

# **BOOTS AND BITS**

## **By David J. LeMaster**

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## CHARACTERS

Boots	A British cat, and the world's greatest detective. He's Sherlock Holmes.
Bits	A dog. He's a hyperactive Watson.
Chesterfield	A mouse. He's a pompous butler.
Tessie	A country cat.
Mother	The kids' mom
Boy Thing	Boots' and Bits' boy.
Girl Thing	Boots' and Bits' girl.
Jail Bird	An old con.
Robin	His pal.
Cardinal	His other pal.
Squiggley	A squirrel.
Mr. Ferret	Squiggley's boss.
Mrs. Squiggley	Squiggley's wife.
Wolfie	A curious looking dog with no sense of smell.
Rascal	A raccoon who loves to eat trash.
Opal	An opossum that likes to sleep a lot.

## SETTING

The setting is the yard of Boots' and Bits' home, followed by their jaunt out onto the street. The action may be performed using a unit set and/or single backdrops if so desired. Whatever choices in design, the set should be simple and consistent with the costumes and story; Boots and Bits live in a cartoonish world.

## BOOTS AND BITS: THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVES

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*(The curtain rises in BOOTS and BITS home, which also serves as their detective office. BITS, a hyperactive detective dog, talks on a telephone, film noir style.)*

BITS: Boots and Bits, World's Greatest Detectives Agency, Bits speaking. **(pause)** No, Boots ain't here. **(pause)** He's out. **(pause)** Whadda I mean? I mean our master opened the front door and Boots went out, Capish? **(pause)** Yeah, I'll tell him. **(hangs up; another ring)** Boots and Bits Detective Agency, Bits speaking. **(pause)** Your homework? I see. Any suspects? **(pause)** A dog? Uh huh. A dog ate your homework. Okay, I'll report it. **(hangs up, looks out at audience)** Er, hey! How ya doin? How are you? My name is Bits. I'm a dog. But you could probably tell, huh? From my ears and my tail. **(chases tail and barks)** Someday I'm gonna get that tail! **(finishes chase then regains composure)** I like being a dog. And I'm a detective. Really. I work for the world's greatest private eye. He's a cat, but don't hold that against him. My boss, Boots, he can stop anyone, solve any crime. We live here with our master, the Girl **(Boy)** Thing. She thinks we're just animals. Gee, if she were to find out we're not just pets, but the world's greatest detectives, she'd probably go crazy!

*(Feigns being crazy. Enter BOOTS, an eloquent British cat, wearing a Sherlock Holmes hat and cloak and smoking a pipe. HE's very pompous.)*

BOOTS: Good morning, Mr. Bits. Are you quite alright?

BITS: Gee, Mr. Boots, am I glad you're here. People have been calling about crimes all day.

BOOTS: It's a real crime wave, Mr. B. **(sneezes)** I've been sneezing horribly. And you know, I'm allergic to crime. **(sneezes again)**

CHESTERFIELD: **(off)** May we come in now?

BOOTS: Ah! I almost forgot. **(Waves them in. Enter TESSIE, an orange cat, and CHESTERFIELD, a mouse.)** This is Tessie and her butler, Chesterfield. They want to report a crime in person.

BITS: Oh, boy! We can solve this like our most famous cases, the Mask of Red Beth or the Hound of the Basketballs! But wait a minute.

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You're a cat and you're a mouse. Aren't you supposed to be enemies?

CHESTERFIELD: (*pompous*) We're a sophisticated cat and mouse.

BITS: You don't look too sophisticated to me.

TESSIE: (*with deep Texas accent*) Eat my kitty litter.

BOOTS: (*to TESSIE*) That's' quite enough of that. Please, just tell us what's happened.

TESSIE: Well, first somebody drank all my milk.

CHESTERFIELD: That was me. I needed something to go with my cheese.

BOOTS: Cancel that one, then. What else is missing?

TESSIE: Somebody stole the blueberry pie out of our window.

CHESTERFIELD: We'd planned to eat it this evening. I'd even had a little nibble.

BOOTS: What are the clues?

TESSIE: Well. There was short brown dog hair all over the place.

BOOTS: Um hmmm.

TESSIE: And someone left a riddle in place of the pie.

BITS: Another riddle?!!

BOOTS: Yes, there's been a riddle left at the scene of every crime this week (*to TESSIE*) What's the riddle?

TESSIE: (*looks at paper and reads*) A sharp knife cannot cut it. Scissors cannot part it. What is it?

BOOTS: Hmmmm. That's a tough one.

BITS: You're telling me. Is it hair?

BOOTS: Hair. Well, either scissors or a knife could cut hair.

BITS: Oh, yeah. How about birthday cake? I've never used scissors on a birthday cake.

BOOTS: But a knife can cut a birthday cake.

BITS: Aw, gee. That's right.

CHESTERFIELD: I think it's cheese.

BOOTS: But a knife can cut cheese. This is mysterious.

BITS: (*to audience*) Can you help us? A knife cannot cut it...

BOOTS: Scissors cannot part it...

BITS: I don't know, Boots. This one's got me stumped. (*goes to his water bowl for a drink*)

BOOTS: Wait! I've got it, Bits! It's water!

BITS: Water?

BOOTS: Of course. You can't cut water. And you can't part it with a knife, either. It just flows onto either side.

BITS: By Jove, Boots! You're right!

**(HE's flung water everywhere. BITS stops and tries to compose himself.)**

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BOOTS: Elementary, my dear Bits. Elementary.

BITS: **(to audience)** I love it when he does that!!!!

TESSIE: This is all well and good, but where the devil's my blueberry pie?

BOOTS: Aha! We still have a problem. Let's move on to the next crime.

BITS: **(looking at paper)** Okay, let's see. The next crime happened just a few minutes ago when someone stole Wolfie's water and dog food bowls. You know, Wolfie, the dog across the street. They just went right in and got that water bowl... **(a sudden realization)** Boots!!!!

BOOTS: Exactly, Mr. B. The riddle was a clue to the next crime.

BITS: Wow!

BOOTS: Did they leave a riddle in the water bowl's place?

BITS: Sure did. Let's see. **(reading)** What's black and white and red all over.

TESSIE: Oh, that's easy.

BOOTS: What is it?

TESSIE: A zebra with a sunburn.

BOOTS: I don't think that's it.

TESSIE: Well, he'd be red all over.

CHESTERFIELD: What about a piece of cheese?

BOOTS: Cheese isn't red!

CHESTERFIELD: No, I was asking. Do you have a piece of cheese I could eat?

BOOTS: Perhaps you should leave the detecting to us. What do you think it is, Mr. Boots?

BITS: A zebra that's been finger painting? You know, if he uses red paints.

BOOTS: There's no zebras in the neighborhood. And we're looking for clues to the next crime. There must be another answer.

BITS: I don't know. **(to audience)** What do you think?

### ***(General audience interaction with kids.)***

BOOTS: I've got it! A newspaper!

BITS: A newspaper? But papers aren't red!!!

BOOTS: They're not red like the color red. But they're read like you read a book.

BITS: I get it!!! Of course!

BOOTS: So what was the next crime?

BITS: Somebody stole Mr. McDonald's newspaper!!!!

BOOTS: I knew it!

BITS: Gee, Boots. You're so smart. I wish I was as smart as you.

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BOOTS: Of course you do, Bits. Now. We must hurry. We've developed a pattern here. The criminal steals things and leaves riddles as a clue for the next crime.

BITS: Yeah. Yeah.

BOOTS: So we must solve the last riddle to catch him before he acts again.

BITS: Oh, Boots! You're a genius. (***digs through papers***) Here! Here's the latest riddle. (***reads***) Climb on my back, I'll roll with you. Sometimes I even carry two. What am I?

BOOTS: Oh, dear. That's difficult.

BITS: Climb on my back... Could it be a horse?

BOOTS: But a horse doesn't roll.

BITS: Oh, yeah.

BOOTS: We must think of something that rolls and could carry two people. Hmm.

BITS: (***to audience***) Got any ideas?

***(All interact with audience.)***

CHESTERFIELD: I think it's a piece of cheese.

TESSIE: Is it catnip?

BOOTS: I've got it! It's a bicycle.

BITS: You mean that funny looking thing with two wheels that the Girl Thing rides?

BOOTS: It's her favorite toy.

BITS: Yeah! I love it when she rides real fast and I run beside her and bark at the tires.

BOOTS: Wait, Bits. If the next clue is a bicycle, then that means...

BITS: What?

BOOTS: (***begins a sneezing fit***) Great Scott! He's going to steal Girl Thing's bike!

BITS: We can't let him do it, Boots! We can't let him do it!

BOOTS: I'll check the garage to make sure.

BITS: Gee, Boots. (***An alarm next to the doghouse goes off. BITS jumps in the air.***) Yikes! It's time for the Girl Thing and Boy Thing to get home from school!!!!!!!

CHESTERFIELD: (***fearful***) Humans!

TESSIE: Let's get out of here!

BITS: (***shakes CHESTERFIELD's and TESSIE's hands***) It was very nice to make your acquaintance... no, wait! Use the pet exit!

***(Exit CHESTERFIELD and TESSIE through the pet door.)***

BOOTS: (***returning***) This is horrible! The bicycle is... (***sneeze***) gone!

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BITS: We can't let her see if it's been stolen.

BOOTS: Quick, Bits! Take off your detective gear.

BITS: **(trying to undress)** I hear the car turning onto our street!

BOOTS: **(yanks off overcoat and hat and hides them)** Where's my flea collar?

BITS: Over there. **(A frantic scramble to become a cat and dog.)**  
They're just a few houses away!

BOOTS: Great heavens, Bits! Your flea collar is backwards!

BITS: **(panics)** Yikes!

BOOTS: Remember, Bits! We can't let the Girl Thing see the bicycle is stolen. Whatever you do, keep her from taking a bike ride.

**(They struggle with flea collars etc. as we hear the car engine get closer, then stop. Car doors slam. We either hear the mother offstage or see her cartoonish legs in the doorway.)**

MOTHER: Hurry and get your things. You've got to be at Girl Scouts in fifteen minutes, Susie. And, Daniel, you've got football practice.

GIRL: Okay, Mom.

BOY: That's cool, Mom.

**(BOOTS and BITS abandon their human qualities and become a dog and a cat. BOOTS rubs against things, etc. while BITS jumps on GIRL and almost knocks her down.)**

GIRL: Hey Bits! **(BITS licks her hand.)** How are you, Bitsy Boo?

BITS: Yip! Yip! Yip! Yip!

GIRL: Here Boots! **(BOOTS rubs against a nearby object.)** Here kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty!

BOY: Ah, you treat 'em like a couple of girls.

GIRL: No, I don't.

BOY: Here's how you treat a dog.

**(HE roughhouses with BITS. BITS loves it.)**

GIRL: Mom! Daniel's abusing the cat again.

BOY: No, I'm not!

GIRL: Hey. I'll beat you on a bike ride around the block.

BOY: You can't beat me. You're just a girl.

GIRL: Betch'a I can.

BOY: Let's go, then.

**(BOOTS and BITS panic. They try various manners of diverting her: BITS brings her a ball. BOOTS brings her yarn. BITS chases his tail. By the end, BOOTS is covered in yarn and BITS is dizzy.)**

GIRL: What's gotten into you, guys? **(BITS leaps to tackle her, then lets her tickle his tummy; HE's ticklish.)** Good dog! **(baby talking)**

Is Bits a good dog? Look at that good dog!

BOY: Ah, you're just making him a big sissy.

**(SHE leaves BITS exhausted and again starts toward the bike. BOOTS, still half tangled in the string, leaps to her and blocks the way. They improvise playing)**

MOTHER: **(enters in a rush)** Grab your bags and let's go, kids.

GIRL: But Mom -

MOTHER: Now.

**(BITS chases his tail and makes GIRL laugh. SHE exits with mother and we hear the car leaving. HE continues chasing tail. BOOTS finally stops him.)**

BITS: What?

BOOTS: You look preposterous.

BITS: I'm just being a dog.

BOOTS: How revolting.

BITS: Well, you look funny, too. Twisting in string like that. **(imitates BOOTS)** Oh, boy. That was a real laugh-riot, that was.

BOOTS: Nonsense. We must turn our attention back to the riddle. Heaven knows what might happen if the girl discovered we're actually famous detectives, and not just a dog and cat.

BITS: Yeah. She'd probably go crazy or something.

BOOTS: **(with magnifying glass)** Now. Back to the case. Someone broke in and took it. See here? A bicycle chain. Split right in half.

BITS: How'd they do that?

BOOTS: Someone brought a large pair of clippers, pried open the garage door, and cut the chain right in half! That means whoever is committing these crimes has to have full use of his arms and hands.

BITS: Wow, Boots. You're so smart. I wish I was as smart as you--

BOOTS: We must find the bike before the girl gets home at 3:15.

BITS: Gee! That's not much time.

BOOTS: What time is it, Bits?

BITS: **(looking at pocket watch)** Well, it's... er... uh... I can't tell time.

BOOTS: Where are the watch's hands?

BITS: Watch's don't have hands.

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BOOTS: Of course they do. They're on the watch's face.

BITS: Are you crazy?

BOOTS: Look here, Bits. The little hand is on the two. That means it's two something.

BITS: Oh. Two what?

BOOTS: The big hand is on the six.

BITS: It's two six?

BOOTS: It's half past two, Bits. Two thirty.

BITS: Uh oh! That gives us... (**tries to calculate**)

BOOTS: Forty five minutes.

BITS: Gee. You're so smart.

BOOTS: (**discovering a note**) Egad!

BITS: What is it, Boots?

BOOTS: A note!

BITS: A note? What's it say?

BOOTS: (**reading**) Riddles as clues are strewn about; find the bike before time runs out.

BITS: Time runs out!?

BOOTS: Great Scott, Mr. B. He's given us a time limit as well!

BITS: How long do we have?

BOOTS: (**reading**) Back in your hands the bike must be  
Before the clock hand reaches three.  
If you haven't found me, you'll have to pay  
I'll take the bike and ride away  
to Canada!  
Signed, The World's Greatest Criminal.

BITS: Ride to Canada! Oh, Boots! This is terrible.

BOOTS: We've got only a half hour.

BITS: What do we do?

BOOTS: First, I... Wait! My cat sense. (**sniffing air**) I sense a presence.  
I can tell that we're... being. .

BITS: Yeah? Yeah?

BOOTS: Watched!!!!!! (**BOOTS jumps up and finds JAIL BIRD, a Blue Jay, who has been watching them from audience. HE is accompanied by two thugs, ROBIN and CARDINAL.**) Aha! It's Jail-Bird and his two thugs Robin and Cardinal.

ROBIN: Watch it, pal!

CARDINAL: Don't get too close.

JAIL BIRD: Paws off the feathers, understand!

BOOTS: What are you doing here, Jail Bird?

JAIL BIRD: I'm just... you know. Perching around. That's all.

CARDINAL: Yeah. Do we look like we're up to no good?

ROBIN: Shhhh.

CARDINAL: Oh. Sorry.

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BOOTS: A likely story. I thought you got five to ten in Sing-Sing for poaching that bird seed.

JAIL BIRD: They gave me time off for good behavior.

BOOTS: Is that so?

JAIL BIRD: Sure. Said I could fly the coup.

CARDINAL: Yeah. We didn't break out of jail or nothing.

ROBIN: Shhh.

CARDINAL: Sorry.

BOOTS: **(stops BITS)** Call headquarters and check his story, Bits.

BITS: Sure, Boots.

JAIL BIRD: You ain't sending me back to Sing Sing, Pal. I'm free as a bird.

BOOTS: What do you know about the crime wave?

JAIL BIRD: What crime wave?

BOOTS: Sing!

JAIL BIRD: Oh, no you don't! You've got nothing on me!

BITS: He's hiding something, Boots! You want me to rough him up a little?

CARDINAL: You and whose army?

ROBIN: Shhh.

CARDINAL: Not "shhh." We're protecting him, remember?

ROBIN: Oh, yeah. Sorry.

CARDINAL: If you wanna--

JAIL BIRD: Hey, Cardinal. Make like a bumble-bee and buzz off. **(to BOOTS)** I'm warning you, pal. Don't ruffle my feathers.

BOOTS: How long have you been here?

JAIL BIRD: What, you think I wear a wristwatch?

BOOTS: Do you know anything about the little girl's bicycle?

JAIL BIRD: What little girl?

BOOTS: The one who lives in this house.

JAIL BIRD: This house? Aw. Something happened to her bicycle? What a shame.

BITS: He knows it, Boots! He knows something! Let me rough him up, Boots! Come on! Let me rough him up!

JAIL BIRD: Look, pal. I don't know nothing about a crime wave or a bicycle. I'm just looking for a few straws and twigs to build a nest, see. And that's all.

BOOTS: **(to audience)** What do you think?

BITS: He did it! He did it! He did it!

BOOTS: Let's think through the clues, Bits. Could he have used the wire cutters?

BITS: Let's see your hands!

CARDINAL: Birds don't have hands!

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