

CURIOUS CRIMES FOR CURIOUS MINDS

MURDLE JUNIOR



CURIOUS CRIMES FOR CURIOUS MINDS

MURDLE JUNIOR

40 BRAIN-BENDING MYSTERY PUZZLES
FOR DARING DETECTIVES

G. T. KARBER



SOUVENIR
PRESS

First published in Great Britain in 2024 by
Souvenir Press,
an imprint of Profile Books Ltd
29 Cloth Fair
London
EC1A 7JQ

www.souvenirpress.co.uk

First published in the United States by Little, Brown and Company,
a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Copyright © Gregory Thomas Karber, Jr, 2024
Murdle TM A Red Herring Corporation 2024

Portraits, ID card, and detective badge illustrations copyright © 2024 by Andy Smith; exhibits designed by Dani Messerschmidt; notebook and pencil © Nemanja Cosovic/Shutterstock.com; magnifying glass © nishio/Shutterstock.com; footprints © graficriver_icons_logo/Shutterstock.com; hat © Sahutian/Shutterstock.com

Interior design by Neil Swaab

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 80522 375 7





For Reya

CONTENTS



<i>How to Solve</i>	1
<i>Where to Start</i>	15
Jake in <i>The Case of the Missing Pencil</i>	19
Julius in <i>The Mystery of the Universe</i>	57
Buster McPaws in <i>The Crime of the Century</i>	95
Olivia in <i>The Case of the Corrupt Computer</i>	133
The Whole Gang in <i>Disaster at Detective Academy</i>	171
<i>Detective Exam</i>	215
<i>Congratulations, Detective!</i>	219
<i>Full Solutions</i>	221
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	230



HOW TO SOLVE

THE FOUR JUNIOR DETECTIVES STOOD AT THE ENTRANCE TO Castle Eminence, staring into the empty darkness ahead of them. They had traveled through the Screaming Forest and the Madding Mountains, but still, the depths of this castle terrified them.

“The chance of this going well for us is minuscule,” said Olivia. She always knew facts like that, and used words like *minuscule* when saying *very small* would do.

Julius agreed. “I don’t know about the odds, but this place gives me bad vibes.” And he was famous for his vast knowledge of vibes, or at least his ability to feel them.

“Of course it gives you bad vibes!” exclaimed Jake. She was the tough talker of the group, easily able to intimidate her way through school. “It’s a super-spooky castle atop terrifying mountains above a haunted forest! But we can’t let fear stop us. We’re detectives now.”

“Technically, *junior* detectives,” Olivia corrected.

“Well, either way. It’s our case. And we can’t go back and say we were too scared to even go inside.”

But it was Buster McPaws, the world’s greatest detective (in the cat category, at least), who was the first of them to walk into Castle Eminence. He strode inside with the confidence of a creature who knew that nothing could harm him, since he still had seven lives remaining.

After the cat had led the way, the rest of them felt pretty silly standing at the door, so they snuck in behind their furry leader.

“Now,” said Julius, “remind me why we’re doing this again.”

Olivia answered him. “The Detective Club assigned us a simple case: Figure out who is hiding in this castle, find where they are hiding, and uncover their evil plans.”

“Oh,” Julius said. “I meant why we felt this was a good idea.”

Olivia continued, ignoring him. “Analysis of this structure suggests that at least three suspects are currently inside it. Based on my calculations, they are these three...”

WHO IS INSIDE THE CASTLE?



**VISCOUNT
EMINENCE**

Apparently, it's pronounced VIE-COUNT. He's older than his father, and he outlived all his sons.

(5'2" • LEFT-HANDED • GRAY EYES • BROWN HAIR)



MAJOR RED

Major Red is a revolutionary leader who is loved by some people and feared by many more.

(6'2" • LEFT-HANDED • BROWN EYES • BROWN HAIR)



AGENT APRICOT

She's a representative from S.P.Y., a secret society dedicated to secret plans.

(5'7" • RIGHT-HANDED • GREEN EYES • BLACK HAIR)

Once the junior detectives were inside, they crept around together—as a team—careful not to employ the absolutely ridiculous strategy of splitting up, and they discovered that there were three places where their suspects might still be hiding out.

WHERE ARE THEY?



THE GREAT HALL

High ceilings, a giant table, an enormous framed portrait of Viscount Eminence.



THE TOWER

It has a great view of the haunted forest below, and no place to run!



THE DUNGEON

If you split up to search the castle, this is the place you want to search least.

And finally, the four junior detectives knew that each of these three suspects had their own specific secret plans, and that each of them had a different hidden agenda.

WHAT ARE THEIR SECRET PLANS?



**TO TAKE OVER
THE WORLD**

This is a pretty classic supervillain plot. You can't blame one for trying.



**TO GET REALLY,
REALLY RICH**

A lot of people have these plans, but only supervillains succeed at them!



**TO GO ON
VACATION**

Honestly, if these are your secret plans, you should probably be allowed to pursue them.

“All right, that’s enough research,” Jake said. “Now it’s time to look at the actual clues we can use to crack this case wide open.”

The four of them put their heads together and made a list of the clues and evidence that they absolutely, positively knew for sure.

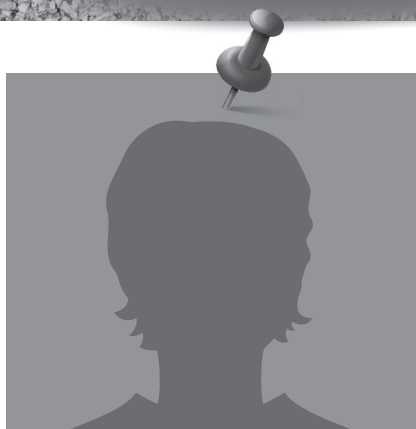
CLUES & EVIDENCE

Because of his enormous ego, Major Red would hide out only in the Great Hall.

The shortest suspect was not in the tower.

The person in the dungeon just wanted to go on vacation.

The person in the tower did not want to get rich.



They were here to find the culprit who wanted to take over the world.

“So,” Olivia said, “each of these suspects would be hiding in one of these places, and each would have one of these plans. First we’ll have to figure out who would have which plan and

be in which hiding spot, and then we can determine which one of them is trying to conquer the world.”

“We get it, Olivia,” Jake said.

“But just in case we don’t,” Julius said, “maybe walk us through it.”

“Okay, so, first, we’ve got to use a Deduction Grid.” She drew one in her Detective Notebook. “Each of these boxes represents a connection between two things. For example, I drew an arrow to the box that represents Viscount Eminence being in the dungeon, to help you all understand.” (See Figure 1.)

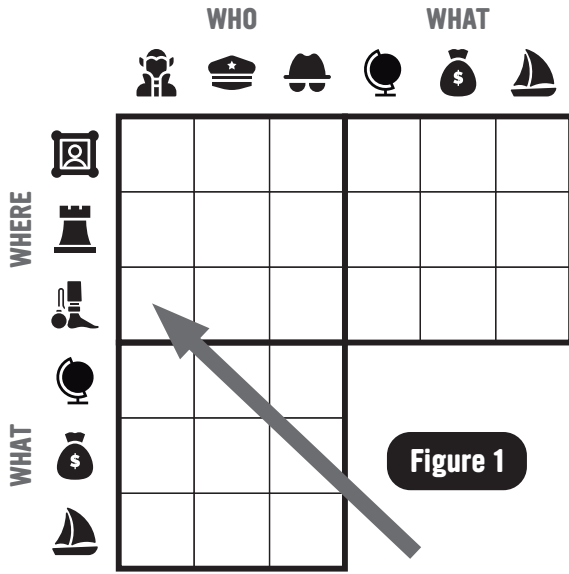


Figure 1

Julius looked at her drawing and said, “I knew that,” but he wasn’t very convincing.

“Now we’ll use this to work through the clues, one at a time. The first clue is simple enough: *Because of his enormous ego, Major Red would hide out only in the Great Hall.*

We'll use a check mark in the Deduction Grid to show that Major Red would be in the Great Hall.” (See Figure 2.)

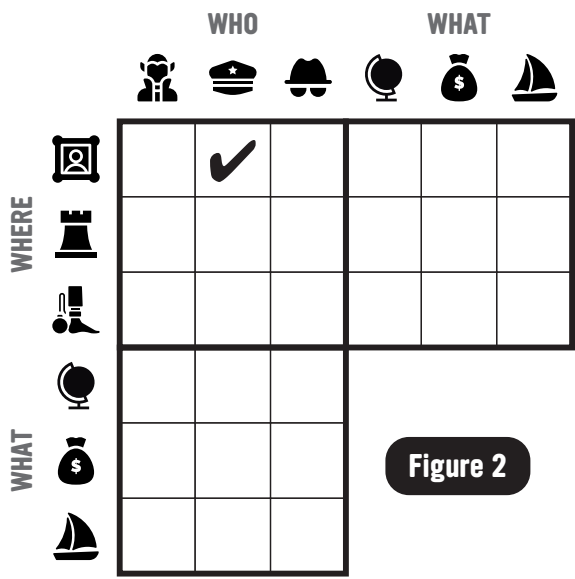


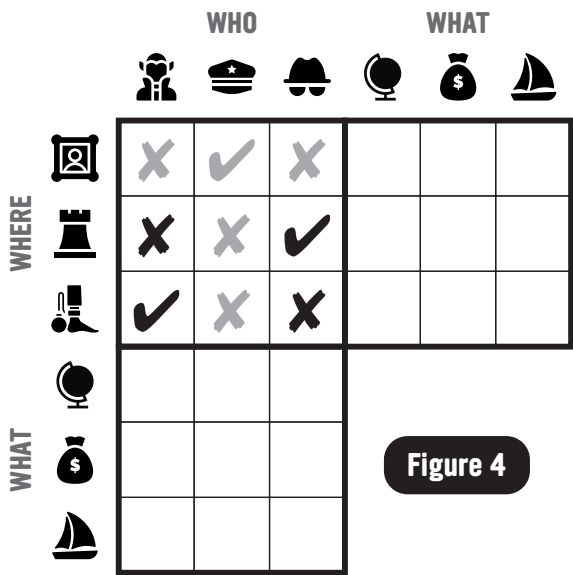
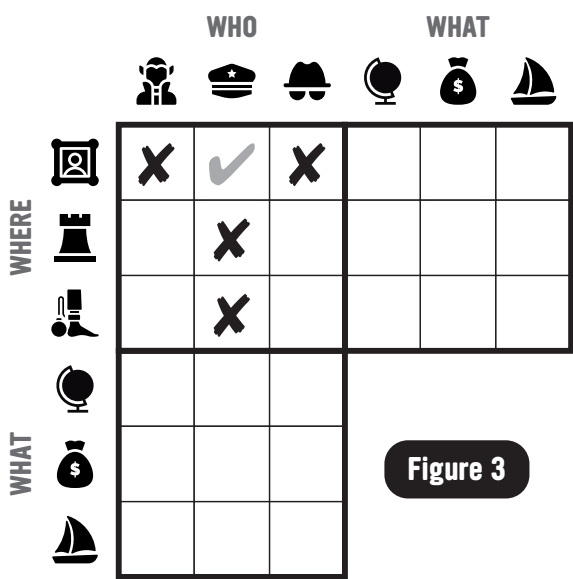
Figure 2

“But that’s not all we can deduce,” said Jake, “because we know that if Major Red is in the Great Hall, then he can’t be in the dungeon or the tower. And we also know—since only one person can hide in each spot—that neither Viscount Eminence nor Agent Apricot was in the Great Hall, and we can put *X*s in their boxes.” (See Figure 3.)

“Correct,” Olivia said. “And now we can move on to the second clue: *The shortest suspect was not in the tower.* Looking at the statistics we’ve put together, we can tell that Viscount Eminence is the shortest suspect, so we can put an *X* in the box where the tower and Viscount Eminence intersect.”

“And there’s more!” said Jake. “Because now we know that

if the viscount isn't in the tower, and he's not in the Great Hall, then he must be in the dungeon. And we've figured out the hiding places for everyone!" (See Figure 4.)



“But now we’ve got to figure out their plans,” Olivia said. “Our third clue: *The person in the dungeon just wanted to go on vacation.* So we can put a check mark where those two intersect, and Xs in the other squares in that row and column.” (See Figure 5.)

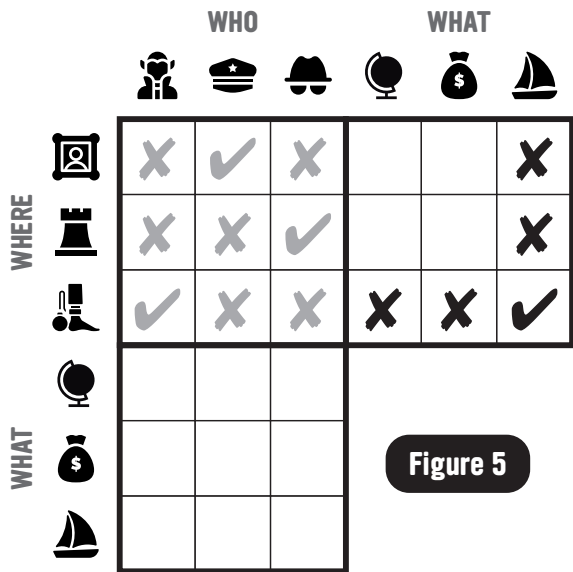


Figure 5

Olivia continued, “But again, that’s not all! Can you figure out what else?”

Julius stared at the grid for a moment before his eyes went wide.

“If we know that the person in the dungeon wanted to go on vacation, and we also know that Viscount Eminence is in the dungeon, then we know that Viscount Eminence just wanted to go on vacation!”

“Correct!” Olivia said, and she placed a check mark in the square where Viscount Eminence and “To Go on Vacation”

intersected. And then put Xs in the other squares in that row and column. (See Figure 6.)

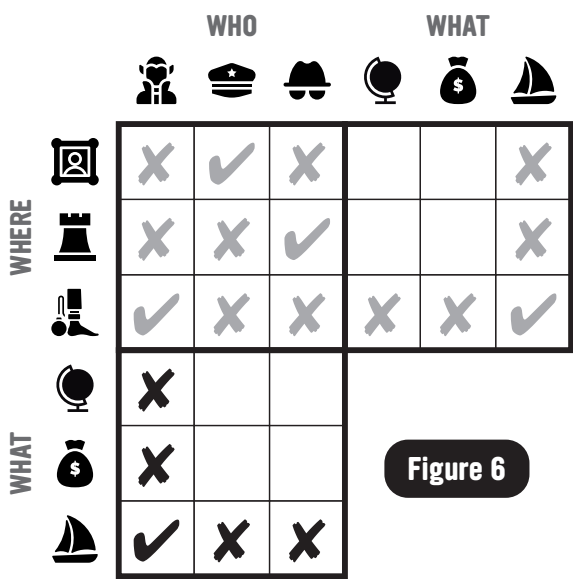


Figure 6

“Now we can move on to the next clue: *The person in the tower did not want to get rich.* So, you know what to do now: We put an X in the box where getting rich and the tower intersect.” (See Figure 7.)

“And that means,” Jake said, “we know that the person in the Great Hall wanted to

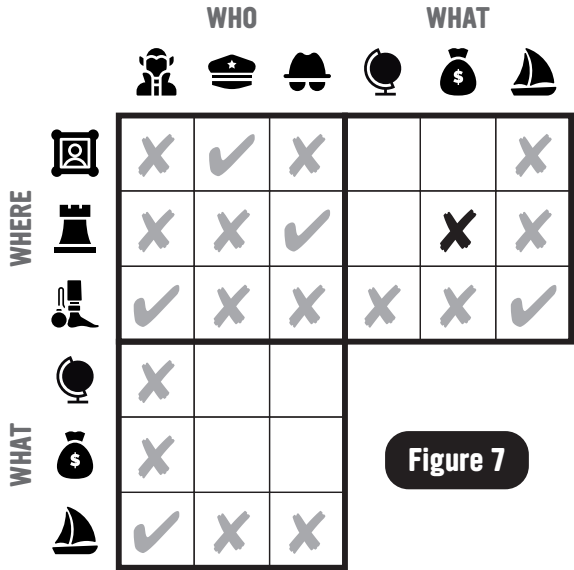










Figure 7

get rich. And we know that the person in the tower wanted to take over the world.” She added the check marks and the *X* to complete that section. (See Figure 8.)

WHO

WHAT










































							
WHERE							
							
							
WHAT							
							

Figure 8

“But we can still make more deductions!” Olivia replied. “We know that the suspect in the Great Hall wants to get rich, and we know that Major Red is hiding in the Great Hall, so we know that Major Red has secret plans to get rich.” (See Figure 9.)

“Now that we’ve filled out the Deduction Grid, we are ready for our final clue: *They were here to find the culprit who wanted to take over the world.* These clues on a separate card are different; they don’t tell us anything about who has which plan or who is in which location—they tell us which suspect we’re looking for. The supervillain we’re here to investigate is the one with plans to take over the world.”

		WHO			WHAT		
							
WHERE		X	✓	X	X	✓	X
		X	X	✓	✓	X	X
		✓	X	X	X	X	✓
WHAT		X	X	✓	Figure 9		
		X	✓	X			
		✓	X	X			

“And we know that Agent Apricot wants to take over the world!” Julius exclaimed.

So the four detectives (led by the courageous Buster McPaws) raced to the top of the tower, where, sure enough, they found Agent Apricot standing on the balcony and looking out over the Screaming Forest below.

“We’ve got you!” they exclaimed.

But Agent Apricot turned around with a smile.

“No, detectives,” she said. “You may have *found* me, but I believe you will find that it is *I* who have *you*. Guards!”

Suddenly, a small army of guards appeared behind the four detectives.

“Throw them in the dungeon,” Agent Apricot ordered.

And despite their best efforts (and the claws of Buster McPaws), the four junior detectives were captured, tied up, and

carried down to the dungeon. Jake turned to Buster and said, “You just had to be the brave one, didn’t you?”

“How in the world did we find ourselves in this mess?” Julius wondered.

It had all started so small, for each of them, with a tiny mystery they had tried to solve on their own. These tiny mysteries turned into bigger mysteries and led to each of them being recruited by the Detective Club (which is always on the lookout for promising detectives, no matter their age...or species!).

This is the story of how each of these four detectives solved their first big case. And although things aren’t looking great for them right now, with your help, they’ll be able to escape the clutches of the evil Agent Apricot and foil her plans for world domination.

All you need are your wits, your determination, and a pencil.
Good luck, detective! We’re counting on you.



WHERE TO START

THIS BOOK CONTAINS THE FIRST MAJOR MYSTERIES OF FOUR junior detectives. You can read about them in any order you want, but you should read all of them before they reunite for *Disaster at Detective Academy* (page 171).

If one of them interests you more than the others, feel free to start with them! If not, you can start with Jake and read straight through.

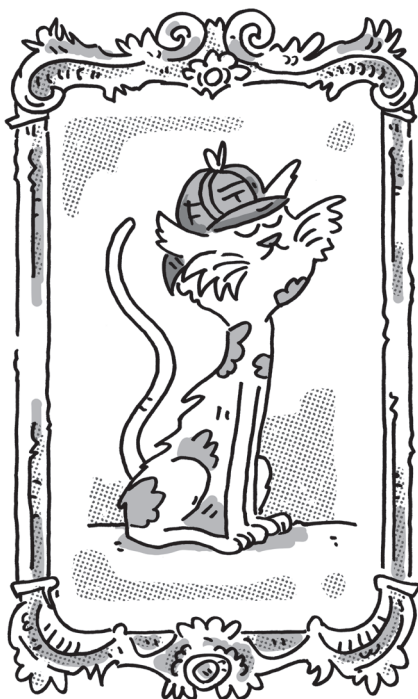
Jake the Gumshoe is a nonsense, in-your-face private eye. She goes to a stuck-up private school, but only because the public schools all kicked her out. She knows that sometimes the best way to figure out whodunit is to accuse everybody and see how they react.



Julius the Intuitive knows that sometimes you just know something, and you can't explain why. He'll follow his hunches, and he'll back them up with logic later. Sometimes the most important clue is in the stars or the marot cards, and you never know where any thread will lead.

Buster McPaws the Snoop

has the most perceptive eye in the detective business. He can smell a crime from a mile away and a treat from ten. He loves food almost as much as he loves the thrill of the chase.



Olivia the Consultant is a real brainiac, potentially one of the smartest kids to ever live. She can hack a computer, calculate complex mathematical equations, and deduce whodunit without ever having to get her hands dirty.

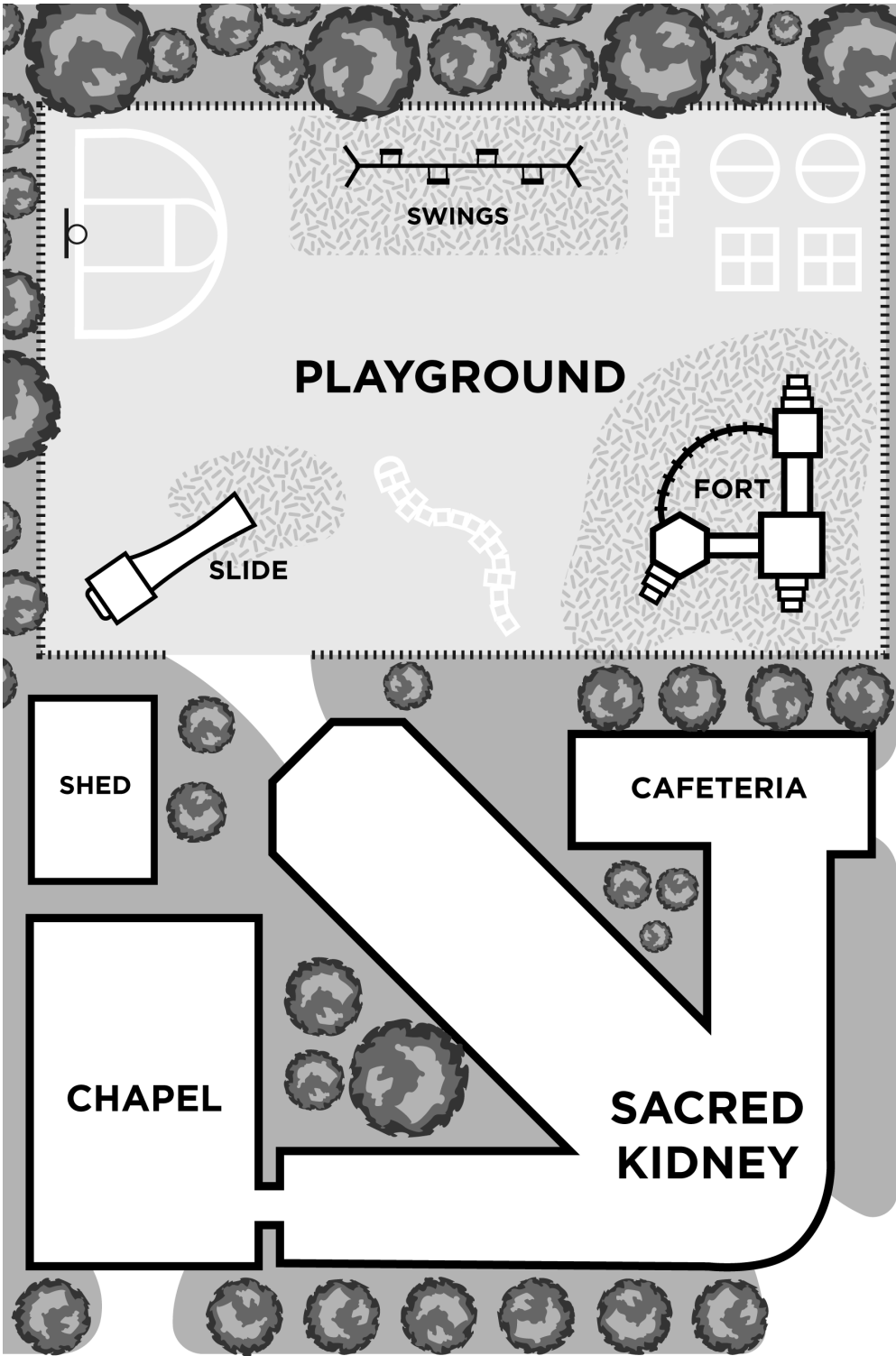


EXHIBIT A:
A MAP OF SACRED KIDNEY PRIVATE SCHOOL

JAKE

IN

THE CASE OF THE MISSING PENCIL

JAKE WAS THE TOUGHEST KID AT HER SCHOOL, SACRED KIDNEY. She had been the toughest kid at her previous school, too, until she was kicked out after the event now known only as “the Pizza Day Disaster.”

Jake swore she was innocent, but nobody believed her.

So that school kicked her out, and she got sent across town to Sacred Kidney, a private school run by the church. There, she’d struggled to fit in, not only socially, but also into her

standard-issue polyester uniform. The only other kid she got along with was Sterling, her sidekick, although he preferred to be called her best friend. He was always getting into trouble, and she was always getting him out of it.

For example, one day during recess, Jake was chewing on a straw when Sterling ran up to her with tears in his eyes.

“Why are you crying?” Jake asked, partly because she wanted to know what was wrong, and partly because she didn’t want people to see her sidekick cry. That didn’t look tough.

“Somebody stole my *lucky* pencil!” Sterling cried.

“Could you describe it to me?”

“It’s about this big, and it’s brown, but it writes in rainbow colors. That’s why it’s so lucky!”

Jake wondered if it was the Sacred Kidney Cat Burglar.

All year, valuable items had been going missing from Sacred Kidney: a gold crown that had once been worn by a bishop, an anointed silver goblet, and more. Each time, Principal Apple-green had launched an investigation, and each time, nothing was found. Jake had looked into it, too. But the Cat was careful, and she left no clues behind. But this time, the Sacred Kidney Cat Burglar had made a huge mistake. They never should have stolen from Jake’s sidekick.

“Dry your eyes, kiddo,” she told him. “I’ll find your missing pencil even if I have to turn this whole school upside down.”

But Jake didn’t know how far she would have to go to solve this case. She didn’t understand that it was going to turn out to

be the most difficult case she'd ever accepted, that it would lead straight to the top, and that it would change the very course of her life forever.

But it would.

This is *The Case of the Missing Pencil*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

If you're interested in writing a book of your own, you should know that a lot of work goes into it from a lot of people who aren't the author.

You need a great editor, which I have in Liz Kossnar. And that editor needs a great assistant, which she has in Lauren Kisare. But to even get to that point you usually need an even greater agent, which I also have: Melissa Edwards at Stonesong.

I would like to thank everyone at Profile Books, including Cindy Chan and Lily Evans, for everything they have done for Murdle, and to Angie Curzi, whose marketing campaign helped put it on the map in the UK.

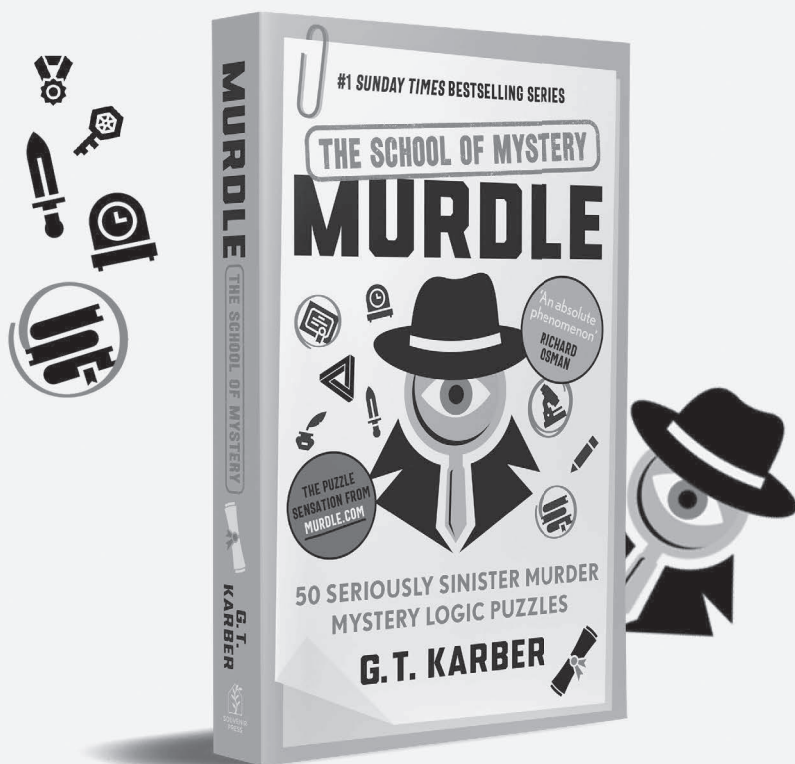
I'd also like to thank Neil Swaab for designing the cover of this book, as well as the interior. Without his work, it would not look nearly as beautiful. And I'd like to thank all the people who helped me write and test it.

Finally, I would like to thank my girlfriend, Dani Messerschmidt. She's been really wonderful to me for many years, and I could not have written a word of this without her help. (She also designed the exhibits!)

PS: If you're ever in LA, eat at Tara's Himalayan Cuisine. The garlic tofu fueled the writing of this book and certainly many others.

**THE #1 BESTSELLING
MURDLE SERIES FOR ADULTS
IS BACK TO TEST YOUR WITS!**

CAN YOU CRACK THESE CASES BEFORE THE FINAL BELL?



'An absolute phenomenon' Richard Osman

'Murdle is mega' Mail on Sunday

'A publishing sensation' The Times

