



The Spy Guy and the Case of the Stolen Soup



Printed on my door in big, bold letters are three words: “The Spy Guy.” I like the way that sounds: *The Spy Guy*. It’s the perfect name for a crime-fighting toucan like me. On this brisk fall morning, I grab a bite to eat and study my *Crime-Stopping Guidebook*.

A frail-faced guinea hen peeks around my door. “Mr. Spy Guy? May I speak with you for a moment?”



I never turn down someone in need, so I motion for her to come in and sit down. My guest is clearly distressed.

“My soup has been *stolen!*”

Tears fill her little bird eyes and I feel sorry for her. I whip out a pad and a pencil to take notes.



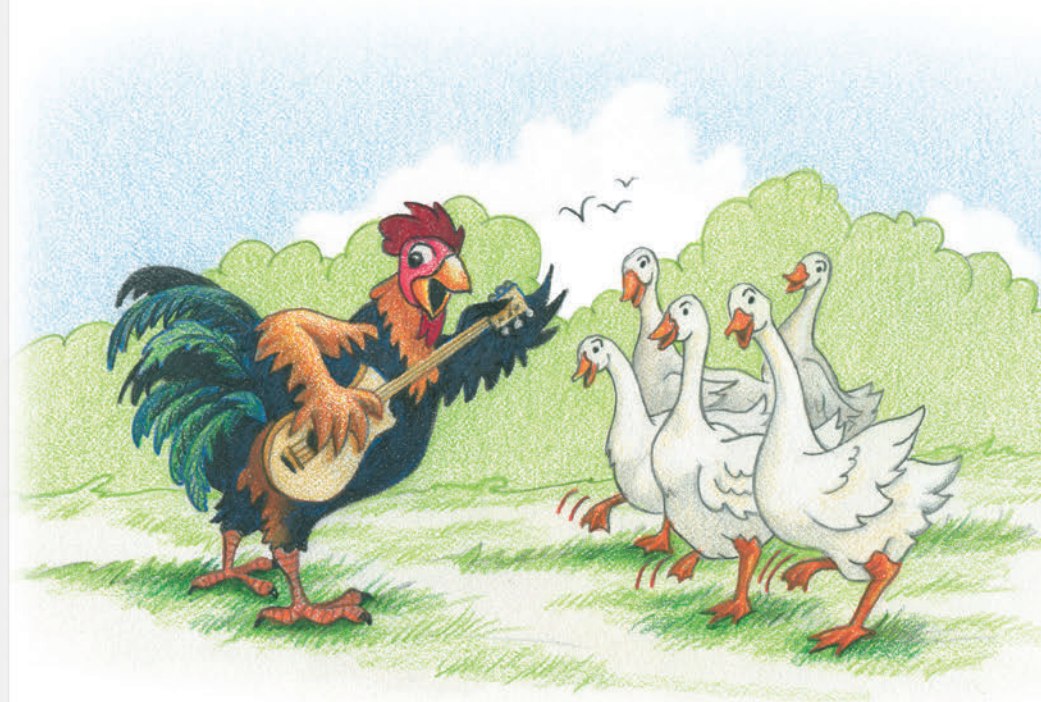
“What makes you think it’s been stolen?”
I demand. “Any suspects? Clues?”

Mrs. Guinea wipes her eyes. “The whole pot of soup just vanished! I have no idea what happened to it!” She leans closer. “I made my best soup recipe for my husband. *Now* what will he eat for supper tonight?”

I instantly know I am the right guy to handle this case. “I’ll get right on it,” I vow. I must find that soup, and the sooner the better. In just six short hours it will be suppertime, and no one should have to go hungry!

A small town seems like an unlikely place for a crime of this magnitude, but I stroll the streets, keeping my eyes peeled for anything that could prove to be a clue.

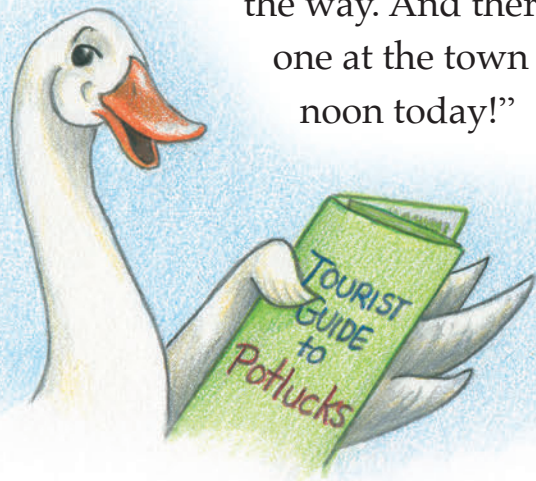
In the park, I come upon a group of tourists. Suspects! I sidle up to them. They are watching—or *pretending* to watch—a rooster play the guitar. I decide to question this gaggle of geese.



“So,” I say. “Does anybody know where I could get a good meal in this town? Like maybe some *soup*?”

The tourists smile at me. They appear to be a nice group of geese. I feel guilty for suspecting them just because they are strangers.

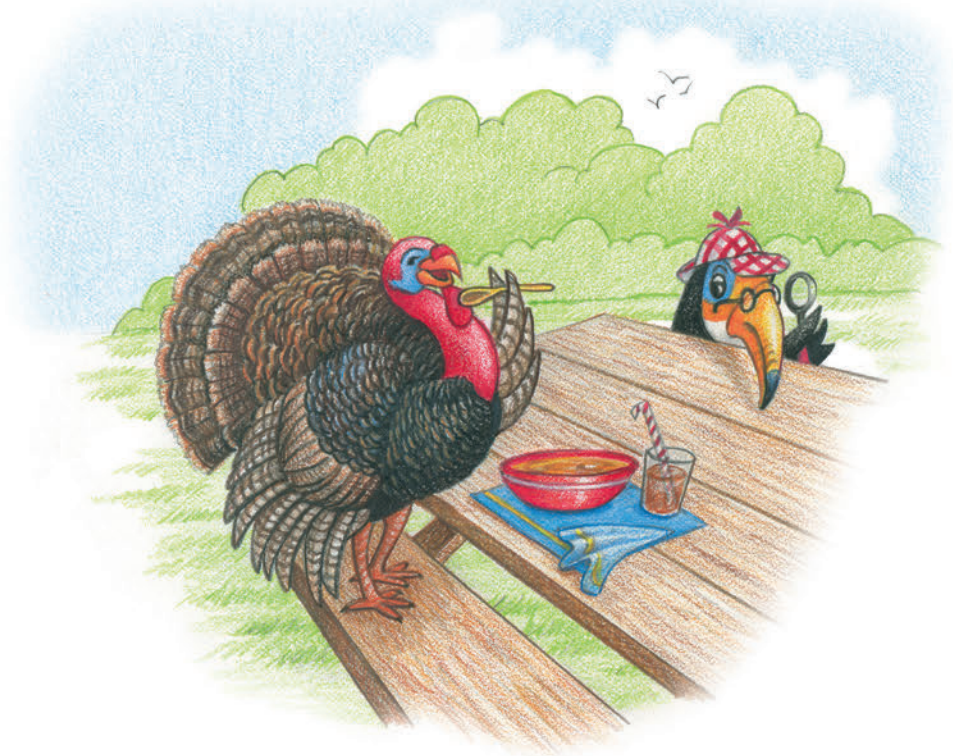
“As a matter of fact, we’re on our way to a potluck,” says one goose. “See?” She holds up a booklet: *Tourist Guide to Potlucks*. “As we travel south, we stop at potlucks along the way. And there’s one at the town hall at noon today!”



A potluck! My *Crime-Stopping Guidebook* says that suspects like to hide at large gatherings. I’m on my way.

When I arrive at the potluck, I scan the crowd for the culprit, wishing I’d remembered to wear a disguise. Right away, I spot a turkey with bushy tail feathers. He looks like he could be a soup snatcher.

I amble up to the table and lean against it.



“So,” I say to the turkey. “How’s that lunch of yours?”

The turkey slurps and swallows. “Superb. How’s yours?”

My *Crime-Stopping Guidebook* doesn’t cover conversations. I don’t know how to respond, so I clear my throat and say, “Nice day for a potluck, isn’t it?”

Then I notice the cow. I don’t know how I missed her. She is a spotted, big-eyed Guernsey cow.

I mosey on over to her side of the table. “Mind if I sit here?” I ask, motioning to the bench beside her.

She lifts her head out of her bowl. “Be my guest,” she replies with a pleasant Southern accent. “You must taste this! It’s heavenly!”



But I’m not interested in what she’s eating. I’m here to find the soup snatcher.

“I’m sure it’s really good,” I say. “But you wouldn’t happen to know where a guy can get a nice, warm bowl of *soup* around here, would you?”

Before the cow can respond, a spiffy-looking bird stops next to me, a serving towel over one arm and a big pot in the other.



“Will you be joining us?” he asks. “Let me serve you some lunch. But there isn’t much left in this pot. A whole gaggle of geese just about finished it off.”

I don’t want to draw attention to myself, so I accept. He sets a steaming bowl in front of me.

“Do you like it?” he inquires as I taste a spoonful.

I nod. The creamy goodness renders me speechless. I have never tasted anything so good.

“I’m glad!” he says as I go for another mouthful. “Doesn’t my wife make the most amazing soup?”

SPLAT! I spit soup all over the picnic table.



“Wait a minute ... are you Mr. Guinea? Is this Mrs. Guinea’s stolen soup?” *No wonder the soup was stolen, I think to myself. It’s really good!*

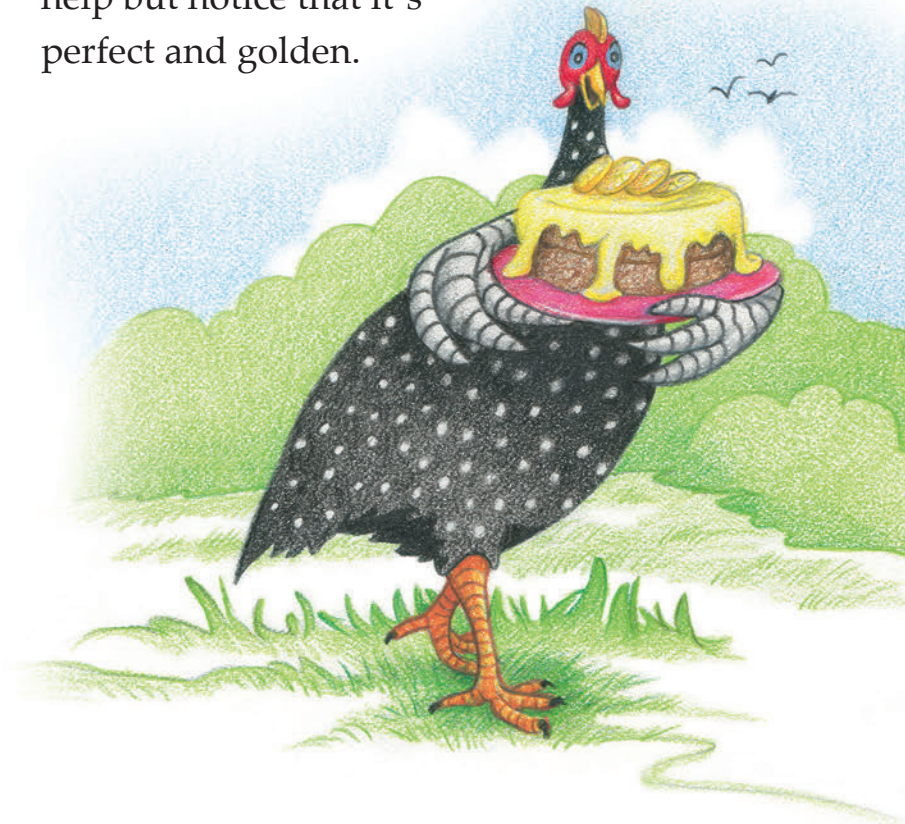
“What? Stolen soup?” Mr. Guinea says loudly. “Somebody stole my wife’s soup?”



Everyone at the potluck turns and stares at us. I start to explain, but Mr. Guinea is still confused.

Could Mr. Guinea be the culprit? I ask myself. But I can’t accuse him without more proof.

As I try to sort it out, Mrs. Guinea herself flutters over, unaware of the commotion. She’s carrying a lovely lemon cake and I can’t help but notice that it’s perfect and golden.



“Honey, you forgot to bring the lemon cake to the potluck lunch!” Mrs. Guinea says to her husband.

“*Lemon cake?*” Mr. Guinea looks at the soup pot in his arms. “But didn’t you make this *soup* for the potluck? I found it on the stove this morning.”

Mrs. Guinea gasps at the sight of the empty pot. “Oh, no! My soup! That was going to be our supper tonight!”



I try to turn the conversation back to happier things so I can finish my bowl of yummy goodness. “Now, now, look on the bright side, Mrs. Guinea! It was just an accident. Your soup is clearly the star of the potluck. Everybody thinks so—right, guys?” Cheers come up from the turkey, the Guernsey, the geese, the rooster, and me.



Mrs. Guinea smiles. “I guess I should be flattered that my soup is such a success. But next time, I’m going to stand guard and make sure nothing happens to it!”

Then Mrs. Guinea says something that is music to my ears. “Well, we can’t let this cake go to waste. Mr. Spy Guy, thanks for solving the case so quickly. Would you accept the first slice of cake?”

I dig my fork into that delightful lemon cake and savor my accomplishment. Being the Spy Guy is a hard job, but someone has to do it.



The End

