

Can you solve the case of the missing trophy?

The scene is Lords cricket ground, London. The day before England and Australia compete for the Ashes trophy. Five men have gathered in the great hall: it is time for the captains to have their picture taken with the trophy.

'D'you wanna hand it over now, mate?' says Oliver Lane, the Australian captain.

'Not this year, Oliver,' David Luxton, the English captain, replies.

Neither man is smiling.

'C'mon mate. We'll whip you, then the trophy's ours.'

'Even if you *whip* us,' Luxton says, 'the trophy stays here.'

'We'll see,' says Lane, eyeing the trophy that sits on the table that they are gathered around.

'He's right,' an older man interrupts irritably. 'It doesn't matter who wins: the trophy has always remained in London.' The older man is Philip Gawthorpe, a member at Lords. He is with his large dog, W.G.

'That's crazy,' Lane says. 'If we win it we should be allowed to keep it.'

'Never,' Luxton says, stepping towards Lane.

'Right, gentlemen,' the photographer and fourth man, interrupts. 'Let's begin.'

And for a moment the tension is relieved as the photographer accidentally spills camera equipment onto the floor. Everyone takes their eyes off the trophy for the first time.

Then suddenly W.G. is choking.

The five men turn to watch.

Philip Gawthorpe is on the floor prizing his dog's mouth open. The photographer is scrabbling to refill his bag with gadgets. And both captains are stepping back, Lane with his hands firmly in his pockets.

Then the chief of security, the fifth and final man, shouts 'The Ashes! They've gone!'

And so they have.

Within seconds ten police officers have the room sealed.

'I'm sorry gentlemen,' the security chief says, 'one of you has stolen the Ashes trophy. I must insist that you are all searched. Thoroughly.'

The four men nod gravely. And each is frisked by the police. Even W.G., a police woman running her hand through his long fur. The dog growls and eyes her with menace.

But there is no sign of the trophy.

'What about his bag?' Lane says, pointing at the photographer.

At first the photographer refuses to hand it over. But he must. However, the trophy appears *not* to be in the bag.

Convinced that none of the men have the trophy, the police reluctantly release them all.

The two cricket captains return to their luxury hotel. Philip Gawthorpe to his veterinary surgery. With W.G. The photographer to his studio. And the security chief looks hopelessly around the room, thinking 'Where *did* the trophy go?'

So, who do you think did it? And how?

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