

WHIZ TANNER
and the
Wounded Pigeon

A Tanner-Dent Mystery

By FRED REXROAD

Illustrated by SUSAN REXROAD

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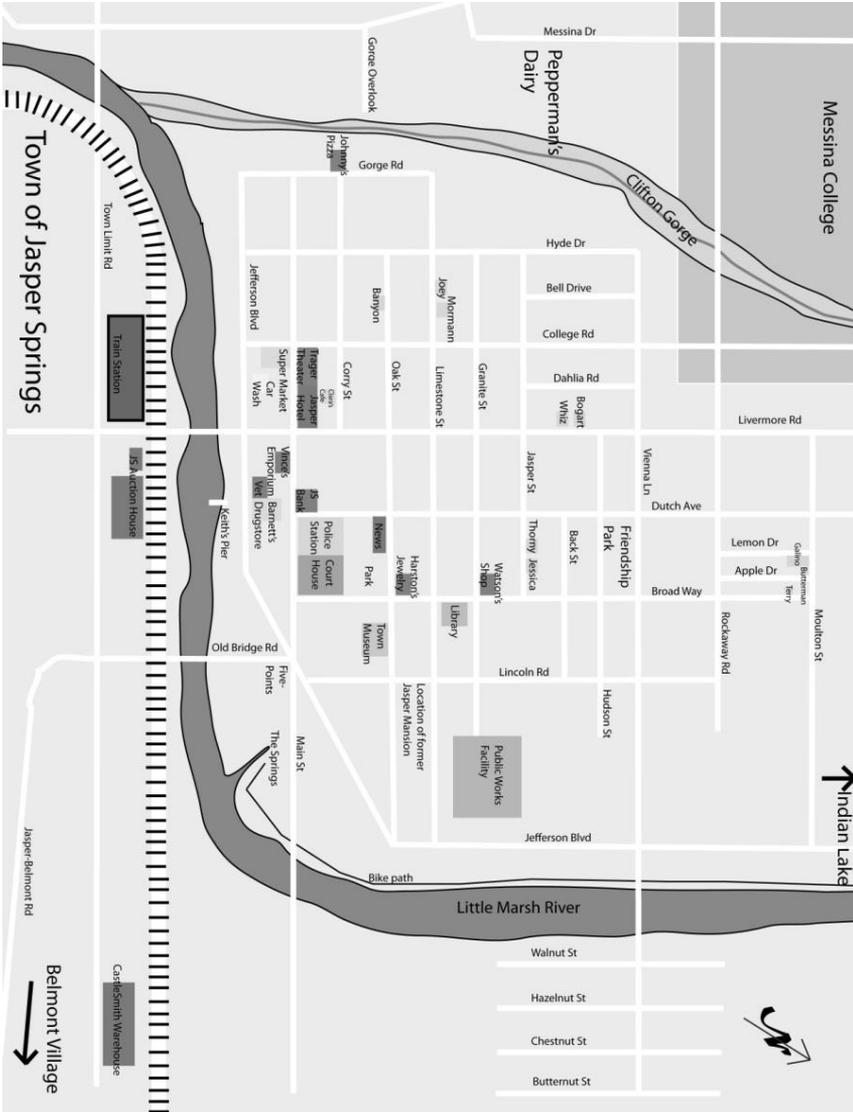
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CHAPTER 1

The Pigeon

We must have looked quite a sight bicycling down Oak Street after turning off Hyde. Whiz Tanner was wobbling along with one hand on his handlebars and one hand holding a pigeon against his body. I was riding just behind him as we raced against time to get to the Jasper Springs Animal Clinic. That bespectacled brainiac was a pretty fair pitcher—about the only sport he’s any good at—but holding that pigeon was like holding a football not a baseball and he should have delegated that task to Agent K.

I guess I should let you in on a few facts. I am Agent K, the Director of Field Operations for The Tanner-Dent Detective Agency. My real name is Joey Dent—Joseph David Dent, if you’re keeping precise notes. Whiz—his real name is Wilson—is the Chief Investigator and I must admit that he is the mastermind behind much of our success. We may only be in sixth grade, but if you don’t believe that we are no kidding real life detectives, well, you should just ask any Jasper Springs resident, or better yet, talk to Jerry

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Mormann who's covered our cases many times for the *Jasper Springs News*.

Anyway, we were now on our newest case. Tucked under Whiz's arm was the only clue we had so far—a wounded carrier pigeon. Attached to the pigeon's leg was a small tube. We removed it but the bird needed medical attention. You see, we found the bird in Mrs. Hassan's front yard on Hyde Drive. It was flopping around under the hedges, so, being detectives, we stopped to investigate. The bird couldn't move its wing and there was a lot of blood. It was badly hurt.

"Through Banyon's driveway and out the alley, Agent K," Whiz yelled. "It will shorten our journey by half a block."

"Right behind you, M." Whiz was Agent M while we were on a case.

We turned up Mr. Banyon's driveway, which goes all the way to the alley. Here, we came to a screeching halt. At the end of the driveway was a gate—a closed gate!

"That gate is never closed!" I yelled. "Mr. Banyon couldn't close it!"

"Obviously, Agent K, your powers of observation have not yet exceeded your memory or you would not have made such an incorrect assessment."

"But Whiz," I was so startled I forgot to use his code name. "That gate has been open so long that a small tree had grown in front of it, so it couldn't be closed."

"Agent K, arguing over whether the gate should be open or closed is a moot activity. The tree is gone, the gate is closed, and we must open it or go around and waste even more precious time. Now, get off your bike and prepare the gate for our egress."

"What?" I asked. "Speak English." I didn't

mention yet that Whiz uses big words—Whiz Words, I call them.

“Open the gate please. This pigeon is beginning to squirm.”

“Okay, M,” I responded rather sheepishly.

I jumped off my bike and opened the gate. The tree, which had been a few years old, was gone and the fence was repaired and had a fresh coat of paint. I unlatched it and began to open it. Whiz started through it as soon as there was enough room. He then darted off at full speed leaving good old Agent K standing there. Well I did the only thing I could. I closed the gate and followed him as fast as I could ride. Although we are very close in size and build, I am a bit more athletic than Whiz, so I was able to catch up quickly—especially with him hampered by the bird.

As we rode, I made a mental note to look up the word egress in the dictionary when I got home. As I said, Whiz uses big words a lot—one of the many things that makes understanding him a bit hard at times. The strangest part is, as smart as he is, he doesn’t realize that we don’t know what he means—I think he understands other kids even less than they understand him. But if Whiz used egress, I’m sure it’s a real word, but I didn’t have the foggiest idea what it meant.

We exited the alley on College Road, crossed Corry and Main and cut through the supermarket parking lot. Jumping the curb, we crossed the carwash driveway and headed down Jefferson. In almost no time we braked to a halt and dumped our bikes on the front lawn of the veterinary clinic.

We had been practicing high-speed dismounts for the past few weeks, and I’ll have to give Whiz quite a bit of credit for the way he laid his bike down while still holding

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the injured bird. The physically demanding parts of our business were usually delegated to good old Agent K. M did the thinking. But when 100% was required from the entire organization, well, M could definitely pull his weight on the physical stuff—and when thinking is required, well I could do a bit of that.

“The door, Agent K!” Whiz commanded and, of course, I jumped.

I opened the door, sounding the buzzer, and he squeezed through rushing to the counter where Mrs. Willis, Dr. Wolfe’s assistant, was sitting. Whiz held out the pigeon.

“We need to see Dr. Wolfe. We have an emergency situation on our hands.”

“Whiz, Joey, hello to you, too,” Mrs. Willis said as she took the bird from Whiz.

“Sorry about the lack of courtesy, Mrs. Willis, but this is an emergency and any time lost may be detrimental to the life of this pigeon.”

I stood there and said, “Hi.”

We followed Mrs. Willis down the hallway and entered examining room number two. We saw Dr. Wolfe in room number one as we passed. I caught a glimpse of the room and gazed at the occupants a little longer than was wise, since I nearly banged into the wall trying to make the turn into room number two. Nobody saw me—I think. Mrs. Willis placed the wounded pigeon on the table.

“Whiz, please hold the bird gently until the Doctor arrives. She’ll be in soon. She’s finishing up an exam on the Carlton’s Shih Tzu,” Mrs. Willis said as she left the room, heading back to the front desk. A buzzer sounded letting her know someone new had entered the clinic.

“I’ll bet Jessica’s old Fluff Puff has a dirty spot on her fur or something just as life threatening.”

“Joey, you are being a little harsh on Jessica, I think. Even show dogs need routine health care. And Jessica is very good at keeping her pet in top shape.”

That statement took me back a step. I guess I was a little hard on Jessica. And I don’t know why since I kinda like her. Jessica Carlton was not much older than Whiz and me, but enough to put her in the seventh grade. She had long, very straight, jet black hair, which was not much darker than her complexion, and she was quite athletic. In fact, she was the only girl I know who could beat me in the 100-meter dash. Her passion, however, was dogs. Her fluffy little dog—hence the name Fluff Puff—has won or placed second in every Jasper Springs’ dog show for the past three years. Her parents own a kennel and breed several varieties of dogs and sell them all over the state.

I had to make a comeback so I just said, “That dog visits more doctors than any person I know. If Fluff Puff has as much as a single hair ruffled, Jessica rushes her to the vet to find out what’s wrong.”

Our conversation was cut short when Dr. Wolfe entered the room.

“Hi boys. What do we have here?”

Whiz turned his body, allowing Dr. Wolfe to see the pigeon.

“We found this pigeon beside the road. It has been shot, Doctor Wolfe. From the shape of the wound, I would say it was hit by one or two small pellets from a shotgun. The size of the damaged area indicates that the bird was only grazed by a few stray pellets near the edge of the shot pattern. I would estimate from this that the shooter was a good deal away from the bird.”

“Well, let’s have a look, Whiz,” Dr. Wolfe said as Whiz released the bird into her hands.

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Dr. Wolfe held the pigeon gently and turned it over several times looking at the injury.

“The wing has only superficial injuries. The feathers have been damaged extensively near the body, but no bones were hit. That’s the good news. The bad news is here.”

She held the bird out so Whiz and I could see a small hole in the body.

“One of the pellets must have entered right here, but I see no exit wound. The pellet must still be inside. I’ll need to do a little digging to check it out and remove it if possible. The bird will have to stay here for a while. Check back tomorrow, boys, and I’ll let you know what I find and what the prognosis is.”

Dr. Wolfe carried the bird out and called for Mrs. Willis to help her in the lab.

“See you tomorrow, boys,” Dr. Wolfe called as she disappeared down the hallway.

“What do you think this is all about Whiz?” I asked. “I mean a pigeon with a message tube on its leg and someone trying to stop it.”

We hadn’t had a chance to discuss the importance of the pigeon since we found it flopping around under the hedges.

“We will not know until we have a chance to examine the evidence. Until then we should not talk about it in public. We must get to the Lab.”

Whiz and I walked down the hallway, passing the waiting room, and left the clinic. As we walked over to where our bikes were laying on the ground, Whiz stopped dead and I nearly knocked him over as I bumped into him.

“What’s up M?” I asked as I rubbed my nose. It was sore from having hit Whiz’s head during the abrupt stop—not the first time that has happened.

“Look, Agent K!”

Whiz was pointing at the bike rack next to the walkway.

“Whiz,” I said with unhidden annoyance in my voice. “I know we should’ve used the bike rack but we were in a hurry. No one’s going to fault us for that.”

“You are not using your powers of perception, not to mention deduction.” Whiz gave me a bewildered look. “What else do you see there?”

I looked at the rack trying to see some mysterious clue. I couldn’t see anything unusual.

“There’s nothing there except a bike.”

“You missed two points, K.”

I looked again. I still saw nothing out of the ordinary for a bike rack.

“I give up. What?”

“First, that bike was not there when we arrived. Second, do you know who owns that bike?”

Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. “Thorny Rose!”

“Right, Agent K. It appears Thorny was the one who came into the clinic while we were in the examining room. That means he heard us discussing the pigeon. And as far as I know, Thorny does not own a pet. He must have seen us racing here. I fear we can expect a tail from him for a while.”

“Whiz,” I said, without moving my lips. “Don’t look now, but Thorny is looking out the window second from the front door.”

He didn’t bother turning around. “Move out. We will worry about him later.”

We jumped on our bikes and rode straight to the Crime Lab—after first going a half a block in the opposite direction to confuse any possible tail we might have had.

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Everything went just as planned until we braked to a halt in Whiz's driveway. We leaned our bikes against the wall of the garage and were heading toward the shed in the backyard when....

“Wilson! Wilson, I was expecting you home over an hour ago. It's mid-afternoon. Your lunch is on the table and getting cold. Joey, you're welcome to stay for lunch. Both of you need to wash up and get to the table.”

Mrs. Tanner was one of the few people who called Whiz by his real name. She allowed Whiz a lot of freedom in many ways, but some things she was a stickler on—and mealtimes was one of them.

“We will be right in, Mom,” Whiz called back. More quietly he said, “This will postpone our investigation by at least fifteen minutes.”

I followed Whiz into his house and sure enough, 15 minutes later, in spite of the fastest hand washing on record and asking for almost no food to eat, we were still at the kitchen table. Mrs. Tanner had a way of slowing things down to her speed—she's a very good magazine writer and I think it's her way of capturing all the moments so she can write about them later. More than once, something Whiz and I did made it into a newspaper or magazine article thanks to Mrs. Tanner.

Ten minutes more and we were outside heading for the shed. Whiz's little sister, five-year old Tammy, ran out with us. She loved following Whiz around. And he usually loves it, too. He tutors her in every subject we take in school. But sometimes she can get in the way—she is five after all. Mrs. Tanner ran after her and brought her back to the house. Mrs. T to the rescue!

End of Chapter ONE

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

www.WhizTanner.com

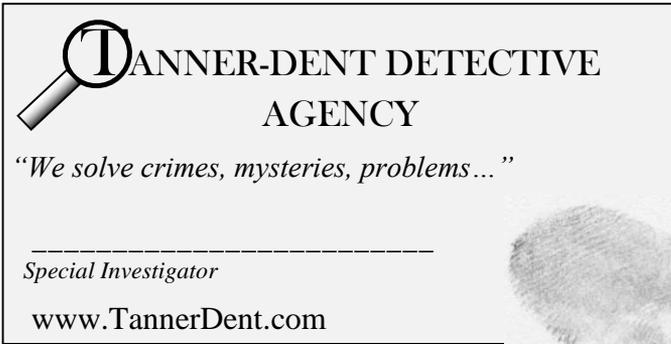
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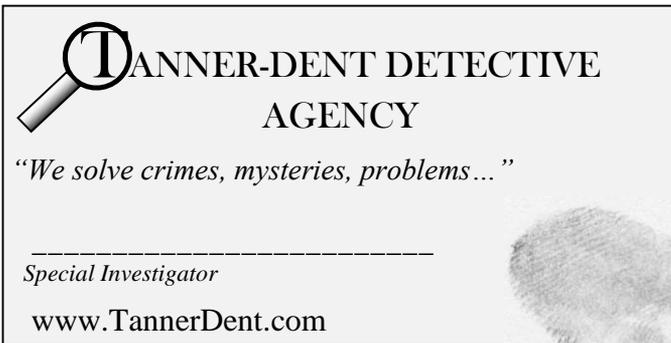


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