

GSI: Grime Scene Investigation

by LISA A. BEACH

Did the front door just slam shut? I wonder. "Hello?" I yell out to no one, as I continue watering the flowers.

I hear muffled noises: footsteps, things being dropped, something hitting the wall and various doors closing.

"HELLO?" I shout again, trying to figure out which one of my family members just walked into the house.

Silence.

Time to investigate.

Tapping into my extensive forensic background (one forensic science class in college, decades of watching TV police/detective dramas and my 18-year stint at motherhood), I begin to solve the "Who-Just-Entered-My-House Mystery."

Looking for evidence, I start at the scene of the grime: the front door.

Hmm, I see Parker's backpack and shoes sitting near the door. *But it's Saturday*, I reason, which means they've been sitting there since yesterday. I glance at the custom-built piece designed to corral the boys' shoes and backpacks when they come inside. *I sure wish we had someplace where the boys could put their stuff*, I think sarcastically.

Next, I walk into the living room and spy a small pile on our green chair: a pair of socks, a book and a big piece of black elastic with no obvious functional purpose. Not willing to touch the socks (clean? dirty?) to feel for recent body heat, I

ignore the clue and continue my detective work.

I gaze around the room and fixate on the empty water bottle (no coaster, of course) on the table. I pick up the bottle and examine the evidence. Room temperature, no condensation on

the bottle's exterior, slight water mark on the table's surface. This is a relic from last night, I wisely deduce, so it sheds no light on the current mystery.

Suddenly, I hear water running in the downstairs bathroom sink. Hoping to catch my Mystery Teen, I dash out of the living room just in time to see a shadowy figure dart around the corner and fly up the stairs, earbuds dangling from his head like a puppet.

Is my 14-year-old home from his soccer game or is my 17-year-old home from his marching band fundraiser? "Parker, is that you?" I call.

Tapping into my extensive forensic background ... I begin to solve the "Who-Just-Entered-My-House Mystery."

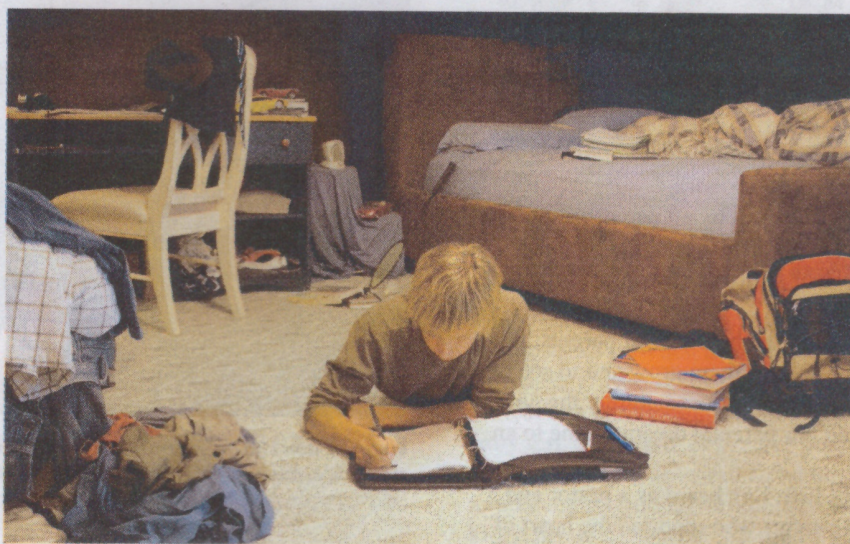
Not ready to go upstairs just yet, I walk into the downstairs bathroom, hoping to find a pair of shoes or a magazine that will help me identify my Mystery Teen.

Empty toilet paper roll. Open toilet seat. Damp towel thrown on sink counter. Yep, all signs of a recent visit from one of my teens. But which one?

Before I head upstairs, I notice more evidence in the kitchen: an opened lunchbox on the counter. The cookie is missing but the apple is still inside. *That sounds about right*, I think. How many days has it been since I last saw either of my boys eat a piece of fruit?

Again, I remind myself that it's *Saturday*, not a school day. I quickly realize the red-herring lunchbox is diverting me from solving the mystery at hand.

I refocus my attention and spot a few clues on the kitchen table. The maple syrup bottle and empty glass on the placemat indicate a recent meal, but breakfast was several hours ago. Another dead end!



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But wait! Upon closer inspection, I discover a pair of soccer socks with fresh grass stuck to the heel, hidden on the seat of the chair underneath the table. Of course! Why didn't I think to look there in the first place?

Sherlock Holmes once said there is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact. But fresh grass is fresh grass. I've identified my Mystery Teen.

On my way upstairs, I pass a soccer jersey discarded on the steps – further proof I've cracked the case.

"Hey, Parker, how was your game?" I ask as I walk into his room, startling him a bit.

He unplugs his iPod. "We won, 3-2. But how did you know I was home?"

Elementary, my dear, elementary. **tiv**

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