



Important cake tins stolen!

Detective Gordon woke up in a sweat. He'd had a terrible dream. He was still partly asleep, though, and could hardly open his eyes.

“Huff, uff, uff,” he sighed as he propped himself up.

From outside the police station came cheerful singing and a steady chop, chop, chop. Police Assistant Buffy was chopping wood.

Gordon felt sure that if he ate just one morning cake he would wake all the way up.

He stood up carefully and went out to the big police room. Half awake, he fumbled along the shelf. But the three important cake tins weren't there. The shelf was empty.

He rubbed his eyes. The shelf was still empty!

He searched the whole room. Nothing. He searched the bedroom and the prison. Nothing.

Then he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He had once been such a distinguished young toad! These days, he didn't much like looking at himself: he resembled a big lump of soft clay. His belly had spread in all directions and hung over his pajama bottoms. His legs were spindly; his flat feet were large and squelchy. His wide mouth hung down at the corners.

"One day, I'm going to turn that mirror around. A toad shouldn't have to look at himself," he grumbled.

But then he remembered that the little mouse Buffy loved the mirror. She could stand there for ages making funny faces at herself. Sometimes she put on the police hat and tried to look appropriately stern.

"Well, anyhow, one of these days I'll turn it around!"

Suddenly he remembered his dream.



In the dream, someone was trying to take all the cake tins.

What if that had actually happened? Imagine if the police station was the scene of a crime!

“Buffy!” Gordon called. “Come in here! Important cake tins have been stolen!”

The chopping stopped at once. So did the singing. Small, quick feet came tripping in. And there stood Buffy, giving a salute. Last winter, he himself had appointed this small and clever assistant: an energetic, smart, kind, and very young police officer, who was a world champion at climbing trees and creeping into small holes. All those things the detective couldn’t manage.

“Good morning, Detective.”

“This is serious,” said Gordon. “Some scoundrel has stolen the cake tins!”

Buffy seemed to give him an artful smile.

She hurried out while Gordon stood there in the middle of the floor. After a minute, she opened the door again. Sunshine flooded in with the scent of flowers as Buffy made her entrance to the trilling of birds. She sang a small, happy *tra la la* and took a few cheery dance steps. Balanced in her arms were the three large cake tins.



“You’ve solved it, my dear police assistant!” said the detective, and at last he felt wide awake and full of beans.

But who was the thief?

Suddenly Detective Gordon remembered that in his dream he’d been eating cakes, about twenty of them. A black and white figure the detective didn’t recognize had been watching him. He’d laughed at Gordon’s fat tummy, and teased him for the way he gobbled up the cakes. In the dream, that figure had tried to steal the cake tins. But the detective had been cunning...

“So who stole them?” Gordon wondered aloud.

“It was you, Chief!” said Buffy happily. “When I woke early this morning, you were already up. Maybe you were sleepwalking. You took the cake tins and disappeared outside. And then you came in without them and went back to sleep.”

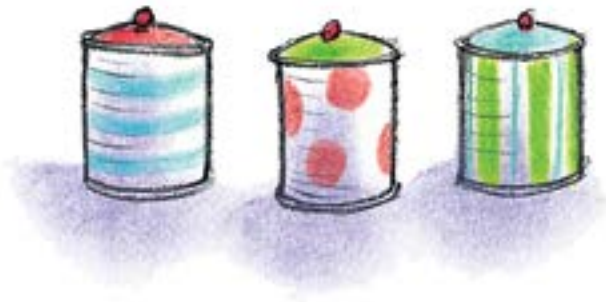
Now the detective remembered that in his dream he'd hidden the cake tins. He cleared his throat and looked at the floor.

"I was wide awake," said Buffy, "so I went out and chopped a bit of wood. And I found the cake tins in the woodshed..."

"It was a nasty, obnoxious scoundrel," the detective said vehemently. "In the dream, I mean..."

He suddenly had a terrible thought: imagine if the cake tins were empty! It would be an awful shame to find he'd eaten all the cakes in his dream without actually enjoying them. He'd have only empty tins left. And an extra fat tummy.

He reached for one of the cake tins. He chose the morning one. There were three different tins—the morning cake tin, the afternoon cake tin, and the evening cake tin.



Since police work often continued into evenings and nights, it was very important to be able to tell the time by taste. What if the morning tin was empty?



But all the cakes were there.

He stacked one vanilla cake on top of another, and ate them. Wonderful...

"Grumph, grumph."

I've become a little greedy lately, he thought.

Buffy rummaged in the dressing-up chest under the bed and put a gold crown on her head. She danced to and fro across the floor. She sang, "I investigate, investigate-ga-ga-gate," all the time watching herself in the mirror.

"Do you know," said Gordon, "it's been quite hard work being a police officer. But since you became Police Assistant last winter, things have been a lot easier. It's much nicer now at the police station."

The mouse danced on her tiptoes across the floor and the detective clapped his hands.

"I think I'll have a vanilla cake to celebrate," he said. "A double one. Mm-mm, grumph, grumph. Ah, yes, now I'm happy..."



Buffy stopped mid-step and looked seriously at her chief.

“But not everyone in this forest is happy,” she said. “There’s something funny going on because almost everyone looks troubled. They are sad.”

“Is that so?” said the detective.

The mouse nodded.

“Is it a crime?” she asked. “If everybody’s sad and serious...”

“A very serious crime!” said Gordon. “Oh, did you want a cake, too? Sorry.”

“Never mind,” said Buffy. “I ate a nut when I woke up.”

She looked into the empty cake tin. Only the smell of morning cakes remained. Buffy had a very good sense of smell and she loved vanilla—it smelled of wind, flowers, and big, faraway mountains.

Detective Gordon shuffled over to his desk and took out a sheet of white paper. The police must do something about this!

He couldn’t think what to write on his notice. Not yet. He satisfied himself with taking out the old and very important stamp from the drawer. He placed it in the middle of the page. He moved it a little to the right. Then a little to the left. Hmm. Perfect.

Kla-dunk, went the stamp.

An official stamp appeared on the page. A new case had begun.

