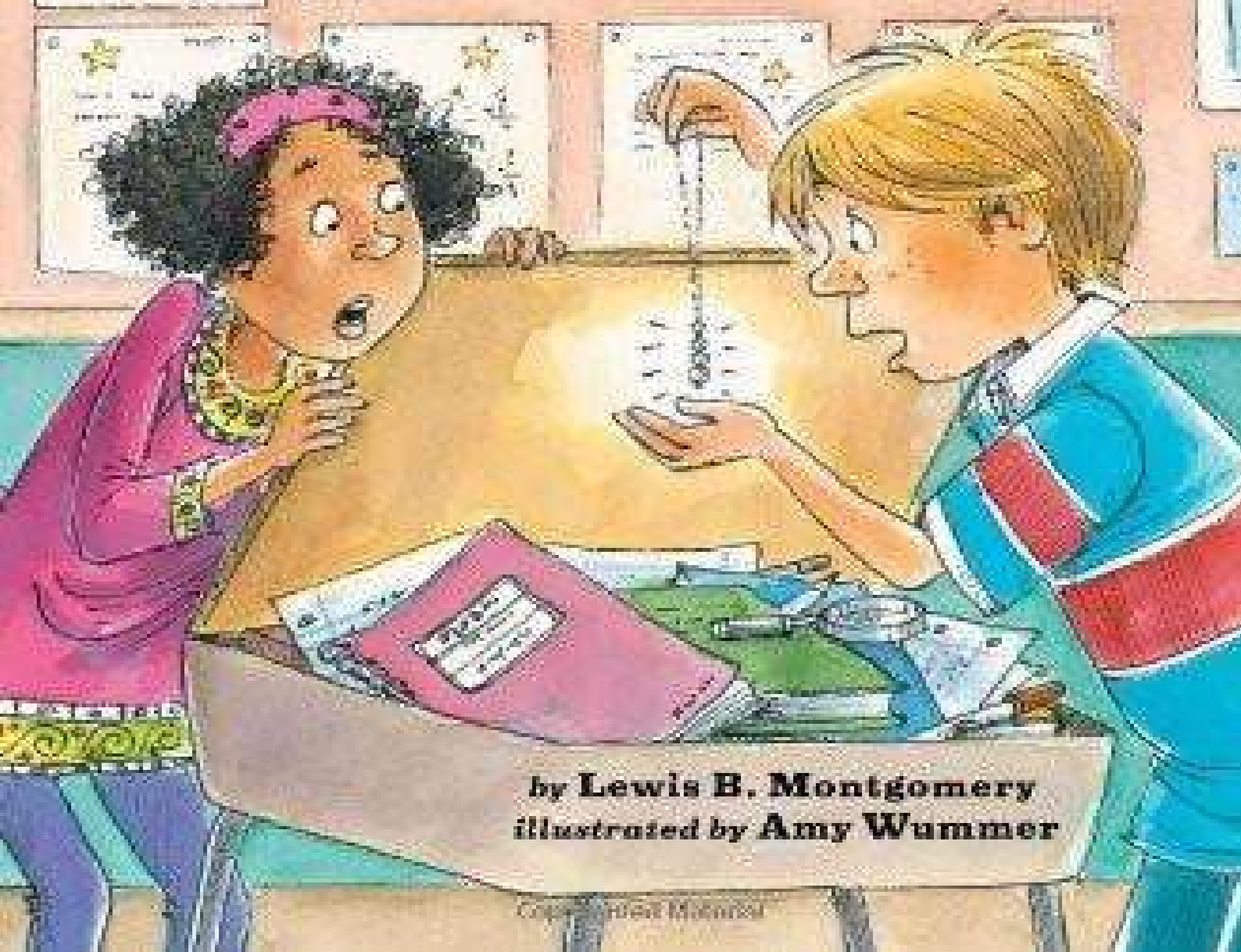


The MILD & JAZZ MYSTERIES

THE CASE OF THE DIAMONDS IN THE DESK



by Lewis B. Montgomery
illustrated by Amy Wummer

the MILO & JAZZ MYSTERIES®

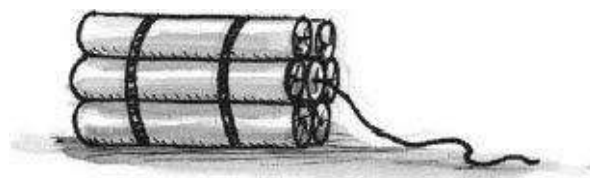
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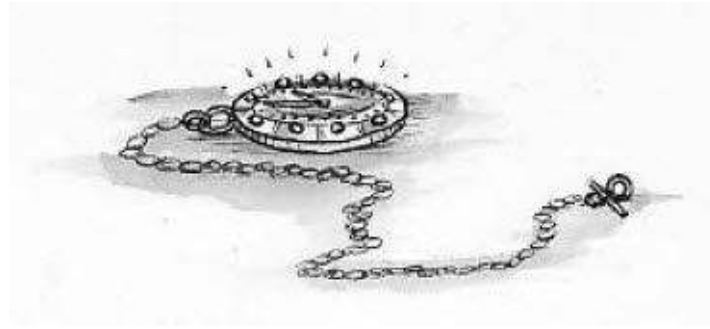
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For the Setliffs, naturally!

—L.B.M.





CHAPTER ONE

Milo slouched at his desk, gazing at the board without really seeing it. He was thinking about stolen jewels.

Ever since he'd seen the news report the night before, he couldn't get it off his mind. A real jewel heist! Just like in *Whodunnit* magazine!

The thieves had broken into a big jewelry store in the middle of the night. They smashed the glass showcases and scooped up all the gold and jewels. They even blew open the vault and stole a diamond necklace and tiara made for Trixie Astor, the soap opera star.

Police were baffled. The jeweler's insurance company was offering a \$1 million reward.

Milo smiled dreamily. If only he and Jazz had a case like *that* to solve!

Milo and his friend Jazz were detectives in training. They got lessons in the mail from world-famous sleuth Dash Marlowe.

Together, Milo and Jazz had solved a bunch of cases right there in the town of Westview. But never anything like this. He could see the flashbulbs popping as they stepped forward for their reward. Maybe Dash Marlowe would show up! Dash would shake their hands and say—



“Milo, how many muffins do I have?” Mr. Davenport asked.

“Huh?” Milo stared at his teacher. Behind him, a girl giggled.

Mr. Davenport tapped his marker on the board. “I baked a batch of two dozen muffins. I ate a quarter of them. Then I baked two more batches and ate a third. So now what do I have?”

Milo struggled to think, then gave up. Weakly, he said, “A stomach ache?”

The teacher sighed. “Anyone else?”



As hands shot up around the room, Noah and Carlos twisted in their seats to give Milo sympathetic looks. He was glad the two of them were in his class this year, especially with Jazz banished across the

hall. He missed all those notes written in invisible ink.

After math was art. As the students pulled their art smocks from their desks, Mr. Davenport called Milo up.

“Something special on your mind today?” the teacher asked.

Milo swallowed. “Well, uh . . .”

“Listen, I know right now math may not seem—” Mr. Davenport broke off, his head whipping around. “Well, for the love of Pete!”

Mr. Davenport dashed to the window and stared out. Milo followed him. All he saw was the empty playground.



“I could have sworn . . .” The teacher shook his head and turned back to Milo. “So, ah . . . I was saying . . .” He frowned. “What was I saying?”

“Um . . . math?” Milo said.

“Math. Yes. Right.” Mr. Davenport glanced out the window again. “Well . . . try to keep your head in the game from now on, okay?”

“I will,” Milo promised.

To his relief, the teacher let him go. The other students had already lined up at the door.

Milo ran to his desk. He pulled the top open, grabbed his folded smock—and froze.

Something glittered in his desk. Something like . . . diamonds.





CHAPTER TWO

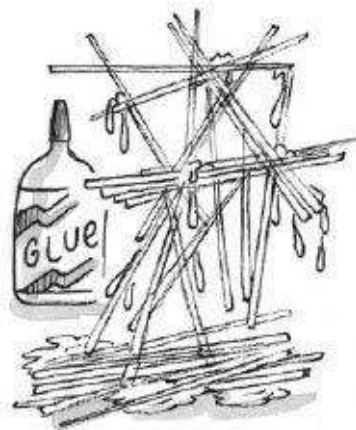
Diamonds?

Slowly, Milo reached into his desk. He felt the cool, hard stones under his fingers as he picked up the object. It really was! A diamond necklace! In his desk!

“Care to join us, Milo?”

Startled, he dropped the necklace back into the desk and slammed it shut. Mr. Davenport watched from the door as Milo rushed to join his classmates, who were filing out into the hall.

His mind was in a whirl. Where had the necklace come from? And how did it get in his desk? Could this be connected to the jewel heist he’d seen on TV?



In the art room, he tried to focus on his toothpick sculpture, but it was impossible. Finally, while the art teacher was helping another student, Milo slipped out of the room. He had to look at that necklace again!

He hurried down the hall, hoping that Mr. Davenport was taking a break in the teachers’ lounge. But when he walked in, his teacher was crouched by Milo’s desk, staring down at the floor.

What was he doing? Milo wondered. Oh, no! What if Mr. Davenport had looked *inside* the desk? What if he’d seen the necklace?

Mr. Davenport jumped up. “What are you doing here?”

“I, uh . . .” Milo scrambled for an excuse. “I felt funny in art class. I think the glue smell made me

woozy.”

His teacher gave him an odd look. “Do you need to go to the nurse?”

Milo shook his head. What did that look mean? Maybe Mr. Davenport had seen the news of the jewel heist, too. Maybe he thought Milo was the thief. Maybe he’d already called the police!

Mr. Davenport checked the clock. “Art class is almost over. Why don’t you sit down and rest?”

Milo sat and stared at his closed desk. He didn’t dare open it with his teacher in the room. If only he had X-ray vision!



At last, Mr. Davenport left to pick up the rest of the class from art. The instant he stepped out the door, Milo flipped up the lid. The necklace was still there, untouched.

Quickly, he slid it out and tucked it in the pocket of his jeans. He had to show it to Jazz. She would help figure out what to do.

It seemed like hours before the bell rang for recess. As the students piled out the door, Noah asked Milo, “Want to play foursquare?”

“I can’t today.”

Carlos came up on Milo’s other side. “You have to! If you don’t, Spencer will want Mandy to play.”

“What’s wrong with Mandy?” Milo asked. Mandy was a terrific ball player, maybe the best in the whole grade.

His friends gave each other a look.

“It isn’t Mandy,” Noah explained. “It’s Spencer. He’s awful around her.”



Carlos made kissy noises.

“Oh.” Milo hated to let them down, but he couldn’t think about foursquare at a time like this. He had to talk to Jazz.

He found her hanging on the zip line. When she saw him she dropped down, brushing her hands. He grabbed her arm and dragged her toward the far end of the playground.

“Hey, what are you— Milo! Quit pulling!”

Letting go, Milo glanced around to make sure nobody was watching. Then he pulled the diamond necklace from his pocket. Cupping it in his hands, he gave her a quick peek.

Jazz’s eyes widened. “Wow! Where did that come from?”

“I found it in my desk.”

“Your *desk*? How did it get in there?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “I went to get my art smock out and—there it was!”

“You mean it wasn’t there when you came in?” Jazz asked.

Milo tried to think. This morning, just like always, he had unloaded his backpack and dumped his books and homework into his desk. He certainly hadn’t seen the diamond necklace then. But had he even looked?

“I’m not sure,” he admitted.

Jazz took the necklace and held it up. The diamonds sparkled in the sunlight. “Do you think they’re real?”



Milo snatched the necklace back and stuffed it in his pocket. “Sure they are. Those thieves know what they’re doing.”

“Thieves? What thieves?” Jazz asked.

As Milo told her about the jewel heist, she lifted an eyebrow.

“But that store is in the city,” she said. “It’s hours away. What would the jewels be doing here?”

“Maybe the thieves are hiding out,” he said.

“In Westview? Why?”

“Why not? Nobody would expect to find them here.”

Jazz frowned. “Well, when we turn the necklace in—”

“Turn it in? But it’s a clue!”

She stared at him. “Milo, you’re not thinking about trying to solve this case?”

“Sure!” he said. “Why not? We’ve solved plenty of others.”

“But if these are actually stolen diamonds, this is serious. A real crime.”

“That’s why it’s our big chance!”

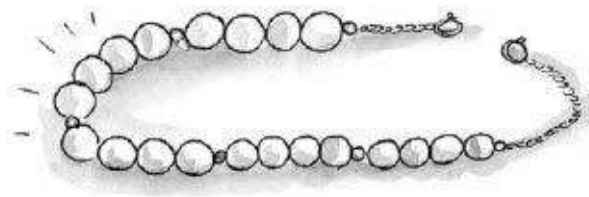
Jazz shook her head. “I think we should tell someone.”

“We will,” he promised. “Just not right away.”

“By the end of the day,” Jazz said.

“That’s not long enough! A week!”

She looked at him for a long moment. Then she said, “Twenty-four hours. *Tops*. Then, no matter what, we’re telling somebody. A teacher. Or our parents. Maybe even the police.”



CHAPTER THREE

Milo couldn't wait to get started.

"What should we do first?" he asked. "Stake out my classroom? Wait! What about fingerprints? Pulling the necklace out again, he peered at it. "I bet there are fingerprints all over this thing."

"Yeah," Jazz said. "Yours and mine."

Oops.

"Well, the thieves probably wore gloves, anyway," he said.

Jazz frowned. "You know, we can't be sure that these are stolen diamonds. Maybe one of the girls in your class brought them to school."

"How many girls our age have diamond necklaces?" Milo asked. "And even if one of the girls *d* have one, why would she wear it to school?"

"The diamonds could be fake."

"They don't look fake to me," he said.

"Well . . . me neither." Jazz shrugged. "But we're not experts. Anyway, we should at least find out if anybody lost a necklace."

Milo had to admit that made sense. They divvied up the girls—five for him, six for her—and headed off in opposite directions.

Jazz was the first one back. As Milo jogged up, she told him, "No luck here. The closest thing was Brooke—she lost a horse charm off her bracelet. You?"

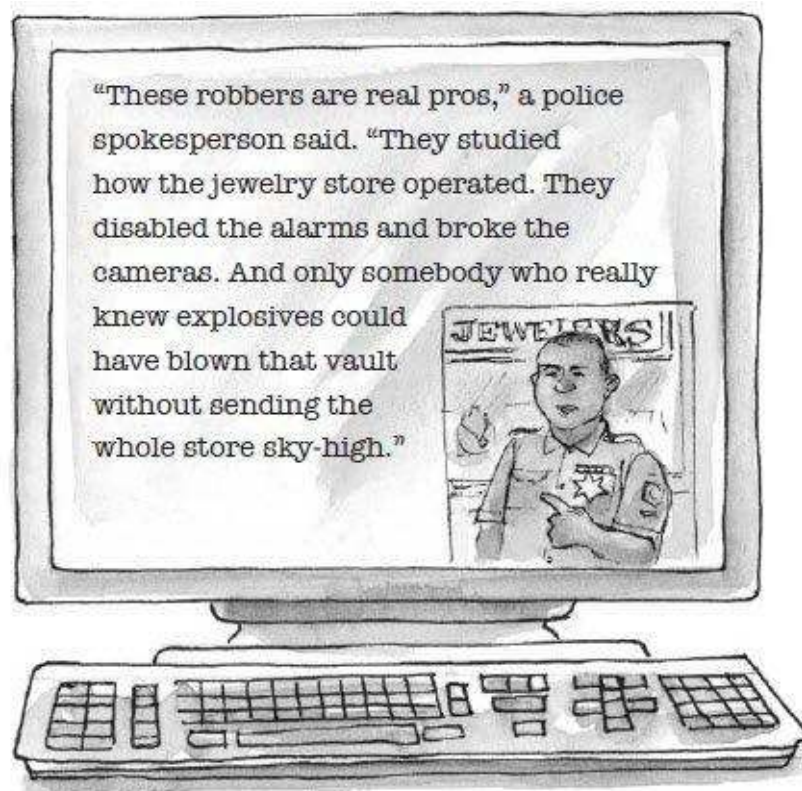
He shook his head. "And I asked everyone—well, except Mandy. She was playing foursquare and she elbowed me out of the way."



Jazz laughed. "I've never seen Mandy wear jewelry, anyway."

Just then the bell rang for the end of recess. Milo and Jazz agreed to meet in the school library the end of the day.

When Milo arrived, Jazz wasn't there. He found a free computer and pulled up the latest news about the heist.



As he was reading, Jazz rushed in. "Sorry I'm late! I stopped to see my old kindergarten teacher." "Huh? What for?"

“Well, I was thinking,” she said. “Kindergartners have all that fancy dress-up stuff. . . .”

Milo jumped up. “You didn’t tell her what I found!”

Jazz shook her head. “I said I needed a fake diamond necklace for a costume. But she was sure she hadn’t put anything like that in the dress-up box.”

Milo felt the necklace in his pocket. “I still say it’s the real thing.”

“We could take it to a jewelry store,” Jazz suggested. “They could tell.”

“What if it’s worth a zillion dollars? They’ll ask where we got it. They might even think *we’re* the thieves.”

Jazz bit her lip. “Well, maybe we could look online. I bet there’s a way to tell real diamonds from fake ones.”

She reached toward the keyboard, and Milo moved over. Just then, a movement outside the window caught his eye.

“What in the world is he doing?”

“Who?” Jazz asked.

“My teacher.” Milo pointed. “I just saw him duck behind that tree. I think he’s hiding!”

“*Hiding?*” Jazz repeated. “Why would he do that?”

“I don’t know, but I want to find out!”

Not waiting to see if Jazz would follow, Milo dashed out of the library and down the hall.

Jazz caught up with him as he burst through the exit. Before she could speak, Milo yanked her behind a shrub.

At that moment, a black van swung into the parking lot. Mr. Davenport stepped out from behind the tree.

Jazz poked Milo. “Why are we—”

“Shhh!” he hissed.

Milo peeked around the bush. His teacher was waving with both hands. Not waving exactly—snatching wildly at the air.

A secret signal?

The black van pulled up. A man leaned out and called. “Dynamite Dan!”

Mr. Davenport dropped his arms and walked toward the van. “Come on, Nick. Nobody calls me that these days. It’s ancient history.”



The man laughed. "Didn't look so ancient Sunday night. Come on, hop in."

As the van roared off, Jazz stood up. "Want to tell me why we're spying on your teacher?" She waited. "Milo? *Milo?*"

He looked up at her. Slowly he said, "Sunday night."

"What about it?" Jazz demanded.

"Sunday night was when the jewelry store was robbed."



CHAPTER FOUR

“I can’t believe you think your teacher is a jewel thief!” Jazz said again.

“You keep saying that,” Milo said.

“Well, I can’t!”

They had been arguing the whole way home. The less Jazz listened to him, the more certain Milo became.

“He’s been acting weird all day. This morning he went running to the window, but when I looked out, there was nothing there. Then, later, I saw him crouching on the floor next to my desk. And not—hiding behind a tree!”

“Grownups always act funny,” Jazz said. “My dad dances to the music in the supermarket.”



“But what about what we just heard? *Sunday night.*”

“Milo, that makes no sense at all. Everybody did *something* Sunday night,” Jazz said.

“Something to do with being called Dynamite Dan?” he pressed. “One of the robbers was an expert with explosives.”

Jazz didn’t answer right away. Then she said, “Suppose Mr. Davenport really is a jewel thief. Wouldn’t he want to keep the diamonds? Why would he put them in your desk?”

“Maybe somebody was coming, and he had to hide them quick. Or maybe—” Milo gulped. “Do you think he wanted to frame me?”

“Milo, he’s your *teacher!*”

“That could be a cover. You know, Mr. Davenport is new this year. How do we know he’s really a teacher at all?”

Jazz groaned. “Well, you can worry about phony teachers. *I’m* going to find out about phony diamonds.”

They dropped their backpacks in Milo’s front hall and headed straight to the computer. While Milo looked over her shoulder, Jazz typed in “diamond real or fake.” She clicked on the first result.

“It says here that a real diamond can scratch glass. That’s the most famous way to tell a real diamond from a fake.”

Pulling the necklace from his pocket, Milo glanced around the room. “There’s the window—”

“Milo! Your mom would kill you!” Jazz said. “Anyway, it says that isn’t a good test. Some fake diamonds can scratch glass too.”

“So how are we supposed to tell?”

Jazz scrolled down. "We could try the fog test."

"What's that?" Milo asked.

"You breathe on it. If the diamond gets foggy, like a mirror, it's a fake. But if it's clear, it's real."

They bent their heads together over the necklace. Milo took a deep breath in, then let it out

Huuuuuuunnhhh . . .

Jazz reeled back. "Your breath smells terrible! What did you have for lunch?"

"Jazz, look!"

The diamonds were sparkling clear.

Milo and Jazz stared at each other.



"They are real!" Milo said.

"Sure looks that way," Jazz agreed. "Wow!"

Just then, they heard a key turning in the front door. Quickly, Milo shoved the necklace in his pocket.

His mom came in lugging a load of groceries, her keys in one hand and the day's mail in the other. His little brother, Ethan, trailed behind, making Darth Vader noises through his nose.

"Something for you," his mom said, dropping an envelope by the computer.

A new lesson from Dash Marlowe!



Jazz hung over Milo's shoulder as he tore open the envelope.



Work Backward

"Begin at the beginning," people always say. But for a sleuth, that isn't always good advice. To solve a case, often you have to begin at the end—then work backward to the beginning.

Once, I worked backward to solve an unusual theft at an amusement park. A teenage girl was waiting in the roller coaster line, when suddenly her purse was snatched away—by a big brown dog!

She chased the dog, but it disappeared into the crowd. The alarm was raised, and a few minutes later the amusement park staff nabbed the dog as it splashed happily at the bottom of the river rapids ride. But the purse was gone.

Luckily, I happened to be on the scene. I asked the people in line which way the dog had come from, and they pointed to the house of mirrors. From there, I traced the dog's path back to the merry-go-round, the swinging pirate ship, and the Tilt-a-Whirl. Everyone had seen the big brown dog, but nobody had seen the purse.

Then I asked a little boy who had just gotten off the Tilt-a-Whirl. He told me the dog had come from the snack stand with a slice of pizza hanging from its mouth. "I'm hungry," the boy added.

I questioned the young man who ran the snack stand. He immediately pulled the missing purse out from behind the counter. When he'd seen the dog running by with it, he'd held out a slice of pizza and the dog had dropped the purse. The young man explained that he was planning to turn in the purse as soon as his shift ended.

The girl was happy to get her purse back. She rewarded the little boy with a slice of pizza and said he was super cute. She said the dog was super cute, too. And the young man at the snack stand . . . well, the last I saw, he was helping the girl into a boat for two at the Tunnel of Love.

“So we need to work backward,” Milo said. “That means we should try to figure out everywhere Mr. Davenport has been since Sunday night.”

Jazz shook her head.

“But Dash says—”

“I don’t think it’s Mr. Davenport’s movements we need to trace,” she said. “I think it’s the necklace.”

“How are we supposed to do that?” Milo asked. “It’s not like my classroom has security cameras or anything.”

Jazz didn’t answer. Then, suddenly, she hopped off her stool and grabbed her jacket.

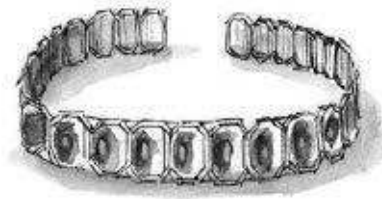
“Where are you going?” he asked.

“Back to school.”

“But everybody’s gone.”

“Not everybody,” Jazz replied. “Somebody is still there. And I think that somebody might be able to tell us how the diamonds got into your desk.”





CHAPTER FIVE

The doors to the school were locked. Milo pressed his face to the glass. Inside, the hall was shadowed and dim.

Jazz tugged at his sleeve. “Come on!”

He followed her around the building. She peered in each classroom window as she passed. Stopping at one, she rapped it with her knuckles.

“Mrs. Peach!” She rapped again, more loudly. “MRS. PEACH!”

The door to the playground opened. Mop in hand, the custodian leaned out. “Hey, kids. What’s up?”

Jazz stepped forward. “Mrs. Peach, did you find a lost necklace yesterday? Fancy? It looked like diamonds?”

“Necklace.” The custodian frowned. Then her face cleared. “Oh, sure, yeah. Stuck it in the desk.”

Jazz shot Milo a triumphant look.

“You put that necklace in my desk?” He stared at Mrs. Peach.

“Yours, huh?” She shook her mop at him. “You kids. If you didn’t have so much stuff, maybe you’d learn to take better care of it.”

“But—but it’s not my—”

Jazz broke in. “Do you remember where you found the necklace?”

“Right there on the floor by the desk,” Mrs. Peach said. “That’s why I put it in. Otherwise, it’d go to Lost and Found.”

Milo said, “You didn’t think that was kind of a funny thing to find in school? A diamond necklace?”

Mrs. Peach looked at him. “Honey, you would not believe the things I find. An empty bottle labeled ‘Liquid Butt’?”



Jazz wrinkled her nose. “That was one of Gordy Fletcher’s pranks. It smells like—”

“I know,” Mrs. Peach said. “Anyway, I figured the diamonds had to be fake. Who’d bring a real diamond necklace to school?”

Milo shot Jazz a sideways glance. That was the question. Who *would* bring diamonds to school? And why?

The custodian told them she needed to get back to work. As the door closed behind her, Jazz said, “Now we know how the necklace got in your desk.”

“But how did it get on the floor?” Milo asked.

“Whoever had it must have dropped it by mistake,” Jazz said.

“Mr. Davenport.”

“Or somebody else.”

“Like who?” Milo said. “One of the boys in my class? We already asked all the girls.”

“Except for Mandy.”

They looked at each other.

“We have to hurry,” Milo said. “Dad promised to bring Chinese takeout home, and Ethan is an egg roll fiend.” If Milo wasn’t there, his little brother wouldn’t leave him anything but drippy broccoli.

Mandy’s house was only two blocks from the school. They found her outside, bouncing a soccer ball from knee to knee. When she saw them, she grinned. “Think fast!”

Whoomph. The ball smacked into Milo’s stomach.

As he doubled over, Mandy said, “Oh . . . sorry. You okay?”

Jazz scooped the ball from the ground and tossed it to Mandy. The other girl trapped it with her foot and flipped it back up to her knees.

“Milo found a necklace at school,” Jazz said. “Did you lose one?”

“Me?” Mandy shook her head.

Jazz sighed. “Oh, well. I couldn’t really picture you in diamonds.”

The soccer ball dropped to the ground and rolled away.

“Diamonds,” Mandy said slowly. “Can I see them?”

Jazz turned to Milo. He shrugged. Pulling the necklace from his pocket, he dangled it on his finger.

“Oh, yeah. That’s it!” Mandy said.

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