

***Third-Grade Detectives #2: The Puzzle of the Pretty Pink Handkerchief,***  
**by George E. Stanley**

“We’re hungry, Grandma,” Todd said. “Did you bake me some cookies last night?”

“Don’t I always?” his grandmother said.

Todd grinned.

Noelle called her mother to tell her where she was.

Todd’s grandmother poured two glasses of milk and put the cookie platter in the center of the table.

“Can we eat in your tree house?” Noelle whispered.

“That’s a great idea,” Todd said. “I haven’t been up there since last summer.”

His grandmother put their milk in plastic cups.

She put their cookies in a plastic bag.

Then Todd and Noelle headed out the back door to the tree house.

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Todd held the milk and cookies with one hand.

He used his other hand to climb up the rope ladder.

Noelle was right behind him.

When they were both inside the tree house, Todd said, “Where’d that come from?” He picked up a pink handkerchief.

“You probably left it here last summer,” Noelle said.

“I don’t use pink handkerchiefs, Noelle,” Todd said. “Somebody else has been up here.”

He held up the pink handkerchief to the light.

“Well, it’s obviously been here for ages,” Noelle said. “It’s filthy.”

“It looks like it has earwax on it,” Todd said.

Noelle looked closely. “Hey! Maybe that’ll tell us whose handkerchief it is.”

“That’s no clue. All earwax looks the same,” Todd said. He pointed to a corner of the pink handkerchief. “Here’s the clue. ‘JPJ.’ That’s someone’s initials.”

“Who’s JPJ?” Noelle asked.

“That’s the mystery we have to solve,” Todd said.

Todd and Noelle finished their milk and cookies.

Then Noelle went home.

Todd went to his room.

He put the pink handkerchief inside a plastic bag and laid it on top of his dresser.

He’d take it to school tomorrow.

He’d show it to Mr. Merlin.

The Third-Grade Detectives now had a new mystery to solve.

*Who left the pink handkerchief in Todd’s tree house?*