

The Valentine Necklace Mystery

Lacy's Disappearing Locket

By: R. Renée Bembry

Can you solve this missing jewel mystery?

Suspects: Colorful Cat, Roamer Rabbit, Lacy Ann, Nancy.

"It takes an extraordinary man to give a daughter a locket just as beautiful as a locket he'd given her mother for Valentine's Day," remarked Aunt Bess.

"Oh it couldn't be just' as beautiful," noted Lacy. "Mom's is twice the size of mine."

"The lockets' values have nothing to do with their size," said Stacy Ann – Lacy's mother. Their significance lays in the fact that your father cherished us both every second we were together."

"Better put the charm back in its box and go set it on your dresser," directed Aunt Bess.

At her vanity, Stacy held the silver locket to her chest. No girl could've been luckier than she to of had a father like hers. "Blasted airplane crashes!" she rebuked.

A cry outside the room redirected her attention. She placed the necklace on the dresser. Upon pulling the door ajar she spied her cat – Colorful – curving her tail-tip, arching her back, and meowing for attention.

The Angora slipped into the room, hopped on the bed, and commenced charming her master with pulsant purrs. In exchange,

Lacy caressed her gold, black, and white fur.

“Call from: Nancy,” announced Lacy’s cell. Her fingers ceased caressing Colorful and reached into her pocket.

While Lacy and her friend exchanged talk about nothing, Colorful re-explored the bedroom. Since Lacy posed no restrictions as to where the feline could or could not venture, the cat roamed everywhere from the bed, to the rocker, to the dresser.

At length, Lacy ended her conversation and strutted to the kitchen.

“Here comes the princess now,” announced Aunt Bess. “The two of you are going to steal the show at the Valentine’s get-together.”

“Don’t get carried away,” objected Stacy. “There’ll be too many beautiful ‘young’ girls, including Lacy, prancing the hall to allow any ‘show stealing’ from me.”

“Don’t sell yourself short, Stace. Any man would be lucky to have you look his way. Wouldn’t he Lace?”

“You’re asking me?” cried Lacy opening a soda.

“You’re the only Lacy in the kitchen.”

“I can’t answer questions like that about my mom. Can I go over to Nancy’s? She wants me to play this new video game.”

Neither mom nor aunt objected.

Lacy grabbed a bag of chips and escaped through the back door.

“I’m going to the store for strawberries,” announced Stacy.

“You’re making shortcake tonight?”

“You guessed it. ”

"Oh great! We haven't had any for too long."

"I'm telling you," laughed Stacy exiting the kitchen only to reappear five minutes later.

"I should be back in half an hour if Ginger doesn't talk my head off," she stated sashaying toward the door again.

"You mean Nancy's mother?" asked Aunt Bess in surprise.

"Lacy's cell sounded while I was upstairs. I'm going to take it to her."

"That girl would forget her head if it weren't attached to her neck," laughed Aunt Bess.

Aunt Bess was sipping afternoon tea when Nancy barged through the front door.

"Excuse me, Aunt Bess," she panted. "Lacy wants me to get her CD. It's a good thing we live only three houses away from each other!"

"Go right on up," invited Aunt Bess. "Our house is your house. Yes indeed."

"That must be cinnamon tea you brewed," noted Nancy skipping down the stairs a few seconds later.

"Want to stop for a cup," teased Aunt Bess.

"If I did I'd miss my turn," screamed Nancy closing the door behind her feet.

Upon hearing from the horse's mouth – Stacy – that she was preparing pork chops with gravy, baked potatoes, corn on the cob, biscuits, tossed salad and strawberry shortcake for dinner, Ginger invited herself and Nancy to eat at the Hansen's'.

"Hope you don't mind my bringing Roamer," pleaded Nancy. "She

just loves running round the house with Colorful.”

“No sense in the animals missing the fun,” approved Stacy.

“Let’s take her upstairs,” suggested Lacy.

“Her play date’s on the couch,” informed Aunt Bess.

As soon as the animals saw one another, their frolicking began.

“Who would’ve known a cat and a rabbit could become such bosom buddies,” noted Ginger as the furry friends scampered through the kitchen – Lacy and Nancy hot on their trails. The girls’ speed, however, proved tortoise-like compared to the four-legged creatures and they gave up chasing them after the mammals ran up the stairs and down the hall to Lacy’s room.

Aunt Bess was collecting laundry next morning while Stacy was at work and Lacy at school. Strolling into Lacy’s room, she decided to have a quiet moment with her brother’s gift to his daughter. Cupping the jewel box in her hands, she hesitated before opening it until...

At last.

Gently.

Slowly.

She lifted the black satin box top.

Her heart plummeted as her eyes fixated on the white interior with nothing to look at but hooks that formerly held her niece’s locket in a picture perfect position.

She heard and felt the words: “Oh my gosh!” spring from her throat.

“What is going on?” she questioned the box.

There was absolutely no way Lacy had worn the locket to school that morning. Her mother had strictly forbidden her to wear the jewel before the Valentine's celebration.

Scampering toward the hall telephone to notify Stacy of the problem, Aunt Bess realized it might be a poor idea to tell Stacy just yet. She didn't want to upset her at work – and what if Stacy already knew the trinket was gone? What if she'd taken it herself for some reason? The jeweler had said Charles had intended mom and daughter to exchange engraving wordage. What if Stacy had decided to surprise Lacy with her engraving prior to the celebration?

But surly Stacy would want to know there was a problem if none of the possible possibilities were facts. She'd want to know right away.

Aunt Bess became overwhelmed with the subsequent set of thoughts that seeped into her mind. She tried to push them away – to prevent their entry – but they ignored her efforts because yesterday she had allowed Nancy to enter Lacy's room unaccompanied.

However, Nancy had been alone in Lacy's room many times before. She and Lacy had been friends since childhood. It didn't seem reasonable that Nancy would wait till they were about to graduate high school to start hocking Lacy's belongings.

Aunt Bess rushed back to Lacy's room. Maybe the locket was on the dresser and she simply hadn't noticed it in her panic.

No.

It was nowhere to be seen.

She pulled out a drawer, and then another, and then another. However, no locket lay in any of them.

Just then, Aunt Bess remembered something. Colorful used to

collect small objects and take them into a hole at the top of her cat-scratching tower.

Slowing herself from fleeing down the stairs – lest she fall and break her neck – Aunt Bess flung a dining chair beside the tower, stood on the seat, and peeked in the hole. She couldn't see much. The hole was too dark. Shuffling her hand through the darkness, she grasped everything she felt until eventually pulling out a string, a ribbon, a cotton ball, and a plastic rat. Nothing of human concern. No sterling locket.

Once again, Aunt Bess's thoughts drifted to Nancy.

Once again, she hated what she was thinking. Nancy could not be a thief. She just couldn't be!

Resolving to let things go until Lacy and Stacy came home, Aunt Bess went back to collecting laundry, – washing and folding more loads than she usually did in a week.

"I didn't wear it – I swear!" Stacy heard Lacy cry as she entered the house.

"What's going on?" she called rushing toward the kitchen commotion.

"My necklace is gone!" Lacy screamed at the top of her lungs.

"What do you mean gone?" cried Stacy.

"Then you don't have it either?" concluded Aunt Bess.

"No! Why would I have it?"

"I don't know," cried Aunt Bess. "I just hoped you'd taken it to the jeweler for an engraving or something."

"No. I haven't seen it since yesterday. I don't understand. How could this happen?"

"I don't know, Mom," sobbed Lacy. "I came home and it was

gone.”

“Well did you search your room? You must’ve misplaced it Honey.”

“No... I didn’t misplace it! I left it right on the dresser! Then I went to Nancy’s house!”

“You mean it was on the dresser – out of the box – when you went to Nancy’s?” asked Aunt Bess.

“Yes!” cried Lacy, “I left it right beside the box.”

“Oh my stars...” sobbed Aunt Bess. “I think my old legs need to sit down.”

“Is there something you aren’t telling us?” asked Stacy escorting Aunt Bess to a chair.

“I don’t want to say. I can’t believe it’s true.”

“What’s true?” insisted Stacy.

“Yesterday, while you were at the market...”

“Ding...Dong!” labored the doorbell. Nancy and Ginger rushed into the house.

“Lacy! Lacy!” called Nancy. “I have your necklace!”

The threesome scurried to the front room to find Nancy holding the locket in one hand and the rabbit in the other.

“Looks like Roamer has “stolen” Colorful’s old hocking habit. She swiped Lacy’s Locket!”

More so than Colorful’s innocence, and Stacy’s noninvolvement, Aunt Bess was relieved to learn it was Roamer – not Nancy – who’d taken over Colorful’s old hocking habit.

Staying Mouth Happy by Preventing Gum Disease

A Happy Mouth Is A Smiley Mouth

Preventing gum disease is a simple thing to do for most people and prevention does not take that much time. A little physical effort is necessary, however, since in order to prevent gum disease one must commit to cleaning their teeth on a daily basis. This means tasks such as brushing and flossing should become regular occurrences in one's hygienic routine.

Brushing Frequency

Although the American Dental Association (ADA) recommends brushing twice a day and flossing once a day, brushing, as well as flossing more frequently could boost chances of preventing gum disease even further. This is important because although brushing in the morning and at night might be sufficient in most cases, times may arise when teeth feel as if they need a toothbrush during the middle of the day. This can happen during occasions when bacterial film feels more prominent than usual against the teeth. Moreover eating foods in the middle of the day that become stuck between teeth may call for additional flossing.

Using the Best Toothbrush

Efficient toothbrushes might be the most important factor in preventing gum disease since they are used to clean plaque forming bacteria and foodstuff from the teeth. This is why regular toothbrush replacement is a vital factor in maintaining the ability to brush with the most effective bristles. Toothbrushes should be soft because soft bristles

are able to maneuver more easily around the teeth than hard ones. In addition, firm bristles may scratch away enamel and provide passages for bacteria to enter the teeth.

Toothbrushes come in a wide variety of styles and many of them have bristles that are longer in the front than they are in the back of the brush. Longer brush heads make it possible to guide bristles to the back of the mouth where they can get across molars that may otherwise be near impossible to reach. Using toothbrushes with extended rear bristles is a great way to help prevent gum disease from developing near wisdom teeth.

The ADA recommends spin brushes (electric brushes) for those who have limited mobility with their tooth brushing hand. Spin brushes are able to maneuver around and between teeth in a most effective manner.

Providing Smaller Toothbrushes to Kids

In order to deter gum disease in children's mouths so they can grow up to have happy smiles it is a good idea to provide them with child-sized toothbrushes. Child sized toothbrushes have less bristles that make it easier to maneuver them throughout smaller mouths. Child-sized toothbrushes also have smaller handles that afford children's hands the ability to grip and control them more easily.

Replacing Frayed Toothbrushes

Toothbrushes do not remain in ideal condition forever. All the brushing against teeth that are much harder and more durable than toothbrush bristles eventually causes the bristles to fray. Frayed toothbrush bristles cannot clean teeth as well as straightened bristles that are more compact. Frayed bristles tend to lie down against the teeth rather than stand up against them during the brushing process. The ADA recommends changing toothbrushes every three to four months. For best results, change toothbrushes sooner if they fray in less than three months.

Flossing the Teeth

No matter how efficiently one brushes their teeth with the best toothbrush on the market, toothbrushes cannot reach between teeth the way dental floss can. This is why flossing on a daily basis is the best way to remove foodstuff and to keep plaque-forming bacteria from damaging areas between the teeth.

Dental floss comes in a waxed form and in an un-waxed form. The un-waxed version may glide between teeth more easily than the waxed version. All the same, users should try different brands since no matter if they are waxed or un-waxed, dental floss thickness or durability varies from one type to another. A way to help in the flossing process is to opt to use floss that comes connected to a hand held device. Floss on these devices is premeasured and it remains stiff as it moves between the teeth.

Eat Foods that Encourage Healthy Teeth

Another important thing to do when striving to ward off gum disease is to eat a proper diet, and in fact, the ADA recommends eating foods from the basic food groups as well as limiting snacks.

See Your Dentist Regularly

Regular dental visits helps to prevent gum disease in ways most people cannot do on their own. This is because dentists and their assistants clean teeth using special tools the public does not possess. At dental offices, tooth x-rays are taken that monitor teeth from the roots up to the surface. What is more, is that during examinations, dentists inspect teeth and gums and are able to detect signs that gum disease may be beginning. Detecting early signs of gum disease called gingivitis is the best way to prevent the latter stage – periodontitis. This is important because gingivitis can be eliminated with proper treatment. When gingivitis is

eliminated, periodontitis, which causes tooth movement and loss, is less likely to begin. Most dentists as well as the ADA continue to concur that a dental cleaning every six months is still the best way to go when warding off gum disease.

Antimicrobial Mouth rinses and Toothpaste

When choosing toothpaste and mouth rinses it is important to select products that have the ADA seal. The ADA accepts products and approves them for use once manufacturers show that their goods perform as they claim they do. Although toothpastes are intended for brushing and mouth rinses are used for swishing both of these products help to rid bacteria from the mouth. Ridding bacteria is important since these little buggers cause gum disease forming plaque.

Toothbrushes that live up to the recommended standard may receive the ADA seal of approval just as mouth rinses and toothpastes. Therefore, when choosing a toothbrush, it is a good idea to look for those that have demonstrated that they perform the way you expect them to based on information manufacturers provide on their packaging. In addition to brushing, flossing, rinsing, and dental visiting, it is important to use toothpaste that contains fluoride and to drink fluoridated water to help prevent gum disease.

Keeping your mouth happy keeps the rest of you happy too!

Keeping A Happy Mouth – How to Spot Periodontal Disease

A Happy Mouth Means A Happy Smile!

Teeth that otherwise appear healthy could be lost due to periodontal disease. This is because periodontal disease attacks from beneath teeth where the infection is not easily detected. Despite occurring inside the mouth, persons with periodontal disease may not feel any pain. This does not mean that people with periodontal disease absolutely cannot tell they have it. Fortunately, there are detectable symptoms that warn patients to schedule checkups with their dentists.

Periodontal disease is an infection that causes a breakdown in tooth related tissues. The infection takes place in the sulcus, which is a hole, or space, beneath the tooth. Because the sulcus is roughly a vacant area, bacteria is able to get into it and attack tooth-supporting tissue. After bacteria has attacked the sulcus for an extended period of time periodontal disease begins. The degree of deterioration determines which type of periodontal disease is present. Gingivitis is considered an early stage of the disease and periodontitis is classified as the latter stage. Symptoms that teeth are under attack in an infected person's mouth include:

Gums that bleed from flossing or brushing – One of the first symptoms persons with periodontal disease might notice is gums that bleed from flossing or brushing. Flossing makes detection easy because blood falls into the sink along with saliva when spitting. The same may be true from brushing especially when using a hard toothbrush. Brushers may notice pink coloring in toothpaste froth when they spit. Bleeding gums indicate symptoms of gingivitis and thus is considered the early stage of periodontal disease.

The irony of detecting blood while cleaning teeth with dental floss or toothbrushes is that regular flossing and brushing can actually help prevent periodontal disease and thus can also prevent the presence of blood. Not flossing or brushing the teeth often enough or well enough allows plaque to build against the teeth and plaque leads to the disease.

Tooth roots become visible at the gum line – Plaque, which is actually a form of bacteria, causes a substance (calculus) most often described as tartar to build up against the teeth. Over time, this buildup causes gums to pull away from teeth. As gums pull away they tend to recede downward which causes them to eventually expose the roots. When exposed, roots become visible at the gum line. Those with periodontal disease may notice their roots are showing and their gums may look puffy, swollen, or red.

Teeth that loosen and teeth that fall out – Permanent teeth that become loose for no apparent reason have most likely done so because of periodontal disease that has been left unchecked. Teeth tend to loosen when periodontal disease reaches its advanced stage (periodontitis). During the advanced stage of periodontal disease teeth may even fall out. This happens because damaged gums as well as tooth bones become incapable of supporting teeth and holding them in place.

Change in tooth location when biting or chewing – As teeth lose support from gums and supportive tissue they may begin moving out of their intended positions in the mouth. Unstable teeth in the top of the mouth can eventually become misaligned with teeth in the bottom of the mouth. Likewise, unstable teeth in the lower part of the mouth could become misaligned with teeth in the top of the mouth. Since misaligned teeth lose their ability to directly align with teeth above or below them, the resulting mismatched areas cause biting and chewing positions to change.

Partial dentures that do not fit the same as they used to – Teeth that move about because they have become unstable could cause displacement that affects denture positioning. Dentures that used to feel snug and comfortable could begin to feel tight in the incorrect areas of the gums.

According to the American Dental Association, persons with

periodontal disease may also notice their gums are “tender” or that they have “pus between” their teeth and gums. The ADA also cites “bad breath that doesn’t go away” as a symptom of periodontal disease,

Visiting a dentist is important when periodontal disease is suspected in order to verify or to disprove the suspicion that the disease is actually present. This is why the ADA stresses the importance of seeing a dentist right away when affected persons suspect they may have the disease. Only a dentist could say for certain whether a patient has periodontal disease or whether something else is going on in a patient’s mouth.

Keep your and your family’s mouths and smiles happy with regular dental visits!

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Welcome Heart and Flower Lovers

Hello visitors whom I hope to become members of this site!

My name is R. Renée Bembry. I am a published author of articles and children's poetry. I have eBooks listed at Amazon.com; and children's poetry published in educational books and audio. I used to write for online magazines but decided to start this site because my works were all over the place. Here, I intend to concentrate on happy stuff! Which is why I call this site HeartAndFlowerBox.com.

If you have a heart, and enjoy the beauty of flowers, you can join me in making this website all about life's positive vibrations! All that makes others smile, fills their brains with meaningful knowledge, or both, will be posted here to make this site a fun place to hang out, communicate, and learn as we love, laugh, and write together, sharing our knowledge, thoughts, and feelings with happiness taking center stage.

Participation is simple. All necessary is to join this site, read articles and posts, write articles and comments, and interact with other site members as they signup.

In giving my thanks to members participating in making this site a fun learning place to visit, I am developing a system that will award points for specific types of activities. Participating, members will be awarded these activity points and will be able to redeem them for toys and gifts at PurpleToyShop.com. Point redemption setup is still in the works, however, the ability to earn points is up and going right now!

With that said... Here's to hoping you will join me!