

WHIZ TANNER
and the

Vanishing
Diamond

A Tanner-Dent Mystery

By FRED REXROAD

Illustrated by SUSAN REXROAD

To
Mom
For being a catalyst without knowing it

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TANNER-DENT DETECTIVE
AGENCY

"We solve crimes, mysteries, problems..."

Wilson "Whiz" Tanner
Chief Investigator

www.TannerDent.com



TANNER-DENT DETECTIVE
AGENCY

"We solve crimes, mysteries, problems..."

Joseph "Joey" Dent
Director, Field Operations

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CHAPTER 1

The Summons

I was suddenly startled awake that Saturday morning by knocks coming from my bedroom window. Now that may not seem strange to you, but my bedroom is on the second floor, and it took me a moment to realize what I was hearing. It was only when I had rubbed the sleep out of my eyes, and had a chance to fully wakeup, that I realized the knocking noise was coming from my window.

I climbed out of bed, walked over, and pulled up the shade. What I saw was the strangest thing. Stuck to the middle of my window was a ball of clay with a pencil-like wooden rod sticking out. The pencil thing was stuck in a windup contraption that moved back and forth. It had a

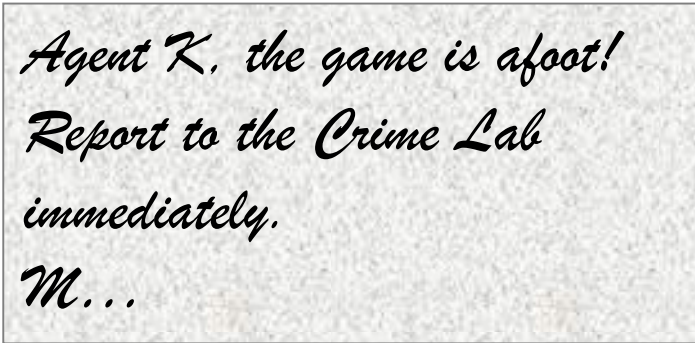
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little rubber ball on the end and each time it moved, the ball hit the glass.

I stared at the contraption for a moment, trying to figure out what it was before I came to my senses. Quickly, I opened the window, grabbed the sticky clay and pulled it off. Looking around as I did so—not seeing anybody. That meant two things. First, I couldn't see who had thrown the clay against my window, but that really didn't matter since I had a good idea who threw it. Second, and much more importantly, there was nobody around to see me reach for it—that would not be good.

You see, I'm a detective and this had all the makings of a message from headquarters. It wouldn't be good to have a neighbor, or worse, a spy, see me pull a strange lump of clay off my bedroom window. It would raise suspicion and suspicion is not good in my line of work.

Sure enough, stuck into the clay was a rolled-up note. I pulled it out and opened it.



*Agent K, the game is afoot!
Report to the Crime Lab
immediately.
M...*

It was from headquarters and was addressed to me, Agent K, the Director of Field Operations for the Tanner-Dent Detective Agency. The note was from Agent M, the agency's Chief Investigator.

M was using a Sherlock Holmes reference, which meant he was extra serious. M often thinks of himself as a young Sherlock Holmes.

Young? Did I mention that M and I were young? In fact, we're sixth graders. But don't let that fool you. We are the best detectives in Jasper Springs. And, I count most of the Jasper Springs Police Department in that, too.

My real name, when I'm not on a case, is Joey Dent. I live on Limestone Street, a couple of blocks north of downtown. M, is Whiz Tanner—he lives a few blocks from me, over on Livermore. Whiz's real name is Wilson, but he's been Whiz to us almost since he moved to town.

Whiz and I are much alike in many ways. We're about the same size and have similar interests. A couple of big differences are the slight red in his hair and his blue eyes which need glasses to see far away. He's also the smartest kid I knew and, maybe because of that, he uses big words a lot, which I call Whiz Words, and nobody knows what he's talking about.

But enough of the introduction, I needed to get to the Crime Lab, pronto!

I dressed as fast as I could and ran downstairs. Mom was in the kitchen talking with Dad. He had a cup of coffee in his hand and was heading out to the garage. Normally, he shuts himself up in our basement playing with his ham radios on Saturday mornings, but today, car maintenance was on the top of his to-do list. Though I'm sure he'll get to his radios when he's done with his chores. It's nice to know I'm not the only one around here with chores.

“Good morning, Joey,” Dad said. “You're up early for a Saturday. Did you get up to help me change the oil in the car?”

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“Not before breakfast,” Mom chimed in.

“Just a quick bowl of cereal for me, Mom. Whiz and I have plans... he’s expecting me.”

“Well, maybe next time on the oil change,” Dad said as he headed out, coffee in hand. “We need to make you an expert at car repair before you learn to drive.”

Learn to drive? Man... that was years away and right now I have much more important things to do. I got a bowl from the cupboard and filled it with Panda Puffs, my favorite cereal since the first time I slept over at Whiz’s house. Topping it off with some milk, I began eating. As I finished up, my sister, Patty, came in and sat down.

She never eats much so I don’t know why she even bothers coming into the kitchen. Patty’s a freshman at Messina College here in town. I don’t know what she’s studying, but she’s always got a book opened in front of her.

“See ya, Sis. See ya, Mom,” I called as I left the room. I brushed my teeth as fast as I could and made my way outside—but not before grabbing the lump of clay. Dad had already crawled under the car by the time I got my bike from the garage. With a quick goodbye, I was off.

It’s three or four blocks to Whiz’s house, depending on how you count the blocks, and I made it there in very good time. Early on a Saturday, there is very little traffic so I didn’t need to slow down much at the intersections. When I arrived at Whiz’s driveway, I skidded to a halt and parked my bike next to his garage.

You can never be too careful when approaching a secret location, so I gave a good look around the neighborhood before making my way to the shed in the backyard. Then, I snuck around to the back and crouched.

After another quick look for spies, I pressed the fake knot on one of the cedar shingles on the back wall.

‘Name?’ came a computer-sounding whisper from a hidden speaker.

“Agent K,” I replied softly.

This prompted the next command.

‘Password?’ the computerize whisper requested.

“Tomato is a fruit.” Whiz is in charge of creating passwords and he’s mighty fond of strange facts.

The secret doorway at the back of the shed popped open an inch or so. I pulled it further and walked through. As I closed the door, a black light came on making the white surgical tape on the stairs glow eerily. Like so many times before, I climbed down into the bomb shelter that was home to the Tanner-Dent Crime Lab.

The bomb shelter—some say it was a storm shelter, but bomb shelter sounds more interesting—was a concrete room under Whiz’s back yard. Whiz and I, with the help of both our fathers built a shed on top of the opening. We also put in a secret entryway that is blocked from the real shed by a wall. That took some fast talking by Whiz, but since both our fathers were kids once, Mr. Tanner eventually agreed and my father—who is head of town maintenance—worked with the town building permit office to approve it.

After it was built, we covered the entire shed in cedar shingles to match the Tanner’s house. Whiz then created a special shingle with a very realistic knot that was a push-button switch. When pressed, a buzzer sounds in the Crime Lab. Whiz then starts a recorder with the instructions. I answer with the correct response and Whiz unlocks the secret door.

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Inside, we have created a very complete crime investigation lab which rivals any lab in any small police station in the country. And we—mostly Whiz—could use it all.

Whiz was sitting at the Crime Computer when I entered. He and his father had been building it for several weeks and it was now complete.

“Fantastic, Agent K. Did you notice any difference in the entrance procedures?”

“None, Agent M. Should I have?” We use our code names while in the Crime Lab—this keeps us professional.

“Actually, no. That proves it works.”

“What works?”

“The voice recognition program works. Remember all those words I had you read into my Dad’s laptop last weekend?”

“Of course. I read words for hours.”

“Those words established the database I used in the voice recognition system. Your entire entry was controlled by the Crime Computer. The sequence started with you pressing the button. The computer then asked for your identity. Your voice pattern matched your profile so the Python computer program I wrote passed on to the next routine and asked for the password. If there was no match, the program would initiate a distress subroutine and stop any further communication.”

“What does the distress routine do?”

“At the moment, other than preventing entry, it does absolutely nothing. But in time it will send a tweet or perhaps phone the house. I have to work on that. Anyway, after you gave the password, it compared your response with the database and then opened the latch permitting your entry.”

“That’s pretty cool, M. But what is this all about.”
As I said ‘this’, I plopped the lump of clay down on the workbench.

I had pulled the windup spring mechanism out of the clay to get a better look. It was from a small toy.

Whiz gave a little chuckle. “Tammy actually gave me the idea for that.”

Tammy was Whiz’s little sister.

“But why? I was enjoying a nice rest. It’s Saturday and I was going to sleep in.”

“Perhaps you were enjoying a pleasant weekend rest, but we have a job to do.”

Of course, I already assumed he had some pretty good reason to call me to the Crime Lab this early on a Saturday.

“So, out with it M... where’s the fire?”

“In the palm of my hand,” was his reply.

He held out his left hand. His fist was closed.

“Is this some sort of joke?” I asked.

Then he opened his fist and his hand burst into flame!

End of Chapter ONE

For more adventures with Agent M and Agent K, go to

www.WhizTanner.com

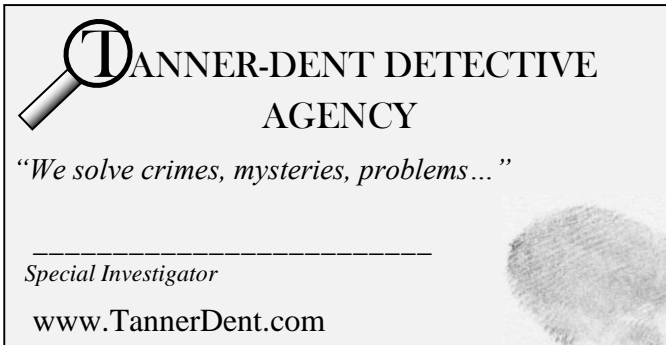
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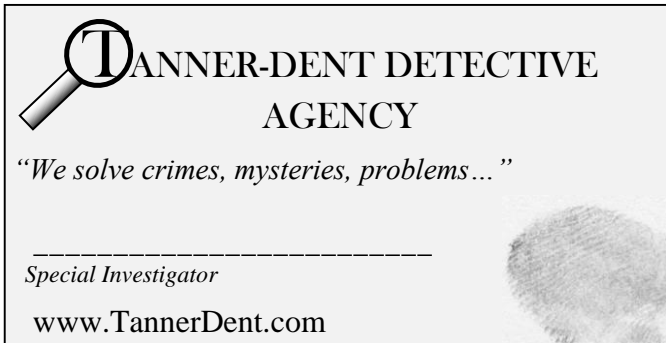




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