

# The Pumpkin Puzzle

By Matilda Rogers

George stormed upstairs recalling the recent argument with his mother about his future. Still fuming, George flopped down on his bed in a hopeless sort of way, contemplating how he was ever going to be a detective. He wanted to prove her wrong and more importantly proclaim himself right! So tomorrow he would march up to the front desk of the amateur detective centre and demand a case. But what if... no he wouldn't think about it, he would face that problem when he came to it. And with that comforting thought he drifted off into sleep's welcoming hands.

The next morning George set out for the amateur detective centre. He reached the front desk and the only mystery available was a rather vague case about a missing pumpkin.

"No way! I'm not doing that! Never! Are you sure there isn't another case?!" George pleaded. The bespectacled lady pushed her glasses further up her nose before answering, "Either take it or leave it."

George begrudgingly took the file and grumbled something unintelligible before leaving the lady to her next customer.

George left the detective centre. He decided to think things over in a place where there was a zero percent chance his family might stroll in. His life wouldn't be worth living if he violated his mum's latest rule. He crossed the street and found the perfect place. A fruit smoothie shop. His parents hated vegetables, fruit, anything healthy.

George slumped down at the table. A missing pumpkin? He could solve that with his eyes closed! But maybe the mystery was bigger than it seemed...

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"Farmer Charlie?" a cheery voice floated through the air, to where Charlie was tending to his pumpkins.

Charlie looked over his shoulder and spotted a tall young man striding confidently towards him. "Charlie, I'm George."

Farmer Charlie felt a stab of excitement. Finally, someone was going to sort out the business with his lovely pumpkin. Absentmindedly, he stroked the pumpkin he was watering.

"I'm Charlie. You're going to get my pumpkin back?" Charlie studied the man before him. He looked young but also like he knew his business. The farmer realised he had wandered off from the conversation.

"Take me to the scene of the crime, I would be much obliged," finished George.

"Yeh, right this way," Charlie said, leading the way.

George studied the dark patches where the pumpkin had been. He also spotted footprints edged into the mud. "Charlie, have you been near this area since the theft?"

"No, haven't had a chance."

"Interesting," George mused. "Interesting indeed."

"Charlie, do you have any idea who might have done this?"

"Well... Augustus down the road... his pumpkins are unfit to eat but somehow he has entered a whopper of a pumpkin in the festival."

"I think I have a plan to bring this pumpkin snatcher to justice," George said slowly.

"What is it?"

"Oh you know me...." George grinned.

"No I don't. I just met you." quipped Charlie.

"You'll see, but I'll require a few things."

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"Tell me again, why do we need all this?" the farmer asked, indicating the metal parts assembled in a pumpkin shape.

"To catch the thief. He will think it's a pumpkin and steal it. We will have the evidence we need and yes, don't give me that look, we will get your precious pumpkin back."

Charlie hastily arranged his face into an innocent look.

"But couldn't we just trap him?"

"He could claim that he had lost his way and we unfairly caught him. Pass the cloth please."

The two men set to work covering the metal with orange cloth. There was no time for idle chit chat. At the end, George went to hide the camera in a fake tomato. Finally they were ready to catch the thief!

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Farmer Augustus was walking back from the market when he saw IT. The pumpkin. "Whoa, that's a beauty! I need that to win the \$500 at the festival. Too bad I'll have to steal," he said, with no remorse. That night he returned and lugged the 'pumpkin' away to his home. The camera caught everything!

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"And the winner is... Farmer Augustus," the announcer shouted.

Augustus strolled up onto the stage, a smirk plastered on his face. He owned the podium.

Suddenly a film began on the huge screen behind the stage.

The footage was of Farmer Augustus stealing the pumpkin!

After the clip had ended, there was an outbreak of outraged roars.

George walked calmly onto the stage and signaled for silence.

"Farmer Augustus, you are to hand back the pumpkin you stole, that is now a police matter and you are automatically disqualified from the competition."

"And that means the rightful winner is Farmer Charlie!" the announcer yelled.

Charlie appeared on the stage looking quite flustered. He was handed the trophy and the \$500 prize money.

"Could detective George, please step up here?" the announcer said. George appeared on the stage looking nonplussed.

"Because of your outstanding work, you're now the official overseer of this event, making sure that no one cheats ever again... and we bestow upon you a lifetime supply of pumpkins."

I wonder what my mum will say now, George thought. I'm officially a detective and we'll be having lovely, healthy pumpkin soup for the rest of our lives!

