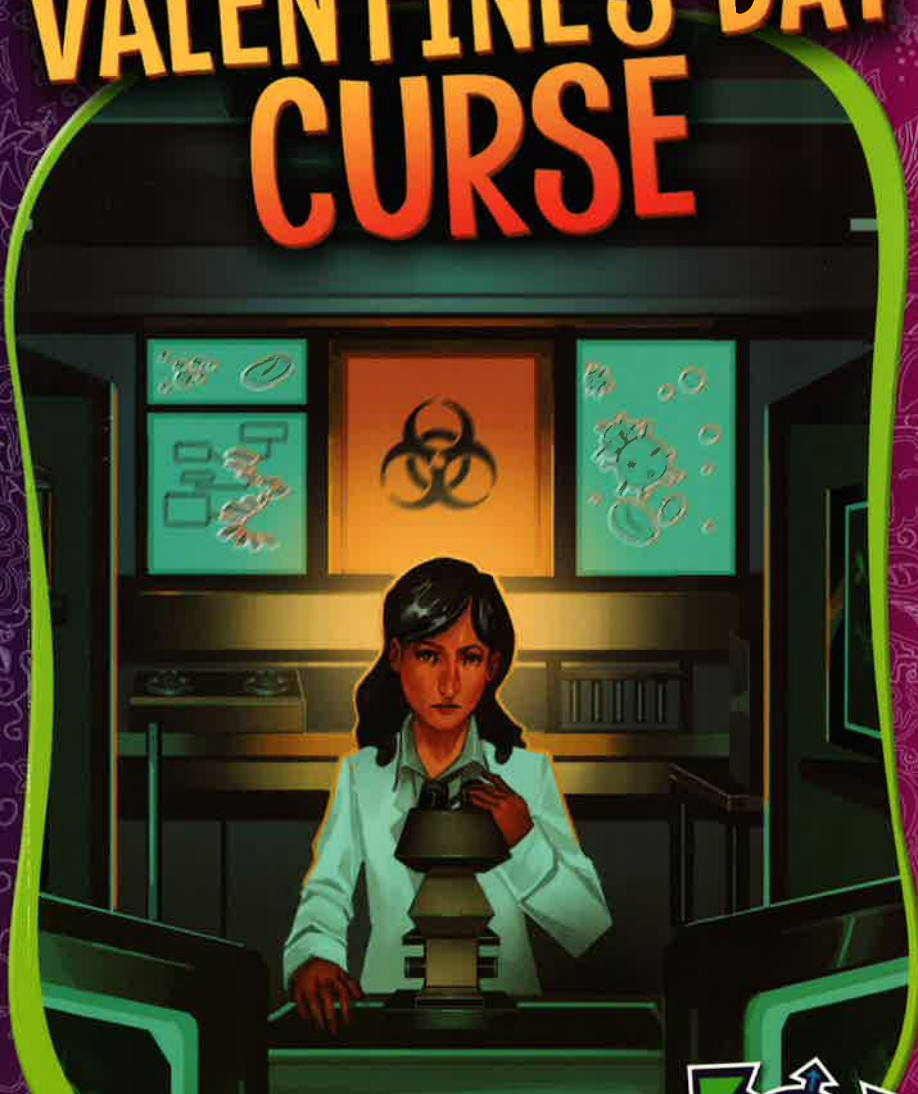
THE VALENTINE'S DAY CURSE



Frank Pedersen

Jeff Lai

Nelson Literacy Directions

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The Valentine's Day Curse

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Written by Frank Pedersen
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Meet the Characters

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Dr Anika Choudhry

A virology researcher.



Dr Alexei Morgenstern

Head of research.



Tony

A security guard.



Congo-Heshangele

A deadly virus.

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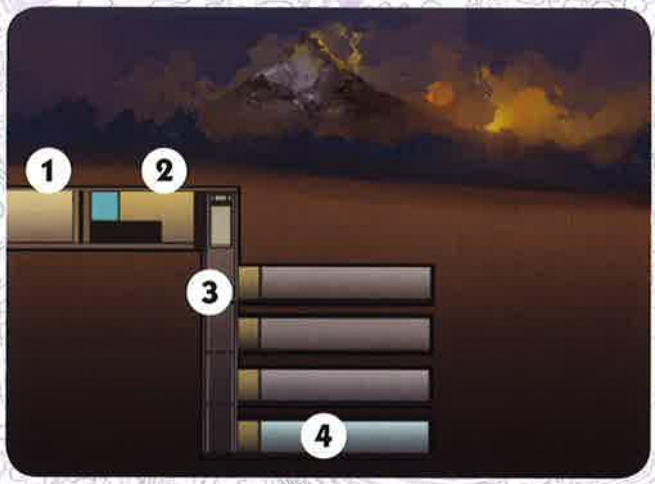
POSTCARD

Dear Reader

Here's a Valentine's Day adventure with a twist. It starts out like all Valentine's Days, with a mysterious bouquet of roses. However, with mad scientists, deadly viruses and top-secret laboratories, it quickly turns into a gripping drama. This is one Valentine's Day you definitely don't want to share with anyone else!

Frank Pedersen
Author

The Underground Laboratory



1. Entrance
2. Security screening
3. Elevator
4. Level 4

1 Roses

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When she answered the knock at her door and found the courier standing there, shivering in the gusty February winds, her first reaction was that he'd arrived at the wrong address. Bearing a bouquet of long-stemmed red roses that were neatly enclosed in cellophane wrapping, he winked at her and held out the flowers.

"Someone's got a secret admirer," smiled the courier. "Happy Valentine's Day."

Doctor Anika Choudhry was dumbfounded. "Are you certain?" she said.

The courier checked his delivery docket and nodded. "705 Brightwater Boulevard," he confirmed. "You're Anika Choudhry, right?"

Anika's astonishment was slowly overtaken by curiosity. She found herself nodding. "I am," she said.



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"In that case, you definitely do have a secret admirer," chuckled the courier. "Signature here, please."

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Anika signed the delivery docket and hurried back inside, cradling the bouquet of flowers. She realised she was smiling. After yesterday's drama, a romantic gift from a secret admirer on Valentine's Day was definitely the last thing she'd anticipated. But who on earth could the flowers possibly be from? She had only been in Mt Eleanor for a month, and she hardly knew anybody in this town. She looked at the copy of the delivery docket that the courier had handed her, but there was no hint of her mysterious admirer's identity.

"No sender's name, no address," she mused. "There's not even a florist's business card, so I can't work out what part of town they live in." She filled a vase with water and arranged the bouquet of roses neatly in the middle of her kitchen table. "Well, well," she said to herself. "Life is full of surprises."

Her thoughts were consumed by what she had to do today. She wasn't looking forward to it.





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This strange surprise, at least, provided some momentary distraction from the uncomfortable feeling of foreboding rising in her stomach. The heady perfume of the roses filled her kitchen and she took a deep breath, filling her nostrils with the rich scent. Try as she might, she couldn't stop smiling. As a dedicated scientist, Anika spent her waking hours being rational and measured – but as a human being, she had to admit, she quite liked this other feeling, a mixture of mystery and delight. Someone, somewhere, had thought of her. She ignored the remainder of her uneaten breakfast and stared at the roses until she realised she was running late. It was critical she arrived first at the laboratory that morning. She took one last, deep breath, grabbed her car keys and headed for the door.

On the thirty-minute commute, she wondered who would have known her home address. She'd kept to herself since moving here, and anyone who asked her occupation had been fobbed off with a



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vague, non-committal answer. Telling the truth would make anyone feel awkward. As well as being a conversation-stopper, revealing her true work was also against the strict rules designed to maintain confidentiality.

Her boss knew her address, but she was convinced he had no romantic thoughts towards her, especially after yesterday's outburst. Who else at the laboratory knew her address? Then she smiled. There was someone she'd seen every morning and evening since starting, someone who always made an effort to be pleasant to her.

"Tony," she said to herself. "Did you look up my details on the security system? That was naughty. Naughty but nice."

