

1 THE GOLD DOME

Christina was convinced that this was going to be one of the most fun adventures that she had ever been on with her grandmother, Mimi, her grandfather, Papa, little brother, Grant, and a couple of friends that they were picking up to join them on the trip.

At the moment, they were standing around the *Mystery Girl*, Papa's little red and white airplane, on the tarmac at a small airport near Dahlonega, Georgia. Mimi, who spent most of her time writing kid's mystery books, was investigating a very curious mystery of her own. She had inherited—from a total stranger—a gold mine!

"I'm sure that if we make a quick stop in Dahlonega, I can find out something about the Gold Bug," Mimi said. She was eager to get underway. The Gold Bug was the name of the mine she had inherited. She believed that the Gold Rush museum in Dahlonega might have some information on it. She had to start somewhere. The will had not said where the Gold Bug was located.

"How about a little lunch, first?" pleaded Papa. He was always ready for a bowl of soup at lunchtime, and could

always entice Mimi with a promise of unsweetened ice tea with lemon and lots of ice—her favorite.

Christina watched Mimi sway her blond curls back and forth as she thought. She tapped the toe of one of her red high heels. No one hoped more than her grandkids that she would give in—they were starving!

Leg 1: Peachtree City to Dahlonega

They'd gotten a pre-dawn start at Falcon Field in Peachtree City, Georgia. As soon as they'd taken off over the pine forests, Papa warned them to "Watch closely!"

They couldn't imagine what kind of surprise he could have for them this early in the morning up in the dark sky. But in just a moment, the sun broke over the horizon. As they banked left to circle past the city of Atlanta, sunlight struck the dome of the state capitol building. It glistened so vividly, that they had to hide their eyes behind their hands.

"You know where all that gold on the dome of the Georgia capitol building came from?" asked Papa.

When the kids yawned and said, "No," he reminded them, "That gold came from a gold rush in our very own state in Dahlonega!"

Mimi looked at the gold watch on her arm, hidden beneath the sleeve of her red suit jacket. "Where we'll be shortly?" she asked hopefully.



“Sooner than those poor folks,” said Papa, pointing down to the interstate highway far beneath them, clogged with cars stuck in the morning rush hour.

Grant and Christina yawned again. “Think I’ll get in a little nap,” said Grant, tugging his jacket up over his shoulders.

But almost before he could nod off, he heard Papa talking to the controllers at the small airport where they were to land. And with one small bounce, they were down, and the adventure had begun.

And, as usual, a mysterious adventure it would be!

2 THE “FIRST” OF MANY GOLD RUSHES

Regarding lunch, Mimi nodded, and Papa led them to a cute café on the quaint town square of Dahlonega, Georgia. The square was busy this sunny Saturday afternoon. The bustling café looked like a giant indoor picnic was in progress with its white tables, checkered tablecloths, yellow daisies in white vases, and families eating and chatting.

They picked a table by the window and ordered homemade pimiento cheese and egg salad sandwiches, chili made with buffalo for Papa, iced tea for Mimi, and big, fat Snickerdoodle cookies for Christina and Grant.

As they waited for the waitress to bring their food, Papa said, “So tell us what you discovered at the museum this morning, and we’ll tell you what we bought in a local shop.” He gave the kids a wink and they giggled. Clearly, a secret was afoot!

“Yes, Mimi,” said Christina, “Tell us again how you came to be the proud new owner of a gold mine!”

Mimi laughed. “It’s like I told you,” she said, sipping her tea, which had a bright green sprig of mint on

top, "a lawyer called me. She said that she was handling the will of a Mr. Jamison Lynn who had died recently of natural causes. He was 104!"

"Wow!" interrupted Grant, "That's older than dirt!"

"Depends on how old the dirt is, buddy," Papa reminded him.

"Let Mimi talk," pleaded Christina. "We want to hear this story."

Mimi smiled at her granddaughter. Christina loved stories—she liked to read them and write them and tell them. "Well, apparently, Mr. Lynn left me the only thing he still owned at the time of his death—a gold mine named the Gold Bug."

Now it was Christina who interrupted. "I've read a story by that name by Edgar Allan Poe. It was really cool; a little scary, but an exciting mystery."

"I always loved that story, too," Mimi agreed. "Edgar Allan Poe was one of my favorites when I was a teenager."

"Excuse us!" said Grant, with a look to his sister. "Back to Mimi's story, please."

"Ok, ok," Mimi said, as the waitress set down their yummy-looking lunches. "The lawyer said that there was little information about the Gold Bug, except that it's somewhere in Alaska."

Papa roared so loud with laughter that the cowboy hat he always wore tipped back on his head. "That helps a whole lot! Somewhere in Alaska, a state made up of a gazillion square miles, most of it frozen!"

"We could get lucky," Christina said with a frown. She really believed that they would find the Gold Bug.

Her grandfather just laughed some more. "That would be a LOT of luck," he said. "You know, depending on luck is how so many folks went bust back during the days of the Gold Rush."

Grant patiently picked the pimiento out of his pimiento cheese. "I'm confused," he said. "If Mr. Lynn was from Georgia, like you told us, then how did he end up owning a gold mine in faraway Alaska?"

"Oh, Grant," said Mimi, "you have to understand more about the Gold Rush." She got a dreamy look in her eyes and they all knew that they were in for a short lecture.

"The Gold Rush was more than just an event, it was a dream, a state of mind," Mimi continued. "Most people lived hard, poor, rough and tumble lives back in the 1800s. They wanted desperately to improve their lives. So when word got out that gold had been discovered in California, it set into motion an amazing chapter of American history!"

"But all that was in California," said Grant. "I still don't understand the Georgia connection."

"Gold's not just found in California," Mimi explained. "There was gold found in Georgia, North Carolina, and other places. Georgia claims the so-called 'first' Gold Rush. But it was California where gold fever struck. People from all over the eastern part of the United States packed up and headed west to seek their fortune, all the way up to Alaska."

Suddenly, Grant got a sort of "gold fever" look in his eyes. "You mean I might find gold right here in Georgia if I dug for it?"

Mimi smiled. "Just maybe," she said. "There are places you can pan for gold around here."

"You might as well buy a lottery ticket," warned Papa, who was a lot bigger on working hard than he was on gambling or waiting for "Lady Luck" to help you out.

But Christina understood that her grandfather was just setting up their surprise. "But you *could* find gold here in Dahlonega, couldn't you, Papa?" she asked with a grin.

Papa grinned back. "Oh, I'm certain that all that glitters is indeed gold here in Dahlonega."

Mimi was suspicious. She looked at Grant, but he just pretended to zip his mouth closed. There was certainly a mystery at their table—and Mimi was the one who was in the dark!

3 ALL THAT GLITTERS...

They couldn't stand it any longer. Papa pulled a small white box with a red ribbon out from under the table and presented it to Mimi.

"Why, what's this?" Mimi asked, truly surprised, which tickled them all, for Mimi was a hard one to surprise. "Because she has eyes in the back of her head," Grant always said.

"Open it! Open it!" the children begged. People at nearby tables overheard the commotion and strained to see what the excitement was all about.

Mimi did not have to be asked twice! She took the box from Papa and blew him a kiss. Slowly, she tugged at the ribbon, stretching out the drama. Finally, she got the box top off, and then fumbled with the red tissue. At last, she revealed the beautiful piece of jewelry inside.

"OHMYGOODNESS!" Mimi squealed, surprised and delighted. "What a lovely necklace! Is this what you all were doing while I was researching—shopping?" She looked at Papa.

"We thought it might bring you luck on this quest," Papa admitted.

"Put it on! Put it on!" the kids squealed together.

Mimi put the necklace around her neck. The gold chain looked pretty against her red jacket. "And what is this thing on the necklace?" she asked, pretending not to know.

"GOLD!" Grant cried. "*Real* gold, Mimi!"

Mimi ran her fingers lightly over the piece of gold and smiled.

"It's a real gold nugget!" said Christina. "It was found in a gold mine right here in Dahlenega! Papa has the papers to prove it."

Mimi hugged and kissed and thanked them all. Nearby guests in the restaurant applauded.

"You know," Mimi said with a smile, "I really do think that this sweet gift from my favorite people will bring me lots and lots and lots of luck."

What neither Mimi, nor her family, could know was that the gold nugget was going to bring them lots and lots and lots of problems—very soon!

All That Glitters...

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