

## The Mystery of the Mad Science Teacher, Marty Chan

### CM Magazine, 2008

excerpt:

*The two things a guy can never take back are the over-sized baby blue sweater his aunt gives him for his birthday – and the promise he makes to a friend.*

*Right about now I wished I had the itchy sweater Big Auntie gave me last year, because I needed it to protect me from my promise to Remi Boudreau. I told my best friend I'd help him with slapshot practice. Little did I know this meant I had to stand in net while pucks flew at me like angry hornets. I reminded myself that Remi wanted to get the puck past me, but I also knew that the goal counted if the puck went through me.*

Marty is back in the third novel in the “Marty Chan Mystery Series” which are set in the small town of Bouvier, AB, where Marty is the only Chinese boy. Having overcome bullies in [The Mystery of the Graffiti Ghoul](#) (nominated for the 2007 Arthur Ellis Award) and [The Mystery of the Frozen Brains](#) (winner of The 2005 City of Edmonton Book Award), Marty finds himself embroiled in solving another mystery. When former “mortal enemy” Trina discovers her bike is stolen, Marty and his best friend Remi follow clues that lead them to suspect that their new science teacher may be the thief. Marty, meanwhile, explores his new romantic feelings for Trina which are also shared by Remi.

Boys especially will find Marty's escapades exciting and funny, and readers may also appreciate the lessons in loyalty and diversity. Marty Chan, the author of the series about his eponymous hero, offers a novel with lots of action and humour that will keep readers looking forward to the next title in the series

**Recommended.**

– Jane Bridle

Jane Bridle is a librarian with Winnipeg Public Library.

**Subject Headings:**

Chinese Canadian—Juvenile fiction.

Theft—Detective and mystery stories.

Grades 3–7 / Ages 8–12.

\*\*\* /4

### Resource Links, Volume 14 Number 1, October 2008

Marty and Remi are back with yet another adventure! Having solved *The Mystery of the Graffiti Ghoul* in the last installment of the series, this time the mystery revolves around a strange new science teacher. While playing street hockey in front of the local “Asylum House,”

Trina appears. Marty notices a definite change in Trina over the summer. “Trina's semi-permanent sneer – the one she usually showed me and no one else – had been replaced with a

smile that drew my eyes to her face like a kitten to a sunbeam." (p. 11) Both Marty and Remi are enchanted with the new Trina! In fact, both of them "like-like her." When her bicycle disappears, they believe someone from the "Asylum House" has stolen it – probably the strange man with the white hair.

Marty and Remi are on the case again! They use their detective skills to find out who stole Trina's bicycle. Soon they find out that Eric's video game has also been stolen. And then, Marty's notebook disappears from his locker. Who is the thief?

As they arrive at school to begin grade 5, they are shocked to find out that the strange man from the "Asylum House" is now their teacher – Mr. E. "My new teacher was none other than Mr. White Hair – the maniac." (p. 53) He seems to be giving one of the new students in their class – Ida – special treatment. What is the relationship between Mr. E and Ida? Will their detective skills help them solve the case? Who will win Trina's heart – Remi or Marty?

This novel once again explores Marty's often complex relationships. His parents live above their neighbourhood grocery store. Although this seems ideal – with access to all the candy you could ever want – Marty is only allowed to eat things which don't sell! He also has a lot of chores to do around the store! Marty's relationship with his best friend Remi is strained by his newfound love for Trina. Remi shares his feelings for Trina with Marty – but Marty doesn't share his own feelings about Trina with Remi! When Trina falls for Marty, Marty doesn't want to hurt his friend by telling him about his relationship with Trina. In order to protect his friend, he shelters him from the truth. In the end, Marty must learn a powerful lesson about honesty!

Young readers will appreciate the amusing situations experienced by the two detectives. There are some interesting scientific details about diabetes, magnets and robots. On the other hand, the solution to the mystery and the robot chase scene are both highly improbable!

– Myra Junyk

**Thematic Links:** Friendship; First Love; Honesty; Detective Fiction; Robots; Diabetes; Magnets

### Blacklin's Reading Room Reviews

I decided to stretch my book review wings a little and try my hand at reviewing a children's book. I received *The Mystery Of The Mad Science Teacher* by Marty Chan from [Mini Book Expo](#) and I'm glad I received the opportunity to review the book. So, here goes:

At first, the fact that the main character has the same name as the author threw me, but after a while I got used to it. Or more likely, I lost myself in the story and found myself chuckling at a child's application of adult terms to his non-adult world. For example, Marty loves to watch detective shows and so he attempts to conduct his investigation into Trina's bicycle theft the way it's done on tv: Stake outs, reports, interrogations, and even an attempt at gathering fingerprints. On one stake out, Marty even thinks like one of those old-time detectives: *"As I waited, time became a caterpillar inching along a highway to a rest stop called Trouble. I closed my eyes and waited for the ride to end."* Refreshing!

Marty Chan the author even provides some "lessons learned on the playground" type scenarios which I think everyone (adults included of course) can relate to in some way or another. Ida's situation provides an excellent example and really, kind of a semi-unusual example: Ida is a juvenile diabetic and like Marty, Trina, and Remi is in the fifth grade. Ida doesn't want others to see her as the "sick" kid, but doesn't want anyone to get close to her.

Ida recognizes the reality of her diabetes while her father cannot. Frustrated with her father Ida screams at him:

*[. . .] The only time you ever spend with me is when it's time for my tests and shots.*

*I want you to get better.*

*Dad, I have to take these stupid insulin shots for the rest of my life. That's not getting better. That's a prison sentence [. . .]*

Read in context, I found Ida's venting powerful and heartbreaking. But the book does end on a happy note and the overall tone of the book is light and funny. And if you're into hockey, you will love all the street hockey scenes and references to Canadian hockey teams (cool.)

I enjoyed reading **The Mystery Of The Mad Science Teacher**. Chan has a gift for writing how children think and express themselves. It's also a gift that draws the reader into the story and into Marty, Trina, Ida, and Remi's world. — Jennifer Dublin