

An Open Drawer



Written and Illustrated by Pip

An Open Drawer

Good to see the sun, thought Emma, as she wiped the sleep from her eyes. Booming thunderstorms had shaken the house and pelted it with rain and hail. She stretched and scanned her sunny bedroom. What!



It had happened again. A drawer was open on her chest of drawers. This is the second time she found this same drawer opened when she awoke in the morning. How could this happen, she wondered. Everything seemed to be in the same place as last night, her clothes piled on her chair, her door shut. The mystery deepened.

She could hear her family sitting for breakfast so she quickly dressed herself. "Good morning, Emma," her

brother, Pip, said from the table. "Your muesli and favorite strawberry yogurt are waiting for you. Did the storms wake you last night?"

"Yes," she replied. But something stranger happened. I found my drawer was open when I woke this morning." She scanned her mother, father, and Pip sitting at the table. Everyone was silent.

Then, Pip said, "You must have left it open last night. You probably forgot because the storms upset your sleep."

"Maybe," but her thoughts were elsewhere as she crunched on her muesli. She would become both the fact finding scientist and nosy detective. She would find the solution to this mystery.

After school, Emma walked to the library. With the librarian's help, she found a book describing the construction of bureaus, dressers, and chests of drawers. It wasn't too long before she had a basic understanding of how a drawer was built and how it worked. Emma felt prepared. She could talk to her father about the old chest of drawers that he had rebuilt for her.

Emma's father described how he found a rickety old chest of drawers and rebuilt damaged parts and finally sanded and refinished it to look new again. She asked him about the drawers and he mentioned that he used an old technique of waxing the wooden pieces so that the drawers would slide easily—a clue she thought.

The next day, Emma spoke to the slöjd woodworking teacher in her school. She asked whether wooden drawers could slide open on their own. "Yes," he said, "It is possible for drawers to unexpectedly open especially when

everything in the drawer is sitting at the front." He thought for a moment and added, "Then, too, the weather can affect the wood. If the floor or chest of drawers is not level, that can change how drawers slide. So, depending upon the conditions, if the chest of drawers is bumped even slightly, that might be just enough to open the drawer."

"Thank you," Emma replied. She had yet another clue.

Later that evening, Emma stood in front of her chest of drawers. Time for her to become a scientist and detective again. She opened the suspect drawer and, yes, it slid easily. She checked and noticed the wood was waxed. She looked into the drawer and noticed everything was bunched to the front.



She also noticed a jar of marbles. She took one of the marbles and placed it on top of the chest of drawers. The marble rolled to the front of the chest onto the floor and across the room. Ah, more clues! she thought. Still one more very important experiment. She closed the drawer and rapped the side of the chest of drawers. Nothing happened. Her heart sank. She rapped again several times and then noticed the drawer had moved ever so slightly and then stopped. But, it had moved!

Emma went to sleep wondering if the terrible thunderstorm that had occurred was powerful enough to have shaken open the drawer. But, what about the first time the drawer opened months ago? She couldn't remember the date nor if there had been a powerful storm or other event that might have caused the drawer to open. She would ask Pip in the morning.



As they walked to school in the morning, Emma explained to Pip her findings as to how the drawer may have opened. She asked if he remembered a powerful storm when the drawer had opened the first time. Like Emma he couldn't remember the date nor did any powerful storms come to mind.

"I have another idea as to what opened the drawer," Pip blurted. "It could be a tomte!"

"What is a tomte?"

"A tomte, nisse, onttu, you know, maybe you call it a gnome. We live in an old farmhouse and it just may have one. A tomte is a small but very strong worker who wears a bright red hat. It appears during the night to help with chores and protect the home. Yet, it is mischievous, too. If you are too messy it may remind you. For its work, it expects a reward of porridge once a year," explained Pip.

"Ah, you and your imagination, Pip. You talk to your imaginary friend, a mythical rå nonetheless, when you go into the forest. Now you expect me to believe in gnomes."

"Maybe, when your room is messy, the tomte is reminding you to put away your things by leaving the drawer open," said Pip.

"Well, Pip, if this is true, how am I to catch this imaginary creature in the act of opening the drawer?"

Some minutes passed before Pip replied. "What if you put a bowl of porridge atop the chest of drawers and opened the drawer. Maybe leave your door open, too. Then, if the bowl is empty in the morning and the drawer

and door are closed, you will have evidence you had a visitor.”



Emma wondered what a good scientist would do in this situation. The scientist would want to explore all possibilities. “Okay, I’ll do it,” she replied.

That evening she prepared a very big bowl of porridge and opened the drawer and door to her room. Yes, it was hard to get to sleep, but it came eventually. And, in the morning, can you imagine her surprise when she found her

door closed, the drawer closed, and the bowl emptied. She would have a most interesting discussion with family.

As she was dressing for breakfast, she heard her mother ask Pip what he wanted for breakfast.

“Ummm, I think I ate too much last night. I’m not hungry this morning,” he quietly replied.

Emma wondered if they could hear her laughing. She had yet another clue and a very good one, too.

Had Emma solved the mystery of the opened drawer? In her journey to find the solution, she had found many clues as to how the drawer may have opened. And, what about you? What do you believe opened the drawer?

This story was inspired by Layna’s adventure.

An Open Drawer © 2025 by Philip Callahan is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Allows you to copy, redistribute, remix, and adapt the material for any purpose, even commercially, as long as you provide proper attribution to the original creator and share any derivative works under the same license. This license promotes sharing and collaboration while ensuring that original creators receive credit for their work.