



by Andrew West  
with contributions from Jack Pachuta

**An interactive mystery game  
for 4 girls and 4 boys are suspects - up to 25 can play!  
(approx 10-13 years old)**

Here's how to organize the investigation:

**Before the party:**

1. Print off one copy of the suspect roles (pages 8 - 15).
2. Print off enough copies of the notes and answer sheet (pages 4 - 6) so that every child who is investigating the mystery has a set. You can, at your discretion, make "clipboards" by stapling these pages to sheets of cardboard.
3. Print off the solution (pages 16 & 17) and keep it hidden.

**At the party:**

1. Assign the roles to eight kids. Everybody else becomes private investigators hired to solve the case. No information needs to be memorized because each suspect has notes containing the answers to questions.
2. Read "Who would do this at Christmas?" and "Rules of the Game" (pages 2 & 3) out loud to everyone.
3. Distribute the notes and answer sheets to the investigators. The investigators will need to make notes to collect information. If the suspects are investigating the events, they'll also need clipboards.
4. Tell the kids to talk with each other to find out what everyone knows about the events. You can organize this if you want to, or you can just let it happen.
5. When time's up (after an hour or so) gather everybody together and, one at a time, ask them the questions on the answer sheet.
6. Read the solution to the crime. You may want to award a prize to the one who comes closest to the correct answers.



## The Strange Case of the Disappearing Presents

### Who would do this at Christmas?

The people of Spruce Valley were nervous. Two days of heavy snow had kept everybody inside their houses, as well as cutting off the town from the outside world. Nobody wanted a third snow day to spoil preparations for the Christmas celebration. Happily, the weather broke early on Christmas Eve morning, and snowplows began clearing the town's streets even though the roads into and out of town were still clogged with snow.

People went about their business. There was much to catch up on! The festivities were to take place in the town square with its huge Christmas tree. Every year, Hamley-Schwarz, the largest toy shop in town, donated wraps 100 presents and arranges them beneath the tree. After carols and Christmas cookies, the much-loved Mayor Bailey, dresses as Santa and arrives on a sleigh, then hands out the presents to the town's children.

By six o'clock everything was ready, and a soft snowfall welcomed the townsfolk to the beautifully decorated square. The town clock chimed six times, and the music began.

But behind the scenes is panic. Christine Cringle, the person in charge of the presents, has discovered that all of the presents have vanished! Only a small group of people knows about the theft, and it's hoped that the case can be solved without having to cancel everything.

Everybody is a suspect, and Christine has asked a group of trustworthy citizens to quietly investigate the incident. Mayor Bailey is due to arrive at 7:30 and nobody wants to let him down.

**How could this have happened? Who would be so cruel as to steal the children's presents on Christmas Eve? It's up to you to solve the mystery and save the Christmas celebration.**



# The Strange Case of the Disappearing Presents

Be sure to ask:

1. Who are you?
2. What have you done today?
3. Who do you think is responsible?



Notes about  
**Piney Needles**



Notes about  
**Bella Chimin**



Notes about  
**Christine Cringle**



Notes about  
**Tanny Baum**



## The Strange Case of the Disappearing Presents

### Ebenezer Creaky

You are a suspect. Always tell the truth when people ask you questions.

#### Who are you?

Ebenezer Creaky. I own Hamley-Schwarz and all the missing toys are still my property. I expect them to be recovered without delay, or I'll call in the police.

#### What have you done today?

I can tell you exactly. I had a productive business meeting with Bella at 9:00, then went back to my office where I made some telephone calls. Christmas Eve is one of our busiest days, and I wanted to make sure everything went smoothly. Some chance of that! At 10:30, I supervised the movement of presents from the store to the fountain. That was when I saw who they had employed for security. It was Piney Needles who used to be a security guard here at the store.

I caught him trespassing after work hours. He's not trustworthy. I couldn't believe somebody had put him in charge of guarding the presents! I complained to Christine, but she said it was too late to change it. I watched them pull the sheet over the fountain at 11:30. Then, I was in meetings for a few hours before I got an emergency phone call from the check-out counter. A reindeer was loose in my store! I didn't make it downstairs before it was captured, but I saw the mess. We had to close the store for 20 minutes while we straightened everything up. The reindeer broke a Roboraptor, and someone will pay for it. I was just as surprised as anybody to hear about the missing presents.

#### Who do you think is responsible?

Isn't it obvious? Talk to Piney. I suspected he was planning to rob me when I caught him trespassing in my store after hours. He clearly had something to do with this.

#### Do you know about the tunnel from Hamley-Schwarz to the fountain?

Yes, I've known about that since I found Piney coming out of it. Nobody would want to go down there! You have to crouch down through 20 feet of the storm sewer before you get to the junction that leads to the fountain. It's revolting down there, and we'd be able to tell anybody who'd been there by the smell!

#### What was the van delivering to your shop?

I made a slight mistake in my sales predictions. By early afternoon we were running out of toys. Normally, we'd have had a delivery this morning, but with the blocked roads it never arrived. We have a warehouse on the outskirts of town, so I arranged for a friend to deliver some extra toys. Why he parked in the main square I have no idea.

#### Did you ask Carrie to get the Roboraptor back from the fountain?

That is an outrageous suggestion! But if you promise to keep it between us? Yes, I did. I only had the one, and I could hardly allow my only remaining, most expensive toy to be given away for free, could I? It's not good business practice. She did a good job, but the reindeer broke it anyway this afternoon. I guess you'd call that justice, but I did what I had to do.

#### What were all the bags in your car?

These shoes are really expensive, you know! I put the bags over my feet when I'm outside so my shoes don't get damaged by the snow. Really!





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