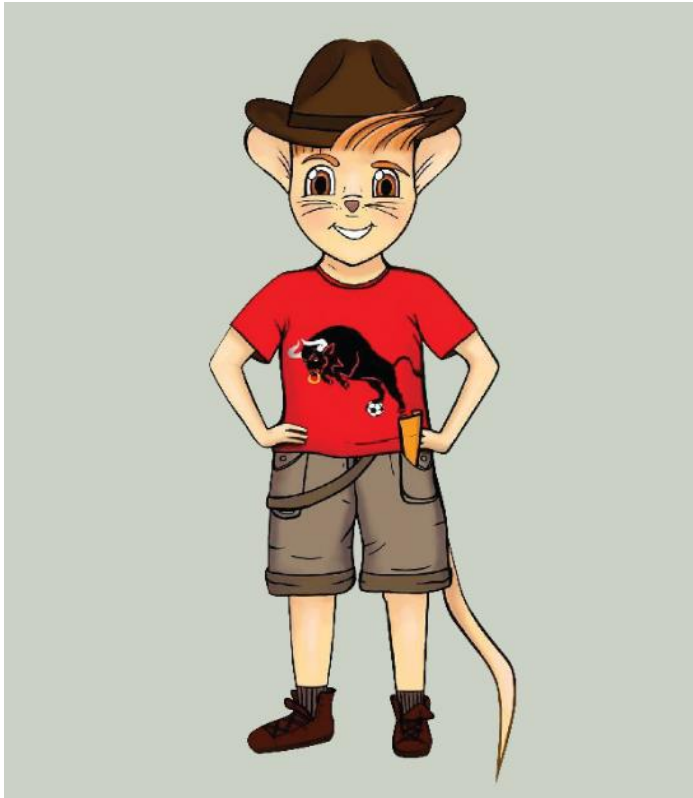


Introducing Jeremy Jones In The Case of the Missing Marble

Join Jeremy as he uses his detective skills to track down the thief who stole his valuable collector marble.



A Short Story by Sandra L. Bell

The Case of the Missing Marble

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. A Collector's Nightmare	1
Chapter 2. The Plan	4
Chapter 3. The Investigation	7
Chapter 4. Crime Solved!	11

Chapter 1

A Collector's Nightmare

Jeremy was on his way home from school when he heard the exciting news! His buddy, Huck Pritchitt came running up to him. “Do you know what’s going on at The Hobby Shoppe?” Jeremy raised his right eyebrow. “No. I haven’t been there in a couple of weeks.” Huck explained that a collector was offering \$500 for a *Golden Tiger’s Eye Precious Marble*. “No way!” exclaimed Jeremy, his interest piqued. He had such a marble in his collection!

They hurried downtown to the Hobby Shoppe so Jeremy could check it out for himself. It was true! Kids were crowded around the store window where a poster gave all the details, complete with a picture of the Golden Tiger’s Eye Precious Marble. “Huck, that’s exactly like the marble in my collection. C’mon! Let’s go to my place and check it out!”

They raced home and went straight to Jeremy’s room. Jeremy kept his marble collection in a wooden box hidden under some loose floor boards in his cupboard. He opened the box which revealed individual slots encasing each carefully collected marble complete with name cards next to each one.

In the centre of the box was his *Golden Tiger's Eye Marble*. Jeremy knew one of the most distinctive characteristics of genuine tiger eye is the “Cat’s Eye Effect”, meaning the marble appears to have a shiny stripe running through it. From his research, he knew that the marble is deemed precious if it contained minerals exhibiting a wavy, luminous band with a silky lustre similar to the eye of a cat.



He took the marble out and held it in the palm of his hand. “What did I tell you, Huck? Isn’t it a beauty!” Huck stared in disbelief, “Jeremy, it’s exactly like the picture! Can I hold it?” Jeremy handed him the marble and Huck examined it from all angles. “This is definitely the *Golden Tiger's Eye Marble*. How did you get it, Jeremy?” He handed the marble back to Jeremy who carefully placed it and the name card in an old ring box on his bureau. “I traded my Hot Wheels Monster Truck for it a few years ago at the fall fair.”

“Cool! This is impressive, Jeremy. What a great trade!” Jeremy beamed, “I’m going to take it down to Mr. Hadley at the Hobby Shoppe right after soccer practice this afternoon. Do you want to come with me?” “You bet! I’ll meet you back here later this afternoon.”

Heading home after soccer practice Jeremy was dreaming about the Red Sonic Rocket mountain bike that he'd been saving for with his allowance. With the money he could get for his Tiger's Eye Marble he would be able to buy the bike now instead of waiting until next year. He was ecstatic! He could picture himself cruising through town on the Red Rocket. He started to run, wanting to get home as fast as he could. Huck was waiting for him on the front porch.

They charged up the stairs and into his bedroom. Jeremy stopped dead in his tracks! He could not believe his eyes! The ring box that housed his Golden Tiger's Eye marble was laying on his bed – empty! Jeremy looked all around his room. He dropped to the floor and checked under his bed. He grabbed the box and turned to Huck in disbelief, “It's gone! My Tiger's Eye has been stolen!”

Chapter 2

The Plan

“Jeremy, what are you going to do?” Huck panicked. After the shock of realizing his marble had been stolen, Jeremy immediately turned into detective mode. “I’m going to find out who stole my marble and make sure I dagnabbit get it back!”

Jeremy rushed to his cupboard and pulled out a kit that looked like a lunch box. “What’s that?” Jeremy put the kit on his bed and opened it. “This here is my Sherlock Holmes detective kit and it’s going to help me find the culprit who did this.” Jeremy pulled out a magnifying glass. “I’ll do whatever I can to help you”, offered Huck.

The first thing Jeremy noticed was a bit of reddish mud on the floor. “This mud was not here when I left to go to soccer,” Jeremy observed. He checked his shoes. They were clean. Then he noticed a gold button almost hidden underneath the bureau next to a torn piece of paper. The scrap of paper was crumpled but had a few words written on it. His eyes continued to sweep the room where he found one last clue by the window. Peeking out from under the curtains was a turquoise and silver hair comb.

“Four clues!”, Jeremy announced. “Huck, hand me those evidence markers numbered one to four that are in the pocket of my detective kit, would you?”

Huck handed the numbered markers to Jeremy. “What clues have you found?” Jeremy explained, “See this reddish mud on the floor near my bureau. This mud is fresh and it wasn’t here before.” Jeremy placed evidence marker number one near the red mud. “There’s a gold button and a torn piece of paper just under my bureau.” He picked them up and replaced them with evidence markers two and three. He laid the button and scrap of paper on his bureau. “There is also a hair comb over here just behind the curtains.” He placed marker number four on the floor and added the hair comb to the other clues on his bureau.

“What are you going to do with this stuff?” quizzed Huck. “I’m searching for any clues that might lead me to the thief who stole my marble. Whoever did this doesn’t know who their dealing with. I won’t give up until I find the person responsible.”

Jeremy smiled at Huck as he held the hair comb in his hand. “This clue means the thief was a girl which will narrow down the suspects. My first thought is that the thief must be from Shady Tree School.” Huck was intrigued, “How do you figure that?” There is red sand in the play area at our

school and the gold button might be from a Shady Tree School blazer.”

Jeremy explained that his plan was to start with the turquoise and silver hair comb. “I’ll question the girls at school but not mention anything about my missing marble. I’ll only ask if anyone had lost a hair comb.

At the same time, I’ll check their shoes for any sign of red sand. I feel pretty confident that I would be able to tell if they were guilty from the looks on their faces when I question them. Let’s meet here in the morning and we can take the hair comb to school and put our plan in place.” Huck nodded. “Jeremy! That’s brilliant!” I’ll pick you up tomorrow morning.”

Jeremy went to bed feeling a little relieved knowing that he had a plan to get started on his investigation.

Chapter 3

The Investigation

He awoke early the next morning, anxious to put his plan into action. The gold button, hair comb and torn piece of paper were laid out on his bureau. He had just picked up the comb, the important starting point in his investigation, when his mum walked in to say, “Good morning”. Jeremy could not believe what she said next! “Oh Jeremy! Thank you! You found my favorite hair comb!” She hugged him and headed back downstairs.

Jeremy collapsed on the bed. The starting point in his investigation had now been blown to shreds! He went back to his bureau, totally discouraged, to further examine the remaining clues. He picked up the gold button and looked at it more carefully. Even though the button was worn it could still very well be from a Shady Tree School blazer.

Just then Huck arrived. “Let’s go, Jeremy. I can’t wait for you to start questioning the girls and see the expressions on their faces.”

“There’s been a development,” Jeremy mumbled. “What do you mean?” Jeremy explained that the

hair comb belonged to his mother. “Gadzooks, Jeremy! What do we do now.”

“Let’s go over the remaining clues.” Jeremy’s focus moved to the scrap of paper. There were three lines of words on the paper. The paper was so crumpled up he could hardly read them. He grabbed his magnifying glass to get a closer look. “The first word said *research* with a check mark next to it. The next word said *value* with a question mark. The third line had four words that were made up of just random letters. “They don’t make any sense!”

Huck scratched his head and suggested, “Why don’t we take the button to school and see who has one missing?” “That will take way too long, Huck, and besides not everybody wears their blazer on a regular school day.” Jeremy was still studying the letters when he had a brainwave!

“Huck, I think I know what the letters represent! Quick, grab the decoder wheel from my spy kit!” Huck lifted the decoder wheel out and looked at it in amazement. “What the heck is a decoder wheel?” Jeremy took it and placed it on the bureau. “Here, let me explain.

There are two wheels, one on top of the other. Both wheels have the alphabet on them. The top wheel turns while the bottom one is fixed. There are many

different codes but I'm going to start with the most common. The basic code uses a sequence of three. In this case the secret code is using letters meaning we have to manipulate the letters by three. Let me explain. The letters on our piece of paper are:

JROGHQ WLJHUV HBH PDUEOH



Forgetting about the top wheel for the moment, let's take the first letter in the code. Locate **J** on the bottom

wheel. On the same wheel, we move up the alphabet three spaces to the letter **G**. We now suspect the first letter in the code is actually **G**. By turning the top wheel so that the **G** aligns with the **J** on the bottom wheel, the rest of the coded letters should automatically line up to reveal the first word. We then repeat the sequence for each word.

JROGHA WLJHUV HBH PDUEOH becomes:

GOLDEN TIGERS EYE MARBLE

As Jeremy was shifting his gaze to the gold button, something on the paper caught his attention. There was a very faint capital C on the top left side. On the top right side there were six faded letters but they were hardly recognizable. He used his magnifying glass and as he examined the letters his heart started to race. He couldn't make out the first three letters but the last three faintly revealed, *"llo"*. His heart pounding, he now knew where he would find his marble!

"I think I know where it is! I'm going to take care of this right after school today. Huck, please don't take any offence, but I need to do this alone. I'll be in touch later and let you know how this all plays out." "No problem, Jeremy. It's been neat to be part of your investigation. I can't wait to hear how this mystery ends!" Jeremy was glad that Huck understood. "Now let's get to class before we get a detention for being late."

Jeremy bolted home after school, grabbed the scrap of paper and flew out of the house. He had told Huck that he wanted to do this alone because he did not want to embarrass the person involved.

Chapter 4

Crime Solved!

Jeremy raced as fast as he could, the vision of his Red Rocket mountain bike back in his thoughts.

Approaching the entrance to the property, he stopped and looked up at the large wooden overhead sign, “*Camp Apollo*”! He was sure the “*Capital C*” and the “*llo*” on the sheet of paper were from here.

The Camp was named after the Greek god Apollo who was the protector of the young. Jeremy knew it was a youth community centre that did amazing work with the local young people. He marched under the arched sign and went straight to the main entrance. When he passed the play area, he observed the same red sand used at his school. As he walked up the wide verandah steps and entered the building he saw his classmate, Amanda Stanley, coming down the stairs.

When she saw Jeremy she quickly turned away and headed back up the stairs. Jeremy called out to her, “Amanda Stanley, you come right down here!” She slowly turned around and headed towards Jeremy.

When she and Jeremy met at the bottom of the stairs he noticed a gold button was missing from her school blazer. There were traces of red sand on her shoes. She was also sporting a bump and bruise on her forehead. Jeremy glared at her and demanded, “GIVE ME BACK MY MARBLE”! Amanda sheepishly produced the marble from her blazer pocket and handed it to Jeremy. He snatched the marble out of her hand and turned to leave. As he was walking away, Amanda asked, “Don’t you even want to know why I took it?”

Jeremy, still fuming, turned to face Amanda and raised his right eyebrow. Amanda continued, “I heard you talking to Huck about the marble outside the Hobby Shoppe. I slipped into your bedroom the next day while you were at soccer practice and saw it on your bureau. I took out the information about the marble that I jotted down to make sure it was the right one. When I saw the marble and the name card I grabbed it and started to run but I slipped and fell, hitting my head on the bureau. I guess I tore the button off my blazer and dropped the paper at the same time. Jeremy, you have to believe me, I feel terrible for what I have done. I was planning on going to your house after I finished my shift here today to return your marble and apologize to you.”

“You still haven’t told me *why* you took the marble”, Jeremy demanded.

“Jeremy, I know this doesn’t make it right and I am really so sorry, but please believe me that my intentions were good. As you know Camp Apollo is a youth community centre that does great work, especially for the underprivileged kids in our area. The Camp desperately needs sports equipment to keep the kids active.

They are talking about shutting down the sports program if they cannot raise the funds. I thought the money from the Tiger’s Eye Marble might go a long way in keeping it alive. I know that doesn’t make it right. I acted impulsively and I am sorry. My intention was to immediately return the marble to you.”

Jeremy was stunned. “Amanda, I had no idea. I know some of what Camp Apollo offers, from book clubs, computer classes, chess clubs to the excellent sports activities. Sports is so important to keep us all grounded,” Jeremy’s voice trailed off and he seemed to be deep in thought.

“Is Mr. Thackeray still running the centre?” Jeremy asked.

“Yes, he is.” replied Amanda.

“Can you take me to him?”

Amanda studied Jeremy and nodded at him to follow her.

When they knocked on Mr. Thackeray's door, he called out to come in. Jeremy and Amanda approached him at his desk.

"How do you do, Mr. Thackeray. My name is Jeremy Jones and I attend Shady Tree School with Amanda. Amanda tells me that Camp Apollo is in need of funds to keep some of the activities going.

Mr. Thackeray leaned back in his chair, rubbing his head, "Yes, Jeremy. That is correct. Sports equipment has become so expensive and finding volunteer coaches is getting harder and harder."

"Mr. Thackeray, I am in possession of a very valuable collector marble. I would like to donate my precious Tiger's Eye Marble to the community centre. The Hobby Shop is offering \$500 for this particular item."

In his haste to jump out of his chair, Mr. Thackeray went over backwards and landed on the floor. He jumped up and ran around his desk and grabbed Jeremy by the shoulders.

"Are you serious?" he exclaimed!

He grinned and nodded yes! Both Mr. Thackeray and Amanda pounced on Jeremy and hugged him excitedly almost knocking him over!

Jeremy handed Mr. Thackeray the marble and also said he would be happy to volunteer his time to coach one of the youth groups in soccer.

Mr. Thackeray smiled and shook his hand, almost taking his arm off! “I will definitely be in touch. Jeremy, our kindest and heartfelt thanks from everyone here at Camp Apollo.” Jeremy and Amanda left the office together.

Jeremy and Amanda walked home for quite a while in silence, each thinking their own thoughts.

“Jeremy, that was one of the kindest, most unselfish acts I have ever seen. And I am glad we’ll get to see each other at the centre when you’re coaching.”

Jeremy raised his right eyebrow and asked Amanda, “Where did you learn about decoder messaging?” Amanda smiled, “I’ve always been a Sherlock Holmes fan. Have you ever been interested in solving mysteries like Sherlock Holmes?” Jeremy grinned, “Yea, kind of.” “By the way, did you have anything special planned for the money you were going to get for your marble?” Jeremy could still

see himself on the Red Sonic Rocket but smiled and said, “No, not really. Nothing as important as helping out Camp Apollo!”

The End

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JEREMY'S TREASURE HUNT



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