang of it,” said the girl.

“Thanks,” Nora said. “I hope it’s soon! By the way, my name is Nora.”

“Hi Nora! My name is Mia.”

Just then the bell sounded for homeroom. Both girls rushed off.

“I’ll see you later,” called Nora.

Mia waved her hand and smiled.

Nora’s homeroom teacher welcomed the class and asked if anyone had any problems. Nora and four other students raised their hands and told him about their locker problems.

“I’ll help you after class,” he offered.

Nora didn’t take him up on his offer to help that morning. She decided to try again on her own after school. She didn’t have too many things to carry around that day, so she really didn’t need to use the locker between classes.

During every class, Nora looked for Mia. She hoped they would have a class or two together, at least. It would be nice to see a friendly face, but Mia was not in any of her classes.

Immediately after school, Nora went down the hall to her locker. Again she followed the directions carefully, but the locker would not open. Frustrated, Nora turned to go, but there stood Mia.

“I am surprised they assigned you that locker,” she said. “They must have run short and had to use it.”

“Why?” asked Nora. “What’s wrong with this locker?”

“Ask your homeroom teacher to show you the security video of this hallway,” said Mia. “You won’t believe what’s on it!”

"What is on it?" asked Nora.

"Something they caught on tape the night after the girl disappeared last year!" she exclaimed.

"What does that have to do with my locker?" asked Nora.

"What they caught on tape was a small ghostly figure that sailed in front of the camera, flew down the hall, and disappeared into this locker!" she said. "Some kids think the locker might be a portal."

"What's a portal?" asked Nora.

"It's an opening between this world and the next," explained Mia. "Something could be waiting in that locker and pull you right into the next world. Some kids think that's what happened to that girl who disappeared last year. They think that is her ghost caught on the security video."

"Oh, come on!" said Nora. "You're just trying to scare me because I'm new here. You made that up!"

"Ask around and you'll see I'm telling the truth," said Mia.

"I will," said Nora. "I'll ask my homeroom teacher in the morning."

"See you tomorrow," said Mia. "I have to go now."

At home that night after dinner, Nora told her mom and dad that she hadn't been able to open her locker yet. She also told them the story Mia had told her.

"I'm sure she was just teasing you," said her dad.

"If your teacher can't help you in the morning with the locker, I'll come over and see what I can do after school," said her mom.

"Is there such a thing as a portal?" Nora asked her parents.

"Some people say so, and there are some theories," her dad told her, "but I'm happy to say that I have never seen one,

and I don't think there is any scientific research that validates portals. Now go finish your homework and get to bed."

Nora was eager to get to school the next morning. She was running late, though, and didn't have time to go to her locker. In homeroom, she raised her hand after attendance was checked and asked if she could ask the class something. The teacher gave her permission, and she asked the class about the girl's disappearance last year and if there was a security video with a ghost going into her locker.

She was surprised that the teacher and students were eager to talk about it.

"Let me show you the movie clip," said the teacher. "It will take just a minute to get it from the library."

He called the library, and a library aide quickly showed up with a DVD copy. It began with a shot of the empty hallway. Then suddenly, a white, ghostly figure flashed by the camera, flew down the hall, and disappeared into Nora's locker!

Nora was stunned. Apparently, Mia had told her the truth about the security video, but what about the portal? Surely there was no such thing as that.

"What does the disappearance of that girl last year have to do with this?" she asked.

"The Goodwin girl was last seen by her locker. It's your locker now. Her body was never found," said one of the students. "Some people think she was pulled into the next world when she opened her locker. Maybe her ghost haunts the school. Maybe that's her on the video."

The bell for first period interrupted the discussion, so Nora found out nothing else that day. After school, she decided to try one more time to open the locker.

Afternoon shadows had begun to fill the hallway. Nora approached her locker and put her backpack down on the hall floor. She was tired of carrying it home and back. She was tired of this nonsense about her locker. This time she was determined to keep trying the combination until she got it open.

She looked at her directions and started to turn the lock. This time it seemed to turn itself. In fact, it opened without any difficulty at all. She pulled open the locker door and hesitated before looking inside. The shadows had deepened, and it was difficult for her to see clearly at first. Then her eyes focused on the back of the locker.

Something about it was not right. The back of her locker looked like it opened into the wall. She blinked and saw someone standing there. It was Mia! How did she get inside the locker?

This must be some kind of joke, she thought. There must be some kind of door leading to a room or another hallway!

“What’s going on?” she asked. “This isn’t funny! What are you doing here?”

“I’m Mia Goodwin, Nora! I’m here to take you to the other side.”

Nora resisted, but Mia was very strong. Nora screamed as she was pulled through the back of the locker into the world beyond! Her screams reached a deserted hallway that was completely filled with shadows now.

When Nora didn’t come home, her parents called the school and then the police. An extensive search over the next several months turned up nothing. There was no evidence of any foul play and no clues about her disappearance.

When the search was discontinued, the homeroom students asked the teacher if they could see the tape again. He

requested a copy from the library, but as soon as the DVD started, they all felt something was wrong. The image had somehow been altered. It started out showing the empty hallway, but this time not one, but two ghostly figures flew by the camera, down the hall, and right into Nora's locker.

The homeroom teacher vowed silently to make sure that this particular locker would be taken out of use immediately. No other student should ever open that locker again!