

- Lindsay Norman

A Thief in the Village!

Themba ran home from school as fast as he could. Big, dark clouds gathered in the sky. Themba knew it would soon begin to rain. He needed to get home quickly to help his mother take the washing off the line.

Themba found his mother piling the washing into a basket. Soon it was safely in the house. Big, fat drops of rain began to fall.

“Just in time,” smiled Themba’s mother. “Thank you for helping me, Themba.”

As she folded the laundry, Themba’s mother looked puzzled.

“Where are your father’s trousers?” she exclaimed. “And where is Nkosi’s other yellow sock? There is only one, but I know I washed them both.”

“Perhaps the wind blew the clothes off the line,” suggested Themba. He ran outside to look.

He looked under the bushes.

He looked on top of the roof of the little shed.

He looked in the water trough. There was no sign of the clothes.

Mrs Moyo came running through the gate. She held a bright red umbrella over her head. She looked very cross. Themba noticed that she was wearing only one shoe. It looked very funny and he tried not to giggle.

“What is the matter, Mrs Moyo?” he asked politely.

“Someone has stolen one of my shoes!” said Mrs Moyo crossly. “Whoever took it must have come into my house. There is a thief in the village!”

“Oh dear!” said Themba’s mother. “What a terrible thought. Surely no one living in our village would steal.”

“I think the thief has stolen from us too,” said Themba. “My father’s trousers and Nkosi’s sock have gone missing.”

“We need to find the thief at once,” declared Mrs Moyo. “He or she cannot have gone far.”

The three of them hurried down the road. Luckily it had stopped raining, but Mrs Moyo was still waving her umbrella angrily over her head.

“I’m going to take the thief to jail,” she said firmly. “That is where a thief belongs.”

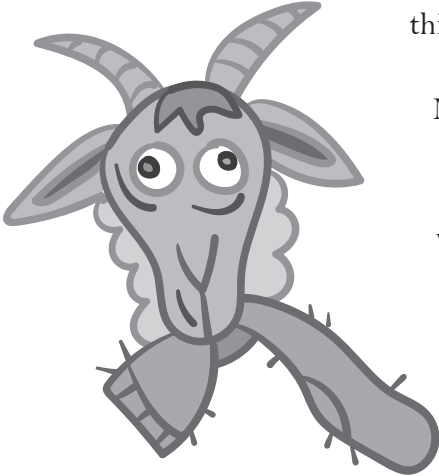
Soon they were joined by the headmaster.

“Someone has stolen my dictionary!” he yelled. “It was in my classroom ten minutes ago and now it’s gone.”

“The thief has struck again!” whimpered Mrs Moyo. “**Quick!** There is no time to waste!”

The little group hurried forward. The headmaster joined them.

Themba saw some goats in the field next to them. Suddenly he stood still and began to laugh.



“I think I have found the thief,” he chuckled.

“Where? Where?” said Mrs Moyo excitedly. The headmaster ducked quickly as she waved her umbrella around wildly. “I’ll knock him out with this!”

“There is the thief,” said Themba, pointing at a big brown and white goat. He was chewing on a yellow sock and seemed to be enjoying it very much.

As the group rushed forward, the goat gave a bleat of fright. He dropped the sock in surprise and ran off.

“Here is my shoe!” said Mrs Moyo, scrambling under a bush. “It is a little chewed but has not come to much harm.”

“And here are father’s trousers!” giggled Themba as his mother fished them out of a big puddle.

“My dictionary!” moaned the headmaster as he retrieved it from a pile of wood. He examined it carefully.

“That naughty goat has eaten all the \bar{Z} pages,” he said crossly. “Now we will never know what zipper and zigzag mean.”

“But the goat will,” laughed Themba. “It will have to come to school to explain the words to us.”



“He certainly will,” said the headmaster with a smile. “All’s well that ends well.”

“I’m very glad that the thief was not a person,” said Them-ba’s mother.

“So am I,” said Mrs Moyo. “I feel much safer knowing that the only thief in our village is a mischievous goat!”