



The Case of the Sneak Thief's Sneakers



Featuring: Nina Chase and Max Decker

It was Saturday afternoon and Max and Nina were playing space aliens in the woods.

"Something's different," Max said as they took a break between battles. "I know. Mr. Reed's not practicing."

Mr. Reed was the school's music teacher. The woods lay right by his property and every Saturday, as they played, the young cousins were always serenaded by solo clarinet music coming from the shack behind Mr. Reed's house.

Nina climbed down from the tree house they were using as their star cruiser. "You're right. I hope nothing's wrong." The words were barely out of her mouth when they heard a distant shout. "That's him."

Max and Nina ran to the edge of the woods. In front of them was Mr. Reed's field. In the middle of the field was the shack. Mr. Reed was there, peering through the shack's open door. "I've been robbed," he shouted for the fourth time. "Max. Nina. Hello." He was trying to control his anger. "I'd just unlocked the door when I noticed a split reed on my clarinet. I went back to my house to get a new one. I left the shack unlocked, just for a few minutes. And now look."

Max and Nina had never seen the inside before, but they'd heard about it. Mr. Reed's music shack had been burgled last year, everything in stolen. When the music teacher brought in new furniture, he bolted it all to the floor-- the table in the centre, the single chair by the table, even the file cabinets.

At first glance, nothing seemed out of place. But then Nina saw the broken pieces of pink pottery on the table. "Someone broke open your piggy bank?"

Mr. Reed looked embarrassed. "It held my rare silver dollar collection." He crossed the room and stretched his tall frame up to the blank space on his only shelf. "I kept it right here." "A crime of opportunity," Max said, as if he dealt with this every day. "The thief saw the unlocked door and was looking for something to steal. He or she grabbed the piggy bank, broke it open on the table--"

"Look," Nina interrupted. "Footprints. Those aren't yours, are they?"

"No," Mr. Reed replied, examining the path of prints on the dusty floor. "I haven't been in here since last Saturday. Being in the middle of a field, this place gets dusty pretty fast."



Very carefully, Max followed the prints, from the door over to the shelf, then back to the table. After that, a jumble of prints led all around the room. "I wonder what he was doing?"

Nina was on the other side of the shack by a pair of nailed down file cabinets. "These look like knee-

prints," she said, pointing to a pair of round impressions between the cabinets. "Why would the thief kneel down?" She knelt down in the two knee prints. Right away, a glint of metal between the two cabinets caught her eye. Nina reached her arm through the narrow gap and pulled out a silver dollar. "The thief was trying to reach this," she said proudly and handed the rescued coin to Mr. Reed. "He was wearing 'SkyMaster' sneakers." Max stood up and wiped a little floor dust from his nose. "It's printed on the tread. Don't worry, Mr. Reed. We'll find your thief."

Max and Nina got on the case immediately. This was a lot more fun than fighting space aliens. Their first stop was Garvey's, the only shoe store in town. Mr. Garvey informed them that "SkyMaster" was a new brand of sneaker. "Since getting them in last week, I've made three sales," he said, checking his computer. "The first pair went to Todd Jones. You know him?" "Sure," Nina said. Everybody knew Todd "Beanpole" Jones. He resembled a seven foot tall skeleton and was the centre of the high school basketball team.

"I sold the second pair to Ollie Infree. You kids probably don't know Ollie."

But they did. Ollie Infree was a petty criminal whose taste for red suits made him look like a fireplug, or like a short Santa without the beard. He'd been arrested several times, once on Max's and Nina's suggestion. But he always managed to avoid conviction. The third pair had been bought by Mona Everest, a human mountain, as tall as Beanpole and as stocky as Ollie. Mona had made a career for herself as a professional wrestler. Two years ago, she retired from the ring and moved to Harborville in order to breed toy poodles.

"We'll have to spy on them all," Nina whispered as they left the store. "Maybe break into their houses and see--" "We're not breaking into anyone's house," Max insisted. "I already think I know who the culprit is."



Can you solve the case?

A) Whom does Max suspect?

* Todd | * Ollie | * Mona | * 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 Sneak Thief's Sneakers

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* Who did Nina and Max suspect?

Todd - Not Correct.

Ollie - Not Correct.

Mona - Correct.

* Here's another clue:

It really annoyed Nina when Max figured out things she hadn't figured out. "How could you possibly know who it is?" she demanded.

Max smiled. "The same way I know that it couldn't be you. You never would have been able to reach up to the shelf in order to snatch the piggy bank. And if a silver dollar had fallen between the file cabinets, you certainly would have been able to retrieve it." "Oh," Nina mumbled, trying to think it through. "Oh! Yes. Of course."

* How did Nina & Max figure it out?

She was the only suspect tall enough to reach the shelf AND with arms too thick to reach the last dollar.

Nina and Max could hear Mr. Reed's clarinet long before they arrived back at the shack. The music sounded loud and angry and with a lot of wrong notes.

"I think you should have the police talk to Mona Everest," Nina announced as they walked through the door.

Mr. Reed didn't seem anxious to accuse the female wrestler. "Why Mona? Out of all the people in Harborville?"

"The process of elimination," Max explained. "Only three people owned that type of sneaker. Also, the thief had to be tall enough to reach the shelf. There's no way a short person could have used the chair. It's bolted down. The thief also had to have thick arms. A skinny person would have been able to retrieve the silver dollar that fell between the cabinets. Mona's the only tall, heavyset suspect. It has to be her."