

# The Case of the Missing Dog

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# Part One: Linus

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Linus glanced around the empty room and decided Snufflefungus had *horrible* taste in office space.

**Linus:** Snufflefungus, you have *horrible* taste in office space.

**Snufflefungus:** But Linus, it's **perfect** for the office of a private consulting detective!

**Linus:** Why, because it's sleazy, run down, and reeks of cigarette smoke?

**Snufflefungus:** No, because it's cheap! And we all know private detectives don't make any money.

**Linus:** Touche!

Snufflefungus was on another one of his kicks. This time he was running around in a deerstalker cap and calling himself, *Snufflefungus Holmes: Private Eye*. Linus didn't expect it to really go anywhere, but whatever did happen was bound to be hilarious.

*(Sound of a knock at the door.)*

**Mara:** Hey guys.

**Snufflefungus:** Hi Mara! Did you have any trouble finding the place?

**Mara:** No, your directions were very... precise. If unconventional.

**Snufflefungus:** Have you thought about the job?!

**Mara:** Well yes, I mean, I'm flattered that you want to hire me, but I have no idea what for.

**Snufflefungus:** I want you to work for (dramatically) *Snufflefungus Holmes, Private Eye!*

**Mara:** Yes, but what will I be *doing*?

**Snufflefungus:** You'll go on adventures! Help me solve crimes! But most importantly, answer the phone!

**Linus:** What about me? What do I get to do?

**Snufflefungus:** You can also go on adventures! Watch me solve crimes! But most importantly, answer my letters!

**Linus:** (Pouting.) Aw man, my penmanship is the worst!

*(Sound of a phone ringing.)*

**Linus:** (Gasps.) A client!

**Mara:** You already have a phone hooked up?

**Snufflefungus:** And I've been running ads already too!

**Mara:** Should I-?

Snufflefungus and Linus nodded in unison. Mara picked up the phone.

**Mara:** Hello, you've reached, um...

**Snufflefungus:** (Loudly whispering.) The office of Snufflefungus Holmes, Private Eye.

**Mara:** The office of Snufflefungus Holmes, Private Eye.

**Mike:** (Over the phone.) Thank goodness!

**Snufflefungus:** (Still loudly whispering.) How can we help you?

**Mara:** How can we help you?

**Mike:** (Over the phone.) Can you meet me at the scene of the crime? Snufflefungus Holmes, I need your help finding my dog!

**Snufflefungus:** Come my dear friends, the game is afoot!

**Mara:** Shouldn't we find out where we're going?!

**Linus:** There's no time for that Mara, come on!

Caught up in the exhilaration and haste of the moment, the group piled out the door and toward their first case!

**Mike:** (Over the phone.) Hello? Is anyone still there?

## Part Two: Snufflefungus Holmes, Private Eye

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To the eye of a skilled consulting detective, everything is a clue. As they rounded the corner and headed down the street toward the home of their new client, Snufflefungus Holmes' keen powers of observation detected it: a sinkhole.

It seemed to be approximately four miles across and it dominated the landscape. Roads, houses, and **everything** simply ceased to exist at its edge. And that ever-widening maw had, for now, come to rest barely ten feet away from their destination: The front porch of Mike's house.

To the untrained eye, it was just a sinkhole. But to Snufflefungus Holmes, it was a *clue*.

**Mike:** Oh Snufflefungus, thank you for coming!

**Snufflefungus:** What seems to be the trouble, Mike?

**Linus:** And just the facts please, we don't need any hysteria.

**Mike:** Hey, where's Malex? I thought for sure he would be with you.

**Mara:** He didn't want to come. He hasn't really been leaving his house lately.

**Mike:** I don't blame him, that's probably for the best.

**Mara:** Oh? Why do you say that?

**Mike:** (Flustered.) Well, uh, he's got this face, you know what I mean?

**Mara:** I don't know what you mean.

**Snufflefungus:** I'm sure Malex will join our adventures soon, he just needs time to recover and become himself again!

**Linus:** So Mike, you said you lost your dog?

**Mike:** No, I said I needed help *finding* my dog. Somebody stole him!

Mara's eyebrows furrowed, but she didn't say anything.

**Snufflefungus:** Where did it happen?

**Mike:** Right here, on my front porch! I was taking my dog out for a walk and **bam!** Stolen!

**Linus:** Is this a doorbell camera? Can we check the footage?

**Mike:** No, you can't! It's uh- It's broken.

**Mara:** Why are you lying to us, Mike? Don't you want our help?

Mike's face turned red and he grimaced.

**Mike:** Well, I... I just...

**Linus:** Spit it out man!

**Mike:** I was embarrassed! I didn't want to tell you the truth, but my dog ran away!

**Snufflefungus:** (Consoling.) Aw Mike, how bad can it be?

**Mara:** Just show us the footage Mike. We can't help you unless we know what really happened.

Mike drew his phone out of his pocket and pulled up the footage.

**Mike:** Okay, here ya go. Just don't laugh at me okay?

**Linus:** I make no promises.

*(Sound of outdoor footage playing. Dog panting and yipping.)*

**Mike:** (In the footage.) Who's a good boy? Yes you are!

*(Sound of dog slithering.)*

**Mike:** (In the footage.) Yes you're a good boy!

**Mara:** Wait, wait. That's a **dog?!**

*(Footage pauses.)*

**Mike:** Yeah, why?

**Linus:** Most dogs have more than one leg.

**Mike:** But Snufflefungus over here has *no* legs!

**Mara:** We've been over this! Snufflefungus is *not a dog*.

**Snufflefungus:** Where did you get your dog, Mike?

**Mike:** Ohioville Animal Shelter! They got whatever number of legs you want! One leg, two legs, ten legs. They got it!

**Mara:** That's horrifying.

**Linus:** I want to know more.

**Mike:** Can we focus on finding my dog please?

**Snufflefungus:** Yes, please play the rest of the footage.

The video resumed. On it, Mike tripped and dropped his dog's leash.

**Mike:** (In the footage.) Oh no! Doggy come back!

*(Slithering sounds as the dog runs away.)*

**Dog:** (Yips.) I'm free! I'm free! I'll never have to see you again! (Mournful yowl.)

*(Footage ends.)*

**Mara:** Was that- was that what it looked like?

**Mike:** Yeah my dog got away and chucked himself right into the sinkhole.

**Linus:** To get away from you?

**Mike:** Yeah he never really talked much, but mostly he talked about hating me.

**Mara:** I'm so sorry. That's horrible.

**Snufflefungus:** Don't worry Mike, we'll find- What's his name?

**Mike:** I never really got a chance to name him, I mostly just called him Doggy.

**Snufflefungus:** We'll find your doggy!

**Mike:** Thank you! I can't tell you how much that means to me!

This was shaping up to be Snufflefungus Holmes' hardest case yet. Undeterred, he hopped as quickly as he could toward Malex's house. Mara and Linus hurried to catch up.

**Mara:** Snuffy, what are you doing? Why did you promise Mike you'd find his dog?

**Linus:** Yeah, didn't you see the footage? That biological atrocity just yeeted itself into oblivion. It's **gone**.

**Snufflefungus:** Friends, friends! I know what to do!

## Part Three: The Boy

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Scarcely six years old, the boy walked briskly and purposefully across the mostly-empty parking garage. Even as young as he was, he found that moving confidently was the best way to avoid any unwanted attention or questions from grown-ups.

He sighed with relief as he caught sight of a familiar pile of junk set against a wall near the corner. Scrambling up from a disused milk crate to an empty 55 gallon drum, he pulled himself up toward a jagged opening near the top of the wall and crawled into it.

The boy was five stories underground, below a cluster of skyscrapers at the heart of downtown Ohioville.

In pitch blackness, he clambered through the short passage and dropped down into a dark chamber. Groping about for a moment, he found a lamp and flicked it on.

The freshly-illuminated chamber, about the size of a large closet or small bedroom, was an abandoned utility junction. He thought it had had been used to wire up all these buildings when they were being constructed. Possibly a holdover from a time when physical telephone lines were still being used.

But now it had been closed up and abandoned. Even so, it was perfect for his purposes. From here he could tap into all the power and networking he needed without anyone noticing. For the time being, this underground pocket served as his base of operations. More than that, it served as his home.

The boy hopped up onto a stool in front of his desk and powered up a bank of equipment. Leaning into his microphone, he pressed the transmit button and spoke.

**Young Malex:** Hey everybody, Malex here! You're listening to the Malex Minute. I successfully completed my search of another grid square today. Tomorrow I will move on to the next. Mara, if you're out there, hang on! I'm coming to find you...

**To Be Continued**