

DETECTIVE'S LETTER

Greetings, forensics interns.

Trouble is afoot. Our client reports that her most prized possession, a certain early 20th-century hand-painted terracotta garden gnome (henceforth "Terry") has vanished from her private gated garden overnight. Investigators on the scene found evidence of tampering in the soil where Terry once proudly stood. What was originally believed to be a matter of simple misplaced gnome has now been reclassified as a kidnapping. But every gnome kidnapper, no matter how clever, leaves a trail.

As lead detective, I have examined the clues to narrow down our pool of suspects to three. These three neighbors had access to the private garden during a garden party yesterday as well as the means to spirit Terry away quietly in the night.

1. Doreen Hazelton. Known admirer of antique garden paraphernalia, including gnomes. In her time spent viewing the victim's garden plot, she was overheard saying Terry would be "perfect for [her] collection." On being interviewed, Doreen stated, "It's no wonder. He's a very handsome gnome."
2. Wolfgang Swift. Known to avoid the victim's garden as often as he obsesses about being in it. Overheard days before the theft claiming he was being followed by "the gnome's dead, soulless eyes" and later swearing he saw it move. On being interviewed, Wolfgang stated, "I didn't do it, but if I did, it's because it was him or me."
3. Gnorman Mann. Stands at four foot negative three when he takes off his red pointed hat. Magnificently bearded. Overheard at yesterday's party saying, "Gnomes should be free, not trapped behind a garden fence." Upon being interviewed today, he expressed with grim satisfaction that "the revolution has finally begun."

Only these three had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to commit this heinous theft. Our last hope lies in the forensic evidence, and that evidence is purely in the soil. The culprit was wise enough to wipe away their shoeprints from Terry's garden plot, but after securing all three suspects' shoes, they lacked the forethought to clean the garden soil from their soles. This is where you come in: we've sent you soil samples from each suspect's shoe. Please test these against the soil from Terry's garden. Whichever soil sample matches must belong to the perpetrator.

We hope you find within you an ever-present passion to see justice served. Or maybe to prove you're the smartest intern in the room. Either way, a photograph of the crime scene is enclosed. Examine it with your special eyes and record your observations.

— Detective Whatshisname