

Sarah's Missing Shoe

Sammy," I yelled downstairs to my 8-year-old son, "go get Sarah's boot for me. It's in the car." We were running late.

A minute later he dashed up the stairs. "Mom, I can't find it."

Oh brother, I thought, *how come no one else in this family can find anything?* I knew that boot was in the car. Sarah had been wearing her snow boots when we went out last night.

I rushed downstairs to the garage and flung open the car door. But the boot wasn't there.

Oh well, I thought, exasperated, *I'll find it later. We've got to go.*

"Everybody in the car," I ordered.

Fortunately, Sarah, age 3, was just going along for the ride. I carried her to the car and strapped her in her car seat. Once I got the older kids to school, I would find her missing boot.

But when we got home, I couldn't find it. I searched everywhere.

"God," I asked, "Please show me where Sarah's boot is." In my mind I saw a picture of a lonely stretch of highway. We had driven on that road last night on our way to a Christmas party.

I shook my head. *Sarah's boot on the road?* I didn't think so.

I recalled the drive. Sarah had been riding in the front seat next to my husband. I was in the back with our two older kids.

I often let Sarah ride in the front seat while I drive

her older siblings to basketball practice, ice skating lessons, school and church activities. It seems a small concession considering all the hours she spends in the car.

That night we had been in a hurry. In the rush, we left Sarah's car seat up front rather than taking time to move it to the back seat.

Sarah was in no mood for another ride. She started fussing, then kicking and screaming. I was yelling at her from the back seat but couldn't restrain her from there.

When she landed a hard kick on my husband's elbow, sending the car into the next lane, my husband pulled the car over to the side of the road.

Furious, I flung open the door on Sarah's side of the car, unbuckled her car seat and ordered her to climb to the back. She obeyed silently, stepping between the front bucket seats. Then I yanked the car seat out of the car and threw it in the back, where my older daughter, Anna, strapped it in.

How could her boot have fallen out? I wondered, then answered my own question. *It couldn't have! She never even got out of the car. Besides, I had been standing in the open car door. Surely I would have noticed if her boot had fallen out near my feet.*

I waited for three days. During that time, the weather

was cold and rainy. We sure missed that boot! And I had recently lost my job, so we didn't have the money to buy a new pair.

Every time I prayed and asked God to show me where the lost boot was, I saw the same stretch of dark highway. I was getting more and more agitated. Was God speaking to me?

I had to look. Even if the boot wasn't there, at least I'd be able to accept the loss and move on.

I called my husband at work. "I know this sounds crazy, but do you remember where we pulled over on the highway the other night?"

He laughed when I told him my plan. "I'm not sure, but I think it was just south of Braddock Road."

I loaded Sammy, his friend, Nick, and Sarah in the car. Twenty minutes later we were on the highway. When I passed the Braddock Road exit I slowed the car.

"Look carefully," I told the boys. "See if you can spot Sarah's purple snow boot."

No luck.

Soon we hit Popes Head Road. I turned right, made a U-turn and waited at the signal. Then I returned to the highway and headed home.

I can't believe I came down here to look, I chastised myself. This is absurd!

Suddenly I remembered something. I had told Nick's mother we were going to look for Sarah's boot because I thought God

told me it

was on the highway. *When will I learn to keep my mouth shut?* I thought. *Now I will have to tell her I have an overactive imagination!*

As we drove home, I glanced across the highway. Something purple was lying on the other side of the road, four lanes away. Could it be the boot?

"I see it, I see it!" shouted Nick from the back seat of the car. That clinched it. Nick thought he saw it, too.

I turned the car around at the Braddock Road off-ramp and headed south again. "All three of you look carefully," I ordered. I glanced back to see three small noses plastered against the window.

Even though it was midday and traffic was light, I wasn't comfortable driving slower than 45 mph on the busy highway. We covered the distance in no time. Once again, no boot.

"OK," I said, "this is getting ridiculous. We're going home. I can't believe I wasted time doing this." But as I pulled back onto the highway and headed home, I was sure I saw the boot across the highway in the distance again.

Oh no, I thought. *I'm going nuts—and driving in circles!* But I had to go back and look one more time.

This time I pulled off the road onto the paved shoulder. I turned on my flashing hazard lights and slowed to a crawl.

About a half mile later, Nick suddenly shouted, "There it is!" Right in front of the car was a purple boot lying on its

side with the tan sole facing the road. Nick hopped out of the car and scooped up the boot. He waved it above his head, jumping up and down.

When he got back to the car, Sarah hugged the boot to her chest. The kids bounced up and down on the back seat. "We found it, we found it," they chorused.

Last summer, Sarah's feet grew too big for the purple boots, and we passed them on to a little girl in our church family.

Whenever we see her wearing them, we are reminded of this incident.

God knew that boot was on the road. But it took Him a long time to convince me. I had to drive around in circles until I slowed down enough to see what God had told me was there all along.

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