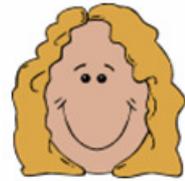




## The Case of the Disappearing Signs

Featuring: Nina Chase and Max Decker



Nina was eating cold pizza for lunch at Max's house one hot July day. Mrs. Decker came in looking warm and weary.

"I'm so disgusted," she said. "Remember that old house over on Norton Drive that I listed? I put a FOR SALE sign up in the yard early this morning. Just drove by now and it's gone. This is the third one this month that has disappeared."

"Why would anyone steal a realtor's signs?" Nina asked. "What would anybody do with them?"

"Who knows?" Mrs. Decker poured herself a glass of lemonade. "Probably some kids with nothing better

to do. I suppose they could use the signs to build something. They were the wooden ones."

Max nudged Nina. "Want to bike over and see what we can find out?"

"Not much there to see," his mother told him. "Only two houses on that whole street. An old lady-Mrs. Stearns-lives in the house next to the empty one."

"Maybe she saw something," Nina said. "Let's go ask."

Half an hour later the two were biking toward the end of Norton Drive. A pick-up truck was parked in front of the empty house. A man was standing on the sidewalk looking in all directions. "You kids know anything about this place?" he asked. "I'm from out of town, and my nephew has been checking houses for me this past month. He thought I might like the one at the end of Norton Drive, so he let me borrow his truck to drive over here. But I don't know if this is the house he meant. There aren't any signs."

"This house is for sale," Max told him. "My mom is the real estate agent."

"Great! Then can you tell me her name and company? I'd like to ask about this property. Paul tells me that houses in this part of town sell fast. He says this one has been on the market for quite some time. Glad I got here before it was sold! Just couldn't get over here any sooner."

As soon as Max gave him the information, the man drove off. Nina stared after the truck.

"Know what? His nephew, Paul, might have taken the signs. Maybe he didn't want people to see that the house was for sale until his uncle had a chance to look at it. You can put lots of things in the back of a truck."

Max nodded. "Let's ask this Mrs. Stearns if she saw anything this morning."

Mrs. Stearns came to the screen as soon as the two knocked. She was gray-haired, but she stood straight and tall. "Oh, I think I know who might have taken those signs," she told them.

"Freddie Swanson. He lives a block away, but he's always up to mischief."

She held the door open as she talked, so Nina peeked inside. She liked the cosy living room. The sofa and chairs were velvet-covered antiques. Lace doilies covered the end tables. A large painting hung over the intricately-carved fireplace mantel, and a cheerful fire crackled below.

"I know Freddie," Max said. "And I know where he lives. Let's go see him."

Freddie was putting a lawn mower in the garage when they reached his house. He mopped his brow, as he talked to them. "Why would I take a dumb old sign?" he asked. "Besides, I've been out here doing yard work all morning." Nina stared past him at the garage. Her parents could hardly get their car in her garage at home because of all the stuff in it, but this one was practically bare. Then she noticed a crudely built tree house in the yard. The boards were gray and weather-beaten.

She and Max talked as they biked back to his house. Mrs. Decker was washing the lunch dishes when they banged into the house.

"We think we know who took the signs," Nina told her.



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Can you solve the case?

A) Whom does Nina suspect?

\* Paul | \* Mrs. Stearns | \* Freddie Swanson | \* Not sure

B) Write down your answer. Motivate your answer using clues from the text.

C) Choose 10 difficult words, translate them and describe them in English.

# KEY - The Case of the Disappearing Signs

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\* Whom does Nina suspect?

**Paul** - Not Correct.

> **Mrs. Stearns** - Correct.

**Freddie Swanson** - Not Correct

\* Here's another clue:

Nina thought back to when she talked with each of the three suspects. Then she remembered something she didn't notice the first time around, something not quite right.

What strange thing did Nina notice as she and Max talked to the three suspects?

\* How did Nina & Max figure it out?

Mrs. Stearns had taken the signs.

There was no evidence to show that Paul had actually used his truck to transport the signs. The boards used for Freddie's tree house were too old and worn to have been recently used for the signs. But Mrs. Stearns had a fire in her fireplace on a hot July day. She didn't want neighbours close by, and so she had taken the signs and was burning them in her fireplace so nobody would know the house was for sale.

"That fire was a hot tip," Nina said later as she joined Max and Mrs. Decker for a cold drink of lemonade.