

The Valentine Necklace Mystery

Lacy's Disappearing Locket

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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.