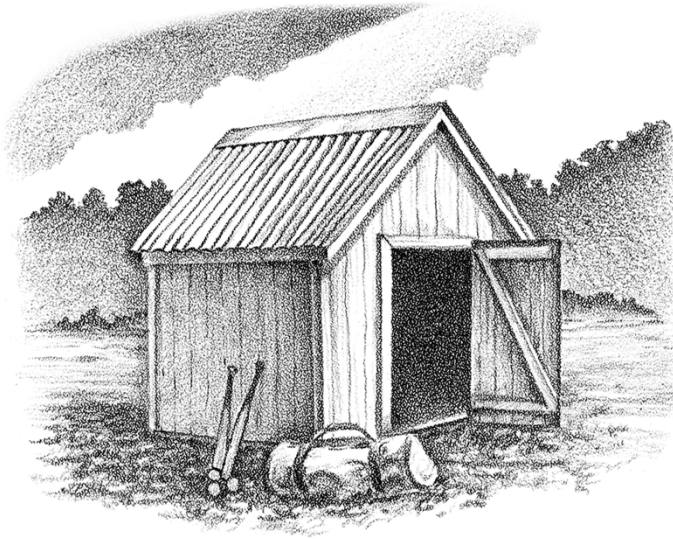


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Where Are They?

‘Hey!’ Marty exclaimed. ‘Where are they? Where are the bases?’ She peered into the shed. It was hard to see. The sun shining on the metal roof had blinded her.

Marty stepped inside. The shed was hot and dark. It smelt damp from last night’s rain.

‘Come on, Speedy!’ Brett joked. ‘Hurry up! Let’s make it *this* year, okay?’

The sun was hot on Marty’s back. She squinted trying to see. Brett’s cleats scuffed in the dirt as he walked up behind her.

WHO STOLE THE BASES?

‘Cool your jets, hot shot! I’m doing the best I can. I just don’t see them!’ Marty said as she turned around. She made a face at Brett. He grinned back.

‘What do you mean, you don’t see them?’ asked José, walking up. He pushed up next to Brett. He tried to look over Brett’s shoulder into the shed.

‘Let me see’, added Dwight. He peered over everyone’s shoulders. ‘Oh, great! No bases for practice’.

Marty frowned. Her eyes scanned the inside of the shed. She could see the little machine that lined the baseball field. And there were the rakes. In one corner, some hoses were wound up like snakes. Team equipment bags lay in a heap.

Marty stepped further inside. She moved the equipment bags. Nope, nothing there. She took one more look around just to be sure. There were no bases. What had happened to them?

Coach Espinoza jogged up. ‘Hurry up, kids, we have to practice. What’s the problem?’

Marty backed out of the shed. She turned around to face the others.

‘We can’t find the bases, Coach!’ Marty said. She shrugged her shoulders.

Coach Espinoza looked puzzled. ‘What?’ he asked. He ducked his head and stepped into the dark shed.

Coach lifted up bags. He moved hoses aside. He came back out frowning.

‘Well, you’re right. They’re not there’, Coach said.