

The Case of the Missing Matchbook Cars

by Elizabeth Trach

Max loved cars. His favorite hobby was building race tracks and obstacle courses for his Matchbook cars to zoom through. He had a box of toy cars that he kept on the bottom shelf in the playroom so he could always reach his cars.

One morning, he wanted to find his green race car to try a new race track. This was the fastest car Max owned. It was even painted like a real race car. He looked in his box of cars, but there was no green racer.

"Doug!" he yelled, "Did you take my green race car?" Doug was Max's older brother, and he often borrowed Max's toys without asking first.

Doug walked into the playroom. "No," he answered. "Did you take my red fire truck?"

Max shook his head. Doug's box of cars was right next to Max's box on the bottom shelf, and the boys dumped out all the cars they owned. They carefully checked, but the race car and the fire truck were nowhere to be found.

"Hey, I can't find my white ambulance either," Doug said. "Who stole them?"

Max thought. His parents didn't like Matchbook cars, so they wouldn't have used them for anything. Their baby sister couldn't even crawl yet, so she wasn't a suspect. "Do you think someone broke into the house?"

Doug shook his head. "I think robbers like jewelry and TVs more than toys," he said. They decided to investigate to check for signs of a break-in just in case.

The boys left the playroom to look for open doors and windows that a robber could have used. Everything was sealed tightly. Just as they were about to give up, they heard a rattling sound from the playroom. They ran back to see what had happened.

In the middle of the pile of cars was Fiddle, the family cat. Fiddle was batting a yellow car back and forth with his paws. "He's playing with it like his toy mouse," said Max.

"Do you think he stole our cars?" asked Doug.

The boys walked over to Fiddle's bed, which looked like a small brown cave with a blanket inside. Doug reached inside and felt around. "I got something!"

Doug pulled out all the missing Matchbook cars. "Looks like Fiddle was our thief!" said Max. "Who knew he liked people toys, too?"

Questions

1. Who does Max first suspect of taking his green car?
2. How do the boys know their family members didn't take their toys?
3. How do the boys solve the mystery?
4. According to the story, what does the word *thief* mean?