

A MAPLE COVE PUZZLE MYSTERY

A Maple Cove Bonus Case

One extra mystery after the case is closed.

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STANDALONE MYSTERY / NO MAIN-BOOK SPOILERS

For personal use by readers of Mabel Knows.

A FIVE-MINUTE CASE

The Vanishing Recipe Card

Read the scene, compare the clues, and decide who removed the card from the locked display.

The Harvest Tea had barely begun when Nora Vale hurried to Mabel. The handwritten cinnamon-cake recipe displayed beneath glass was gone. At 3:12, Tom's photograph still showed it inside the locked case. At 3:18, the case was empty.

The key normally hung behind the welcome desk on a brass maple-leaf tag. The lock was undamaged. Gus had been resetting the fuse during the one-minute power flicker at 3:15; two volunteers confirmed it. Lorraine had been glazing cakes, and red jam covered both hands. Tom had taken photographs continuously from the stage.

Nora said she had stayed at the raffle table throughout the flicker. Yet the raffle ledger contained no entries from 3:14 to 3:20. Celia remembered hearing a small metal tag tap against a ceramic mug at the tea table during the darkness. Nora's mug had a fresh brass-colored scratch near its rim and a trace of cinnamon dust beneath the handle.

Earlier, Nora had argued that the recipe belonged to her family and should never have been displayed for strangers to copy. When the lights returned, she was the first person to announce that the card had vanished.

YOUR DEDUCTION

Who removed the recipe card, how, and why?

CASE CLOSED

Mabel's deduction

Stop here until you have written down your answer.

THE ANSWER

Nora removed the card. During the power flicker, she took the tagged key from behind the welcome desk, opened the case, and hid the recipe near the tea table. The undamaged lock proves the key was used. The brass scratch on Nora's mug matches the metal tag Celia heard, while the cinnamon dust links the mug to the missing card. Her empty raffle ledger leaves the necessary six-minute gap, and her earlier argument supplies the motive: she wanted to keep the family recipe from being copied.

CLUE CHAIN

1. Locked case + no damage = the real key was used.
2. Metal tap + brass scratch = the tagged key touched Nora's mug.
3. Cinnamon dust = contact with the recipe card or its display.
4. Ledger gap + stated motive = opportunity and reason.

Every answer was already in the room.

KEEP YOUR PENCIL SHARP