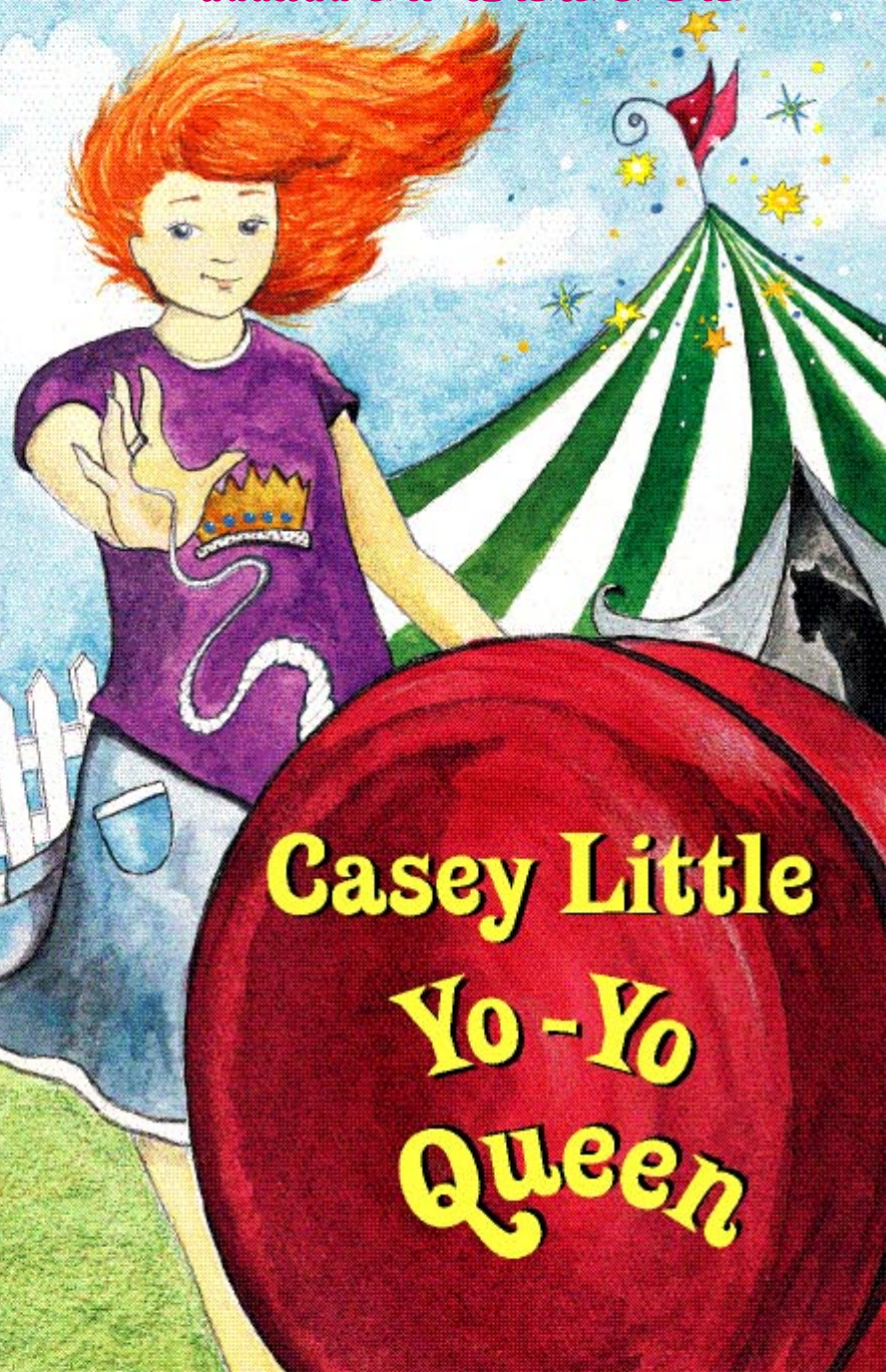


NANCY BELGUE



**Casey Little
Yo-Yo
Queen**

o r c a y o u n g r e a d e r s



Casey flattened herself against the side of the house. “Shhh!” she said. She beckoned to Mickey.

He crept forward.

“Look!” Casey said.

Mickey craned his neck around Casey’s shoulder and stared.

A big striped tent filled Mrs. Lombardi’s backyard.

Casey and Mickey stared so hard at the tent they didn’t even hear the footsteps.

A shadow snaked over them and onto the grass.

“Hello, children,” said a mysterious voice.

To buy the horse that she loves, Casey needs a lot of money, fast. Will she be able to overcome her fear to win it?

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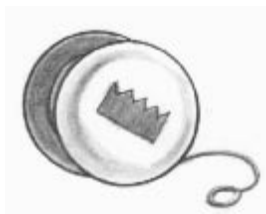
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Chapter 1

“You won’t believe what I just saw!” Casey Little whispered to her best friend, Mickey.

Mickey slouched down under his spy hat and went on dusting his kitchen table for fingerprints. He grunted.

“Stop fooling around, Mickey,” Casey said, nudging him with her elbow. “Come here and look!”

“I’m not fooling around,” Mickey said, looking up from his notepad. “I’m finding out who ate the last donut.” He pointed to the plate, sprinkled with chocolate crumbs and fingerprint dust. “I was saving that donut for lunch!”

“Forget the donut. The new neighbor just had a pinball machine delivered to her house.”

“Sure. And I just did a Nollie 360 kick-flip.”

“No, really. The delivery men are just leaving.”

Casey pulled Mickey’s sleeve. He came over to the window. A big truck was pulling away from the house across the street. *Phil’s Vending Machines* was written in bright red letters on its side.

Across the street, Mrs. Lombardi’s house sat smugly in the sun. The curtains were drawn.

As Casey and Mickey watched, the lawn sprinklers sputtered to life, filling the yard with tiny rainbows.

“What would an old lady like that want with a pinball machine?” Casey asked.

Mickey shrugged. “We could spy on her and find out.”

Casey shook her head. “Maybe she’s trying to attract kids into her house so she can eat them!”

Mickey smiled. "I don't think so. I heard my mom tell my dad that Mrs. Lombardi's a vegetarian."

"Your mom talked to her?" Casey turned to Mickey, her eyes wide. "I didn't think anyone had ever seen her."

"Sure. My mom knocked on her door the day she moved in." Mickey had gone back to studying the empty plate. "I think my brother, Felix, ate the donut," he said at last.

"Are those his fingerprints?" Casey asked, peering at the plate and forgetting Mrs. Lombardi for a minute.

Mickey shook his head and pointed out the back window. Felix was pedaling his tricycle up and down the driveway. Chocolate was smeared from one end of his mouth to the other.

"Good detective work, Mickey," Casey said.

"There's more than one kind of evidence, you know," Mickey said indignantly. "Sometimes all the proof you need is right in front of your eyes."

Mickey's mother poked her head in the back door. "I'm taking Felix to the park. Do you want to come?" Mickey folded up his fingerprint kit and nodded.

"What about you, Casey?" asked Mrs. Mitchell.

Casey shook her head. "I've got work to do."

Mrs. Mitchell smiled. "How many have you got on your list this week, Casey?"

"Three," Casey said proudly. "Mrs. Richardson's dog, the Singhs' fish and the Littlejohns' snakes."

"How's your horse fund coming along?"

"I have three hundred dollars saved already. Only one thousand two hundred dollars to go!" Casey was saving all her money to buy Lightning, her favorite horse. The riding stable where Casey rode was being sold because the owner was retiring. Casey had worked really hard all summer to save three hundred dollars.

"That's amazing. Well, come on then,

boys.” Mrs. Mitchell bustled around the kitchen, throwing snacks into a canvas sack.

“Notice anything missing?” Mickey asked his mother, staring at the empty plate.

Mrs. Mitchell patted Mickey on the head. “No, dear.”

“The donut?”

Mrs. Mitchell smiled. “Did Felix get it?”

“It’s not funny, Mom.”

Casey could still hear Mickey complaining as he followed his mother and brother down the street. She stood for a minute, then checked her pocket for the keys. She had each family’s key on a separate ring, labeled with their name. She would start with the Singh house. Casey fished out the Singhs’ house key and crossed the street, still staring at Mrs. Lombardi’s.

She let herself in the back door, just the way Mrs. Singh had showed her. Casey had started her pet-sitting business in the spring. At first her mom had thought that ten was too young to take