To Katie and Ty—thank you for getting me addicted to lateral thinking puzzles. And to Kristin—thank you for your encouragement and inspiration.

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To Vicki and Christy—you constantly help me figure out the mysteries of life.

Sandy

## Contents

**Introduction** .............................................. 7

**Time to Think** ............................... 9
1 When Time Stands Still
2 Lunch Time
3 Egg Timer
4 Timeless
5 Got the Time?

**On the Case** ................................. 17
6 Primary Evidence
7 The Hotel Guest
8 Women’s Intuition
9 T-Shirt Trouble
10 The Missing Socks
11 The Deductive Neighbor
12 Lost and Found
13 The Hotel Thief
14 Filthy Rich

**Sleep on It** ................................. 29
15 The Early Bird
16 The Failed Prank
17 Siesta and Fiesta
18 Unfamiliar Surroundings
19 New Year’s News
20 Sheepless in Seattle
21 Rise and Shine…or Not

**Call Me with the Answer** ........................ 39
22 First Date
23 Unknown Caller
24 Seven Digits
25 What Is Your Emergency?
26 Whom Shall I Say Is Calling?

**Criminal Puzzlement** .......... 47
27 A Dog’s Life
28 The Intruder
29 In for Questioning
30 The Tidy Crook
31 The Witty Cop
32 Robbed Again?
33 Sixth Sense
34 The Unsafe Safe
35 The Cheap Fix
36 Joy Ride
37 Quick Thinking
38 Above the Law?
39 Autograph Snatcher
40 Not So Safe

**For the Road** ................................. 63
41 Homeward Bound
42 Running on Empty
43 Stuck in Traffic
44 Choosing Sides
45 Weather to Forget
46 Seeing Is Believing
47 Pulled Over for No Reason?
48 The New Sound System
49 Fast-Food Freakishness
50 Windshield Wipers Won't Work?
51 Green Light, Red Light
52 Locked Road
53 The Long Way Home

For a Price ..................... 79
54 The Inheritance
55 The Costly Item
56 Two of a Kind
57 Buyer's Remorse
58 The Right Bank
59 The Rare Book
60 One Person's Junk…
61 Underpaid?

Puzzling Behavior ........... 89
62 Is It a Miracle?
63 Always Be Prepared
64 Scared Silly
65 If the Shoe Fits
66 Trouble at Work
67 That's Unheard Of
68 A Passing Failure
69 No Mulligan?
70 For Sale Fib
71 Sudden Outburst
72 What Not to Do
73 The Forgotten Gift

Clever Thinkers ............... 103
74 A Needle in a Haystack
75 A Key Solution
76 Who's There?
77 It's Not Polite to Stare
78 All in a Name

Puzzling Situations ........... 111
79 The New Girl
80 Teacher's Pet
81 Special Delivery
82 Playing Hooky
83 All Trick and No Treat
84 Blind Date
85 The Invisible Girl
86 More or Less?
87 Fleeting Interest
88 Art for the Ages
89 Losing with Style
90 Mirror, Mirror
91 Puzzle Puzzle
92 Artistic License
93 The House Painter
94 Water Rules
95 Lucky Bug
96 Power Outage
97 A Case of Amnesia?
98 Good Advice
99 Bad Hair Day
100 When It Rains, It Pours

Clues .................................. 135

Solutions ............................. 157
INTRODUCTION

What Are One-Minute Mysteries?

These short mysteries, also known as lateral thinking puzzles, are often used in groups as an interactive game. Each puzzle describes an unusual scenario, and it is up to you and your friends to figure out what is going on. Although it is possible to come up with many answers that seem to solve the puzzle, the challenge is to find the solution that matches the one in the back of the book. Each mystery takes less than a minute to read, and then you can take your time and enjoy the sleuthing process.

How Do I Solve Them?

These puzzles do not provide you with enough information to find the solution, but you can fill in the gaps by asking yes-or-no questions. The process is similar to the game of 20 questions, but instead of finding the identity of a thing, you solve a mystery. You’ll need one other person in order to enjoy these puzzles to the fullest, and the more people, the better! Choose one person to be the case master. This person reads a puzzle aloud and privately consults the answer in the back of the book. All other players are the detectives. They take turns posing questions to the case master, who can respond by saying yes or no or something like “That doesn’t matter” or “Rephrase your question.” The case master provides clues from the back of the book as needed. The game is won when someone figures out the key to the solution. It isn’t necessary to recite the entire solution, but only to figure out the part that explains what is puzzling.
What Else Do I Need To Know?

Start by asking big-picture questions. You will be tempted to jump right in and guess the answer, but you will most likely be wrong. Give yourself something to build on by asking questions like these: Is the location important? Is anyone else involved? Could this happen to me? As you figure out what is going on, you can ask more specific questions. Also, ask completely random and off-the-wall questions. Think laterally—that is, think creatively or outside the box. If you have exhausted all the obvious possibilities and don’t know where else to go, use your imagination and view the problem from a new perspective.

Eliminate red herrings and always check your assumptions. Look at each element of the puzzle and ask if it is important, and then focus on the details that matter. If a puzzle doesn’t come right out and say something, don’t assume it to be true. If the case master can’t answer one of your questions with a yes or no but instead tells you to rephrase your question, you are probably assuming something.

If you decide to investigate these mysteries on your own, the clues section will serve as your guide. If you have a hunch of what the solution is, before looking at the answer, first examine the clues to see if you are on the right track. Some of the clues will surprise you! Once you have read all of the clues, your goal is to come up with a satisfying solution that fits all the constraints of the mystery and clues.

Oh—one last thing. Don’t let the illustrations mislead you. They generally depict humorous but incorrect assumptions and are purely for your viewing enjoyment. Now put on your sleuthing caps and get on the case!
1.

**When Time Stands Still**

As a burglar reaches for something on the mantel, he accidentally knocks over a clock. It falls to the floor, breaks, and stops. The next morning, however, police aren’t able to determine what time the robbery took place. Why not?
2.

**Lunch Time**

Robbie goes into a restaurant and orders a deli sandwich and a cola for lunch. Afterward, he pays his bill, tips his waitress, and goes outside. He slowly takes in his surroundings. The sky is black and the city streets are deserted.

What happened?
Egg Timer

Hard-boiling an egg takes approximately ten minutes, but it isn’t always as simple as that. Many factors can alter the time it takes. For example, in different parts of the world, hard-boiling an egg can take up to forty minutes. Why?
4. **Timeless**

A man is looking at a clock that displays the correct time, but he doesn’t know what time it is. Why not?
5.

Got the Time?

Why does a secret agent check the time of day every time he finishes a phone call?