

From the lost files of Dr. Watt's son

The Case of the Missing Binoculars

Dr. Watt was a respected scientist who had won fame and fortune by his celebrated studies of bird migration patterns. Every year for the last ten years, he and his large family had chased a flock as it flew south. Each time, the Watts clambered into their lime colored van and followed the birds for hundreds of miles. (Fortunately, the birds tended to fly above major highways.)

Although this was supposedly the family vacation, Dr. Watt couldn't stop very often or he would lose the birds. He didn't mind, but most of the rest of the family didn't quite share Dr. Watt's scientific enthusiasm.

It was always a long trip.

This year, Dr. Watt had sadly decided to leave everyone else at home except his oldest son, Harry.

Harry was excited. He enjoyed chasing the birds. He loved talking for hours with his father, who could get quite worked up during the chase. Also, he secretly hoped that his father would get tired enough to let him drive for awhile. Still, since he was only in sixth grade, he didn't let himself get too excited at the possibility.

The morning of the great expedition, the entire family rose at dawn to see them off. The van was packed. Harry was bright-eyed and eager. Mrs. Watt was anxiously rechecking the van. The rest of the children, **Susie, Annie, Louie, Gina, and Jerry**, were falling asleep.

Suddenly, there was an anguished cry from the house. Dr. Watt rushed out.

"What is it?" asked Gina.

"My binoculars!" cried Dr. Watt. "Look!"

The precious case which usually held the beloved binoculars was empty.

"Did you leave them somewhere, honey?" asked Mrs. Watt.

Her husband took little jumps around the lawn and scrutinized the sky. "Where would I have left them?" he asked. His face was pale. "The flock will fly by in ten minutes. If I can't find my binoculars in time, I can't go! Does anyone know where my binoculars are?"

Everyone loudly protested their ignorance. Dr. Watt groaned in despair.

"Wait, Dad," Harry said. "You're forgetting something."

"What?" asked Dr. Watt.

"We're all sleepwalkers," said Harry. "Except you and Mom, of course."

Dr. Watt slapped his forehead. "Oh no!" he cried. "Any one of you could have spirited them away! They could be anywhere in the whole house! And we only have five minutes to find them!"

"Don't worry," said Harry, as he yanked out a notebook and pen. Quickly he drew a grid. "When did you last notice your binoculars on the chair?"

"At 8:30 or so, just before I went to bed," Dr. Watt said. "I put them in the case and put it on the chair. I got to bed early so I'd be well rested for the trip."

"Are you sure, honey?" asked Mrs. Watt. "When I came in around 9:00 to check on the packing, I noticed that the case was open and empty."

"Ha!" cried Harry. "Then the binoculars were taken between 8:30 and 9:00 last night. No one took the

binoculars while he was awake, right? So the binoculars could only have been taken by someone who was asleep between 8:30 and 9:00! I, for instance, didn't get to bed until 10:00, so it wasn't me."

"We all went to bed pretty early last night so we could get up to see you off," said Susie. "But only a couple of us could have gone to bed before 9:00."

"Each of us monopolizes the bathroom for about 15 minutes to get ready for bed," said Harry. "So each person goes to bed around 15 minutes after the person before him. I was the last in bed. You five kids went to bed before me. If we count five 15-

minute periods before my bedtime at 10:00, we'll know when the first person went to bed. Five times 15 is 75 minutes. So the first person must have gone to bed 75 minutes before 10:00 PM. That would have been at 8:45 PM."

"So the first person in bed is the only one who could have sleepwalked before 9:00 PM!" cried Dr. Watt. "Who was first?"

All the children started talking at once. Harry scribbled furiously in the grid as they spoke. After telling him all they could remember, the children were quiet. There were precisely 47 seconds of tense silence. Then Harry shouted, "It was—"

Use the clues below to fill in the **entire** grid and figure out in what order the children went to bed. If you use all the clues and you still haven't found the culprit, quickly review this story. While there are no hidden clues, there may be an obvious fact or two that you forgot.

CLUES

1. **Susie:** I went to bed just before Harry. I'm quite sure of it.
2. **Annie:** Louie and Jerry were still playing checkers when I went to bed.
3. **Louie:** Gina went to bed before Jerry and I did.
4. **Jerry:** I wish I could have finished the game of checkers with Louie, but I had to go to bed first. (He stayed up for awhile.)
5. **Gina:** As usual, Annie got to stay up later than I.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Susie					
Annie					
Louie					
Jerry					
Gina					

The first one to go to bed was _____ .

When you have finished the puzzle, read the rest of the story on the next page.

Conclusion

“Are you going to finish your sentence, Harry?” asked Susie. Harry had stood with his mouth open for half a minute.

“Yes,” said Harry, a bit sulkily. “I was just being dramatic.” Then Harry said the name you wrote on the previous page.

Everyone thought for a moment.

“Do you remember doing anything?” Dr. Watt asked the culprit.

“No!” cried the culprit. “I was asleep!”

“Well, now what, Harry?” said Dr. Watt.

“At least we know who the culprit was!” said Harry.

“But how does that help us?” asked one of the children. “We still don’t know where the binoculars actually are.”

“Oh,” said Harry. “True. Well, ah, I suppose now we know to check that person’s bedroom.”

“We could have just all checked our bedrooms in the first place!” cried another child. “This was a waste of time!”

“No, wait!” cried the culprit, with a look of dawning recognition. “Now that you mention it, I just remembered that I had a very strange dream last night. I put a really big toy surprise inside our box of oatmeal. You know, the big box?”

“AAH!” cried Dr. Watt. He raced into the house.

“Case closed!” said Harry.

Just then, tiny shadows began to flit across their lawn. The birds had come.

“Got it!” yelled Dr. Watt, as he leapt out the front door and brushed oats off his binoculars. He jumped into the van and fired up the engine. There was a chaos of squawks, a roar of a motor, and then all was quiet. They had gone.

The culprit yawned. “I’m tired,” the innocent villain said. “Can I go back to sleep?”

“NO!” cried everyone else.