

The power of

# Sharpe Thinking

The problem-solving adventures of Scott and Angie Sharpe



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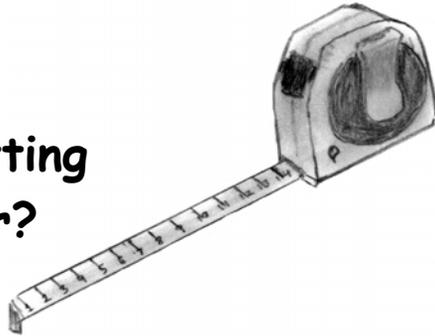
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## Mystery #5:

### **Am I Getting Shorter?**



Wolfie's younger brother Joey was forever playing practical jokes on people, so whenever his stunts didn't work, the only person upset about it was usually Joey himself. That's what Scott and Angie thought must have happened when he appeared at their front door one Saturday morning, looking glum.

"Am I getting shorter?" he asked. "Tell me the truth."

"Of course not," Scott said. "Kids don't get shorter. They grow."

"I think you've grown a couple of inches since last spring," Angie added, wondering what kind of stunt had backfired so badly that Joey thought he was shrinking.

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“You really think I’ve grown a couple of inches?” Joey sounded hopeful.

“At least that.” Then, warily, Angie asked, “What makes you think you’re getting shorter?” Maybe Joey wasn’t really as worried as he looked. Maybe he was pretending. Maybe he was trying to throw them off, so they wouldn’t suspect he was getting ready to play a joke.

“Okay,” Scott said sternly. “What’s this about?”

“I need you to prove that I’m not shrinking. Come on, I’ll show you.”

By now both twins were suspicious, but they were curious, too. “Show us what?” Scott asked.

“A tree.”

Angie put her hands on her hips. “A tree? A tree that makes you think you’re getting shorter? Be serious, Joey.”

“I *am* serious. I’ve never been *more* serious.”

Both twins looked at him skeptically.

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“Just come with me,” Joey pleaded. “This is not a joke. I promise. *Please.*” He got such a pathetic look on his face that it was impossible to say no.

Ten minutes later the three of them were standing in front of a weeping willow tree beside the creek near Joey’s house. Its curtains of graceful, drooping branches swept the ground. They pushed them aside so they could examine the trunk.



**Joey was using a weeping willow tree to measure his height**

“See? Right there,” Joey said. He pointed to a thick scratch on the bark above his head. “I made that mark right there to measure myself against. That was six months ago.” He stretched to his full height, with his back against the tree, so the twins could see that the top of his head was well below the mark. “If I grew, my

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head would be above the mark, not below it," he said.

"You'd think so, wouldn't you?" Scott said with a smile.

"This isn't funny," Joey moaned. "Last year I was one of the tallest kids in my class. This year I'll probably be the shortest one in third grade."

Angie, too, began to smile. "When you're in school, do you feel shorter than everyone else?"

"No. The last time I noticed, James only came up to here." He pointed to an eyebrow. "But he's probably taller than me by now."

Angie nodded with mock seriousness. "And what about your clothes? Are your pants getting too long for you, now that you're shrinking?"

"No. Mom just bought some new ones because last year's were too short." Then his expression drooped. "But I guess the old ones will fit better, now."

Joey looked desperately from Angie to Scott, then from Scott to Angie. "So can you help me? Is there some way I can get taller?"

Both twins put on a look of great thoughtfulness, as if they were mulling this over.

“Well?” Joey asked.

Much as the twins enjoyed giving Joey a dose of his own medicine, by now he looked so miserable that they began to feel sorry for him.

“You’re not getting shorter, Joey,” Angie assured him finally.

“You’re growing right on schedule,” Scott said.

“Then what – ? Then why – ?” Bewildered, Joey pointed to the mark on the tree. “I’m sure that’s exactly the mark I made.”

“Oh, I believe you,” Scott said. “The mark is okay. And your height is okay. What isn’t okay is your logic.”

Angie nodded. “There’s one thing you forgot to take into account.”

### **WHAT HAD JOEY FORGOTTEN?**

*(answer on page 74)*

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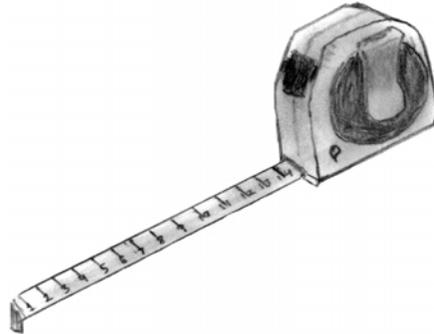
### Mystery #5:

### **Am I Getting Shorter?**

#### *Answer:*

Joey isn't getting shorter – he's just confused.

Joey is forgetting that plants and trees grow, just like people do. He had made a mark to measure himself on a fast-growing weeping willow tree. Even though Joey had been growing normally during the past six months, the tree was growing much faster.



As the trunk shot up on the willow tree, so did the mark Joey had made. He'd be better off making the mark on a door frame or something else that is not living, and therefore not growing.



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