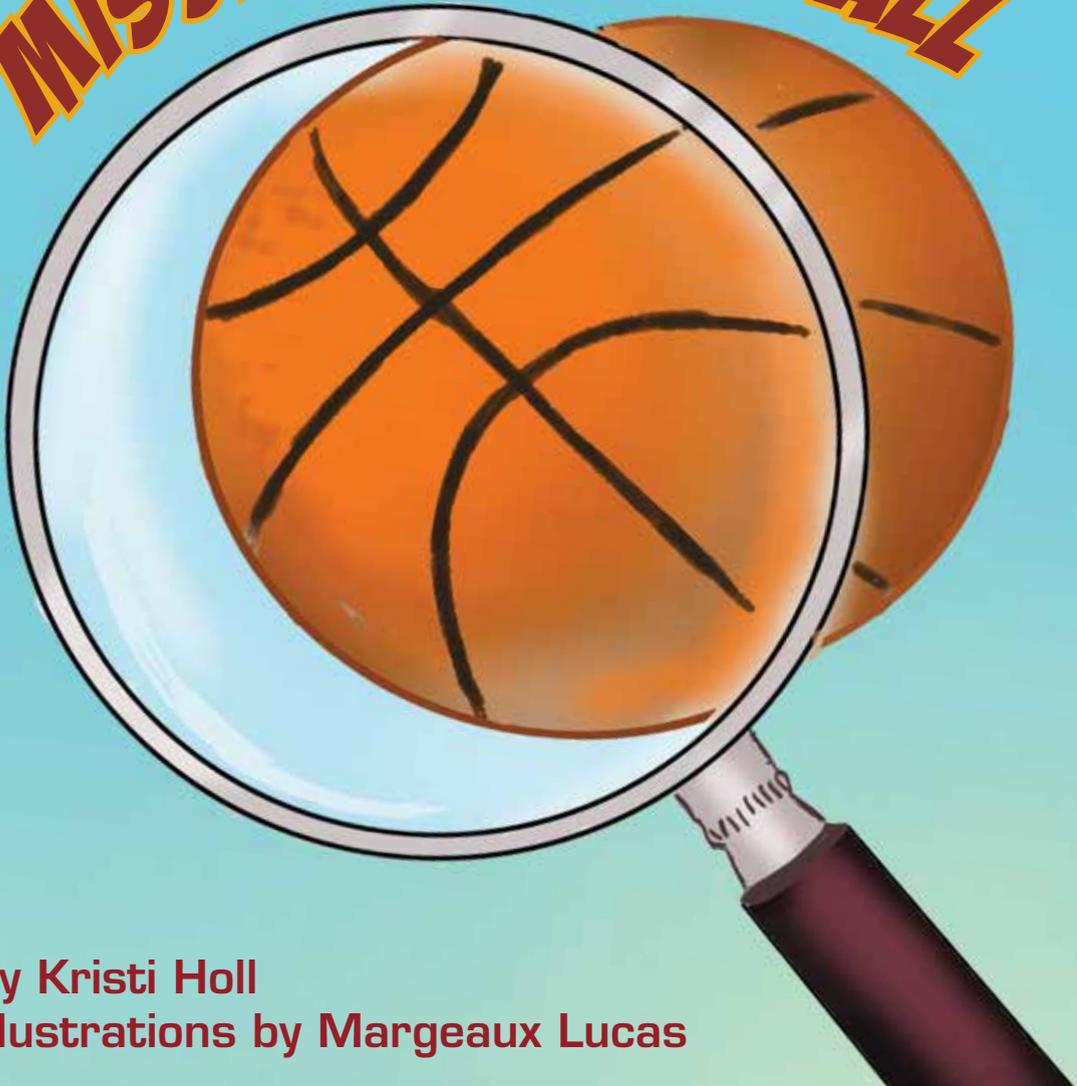


THE CASE OF THE MISSING BASKETBALL



by Kristi Holl
Illustrations by Margeaux Lucas

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Claire sat on the stoop, cradling her lifeless basketball. It had finally gone flat from the nonstop dribbling and shooting she and her big brother Marcus had been doing all summer. She wanted to tell Marcus right away, but he was busy helping Dad bundle newspapers in the garage.

Claire decided to deliver the bad news after lunch and headed inside. When she returned, her basketball was gone!



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The Case of the Missing Basketball

Level R

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Thinking that maybe her basketball rolled away, Claire searched the driveway. Overhead, she heard the roofer's hammer banging as he replaced shingles on their three-story house. Claire shouted up to him, "Sir, have you seen my basketball?"

The roofer, who could barely see Claire far below, shouted back, "I think I saw a little kid take it."

Claire wondered if her little brother took it. She called up toward the tree house, "Pete, did you take my basketball?"

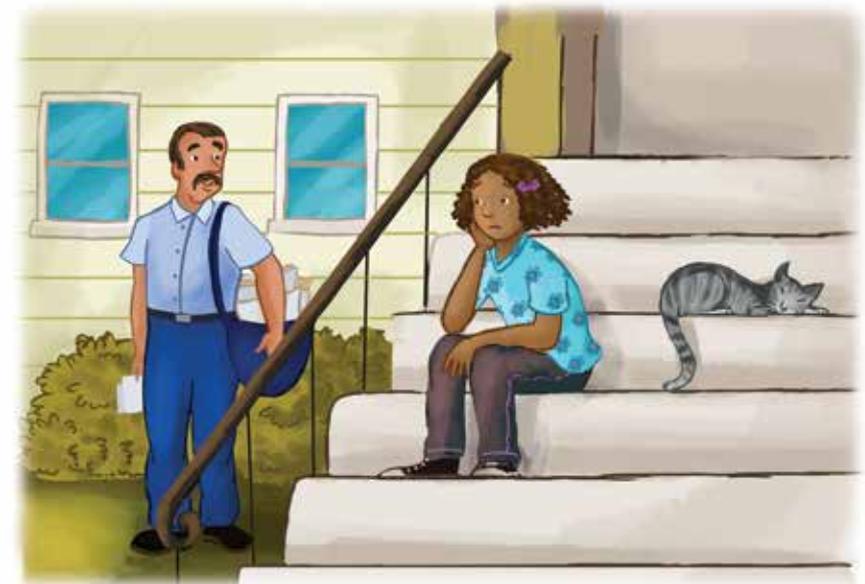
"No," Pete said, "but I think I heard someone yell, 'Don't do it!'"



That sounded suspicious! Claire spotted their mail carrier and called, "Mr. Gonzales, did you notice anyone unusual on Henderson Street?"

"No," he replied. "Henderson is deserted today. Everyone must be at the big game downtown."

Claire sat on the steps, resting her chin in her hand, and thought about the clues. The roofer thought he saw a little kid, but perhaps everyone appeared little from the roof. Pete thought he heard someone yelling, "Don't do it," while Mr. Gonzales didn't notice anyone unusual.



Suddenly, Claire realized she was hearing a new sound, something other than the roofer's banging. The sound was coming from behind the house.

Claire raced to the garage. Her dad was watching a game on his tiny TV and yelling at the players, "Don't pass to him! Don't do it!"

Claire heard the new sound again and looked around the garage. Just then, she saw Marcus sitting in a corner, filling her basketball with an air pump.

"Your ball was getting flat," Marcus said.

"Finally, all the clues make sense," shouted Claire.

Marcus passed Claire the ball.

"Why don't you tell me all about it over a game of basketball," Marcus said smiling.

Level R

Literary

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