

**Stop
Here!**

Discussion Questions

1. How many puppies have been dog-napped? What makes them so special?
2. Can you name the three main suspects? What reason might each one have to take the puppies?
3. Which character do you think Annie is speaking to when she says, “I’ve been expecting you”? Who do you think the crook is?
4. Talk about possible ways this story could end. Can you predict what will happen?

OKAY! Now keep reading to see if you were right.

Getting to her feet, Annie kept the flashlight pointed at the shopkeeper. “Good evening, Ms. Sellunow.”

Looking surprised, Ms. Sellunow froze next to the bluecoats’ cage. She stammered, “I just came here . . .”

“To steal another animal?” Annie finished for her.

“You think I’m the bad guy?” Ms. Sellunow started sobbing—again. “Why would I steal my own bluecoat puppies?”

“Because you never had them,” Annie said, not buying the woman’s crocodile tears.

The plump woman pretended to be shocked. “You saw them with your own eyes! Look, there’s one now!” Ms. Sellunow pointed at the blue fur ball in the cage.

Annie shook her head. “That isn’t a bluecoat. It’s a mutt. You used blue dye to make the mutts look like bluecoats. Then you sold the fake puppies to make some quick money.”

“Money?” Ms. Sellunow cried. “I don’t care about money!”

“You say that, but you’re covered in gold and silver jewelry,” Annie said, gesturing to the woman’s rings and bracelets. Ms. Sellunow didn’t bother arguing.

“You knew that if the puppies went home with Mrs. Gotrocks, she would

learn the truth,” Annie continued. “But you wouldn’t have to give the money back if the puppies were stolen first. So you hired me to make your dog-napping story more believable.”

“But you know the real story, do you?” the woman said, rubbing her eyes.

“That’s right,” Annie said. “The past two nights you came in here and took one of the phony puppies out of the bluecoats’ cage and washed off the blue dye.” Annie flashed her light on the sink used to bathe the animals and then back on Ms. Sellunow. “That’s why I dreamt about running water—I heard the sound from the faucet even though I was asleep.”

“I think you’re still dreaming, dear,” Ms. Sellunow said sarcastically. “I don’t have to listen to this.”

Before she could walk away, Annie stopped her. “There’s more. At some point, the bluecoat female bit off a piece of the handkerchief you used to dry the mutt. I found the cloth in her mouth, and I’d bet it would perfectly match your handkerchief.”

Mrs. Sellunow threw up her hands in disbelief. “And where did I stash this squeaky-clean mutt?”

“In with the other mutts, of course,” Annie answered. “This morning I noticed there were four mutts in that cage. But according to this sign, there should only be three.” Annie held up the paper that read: *Three Mutt Puppies for Sale! Get Them CHEAP!* “The extra mutt is the one you washed off and put in with the others last night.”

Suddenly, all the fake sadness drained out of Ms. Sellunow’s face. She looked like an angry, cornered animal ready to pounce. “So what if you’re right?” she hissed. “No one is going to believe *you*.”

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that,” Annie said.

That was when Tater stepped out of the shadows where Annie had asked him to watch and listen. “I believe Annie,” he told Ms. Sellunow. “We’re going to call the police, and you’re going to give back Mrs. Gotrocks’ money.”

Ms. Sellunow seemed to realize she was caught. “Oh, no,” she whined, and slumped against the wall. She started sobbing, and for the first time Annie thought there were real tears.

“Are you going to lose your job?” Annie asked Tater, worried about his future.

Tater smiled. “Actually, this is my store. Ms. Sellunow just worked here. And, guess what, Ms. Sellunow?” he asked, popping a dog biscuit into his mouth. “You’re fired.”