



**Stolen nuts.
Suspects: everyone.**

“Wretched thieves!” cried a small creature as it scurried through the snow. “Thieving wretches!”

It was late in the evening and the whole forest was asleep.

It was snowing softly and beautifully.

“Monstrous plunderers!” called the little animal in a trembling, squeaky voice. “Plundering monsters!”



The animal came to a path. The path led to a little house. And the little house was a police station. A light shone in the window, as it always did at the police station.

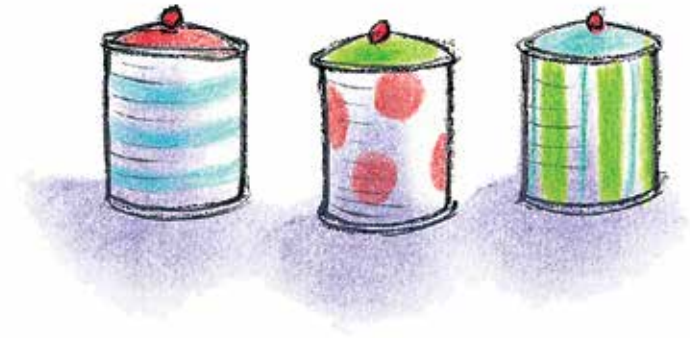
The animal brushed the snow from its coat and shook a swirl of flakes from its long furry tail. It was a squirrel, which now wiped its feet and stepped inside.

“Hoo! Horrible and sad!” cried the squirrel. “Sadness and horror!”

The squirrel looked around. It was a completely ordinary police station. First you entered the big police room. On the wall beside the door was a glass cabinet. In the cabinet was a pistol and a baton. The glass was very thick and the cabinet was locked with a strong lock.

In the middle of the big police room was a fireplace where a few embers glowed. Behind the fireplace was a little kitchen for making tea.

The police station had many modern gadgets the squirrel didn't understand. It was a strange house, full of odd things, he thought. The squirrel himself lived in a hole in a tree. He had no chairs, tables, and suchlike. It was just him and his nuts, which was all he needed.



Then the squirrel noticed three very large cake tins. He smelled something agreeable and he looked at them with interest.

The squirrel turned to the right. There was the prison with its barred door, standing open. Inside, a bed was made up with a thick quilt and two pillows. Clearly no thieves were staying at the moment.

He turned to the left. There was another small room: a bedroom for the chief of police. The squirrel peered in through a gap in the doorway. Above the bed were pictures of toads—old toads, very small toads, and some the squirrel found quite ugly. Then he went right in and stood before a big desk. A very fat toad sat at the desk with an important piece of paper in front of him and a pen in his hand.



This was the famous Detective Gordon, chief of police and chief of detectives in the forest. The famous Chief Detective Gordon, feared by all criminals.

But Detective Gordon was asleep. He lay on his important paper, his face in a small pile of cake crumbs. His mouth was open and he was snoring. From the corner of his mouth, spit dribbled onto the paper.

“Hoo!” said the squirrel once more.

The detective twitched, mumbled a little, and licked his lips in his sleep. Then he rubbed his big round eyes. He suddenly seemed to be wide awake.

“I wasn’t asleep!” he said quickly. “I was writing something important.”

He looked at the paper. It was wet and everything he had written was smudged. Smudged, with cake crumbs on it. “But it didn’t turn out so well,” he added sadly, crumpling up the paper. “My dear squirrel, please sit here on the visitors’ stool. How can I help?”

The squirrel sat carefully on the little stool and started to explain. It was a long and convoluted story which took a long time to begin and seemed to have no end. More and more people turned up in the story, did nothing, and then disappeared. A great many were suspected of a crime.

But what crime was it?

No ordinary person would be able to understand what it was all about.

And yet, Detective Gordon did.



By the end, the squirrel was so upset he began to cry. Detective Gordon gave him a handkerchief, but didn't interrupt. He never did. Sometimes he said a small "Uh-huh" to help the squirrel along. After three-quarters of an hour Detective Gordon wrote on a new, dry piece of paper:



The squirrel finally finished his story and he sat sniffing quietly, stroking his nose with his tail to comfort himself. He had a soft nose and mild, sensitive eyes. The detective was a little envious.

The detective had two drawers in his desk. One was for important notes, the other for his stamp. The detective took out the big old-fashioned stamp, placed it on the paper, moved it a little to the right and then a little to the left. Then he pressed. Kla-dunk, it went.

At that, the squirrel grew calm and seemed satisfied.

That was a very good stamp, Detective Gordon thought.

The squirrel twisted the handkerchief in his hands.

"Will I get my nuts back?" he asked.

"I'll investigate the case."

They went out together into the snow. It was snowing still, and the full moon was perched in the treetops, spreading its light. The squirrel said he could show the way. Detective Gordon shook his head.

He knew how to follow tracks. After all, he was a detective!

