





# ART, NATURE, AND A MYSTERY

It was a warm spring morning at Mouseford Academy. The sun was on the horizon and birds chirped happily while flowers, still wet from the morning dew, opened their petals to the light of a new day.

“**Good Morning!**” Violet called happily as she knocked on the door to Colette and Pamela’s room.

Pamela sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes.

“Is it time to get up already?” she mumbled sleepily.

“Yes, it is!” Violet replied eagerly. “Paulina and I are going to the **ART AND NATURE** workshop. Do you want to come along?”









“What time is it?” Colette asked. She was also still in bed.

“It’s eight o’clock,” Paulina replied, popping her head into the room. “Three minutes before eight, to be exact.”

“**It’s way too early!**” Colette complained. “I just want to roll over and go back to sleep!”

 “Then you’d miss out on painting in **nature**,”  
 Violet said. “It’s so relaxing.”  

 “Nicky’s coming, too,” Paulina added.  

“Okay, okay,” Pam groaned. “There’s going to be breakfast there, right?”

“Of course!” Paulina reassured her. “There’s an amazing **buffet** waiting for us!”

“In that case, I’ll be dressed and ready to go in five minutes!” Pam exclaimed eagerly as she **LEAPED** out of her bed.

“What about you, Colette?” Violet asked. “Will you join us?”



Colette fell back against her pillow and seemed to weigh her options. Finally, she pushed herself up and out of bed.

“I’m awake anyway, so I may as well come,” she said. “And the morning air is really good for the fur. Give me a few minutes and I’ll meet you there.”

“Great!” Paulina exclaimed **happily**. “We’ll wait for you downstairs.”

“Let’s hope we see her soon,” Paulina





WHISPERED to Violet as they headed out. “We know how long Coco’s **minute** can be!”

Ten minutes later, the five friends were walking across the grounds of Mouseford Academy. The school was **calm** and **quiet**, which happened a lot during the spring when some of the students went on weekend trips.

“It’s so peaceful,” Colette commented, looking around.

“Yes,” Paulina agreed. “It’s the perfect day to **PAINT** in nature.”

“It really is,” Nicky said thoughtfully. “I look forward to these creative workshops every spring.”

The friends arrived in the garden to find a truly calm space. A few painting easels and stools were set up under a large oak tree. Nearby, there was a **GAZEBO** with a large table set for breakfast.



“Yum,” Pam exclaimed as she hurried toward the buffet. “Look at all this **DELICIOUS** fruit and yogurt. What a way to start the day!”

Nicky and the others laughed. Some things would never change!

After they were done eating breakfast, Violet headed for one of the easels.

“We should get to work,” she said happily. Then she placed a fresh canvas on the stand, opened her painting case, and carefully picked out the **PAINT TUBES** she would use for her work.

“You’re so neat, Vi,” Nicky commented admiringly as she watched her friend.

“Being organized helps me stay focused,” Violet explained.





“Ah, that must be why my **Paintings** are always so chaotic!” Nicky replied, showing Violet her messy, half-finished canvas.

“If you want, I can help you work on a **sketch** first,” Violet suggested.

“Really?!” Nicky exclaimed. “That would be amazing. Thank you!”

Nicky moved her easel closer to Violet’s and smiled at her friend **gratefully**.

Paulina started working on a flowery bush while Pamela picked a large oak in the middle of the garden as the subject of her painting. Then the mouselets got to work, intent on painting and enjoying the sunny and peaceful **day**.

After they had been working for a while, Paulina’s buzzing cell phone interrupted the silence.

She pulled her phone out of her pocket and gasped.