

*The
Summer
Lost-
and-
Found*



Gixo Folio

October 03, 2026

The Summer Lost-and-Found

by Gixo Folio

Copyright © 2026 Gixo

A sample chapter book written by Gixo Folio. Every person, place and event in it is invented.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	The Cupboard by the School Gate
Chapter 2	The Tin Moon Trail
Chapter 3	Footprints by the Garden Gate
Chapter 4	The Shed with a Secret
Chapter 5	The Missing Sock Chase
Chapter 6	The Summer Cupboard Surprise

CHAPTER 1

The Cupboard by the School Gate

A Sock with Excellent Aim

"BANG!" YELLED MILO REED AS THE CUPBOARD DOOR FLEW open.

A blue-and-yellow striped sock landed right on his head.

Then another sock bounced off his shoulder.

A third sock flopped into the school gate puddle.

"Oh dear," said Mrs. Brindle.

Milo stood very still beneath the sock. The cupboard groaned behind him.

Then a cheerful pile of lost things tumbled out.

There were socks, gloves, caps, scarves, and one bright green trainer.

The trainer landed upside down beside Milo's foot.

Its laces waved in the breeze like tiny white worms.

Milo lifted the striped sock from his head.

"Well," he said, "the socks have chosen me."

Mrs. Brindle blinked.

"Chosen you for what?"

"To be their captain," Milo said proudly. "Captain Milo of Sock Mountain."

Mrs. Brindle tried not to laugh. Her round cheeks wobbled anyway.

"A fine job," she said. "Though Captain Sock Mountain must first clear the path."

Milo looked at the heap. It reached almost to his knees.

"Do socks need a captain?" he asked.

"Not usually," Mrs. Brindle said. "But these ones need owners."

The village school stood quiet behind them. Summer had begun yesterday.

No children raced across the playground now. No bells rang for lessons.

Only a pigeon strutted near the gate, looking very important.

Milo picked up the wet sock from the puddle.

"First rule of being captain," he said. "Never leave a sock behind."

The pigeon cooed loudly.

"Even you agree," Milo told it.

Mrs. Brindle handed him an old laundry basket.

"Put the things in here, please."

Milo began scooping. A red mitten. A purple scarf. A cap with a bent brim.

Then he found something that was not soft at all.

It was a little wooden boat.

Milo turned it over in his hand.

"This doesn't look like lost property," he said.

"Everything looks like lost property," Mrs. Brindle replied, "until somebody finds it."

Milo thought that sounded clever. Mrs. Brindle often said clever things while carrying buckets.

He placed the boat carefully in the basket.

Under it lay a silver-colored tin moon.

It was small, flat, and shiny around the edges.

"Now that," said Milo, "looks like moon property."

Mrs. Brindle laughed out loud.

"Best put it in the basket before it floats away."

Milo Gets the Key

They worked until the cupboard floor appeared again.

It was dusty and scratched, with one loose floorboard.

Mrs. Brindle shut the door gently this time.

"There," she said. "Much better."

Milo stared at the cupboard. It stood beside the school gate.

Its paint was dark green, except where it had peeled.

A brass keyhole glinted beneath the handle.

Mrs. Brindle took a key from her pocket.

It was tied to a yellow string.

"Milo," she said, "would you like a summer job?"

"A real job?"

"A small real job," said Mrs. Brindle. "Still very important."

Milo stood taller. He was seven, but he could stand quite tall.

"What do I have to do?"

Mrs. Brindle held up the key.

"Mind the lost-property cupboard. Keep it tidy. Help people collect their things."

Milo's eyes widened.

"You mean I get the key?"

"You get the key," Mrs. Brindle said.

She put it into his palm.

It felt cool and heavy.

"But there is one rule," she added.

"Only one?" said Milo. "That sounds easy."

"Ask before guessing who owns something."

Milo nodded slowly.

"Because guessing could make a bigger mess?"

"Exactly," said Mrs. Brindle.

Milo looked at the cupboard door. He remembered the sock avalanche.

He was good at making messes without meaning to.

Last week, he had tried to water his aunt's flowers. He watered one shoe, one chair, and himself.

"I can do this," he said. "I'll be careful."

Mrs. Brindle smiled.

"Careful is a wonderful word."

"And I won't let the socks escape again," Milo promised.

"A brave promise," she said.

Milo slipped the yellow string over his wrist.

The key dangled beside his hand.

For a moment, he felt like the keeper of a secret castle.

Then a sock fell from the cupboard roof.

It landed on his nose.

"Captain's first problem," Milo muttered.

The Things Without Names

That afternoon, Milo brought the basket to a table outside the school hall.

The hall smelled of floor polish and old paper.

Sunlight made bright squares on the wooden floor.

Bea Morris arrived first, carrying a notebook and three pencils.

Bea liked maps, plans, and labels. Her pencil case had labels too.

One said PENCILS.

The other said MORE PENCILS.

"What happened?" Bea asked.

Milo pointed at the basket.

"The cupboard exploded socks."

Bea looked at him carefully.

"Did it really explode?"

"Not with fire," Milo said. "With fluff."

Bea nodded. "That makes more sense."

Tavi Khan burst through the hall door next.

"I came as fast as possible!" he announced.

"Why?" Bea asked.

"Milo said there was a mystery."

"I said there was lost property," Milo replied.

Tavi grinned. "Same thing, sometimes."

Tavi loved puzzles. He also loved climbing walls, jumping puddles, and asking questions before breakfast.

"Show us," he said.

Milo tipped the basket onto the table.

Out came the mitten, the tin moon, and the tiny wooden boat.

There were also three socks, a hat, and a comb missing teeth.

Tavi picked up the comb.

"This belongs to a very brave hedgehog," he said.

Bea made a small snorting sound.

"Hedgehogs do not comb their hair."

"How do you know?" Tavi asked.

"I have never seen one with hair," Bea replied.

Milo laughed so hard he almost dropped the key.

"Let's make a list," Bea said.

She opened her notebook to a clean page.

At the top, she wrote: THINGS WITHOUT NAMES.

"That sounds sad," Milo said.

"It is only until we find the names," Bea explained.

Milo liked that better.

Bea wrote each thing down.

- One red mitten
- One tin moon
- One tiny wooden boat
- Three socks that may be friends
- One toothless comb

"The socks are definitely friends," Milo said.

"We cannot know that," Bea said.

"They lived together in the cupboard," he told her.

Tavi tapped the wooden boat.

"This is the strange one."

"The moon is strange too," Milo said.
"And the mitten," Bea added. "It has a green stain."
"Jam?" asked Milo.
"Paint?" said Tavi.
"Pond slime?" Milo suggested.
Bea shut her notebook.
"Mrs. Brindle said we must ask before guessing owners."
Tavi folded his arms.
"We can guess what happened."
"That might be allowed," Bea said.
"But we should not decide," Milo added.
They all nodded.
It felt like a proper rule for a proper team.

A Bell in the Drawing

Tavi lifted the tiny wooden boat again.
It had a pointed front and a curved back.
Someone had painted one blue stripe along its side.
"Maybe it sailed through a drain," Tavi said.
"Maybe it floated in a puddle," Milo said.
"Maybe it was carried by a bird," Bea said.
Tavi stared at her.
"A bird carrying a boat?"
Bea shrugged. "You said a drain."
Milo turned the boat upside down. Something rustled inside.
"Listen," he said.
All three leaned closer.
"Shake it gently," Bea warned.

Milo gave the boat the tiniest shake.
A folded piece of paper slipped from a crack underneath.
It fluttered onto the table.
No one spoke for a moment.
Then Tavi whispered, "Message vessel."
"You were joking," Milo said.
"I was partly joking," Tavi replied. "Those are the best jokes."
Bea unfolded the paper with both hands.
Inside was a drawing, made in thick black pencil.
It showed a bell on a tall post.
Beside the bell was a circle of flowers.
Underneath, someone had drawn three short lines.
"I know that bell," Milo said.
His heart gave a quick little jump.
"Which bell?" Bea asked.
"The one beside the school garden," Milo said. "Near the gate
with the climbing roses."
Tavi bounced on his toes.
"A boat message points to a garden bell!"
"It could be a picture from art class," Bea said.
"Then why hide it inside a boat?" Tavi asked.
Bea looked down at the drawing again.
"That is a good question."
Milo touched the yellow key around his wrist.
He had wanted to prove he could help.
Now helping felt much bigger than putting socks in baskets.
"We should look," he said.
"Carefully," Bea reminded him.
"Bravely," Tavi added.

"And without making a bigger mess," Milo said.

Bea opened her notebook. On a fresh page, she began drawing the school grounds.

There was the hall. The playground. The cupboard by the gate.

Then she drew the winding path to the garden bell.

Tavi leaned over her shoulder.

"Put an X by the bell."

"We do not know it is an X place," Bea said.

"Put a tiny question mark, then."

Bea drew one.

Milo peered through the open hall door.

Beyond the quiet playground, roses climbed the garden gate.

The bell hung beside them, still and shiny.

Then the wind blew.

Clink.

The bell gave one small ring.

Under the bell, something silver flashed in the grass.

Milo gasped.

"Did you see that?"

Tavi grabbed the wooden boat.

Bea clutched her map.

The three friends ran toward the garden gate.

What was waiting beneath the bell?

CHAPTER 2

The Tin Moon Trail

A Moon in the Sunlight

"THERE!" MILO SHOUTED, SKIDDING BESIDE THE GARDEN gate.

Something flashed in the grass like a tiny sunrise. Milo threw up both hands to shield his eyes.

"My eyeballs!" he cried. "They have been moon-blinded!"

Tavi dropped to his knees beside the roses. Bea arrived behind him, holding her notebook shut.

"It is only sunlight," Bea said. "Your eyeballs will survive."

Tavi parted the long grass carefully. Then he gave a delighted gasp.

"The tin moon!" he said.

It lay beneath the bell, bright and silver-colored. One pointed tip poked from the grass.

Milo picked it up gently. It felt warm from the sun.

"It must have fallen from the cupboard pile," he said. "Or it rolled here by itself."

"Things do not usually roll uphill," Bea said.

"Maybe this moon is very determined," Milo replied.

Tavi stared at the shiny curve. "I know who owns it."

Bea raised one eyebrow. "Do you?"

"A night-watching astronomer," Tavi announced. "Someone who studies stars and moons."

Milo looked toward the village road. "Do we have one nearby?"

Tavi's smile shrank a little. "Not that I know of."

"Then we must ask before guessing," Bea reminded them.

Milo nodded. Mrs. Brindle's rule still felt important around his wrist. The brass key bumped against his hand.

"We can ask people if they lost it," he said. "That is not guessing."

"Excellent," Bea said. "First, we need details."

She opened her notebook and wrote quickly.

"One small tin moon," Bea read aloud. "Silver-colored. Flat. Shiny edges."

"Possibly from an astronomer," Tavi added.

Bea did not write that part.

The garden bell gave a soft clink above them. Everyone looked up.

"Did you hear it?" Milo asked.

"The wind moved it," Bea said.

But the air felt very still.

Tavi glanced at the drawing from the wooden boat. "The bell is in the picture. The flowers too."

"That means this place matters," Milo said.

"Or somebody liked drawing bells," Bea replied.

Milo turned the moon in his fingers. "Let's find out."

The Playground Question

The playground was not empty anymore. Summer club had begun after lunch.

Children chased hoops, swung from the climbing frame, and built a fort from benches. A teacher watched from a shady chair.

Milo held up the tin moon.

"Has anyone lost this?" he called.

A small boy near the sand tray hurried over. He had crumbs on his jumper.

"Is that a biscuit?" he asked.

Tavi looked shocked. "A metal biscuit?"

The boy leaned closer. "It is shiny. Maybe it has silver sugar."

"Please do not lick it," Bea said quickly.

"I was only going to sniff it," the boy said.

He sniffed the moon anyway. Then his nose wrinkled.

"It smells like old coins," he said. "Definitely not biscuit."

"A useful test," Milo said.

The boy ran back to the sand tray. "Tell me if you find a biscuit moon!"

"We will not," Bea called after him.

They asked three children by the hoops. Nobody had seen the moon before.

They asked a girl sitting under the slide. She had lost a red hair ribbon.

"It was not mine," she said. "But I saw something shiny yesterday."

Milo leaned forward. "Where?"

"By the gate," she said. "Or maybe it was a sweet wrapper."

"Was it shaped like a moon?" Tavi asked.

"Could be," said the girl. "Or a squashed fish."

Tavi opened his mouth, but Bea touched his elbow.

"Thank you," Bea said kindly. "That helps."

As they walked away, Milo whispered, "How does a moon look like a fish?"

"When it is squashed," Tavi said.

"Moons cannot be squashed," Bea said.

"Not with that attitude," Tavi replied.

They reached the climbing frame. Two older children were arguing over a skipping rope.

"I had it first!" one shouted.

"You had it tangled first," said the other.

Milo waited for a pause. It took a while.

"Excuse me," he said. "Did either of you lose a tin moon?"

The taller child stared at it. "No."

The other child shook her head. "But I saw Mr. Wren looking for something."

"Mr. Wren?" Bea repeated.

Mr. Wren was the school gardener. He wore a floppy hat and muddy boots.

"When?" Milo asked.

"This morning," said the girl. "He was near the garden."

"What was he looking for?" Tavi asked.

The girl shrugged. "Maybe his trowel."

"Or a moon," Tavi said.

"Gardeners do not usually use moons," Bea replied.

"They use lots of odd things," Tavi said. "String. Pots. Tiny forks."

"Those are not moons," Bea said.

They thanked the children and crossed the sloping playground. Milo studied the tin moon as he walked.

"We have asked lots of people," he said. "Nobody knows it."

"Not yet," Bea replied. "Listening takes time."

"I listened," Tavi said.

"You spoke during most of it," Bea said.

Tavi thought about that. "I can listen louder next time."

"That is not how listening works," Milo said.

A Wobbly Search

Milo reached the little hill beside the playground fence. He held the moon up again.

"Perhaps it belongs to somebody at the summer club," he said.

A breeze brushed his fingers.

The moon slipped.

"Oh!" Milo cried.

The tin moon hit the path with a ping. Then it rolled downhill.

"After it!" Tavi yelled.

Milo ran first. Bea tucked her notebook under her arm and raced beside him.

The moon bounced past a bench. It spun under the slide.

"Left!" shouted Milo.

"I can see that!" Bea called.

The moon rolled faster. It flashed between two flowerpots.

Tavi leaped over the pots. His shoelace came undone, but he kept running.

"Stop rolling!" he told the moon.

The moon did not listen.

It rattled toward the rain barrel beside the garden path. Next to it sat an empty metal bucket.

Tavi grabbed the bucket by its handle.

"Stand back!" he shouted.

"Why?" Milo asked.

"Because I have a plan!"

Tavi slid down the last bit of hill. He pushed the bucket across the path.

Ping!

The tin moon rolled straight inside.

"Got it!" Tavi cried.

He bent to look into the bucket.

Then he tipped the bucket too far.

It dropped over his head with a hollow clonk.

"Tavi?" Bea asked.

Two hands appeared beneath the bucket rim. They waved slowly.

"I am fine," Tavi's voice boomed. "But I appear to be a bucket person."

Milo laughed so hard he had to sit down.

"Do not laugh," Tavi said. "I cannot see where my feet are."

"They are under you," Bea said.

"That is a relief."

Bea carefully lifted the bucket. Tavi blinked in the sunlight.

A leaf clung to his hair. The tin moon sat at his feet.

"You caught it," Milo said, still grinning.

"A true explorer uses every useful object," Tavi declared.

"Including his own head?" Bea asked.

"Especially that," Tavi said.

Milo picked up the moon again. This time, he held it tightly.

"Wait," Bea said. "Turn it over."

On the back was a tiny painted flower. It had five red petals and a yellow middle.

Milo's smile disappeared. "That looks familiar."

Bea looked toward the garden gate.

Painted beside its latch was the very same flower.

"A clue," Tavi whispered.

The Garden Bell Rings

The friends hurried through the gate. Roses climbed over the arch above them.

Mr. Wren knelt beside a row of beans. His floppy hat was dusty with soil.

"Hello, team," he said. "Have you come to inspect my carrots?"

"Not today," Milo said. "We found this."

He showed the tin moon.

Mr. Wren wiped his hands on his trousers. He studied the painted flower for a long moment.

"Well now," he said softly. "That flower is from this gate."

"Does the moon belong here?" Bea asked.

"I do not know," Mr. Wren said. "But I heard something strange."

Tavi bounced once. "A moon noise?"

"A bell," Mr. Wren replied. "Last evening, after closing time."

Milo looked at the tall post beside the roses.

"This bell rang?" he asked.

Mr. Wren nodded. "Just once. Clink."

"Was anyone here?" Bea asked.

"I did not see anyone," Mr. Wren said. "I was packing my tools."

"Could the wind ring it?" Milo asked.

Mr. Wren looked at the quiet leaves. "Perhaps. But there was hardly any wind."

Tavi grinned. "Then somebody came through the gate!"

"Maybe," said Mr. Wren. "And maybe they dropped this moon."

Milo touched the painted flower with one finger. The clue felt bigger now.

"We should check the cupboard," Bea said. "It is where the moon was found."

"Carefully," Milo said.

"Quietly," Bea added.

"And without wearing any more buckets," Tavi said.

They hurried back along the path. The school gate stood open in the sunshine.

The dark green cupboard waited beside it.

Milo slowed down.

Something was different.

On the dusty ground beside the cupboard door was a fresh muddy footprint.

It pointed toward the garden.

And beside it lay one tiny red rose petal.

"Someone was here," Milo whispered.

The cupboard gave a small creak.

Who had come to the cupboard after closing time?

CHAPTER 3

Footprints by the Garden Gate

Tracks in the Dust

"THERE!" MILO CRIED. HE POINTED SO FAST THAT HIS YELLOW key bounced.

The fresh muddy footprint faced the green garden gate. Its toe pointed straight toward the roses.

Bea crouched beside it. "Nobody step on it," she said. "Especially nobody with large, excited feet."

Tavi froze with one trainer raised. "You mean me."

"I mean all of us," Bea said.

"But mostly him," Milo added.

Tavi put his foot down behind him. "I am now a statue."

The muddy print was smaller than Milo's hand. It had a rounded heel and little bumps along the front.

"It does not look like Mr. Pottle's boot," Milo said.

"No," Bea replied. "His boots make square marks."

She found a thin twig beneath the hedge. Then she laid it carefully beside the footprint.

"What are you doing?" Tavi asked.

"Measuring," Bea said. "A clue is more useful when you know its size."

Milo watched her make two tiny marks on the twig. "Is it small?"

"Very small," Bea said. "About as long as my pencil sharpener."

Tavi's eyes grew wide. "A tiny detective!"

"Or a child," Bea said.

"Children are also tiny detectives sometimes," Milo said.

Bea looked at the print again. "It could be a small shoe. But the front is odd."

"Maybe it has six toes," Tavi whispered.

Milo looked down at his own shoes. "I hope not. Shoes with six toes would need extra socks."

"Captain Sock Mountain would be delighted," Tavi said.

"Captain Sock Mountain has retired," Milo replied. "He is now a serious lost-property keeper."

"With a moon in his pocket," Bea said.

Milo patted the tin moon safely inside his shorts pocket. It made a small clink.

The friends compared their shoes with the footprint. Milo's trainers were too long. Bea's sandals had flower shapes underneath.

Tavi's trainers had a zigzag pattern. "Mine look much more exciting," he said.

"They also look much muddier," Bea said.

Tavi inspected his soles. "That is adventure mud."

"Do not add adventure mud to the clue," Bea warned.

They followed the prints through the gate. One appeared near the roses. Another marked the dusty path.

Then the trail stopped beside the garden step.

"Where did it go?" Milo asked.

"Maybe it flew," Tavi said.

"Small shoes do not fly," Bea replied.

"You have not met every small shoe," Tavi said.

Milo bent closer to the ground. A brown smear ran toward the step.

"Look," he said. "Something went this way."

"Carefully," Bea reminded them.

They moved closer, one slow step at a time.

The Snail on the Step

A snail sat in the middle of the step.

It had a shiny brown shell and two long feelers. Its body stretched across the path like a tiny, wobbly bridge.

Tavi stopped at once. He gave the snail a solemn salute.

"Good morning, Garden Guardian," he said.

The snail pulled in one feeler.

"It is startled," Bea whispered.

"It has an important job," Tavi whispered back. "Important jobs are startling."

Milo crouched beside the step. "Maybe it saw the mystery person."

"Can snails remember faces?" Tavi asked.

"Probably," Milo said. "Though they might be slow at explaining."

Bea pointed to a patch of mud near the snail. "There is another mark."

The print was smudged, but it pointed toward the potting shed. A row of flowerpots stood outside its door.

"The trail goes there," Bea said.

"After the guardian lets us pass," Tavi said.

"We can walk around it," Milo said.

The friends stepped carefully off the path. Tavi lifted his feet very high.

"Why are you walking like that?" Bea asked.

"I do not want to surprise any more guards," he said.

Milo nearly laughed. Then he saw something bright beside the largest flowerpot.

"Green!" he said.

A narrow green ribbon was caught beneath the pot. One end fluttered in the warm breeze.

Bea held up a hand. "Do not pull it yet."

Milo stopped. His fingers were already reaching.

"Mrs. Brindle's rule," he said quietly. "Ask before guessing."

"And Mr. Pottle said to be careful," Bea added.

Tavi peered around the flowerpot. "Maybe the ribbon belongs to a secret garden club."

"Maybe," Milo said. "But we should ask Mr. Pottle before moving anything else."

Tavi stared at the potting shed door. "What if the clues run away?"

"Ribbons do not usually run," Bea said.

"This one is already trying to fly," Tavi replied.

Bea opened her notebook. On the page called THINGS WITHOUT NAMES, she wrote:

- One tin moon with a painted flower
- One tiny wooden boat

- Small muddy footprints
- One green ribbon by a flowerpot

Milo read the list. "It feels like all the things know each other."

"Things cannot know each other," Bea said.

Tavi nodded toward the ribbon. "Then why are they all hiding near the garden?"

Bea shut her notebook slowly. "That is a good question."

Three Ideas, One Plan

Tavi marched toward the shed. "We should search every shed now."

"There are three sheds," Milo said.

"Exactly," Tavi replied. "Three sheds. Three clues. That is a sign."

"It is not a sign," Bea said. "It is counting."

"We should check the clue list first," she continued. "We might see a pattern."

Tavi folded his arms. "Lists do not find things."

"They stop us from forgetting things," Bea said.

Milo looked from the shed to Bea's notebook. Tavi wanted to rush ahead.

Bea wanted to think everything through. Milo understood both feelings.

He wanted to know about the muddy prints. But he did not want to make a bigger mess.

"What if we do both?" he said.

Bea and Tavi turned toward him.

"How?" Bea asked.

Milo pointed at the notebook. "Bea checks the list. Tavi looks at the shed doors."

"Only the outside," Milo added quickly. "No opening doors. No touching pots."

Tavi's face brightened. "A careful outside search."

"Then we ask Mr. Pottle about the ribbon," Milo said. "After that, we know more."

Bea thought for a moment. "That is fair."

"It is also fast," Tavi said.

"And careful," Milo reminded him.

"Fast, fair, and careful," Tavi said. "A perfect detective plan."

Bea drew three boxes in her notebook. "One box for each shed."

"I get the first shed," Tavi said.

"We stay together," Bea told him.

"Then we all get the first shed."

They began at the potting shed. Its wooden door was shut tight. A small padlock hung from the handle.

"Locked," Tavi said. "Very mysterious."

"Very normal," Bea replied. "Tools should be locked away."

Beside the door lay a tiny muddy mark. It was half hidden under a dry leaf.

"Another footprint," Milo said.

Bea measured it with her twig. "Same size."

Tavi pointed behind the shed. "The trail goes around there."

They followed it past a water barrel and two empty buckets. The muddy marks ended at a low window.

The window was closed. Its glass was dusty, except for one clean little streak.

"Someone looked inside," Tavi breathed.

"Or a bird bumped it," Bea said.

"Birds do not wear small shoes," Milo said.

Bea made a note. "Clean streak on shed window."

"What would you do?" Tavi asked the snail, which had now reached a lettuce leaf.

The snail did not answer.

"It says we should ask Mr. Pottle," Milo guessed.

"Wise guardian," Tavi said.

A Ribbon in the Shed

Mr. Pottle was trimming dead lavender flowers near the bean plants. His floppy hat drooped over one eye.

"Hello again, young detectives," he said. "Have the muddy marks told you a story?"

"Not yet," Milo said. "But we found this."

He pointed to the green ribbon. Mr. Pottle walked over and bent beside the flowerpot.

"Ah," he said. "I recognize that ribbon."

Tavi bounced once. "Whose is it?"

Mr. Pottle scratched his chin. "That is the trouble. I cannot remember."

Bea looked surprised. "You recognize it, but not the owner?"

"I saw it tied around something yesterday," Mr. Pottle said. "Or perhaps the day before."

"Around what?" Milo asked.

Mr. Pottle sighed. "That part has wandered out of my head."

Tavi looked toward the sheds. "Maybe it wandered into there."

Mr. Pottle smiled. "The sheds are locked, I am afraid."

"Could you look inside with us?" Milo asked. "We will not touch anything."

Mr. Pottle studied their serious faces. Then he nodded.

"A careful look," he said. "That sounds sensible."

He took a key ring from his pocket. It jingled like tiny bells.

The shed door creaked open. Inside smelled of soil, wood, and raincoats.

There were trowels on hooks. There were seed trays on shelves. There were boots lined up beneath a bench.

Tavi whispered, "This is better than a treasure cave."

"Hands by your sides," Bea reminded him.

Tavi pressed both hands against his own pockets.

Milo looked around slowly. A stack of empty flowerpots stood in one corner. Behind them, something yellow peeked out.

"Mr. Pottle?" he said. "May I move that top pot?"

Mr. Pottle nodded. "Gently."

Milo lifted one pot. Then another.

Behind them lay a paper sun.

It was cut from thick yellow card. Orange lines danced around its edge.

In the middle was a painted flower with five red petals.

Milo pulled out the tin moon. He held it beside the paper sun.

The same red flower shone on both pieces.

"They match," Bea breathed.

Tavi leaned close. "A sun and a moon."

"And a boat," Milo said.

Mr. Pottle's eyebrows lifted. "That sun was not there this morning."

Then something tapped against the far shed wall.

Tap.

Tap-tap.

The three friends went still.

From behind a pile of watering cans came a small, scared sneeze.

"Who is in the shed?" Milo whispered.

CHAPTER 4

The Shed with a Secret

A Knock in the Quiet

"WHO IS IN THE SHED?" MILO WHISPERED.

Tap. Tap-tap.

Then came the small, frightened sound again.

"Shh-choo!"

Tavi leaped behind Milo so quickly that Milo wobbled.

"I am being brave," Tavi whispered. "From back here."

"You are standing on my sandal," Bea said.

"That is part of the brave plan," Tavi replied.

Mr. Pottle lifted his floppy hat. He peered over the watering cans.

"Nobody move too fast," he said. "A scared creature might run."

Milo's yellow key tapped against his wrist. He did not want creatures running around sheds.

He also did not want to find a creature with six toes.

"Could it be the tiny detective?" Tavi asked.

"Or a large squirrel," Milo said.

Bea gave him a look. "Large squirrels do not sneeze in sheds."

"You have not met every squirrel," Milo said.

The shed went quiet.

Outside, bees buzzed around the lavender. A breeze rustled the bean leaves.

Then-tap. Tap-tap.

Milo pointed toward the far wall. "There!"

Mr. Pottle walked slowly past the bench. He moved one watering can aside.

Nothing jumped out.

He moved another can.

Still nothing.

Tavi peeked around Milo's shoulder. "Maybe it has become invisible."

"That would be difficult," Bea said.

"Not for a clever squirrel," Tavi replied.

Mr. Pottle opened the little side window. A gust of warm air blew inside.

Tap!

A wooden shutter beside the window banged against the wall.

Tap-tap!

The shutter swung again. Its loose metal hook rattled.

"That is the knock," Bea said.

Mr. Pottle nodded. "The hook must have slipped free."

Milo let out a long breath. "So nobody was knocking?"

"Only the breeze," said Mr. Pottle.

Tavi stepped out from behind Milo. "I knew that."

"Did you?" Bea asked.

"Of course. I was guarding Milo from the breeze."

"Thank you," Milo said. "I feel very safe."

But then the strange sneeze came again.

"Shh-choo!"

All three friends froze.
Mr. Pottle smiled and pointed upward.
A dry seed packet was caught in a crack above the window.
Each gust made it flap.
"Shh-choo!" it went.
Tavi blinked. "A sneezing packet."
"It needs a handkerchief," Milo said.
Even Mr. Pottle laughed.
Bea looked at the rattling shutter. "The shutter was hiding the sound."
"And the packet was hiding the sneeze," Milo said.
"A very noisy hiding place," Tavi added.
Mr. Pottle fastened the shutter hook again. The shed became still at once.
"There," he said. "No secret visitor after all."
Milo glanced around the shadowy shed. The paper sun still lay near the flowerpots.
Its red flower matched the tin moon in his pocket.
"Maybe there is still a secret," Milo said.

The Bundle Under the Bench

Bea walked toward the bench. "The sounds distracted us."
"That is what sneezing packets do," Tavi said solemnly.
"They are very sneaky."
Under the bench, something pale showed behind a row of muddy boots.
Milo crouched down. "There is a cloth there."
"Ask first," Bea reminded him.

Milo looked at Mr. Pottle. "May I move the boots?"

"Gently," said Mr. Pottle.

Milo slid the boots aside one by one. They were heavy and smelled of damp soil.

Tavi wrinkled his nose. "Those boots have been somewhere serious."

"The vegetable patch," Mr. Pottle said.

"Very serious," Tavi agreed.

Behind the last boot was a small cloth bundle. It was tied with green string.

The string looked just like the ribbon by the flowerpot.

Bea opened her notebook. "Green tie. Cloth bundle. Found under bench."

"Should we open it?" Milo asked.

Mr. Pottle thought for a moment. "You may look. But keep everything together."

Milo untied the string carefully. The cloth unfolded like a little blanket.

Inside lay three things.

There was a round red button with a shiny gold edge.

There was a soft purple scarf with tiny white stars.

There was a short strip of blue ribbon.

A tiny silver bell was tied to the ribbon.

Tavi gasped. "A bell ribbon!"

Milo remembered the garden bell ringing once after closing time.

"Maybe it came from the bell," he said.

"Maybe," Bea replied. "But we do not decide."

Milo nodded. Mrs. Brindle's rule still mattered.

"One red button," Bea said, writing. "One purple scarf. One blue bell ribbon."

"Put them on our list," Milo said. "Not in the clue pile."

Bea looked pleased. "Exactly."

"They could be clues," Tavi said.

"They could," Milo replied. "But first, they are things without names."

Tavi considered this. "That sounds fair."

He picked up the scarf. "I can carry everything back."

"It is quite long," Bea warned.

"I have strong arms," Tavi said.

He looped the scarf around his neck once.

Then twice.

Then three times.

The purple cloth slid over his head.

"Tavi?" Milo asked.

Two trainers shuffled beneath the scarf.

"I am fine," Tavi's muffled voice said. "I am also a purple mountain."

Bea tugged one end of the scarf. Tavi's head popped out.

His hair stood up like the surprised brush again.

"Perhaps the scarf carries you," Milo said.

Tavi handed it back quickly. "It is stronger than it looks."

Mr. Pottle chuckled. "Lost things can be full of surprises."

Bea folded the scarf neatly. Milo placed the button and bell ribbon beside it.

Then he noticed something blue tucked inside the cloth.

"Wait," he said.

A Note in Blue Pencil

Milo pulled out a small square of paper.

Blue pencil words covered the front.

Bea leaned close. Her eyes grew wide.

"Read it," Tavi said.

Milo held the note with both hands.

"Please keep these safe until the summer gathering," he read.

For a moment, nobody spoke.

The shed felt different now. It was only a small wooden room.

But somebody had hidden lost things here on purpose.

"The summer gathering," Tavi whispered. "That sounds important."

"It happens near the end of summer," Mr. Pottle said. "People bring food, games, and music."

"Do people bring socks?" Milo asked.

"I hope they bring matching socks," Mr. Pottle replied.

Bea took the note carefully. "I have seen this writing before."

Milo looked at her. "Where?"

"On the cupboard inventory," Bea said. "The list Mrs. Brindle keeps inside."

"The writing with neat round letters?" Milo asked.

Bea nodded. "The same careful letters. Look at the P. It curls under."

Tavi bent close. "That P does look very curly."

"So someone used the cupboard list," Milo said.

"Or someone writes exactly like Mrs. Brindle," Bea said.

"Could Mrs. Brindle be the secret returner?" Tavi asked.

Milo shook his head slowly. "She would just tell us."

"Probably," Bea agreed.

Tavi looked at the bundle. "Do these things belong to one person?"

"A person with a button, scarf, and bell ribbon?" Milo said.

"Or many people," Bea said. "Someone may have found them together."

Milo touched the tin moon through his pocket. There was the moon. The wooden boat. The paper sun.

Now there was a bundle too.

"Maybe somebody is quietly returning lost things," he said.

"But why hide them?" Tavi asked.

Bea folded the note again. "Maybe they do not want to be seen."

"Maybe they are shy," Milo said.

"Maybe they are a squirrel," Tavi said.

Bea sighed. "Squirrels do not write in blue pencil."

"A very clever squirrel might," Tavi replied.

Milo looked at Mr. Pottle. "Can we take these to the cupboard?"

Mr. Pottle nodded. "That is where lost things belong."

"Until their owners find them," Bea added.

Milo tied the bundle shut. This time, Tavi did not try to carry it.

He carried Bea's notebook instead.

"I can protect the list," he said.

"Do not sneeze on it," Bea told him.

"I am not a seed packet," Tavi said.

The Empty Hook

The three friends hurried past the bean plants and through the garden gate.

The school grounds were warm and quiet. A pigeon strutted near the playground.

It looked as if it knew every secret already.

The dark green cupboard waited beside the school gate.

Milo unlocked it with his yellow key.

The brass keyhole gave a small click.

Inside, the shelves looked tidy. Mrs. Brindle had helped Milo sort them yesterday.

Bea placed the cloth bundle on the middle shelf.

"One bundle of things without names," she said.

Milo checked the hooks along the cupboard wall.

His stomach gave a little jump.

"One is empty," he said.

There had been a blue-and-yellow striped sock hanging there.

The very sock that had landed on his head.

Captain Sock Mountain's first sock.

Now it was gone.

"Maybe it fell," Tavi said.

They checked the cupboard floor.

Nothing.

They checked behind the basket.

Nothing.

They even checked inside the empty laundry tub.

Still nothing.

"Mrs. Brindle!" Milo called.

She came from the school hall, carrying a box of chalk.

"What is it?" she asked.

Milo pointed at the empty hook. "Did someone borrow the striped sock today?"

Mrs. Brindle looked inside the cupboard.

Her round cheeks stopped wobbling.

"No one has borrowed anything today," she said.

Bea held up the blue-pencil note. "And we found this in the potting shed."

Mrs. Brindle read it quietly. Then she looked at the bundle.

"How curious," she said.

Tavi glanced toward the garden gate. "Maybe the secret re-turner came back."

Milo stared at the empty hook.

The striped sock had not walked away by itself.

Had it?

CHAPTER 5

The Missing Sock Chase

A Trail of Wool

"LOOK!" MILO CRIED. "THE SOCK LEFT A TAIL!"

A stripe of blue-and-yellow wool hung from the cupboard latch. It fluttered in the warm breeze like a tiny flag.

Bea bent close, but did not touch it. "It has been pulled from the missing sock."

Tavi gasped. "The sock is shedding clues!"

"Or someone carried it away," Milo said.

His yellow key tapped against his wrist. The empty hook inside the cupboard still made his stomach feel strange.

The blue-and-yellow striped sock had landed on his head first. Now it was gone.

Mrs. Brindle stood beside them, holding her box of chalk. "Can you follow the wool safely?"

"Yes," Bea said. "We will look before we decide anything."

Milo nodded. Mrs. Brindle's rule was important. Ask before guessing who owns something.

"And we will not tug the trail," Bea added. "It could break."

Tavi leaned forward. "I can be very gentle."

He took one careful step. Then his trainer landed on a crunchy leaf.

Crack!

Tavi froze. "That leaf was louder than expected."

Milo bit his lip to stop laughing. "The wool goes toward the playground."

Bea held the loose end between two fingers. The stripe trailed over the dusty path.

It passed the painted hopscotch squares. It curled around the number six.

"Why would a sock play hopscotch?" Tavi asked.

"It did not play hopscotch," Bea said. "Someone carried it here."

"Maybe the person hopped," Milo said.

"That is possible," Bea replied. "But we need more clues."

The wool led past the red scooter shed. Then it slipped beneath the garden gate.

"A chase!" Tavi whispered.

"A careful chase," Bea corrected.

The friends hurried after the narrow wool trail. Milo kept his eyes on the ground.

It was hard not to run. What would you do if a missing sock left a path?

Behind them, Mrs. Brindle called, "Stay where I can see you!"

"We will!" all three shouted.

Too Many Guesses

The trail ended beside Mr. Pottle's rake. A longer piece of striped wool was looped around its handle.

Milo stared at it. "Maybe the sock belongs to a gardener."

Mr. Pottle was watering the bean plants nearby. His floppy hat lifted when he looked over.

"A gardener?" he asked. "I do wear socks."

"Do you wear blue-and-yellow striped ones?" Milo asked.

Mr. Pottle looked down at his muddy boots. "Not today."

Tavi pointed toward the school kitchen window. "Maybe it belongs to a baker."

"There is no baker here," Bea said.

"There could be a secret baker," Tavi replied. "Secret bakers need warm socks."

Milo considered this. "A baker might lose a sock in dough."

"That would be very lumpy bread," Bea said.

Tavi's face lit up. "Or it belongs to a scarecrow!"

Before anyone could answer, he grabbed the rake. He placed it upright beside a bean row.

"Tavi," Mr. Pottle said, "please be gentle with that rake."

"I will," Tavi promised.

He draped the missing sock's wool trail over the rake handle. Then he found an old cloth bag beside the compost bin.

"Meet Sir Stripe-a-Lot," Tavi announced.

He put the bag over the rake head. Two leaves became eyes.

Milo clapped once. "He looks worried."

"He is protecting the beans," Tavi said.

A breeze blew through the garden.

The rake wobbled.

Sir Stripe-a-Lot leaned sideways.

Then he fell into the soft soil with a gentle thump.

The cloth bag landed over Tavi's foot.

"He has fainted from bravery," Tavi said.

Even Mr. Pottle laughed. "A scarecrow needs more than one sock, I think."

Bea carefully lifted the wool from the rake. "We are making too many guesses."

Tavi pulled the bag off his trainer. "But my scarecrow theory was excellent."

"It was funny," Milo said.

"Funny can be excellent," Tavi replied.

Bea pointed toward the path. "Look at the clues. The wool came from the cupboard."

"Then it crossed the hopscotch squares," Milo said.

"Then it came around the garden," Tavi added.

"So what should we look for next?" Bea asked.

Milo rubbed his chin. He wanted to say gardener. Or baker. Or scarecrow.

But none of those ideas explained the trail.

"Something that matches the other clues," he said at last.

Bea smiled. "Exactly."

"Like the moon and the paper sun?" Tavi asked.

"Yes," Bea said. "Those had matching flowers."

Milo looked toward the school path. A bright chalk mark shone near the gate.

"I see something yellow," he said.

The Chalk Sun

The friends crossed the garden slowly. The wool trail had disappeared beneath the gate.

But on the school path, someone had drawn a large chalk sun.

It had a round yellow middle. Orange rays stretched in every direction.

Milo stopped beside it. "It matches the paper sun."

Bea opened her notebook. "The paper sun had orange lines too."

"And the note said to keep things safe," Tavi said.

He crouched beside the chalk drawing. "Maybe the secret re-turner made this."

Bea nodded slowly. "Maybe. Look at the middle."

Inside the chalk sun was a small red flower. It had five petals and a yellow center.

Milo pulled the tin moon from his pocket. The painted flower on its back matched exactly.

"Moon," Milo said.

"Sun," Tavi said.

"And now a chalk sun," Bea finished.

Their eyes followed one orange chalk ray. It pointed across the path.

Another ray pointed toward the playground bench.

"That has to be a direction," Milo said.

"It could be," Bea said. "Let us check."

They walked to the long wooden bench beside the hopscotch squares. Its green paint was peeling.

Underneath, the ground smelled dry and dusty. A pigeon marched nearby, watching them closely.

Tavi lay flat on his tummy. "I can see something!"

"Do not crawl too far," Bea warned.

"I am only half under," Tavi said.

"Your feet are waving," Milo told him.

Tavi reached beneath the bench. "There is wool. And something hard."

"Ask before taking it," Bea reminded him.

Tavi looked at Milo. "May I take it?"

Milo looked around. Nobody was sitting on the bench. Mrs. Brindle watched from the school gate.

"Yes," Milo said. "Carefully."

Tavi slid out backwards. Dust covered the front of his shirt.

In one hand, he held the blue-and-yellow striped sock.

In the other, he held a little wooden star.

"We found it!" Milo cheered.

The sock looked slightly squashed, but safe. Its blue and yellow stripes were bright in the sunlight.

"Captain Sock Mountain's first sock is back," Milo said softly.

"The captain has returned," Tavi said.

Bea held out her hand. "And what is the star?"

Someone Knows Their Names

The wooden star fit neatly in Bea's palm. It was painted sky blue around the edges.

At its center, a yellow starburst shone.

"Turn it over," Milo said.

Bea did.

Letters were written across the back in tiny, neat rows. Some were scratched lightly into the wood.

"These are initials," Bea said.

"What are initials?" Tavi asked.

"The first letters of somebody's name," Bea explained.

She traced them with one finger. "L.P. R.S. N.J. And more."

Milo peered closer. "Those are village children."

"You know them?" Tavi asked.

"Some of them," Milo said. "L.P. is Leni Price. She comes to summer club."

Bea looked thoughtful. "Maybe each child painted the star."

"Maybe it belongs at the summer gathering," Milo said.

The word gathering made the three friends quiet.

They had found a note about it in the potting shed. Now they had a star covered in children's initials.

Tavi turned the sock inside out. A small folded paper slipped from its toe.

"A sock message!" he cried.

"Do not rip it," Bea said quickly.

Tavi held it as gently as a feather. Milo unfolded the paper.

The words were written in blue pencil. The letters were neat and round.

Milo read aloud.

"Thank you, Milo, Bea, and Tavi, for keeping lost things safe."

His mouth fell open. "It knows our names."

Bea took the note and read the rest.

"Please come to the school summer gathering. There will be something waiting."

Tavi bounced so hard that dust puffed from his shirt. "Something waiting?"

"What something?" Milo asked.

"Who wrote the note?" Bea whispered.

The pigeon gave a loud coo from beside the bench.

Tavi pointed at it. "Do not say it."

"I was not going to," Milo said.

"You were thinking squirrel," Bea said.

Milo gave a small smile. "Maybe a very clever pigeon."

Mrs. Brindle came toward them, carrying her chalk box. Milo showed her the sock, star, and note.

She read the note twice. Her eyes crinkled at the corners.

"Well," she said, "someone is grateful for your hard work."

"Do you know who?" Milo asked.

Mrs. Brindle smiled, but did not answer. "The summer gathering is tomorrow afternoon."

Tavi stared at the wooden star. "Will everyone with initials be there?"

"Perhaps," Mrs. Brindle said.

Bea tucked the star carefully into her notebook. Milo held the striped sock against his chest.

It was only a sock. But it had led them over hopscotch squares, around the garden, and beneath a bench.

Now it had led them to an invitation.

Who had been helping Milo's lost-and-found work in secret?

And what could possibly be waiting at the summer gathering?

CHAPTER 6

The Summer Cupboard Surprise

Ready for the Gathering

"BANG!" CRIED MILO AS THE CUPBOARD DOOR SWUNG OPEN.

A paper chain fluttered out. It wrapped around his yellow key twice.

"The cupboard is decorating you," Tavi said.

"I hope it stops at my wrist," Milo replied. "I only have one head."

It was the afternoon of the school summer gathering. Tables stood across the playground. Bright cloths covered them. Plates of little cakes waited beside jugs of lemonade.

Near the school gate, the dark green cupboard looked almost grand.

Mrs. Brindle had tied a yellow ribbon around its handle. A small sign hung beneath it.

LOST THINGS LOOKING FOR HOME.

"That is a good sign," Bea said. "Clear and useful."

"It should say, 'Enter if you dare,'" Tavi said.

"People might be scared of their own mittens," Milo said.

"Only the very fierce mittens," Tavi replied.

Milo looked inside the cupboard. The shelves held all the things without names. The tin moon. The tiny wooden boat. The paper sun. The purple scarf. The red button. The green ribbon.

The blue-and-yellow striped sock lay on a clean cloth at the front.

Bea opened her notebook. The wooden star, covered in children's initials, rested inside it.

"We should set everything out neatly," she said. "Then we check the owner list."

"And then everyone finds their things," Milo said.

"And then we eat cake," Tavi added.

"That is not part of the plan," Bea said.

"It is part of every good plan," Tavi told her.

The friends carried a table beside the cupboard. Milo laid out the soft things first. Bea placed the tin moon, paper sun, and wooden boat in a straight row.

Tavi tried to make the striped sock stand up.

It flopped sideways.

"It is tired from all that travelling," he explained.

"Socks do not travel alone," Bea said.

Tavi looked at the sock. "This one did."

Milo smiled. The sock had travelled from the cupboard to the garden. Then under the bench. It had led them to a note.

Now the summer gathering had begun.

Children and grown-ups came through the school gate. Some carried picnic blankets. Some carried bowls of fruit. Mr. Pottle wore his floppy hat and brought a pot of mint.

"For the lemonade," he said.

"Does mint help solve mysteries?" Tavi asked.

"It helps lemonade," Mr. Pottle replied.

"That may be even more important," Tavi said.

Mrs. Brindle rang the garden bell once. Clink!

Everyone turned toward the cupboard table.

"Before the games begin," Mrs. Brindle called, "Milo, Bea, and Tavi have something to show us."

Milo's stomach gave a small flip.

He had spoken in class before. But this was different. Everybody was looking at him.

Bea nudged his elbow.

"You can do it," she whispered.

Milo touched the yellow key. "We found some lost things," he began. "We kept them safe. We hope they can go home today."

Tavi lifted the sock. "Especially this brave explorer."

A few children laughed.

Then someone at the back made a tiny sound.

"Oh!"

The Note Writer Steps Forward

A small girl stood beside the school wall. She had dark curls and a pale green dress. Her hands were tucked behind her back.

Milo knew her a little. She came to summer club with her older brother.

"Nella?" Bea said gently.

Nella looked at the table. Then at her shoes.

"I made some of the clues," she said.

The playground went quiet.

Tavi's mouth fell open. "You made the chalk sun?"

Nella nodded.

"And the paper sun?" Milo asked.

Another nod.

"And the note in blue pencil?" Bea asked.

Nella's cheeks turned pink. "Yes."

Milo thought about the tiny muddy footprints. The green ribbon. The wooden star. The sock trail.

"Were those your footprints by the garden gate?" he asked.

Nella lifted one foot. Her sandal had little bumpy flowers underneath.

"I got mud on them," she said.

Tavi stared at the sole. "Not six toes."

"No," said Nella.

"That is a relief," Milo said.

A few people chuckled. Nella gave the smallest smile.

Mrs. Brindle did not look cross. She only waited.

"Why did you hide the things?" Bea asked.

Nella's fingers twisted together. "I did not hide them to be mean."

"We know," Milo said quickly.

Nella looked up at him. "Last summer, I lost my red button. It came off my cardigan. I looked everywhere."

She pointed to the round button on the table.

"Then I found it in the garden," she continued. "But I also found other things. The moon and boat were there. The scarf was under a bench."

"You found them all?" Tavi asked.

"Not all at once," Nella said. "I found one thing. Then another thing. Then another thing."

"A rule of three," Tavi said wisely.

Bea blinked. "That is not really a rule."

"It is now," Tavi replied.

Nella took a breath. "I wanted people to find their things. But I was scared to ask everyone."

"So you made a treasure trail," Milo said.

Nella nodded. "I thought the clues would make it fun. I thought you would follow them."

"We did," Tavi said. "We followed them everywhere."

"Even into a bucket," Milo added.

"That was the moon's fault," Tavi said.

"And you took the striped sock?" Bea asked.

Nella looked worried again. "Only for the trail. I put it under the bench with the star. I was going to bring it back."

"You did bring it back," Milo said. "You led us to it."

Nella's shoulders relaxed a little.

"You made us work hard," Bea said. "But you also helped us notice the things without names."

"I am sorry about the sock," Nella whispered.

Milo held it out. "It is okay. This sock has had an exciting summer."

"Too exciting," Bea said.

"No such thing," Tavi replied.

Milo looked at Nella. He remembered how important the yellow key had felt in his hand. Keeping things safe was a big job.

"Thank you for finding the lost things," he said. "Next time, you can tell us first."

Nella nodded quickly. "I can."

"And you can join our club," Bea said.

Nella blinked. "Your club?"

"The lost-and-found club," Tavi announced. "We do careful searches. We make lists. Sometimes we become buckets."

"Only Tavi becomes buckets," Bea said.

"It is one of my special skills."

Nella smiled properly this time.

Every Thing Finds a Home

"Let us see who recognizes these things," Milo called.

A girl with yellow ribbons hurried forward. "That moon is mine!"

She picked it up carefully. "It was on my night picture. I painted the flower myself."

"We wondered about that flower," Bea said.

"My brother has the paper sun," the girl added. "We made a sky together."

A boy near the lemonade table raised both hands. "The boat is mine! It fell from my pocket when I was racing."

"It carried a message," Tavi told him.

The boy looked amazed. "My boat is a message boat?"

"It is now," Milo said.

A taller girl recognized the purple scarf. She wrapped it around her neck and hugged it.

"I thought it was gone forever," she said.

Nella handed the red button to a woman standing beside her. "This is mine," Nella said softly.

"It certainly is," the woman replied. "Your cardigan will be pleased."

Then a boy named Leni came running from the games table.

"My ribbon!" he shouted.

He held up the green ribbon. "It goes on my kite tail."

"We found it by a flowerpot," Milo said.

"My kite landed there," Leni explained. "Then it blew away again."

"Your kite sounds very busy," Tavi said.

At last, a small boy with crumbs around his mouth pointed at the striped sock.

"That one is mine!" he said.

Milo recognized him from the playground. He was the boy who had thought the tin moon was a biscuit.

"You lost your sock?" Milo asked.

The boy nodded. "My name is Ollie."

Tavi handed it over with both hands. "Here is your brave explorer."

Ollie slipped the sock over his hand instead of his foot.

"Hello," said the sock in a squeaky voice. "I am Sir Stripe-a-Lot."

Tavi gasped. "My scarecrow has become a puppet!"

Ollie made the sock bow. "Thank you for rescuing me from the dangerous bench."

Everyone laughed. Even Bea laughed so hard she had to close her notebook.

"You are welcome," Milo told the sock.

"And do not run away again," Bea added.

The sock puppet nodded very seriously.

A Cupboard for Next Summer

When the last lost thing had found its owner, the table looked almost empty.

Milo felt happy. It was a warm, fizzy feeling. Like lemonade bubbles in his chest.

Bea pulled out a fresh page in her notebook.

"We need a better plan for next term," she said.

"A plan with cake?" Tavi asked.

"A plan for the cupboard," Bea said.

Nella stood beside her now. "Can I help?"

"Yes," Bea said. "You can make the headings."

Together, they made a simple chart.

- What was found?
- Where was it found?
- When was it found?
- Who collected it?

"And one more," Milo said.

Bea held out her pencil. "What?"

"Ask before guessing the owner."

Bea wrote it at the bottom in big, neat letters.

Mrs. Brindle read the chart. Her round cheeks wobbled with a smile.

"Excellent teamwork," she said. "What will your club rules be?"

Milo looked at Bea, Tavi, and Nella.

"Careful," Bea said.

"Kind," said Nella.

"Brave," Tavi said.

Milo nodded. "And no pretending a rake is a scarecrow unless Mr. Pottle says yes."

Mr. Pottle lifted his mint pot. "A wise rule."

"Also," Tavi added, "buckets should be worn only in emergencies."

"That rule is mostly for you," Bea said.

The gathering grew louder again. Children ran toward the games. Music started near the hall. Ollie's sock puppet waved at everyone.

Milo turned back to shut the cupboard.

Something lay on the lowest shelf.

It had not been there before.

It was a feather.

Not a pigeon feather. This one was long and pale blue. Silver dots ran along its edge like tiny stars.

Milo picked it up carefully.

"Bea?" he said.

Bea came closer. Tavi and Nella leaned in too.

"Is that on our list?" Milo asked.

Bea shook her head.

"Nobody has claimed it," Nella whispered.

The feather gave a little tremble in the breeze.

Tavi's eyes grew wide. "A new thing without a name."

Milo stared at the silver dots.

Who had left a strange feather in the cupboard now?