

Sam Adler and the Missing Horseshoes

by Dwayne Carr

“Come on, Toby. You’re a big sissy!”

I recognized Zack Barton’s voice even though I couldn’t see him and he sounded like he was trying to whisper. My best friend, Toby, and I were in Wilson’s grocery store after school. Toby was one aisle over and I thought I’d better go see why Zack was bothering him. Zack is the biggest bully in our class, so I was sure he was up to no good. I turned around and nearly bumped into Ambassador Prill.

He was wearing a suit of armor.

Maybe I’d better back up and tell you a little bit about myself. My name is Sam Adler. I’m a fifth-grader with bright red hair that never stays in place. I’m pretty normal, except that I travel a lot to a planet called Thrae. It’s a lot like Earth, except that their time periods shift as often as the wind does on Earth. One minute everyone is jetting around in private rockets and exploring space, and the next they’re all living in castles and wearing armor. It’s kind of confusing at first, but you get used to it.

The Ambassador bowed at the waist. His armor squeaked and the visor on his helmet clanged shut, which made him sputter as if he had just swallowed water in the pool. Ambassador Prill is very serious and doesn’t make mistakes. He held up the visor then sputtered some more and made another squeaky bow.

“My lord Adler,” (that’s what everyone calls me whenever Thrae is in one of its Middle Ages periods). “I bring grave news.”

“I’m sure we can handle it, Prill,” I said.

Prill bowed again, because I’m very important on Thrae. “There is trouble with Zor, my lord.”

Zor is the chief bad guy on Thrae. He’s always giving King Bern a hard time, and the king always calls *me* when Zor gives him a hard time.

“Let’s go,” I said.

The next moment we were hurrying across the drawbridge of King Bern’s castle. Just as we stepped into the courtyard someone shouted.

“LOOK OUT!”

I stopped just in time. Something *whizzed* past my nose and hit the ground with a *clank*.

Three small boys ran toward me. “Sorry, mister! You okay?” they shouted.

I picked up the thing that had almost hit me. A horseshoe.

“Why are you throwing horseshoes at people?” I asked sternly.

The boys all tried to answer at once. “We didn’t have anything to do. We found these horseshoes and we’re trying to see how far we can throw them. We didn’t mean to throw them at you!”

I shook my head. “Don’t play so close to the castle gate,” I said.

They grabbed the horseshoes and ran off. Ambassador Prill and I hurried into the castle.

The king was pacing the polished marble floor of his throne room. When he saw me he stopped and grabbed my arm. “What a relief to see you, Lord Adler! Zor has challenged me to personal combat. If I lose the combat, Zor will become king!”

I frowned. “But King Bern, Zor has challenged you to personal combat 187 times this year. You’ve never lost. Why are you so worried?”

“My horse!” cried the king. “Someone has stolen his horseshoes! Without them I cannot ride into combat. The kingdom will be lost!”

“Hmmm,” I said. “Wait here.”

Five minutes later I herded the three boys into the throne room. They stood in front of King Bern trembling and staring at the floor.

“What do you have to say for yourselves?” said the king.

“The horseshoes were hanging in the barn,” said one of the boys. “We didn’t think they *belonged* to anybody.”

King Bern frowned.

One of the other boys shrugged. “It was no big deal. They were just old horseshoes.”

The king turned red and clenched his fists.

Then the third boy stepped up in front of the king. “I’m sorry, King Bern. We knew those horseshoes didn’t belong to us. We should have asked before we took them.”

The king looked the boy up and down and grunted once or twice, then he turned to the other two boys and scowled.

“No big deal, huh?” he said. “You didn’t think they belonged to anyone, even though they were hanging in *my* barn?!”

Both boys looked scared.

“I’m sorry, your majesty,” said one. “We were wrong.”

The other nodded his head.

King Bern grunted a few more times. “Alright then,” he said at last. And then he smiled. “I think we can find some *old* horseshoes for you to play with.”

The boys ran off and the king smiled at me. “Thank you, Lord Adler. Once again you have saved my kingdom!”

A moment later I was back in the store and Prill had disappeared.

I heard Zack talking to Toby again. “I dare you to steal it! It’s a little thing. They’re not going to miss it. You’re just a sissy!”

I stepped into the next aisle.

Zack was pointing at a hard rubber ball, the type that light up and bounce like crazy when you throw them against a wall. “They make tons of money in this store,” he said. “They aren’t going to go out of business because one little ball disappeared.”

Toby looked nervous and took a step backward.

I race down the aisle, grabbed Toby's arm, and pulled him away from Zack. "Come with me," I said. I looked back at Zack and then hurried Toby out of the store. "Trust me, Toby," I said. "Stealing a *little* thing can lead to a whole *lot* of trouble!"

THE END