The Mystery of the Missing Shoes

Jane the brain went over to her friend Gina’s house to play. When she got there, the front yard was all torn up. Where once there had been grass, there was only a stretch of mud from the sidewalk all the way up to the porch steps. Gina’s dog Muppet wagged her tail furiously from the porch when she saw Jane coming. Jane stopped to pet the dog, and noticed her muddy shoes. “What happened?” Jane asked Gina when she answered the door. “We had to have our septic system dug up,” Gina said. “The workmen are going to put down grass seed and the grass will grow back. You can take off your shoes and leave them on the porch.”

Jane did. She and Gina played in the house for a few hours. When they came back out, Jane’s shoes were gone! “What happened to my shoes?” Jane said. Gina went back in and asked her mother, but her mother said that she had not taken the shoes. Jane examined the front porch. There were no muddy footprints on the porch, so no one had walked across the porch in her shoes. Muppet came over to her and Jane knelt down to pet her. As she did, she looked out across Gina’s front yard.

“Gina,” Jane said. “I know who stole my shoes.”

“Who?” Gina said in surprise.

“Muppet must have done it,” Jane said. “Look at the yard. There are footprints walking towards the porch, my footprints. But there is no second set of footprints walking to the porch, and no set of footprints walking away.”

“Muppet’s dog house is on the other side of the porch,” Gina said. The girls hurried around the corner of the house and Jane got down on all fours to inspect Muppet’s dog house. Sure enough, her muddy shoes were inside. Also inside were Gina’s missing house slippers, her mother’s missing oven mitt, and her father’s missing tie.

“We have caught our thief!” Jane announced, as Muppet licked her happily on the nose.
The Mystery of the Missing Boards

“This is the craziest crime I have ever heard of!” said Detective Harvey as he hung up the phone. “What is it, detective?” his partner, Detective Simpson, asked. “Missing boards,” Harvey said. “Boards?” “Boards! From half the houses on Pickle Street!”

Detective Harvey frowned. The houses on Pickle Street were all a hundred years old. They could all use some tender, loving care, but they were full of nice families that had modernized the plumbing and the electricity and who kept their lawns cut. The fact that the porches were starting to mope a little didn’t bother anyone too much. “The boards are all missing from the front porches,” Harvey told Simpson. “Come on. Let’s investigate.”

Ten minutes later, Harvey and Simpson had parked at one end of Pickle Street and had started to walk. They came to the first house. Harvey stopped. “Are we going up?” Simpson asked. “I don’t need to,” Harvey said. “I can see the missing board from here.” And sure enough, when his partner looked at the steps, one of the two boards that made up each riser was missing. As they left the house, Harvey noticed a bicycle lying on its side in the grass.

They walked to the next house. Harvey walked up onto the porch and looked around. Next to the front door were a pair of boy-sized boots. The floor board at the far end, underneath the swing, was gone. The owner of the house walked out to talk to them. “That board has been loose for years,” he said. “But not so loose that it got up and walked off by itself. Someone pried it up.”

Harvey and Simpson continued their walk down Pickle Street. They stopped at every house, and as Harvey had said at the station, about half of them were missing boards. “Well, that wasn’t very helpful,” Simpson said.

“Oh, sure it was,” Harvey said. “I know who the thief is.” “Who?” his partner asked in surprise. “Did you notice that every house with a missing board has a boy living in it?” “How would I have noticed that?” Simpson said.

“The first house had a boy’s bicycle in the yard. The second house had a pair of boy’s boots on the porch. The third house had Speed Racer curtains on a window in the front bedroom. In every house with a board missing, there was something quite obvious and noticeable to suggest that a boy lived there.” “So what does that mean?” Simpson said. “What are we going to do now?”

“See these woods right here at the end of the street?” Harvey said. Simpson nodded. “We’re going in.” They walked a little way into the woods, and there, about fifteen feet up in a huge, old tree, was a treehouse made of old porch boards. Half a dozen boys looked down at them, their eyes wide.

“Are we in trouble for stealing the boards?” one of them called down to Officer Harvey.

“Not from me,” Harvey said. “But you all have some explaining to do at home!”
Compare & Contrast

The Mystery of the Missing Shoes
What is different?

The Mystery of the Missing Boards
What is different?
What is the same?